



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

# 2026 Annual Progress and Services Report

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# Introduction

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) is pleased to submit the first Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) for the 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). The 2026 APSR is the first report to document CDHS' progress toward accomplishing the goals, objectives, and interventions in the 2025-2029 CFSP, in addition to the requirements set forth in the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families' (ACYF) most recent program instruction (ACF-ACYF-CB-PI-25-01) related to the 2026 APSR. For additional contextual information on the goals, objectives, and interventions included in this report, please reference Colorado's 2025-2029 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, including child welfare 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.

# Update to the Vision and Collaboration

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.”

CDHS continues to collaborate 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. The following collaborative efforts and partners are highlighted in this report due to their impact on the implementation of major initiatives in the past year.

## Child and Family Services Review

In preparation for Round 4 of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), CDHS hosted a CFSR Round 4 Kick-Off Event in October 2024. The purpose of this event was to gather child welfare stakeholders from across Colorado to discuss the purpose and timeline of the CFSR, celebrate Round 3 accomplishments and explore opportunities for the upcoming Round, and discuss several of the Statewide Data Indicators measured by the Children’s Bureau.

Kick-off attendees represented nearly 30 stakeholder agencies, including 15 county departments of human services, the Administrative Review Division (ARD), the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO), the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (HCPF), the Colorado Office of the Child’s Representative (OCR), the Colorado Office of Respondent Parents’ Counsel (ORPC), and the Colorado Court Improvement Program (CIP).

DCW continues to collaborate with stakeholders on the planning and implementation of the CFSR Round 4 through bimonthly CFSR Implementation Team calls.

## 2025 Legislative Session

The First Regular Session of the 75th General Assembly convened on January 8, 2025. The session included several bills that included legislative impact on child welfare practice and funding. These bills include, but are not limited to:

## HB25-1097: Placement Transition Plans for Children<sup>1</sup>

HB25-1097 outlines measures to support children in out-of-home (OOH) placements in family-based settings through the creation of placement transition plans. The bill requires CDHS to develop and adopt a placement transition plan template that outlines logistic and communication factors when a child/youth will move from one OOH placement to another or to return home. The purpose of the plan is to create consistency and prevent children/youth from experiencing unnecessary or abrupt placement changes that affect their well-being or sense of security. Feedback was solicited from county departments of human services, the Colorado Office of Respondent Parent Counsel (ORPC), the Colorado Office of the Child's Representative (OCR), and CDHS.

## HB25-1188: Mandatory Reporter Task Force Recommendations<sup>2</sup>

In 2022, the Colorado General Assembly tasked the CPO with assembling a task force to analyze the effectiveness of and issues with the law requiring individuals from specific professions to report suspected child abuse to authorities. The task force was composed of representatives from the OCR, the ORPC, lived experts, law enforcement agencies, attorneys, county departments, and DCW, among other agencies. The task force developed a final report with recommendations to amend Colorado's requirements of mandatory reporters and the entities that employ them; some of these recommendations are incorporated into HB25-1188.

## HB25-1204: Colorado Indian Child Welfare Act<sup>3</sup>

During CY 2024, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) commenced a workgroup to work on Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) improvements for Colorado State Statute. The workgroup included representatives from the SUIT, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT), the OCR, the ORPC, county departments of human services, Native American advocates, and DCW. The workgroup met monthly to update the recommendations for ICWA practice in Colorado, which are included in HB25-1204. The bill codifies the federal "Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978" into state law as the "Colorado Indian Child Welfare Act" (CO-ICWA) and provides additional protections for Indian children and children known to be Indian children under state law.

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<sup>1</sup> [HB25-1097: Placement Transition Plans for Children](#)

<sup>2</sup> [HB25-1188: Mandatory Reporter Task Force Recommendations](#)

<sup>3</sup> [HB25-1204: Colorado Indian Child Welfare Act](#)

## HB25-1271: Federal Benefits for Youth in Foster Care<sup>4</sup>

HB25-1271 requires a county department of human or social services to determine whether each child/youth in foster care or participating in the Foster Youth in Transition (FYiT) program may be eligible to receive benefits administered by certain federal agencies and to apply for federal benefits on behalf of these children/youth. This bill is intended to ensure that if children/youth in care are receiving benefits such as death benefits, these funds are not being used to pay for the cost of OOH care and are instead sent to a representative payee. Feedback was solicited from the ORPC, the OCR, county partners, and CDHS.

## SB25-151: Measures to Prevent Youth from Running Away<sup>5</sup>

Placed within the CPO, the Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-of-Home Placement<sup>6</sup> began meeting in September 2022 after the Colorado General Assembly passed HB22-1375: Child Residential Treatment And Runaway Youth<sup>7</sup>. Task force members included young people who previously resided in the child welfare system, families whose children have run from OOH placements, members of law enforcement and professionals who are responsible for the care of youth in OOH placements including residential child-care providers, child welfare human service providers, non-profit organizations, and foster parents, among others.

In their final report, the Task Force found that there is no cohesive, statewide system in place that addresses the needs of youth who run from OOH placements, and outlined recommendations that focus on preventing a child/youth from running away from a residential child care facility. Some of these recommendations are incorporated into SB25-151, which requires each facility to develop a policy of how the facility responds to a child/youth's threat or attempt to run away from the facility, outlines who should receive a copy of the policy, and specifies who should be contacted when a facility discovers that a child/youth is missing from its care.

## SB25-294: Behavioral Health Services for Medicaid<sup>8</sup>

SB25-294 requires collaboration between HCPF, CDHS, the BHA, and relevant stakeholders to develop policies concerning residential behavioral health services for

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<sup>4</sup> [HB25-1271: Federal Benefits for Youth in Foster Care](#)

<sup>5</sup> [SB25-151: Measures to Prevent Youth from Running Away](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Timothy Montoya Task Force](#)

<sup>7</sup> [HB22-1375: Child Residential Treatment And Runaway Youth](#)

<sup>8</sup> [SB25-294: Behavioral Health Services for Medicaid Members](#)

Medicaid members in the custody of a county DHS. These policies are required to be developed no later than December 1, 2025; more information will be provided in subsequent APSRs.

## Prevention

Colorado continues to refine its child welfare system with a focus on proactively strengthening families through a vast prevention continuum and early intervention strategies. The ultimate goal is to have an array of supportive services available statewide to keep families together safely, only using OOH placement when necessary, with prioritization given to kinship and family-like settings. This intentional shift has helped reduce unnecessary placements and foster home utilization, while decreasing the number of families moving further into the child welfare system to access services.

The Child Welfare Prevention Task Group (CWPTG), created out of the Child Welfare Sub-Policy Advisory Committee (Sub-PAC, which is Colorado’s main child welfare policy development group), operates as an advisory committee for the development of a broad statewide prevention infrastructure. Members include county department of human services personnel, community organizations and service providers, lived experts, state agency partners, and research and evaluation experts. The CWPTG is responsible for recommending updates to Colorado’s Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) Five-Year Prevention Plan and for providing recommendations to the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Board about ways to reinvest federal reimbursement dollars to support prevention efforts across Colorado.

## Collaboration with the Counties

### The Colorado Human Services Directors Association (CHSDA)<sup>9</sup>

The CHSDA is a non-profit association representing the social/human services directors from all of Colorado’s 64 counties. CHSDA works under the authority and direction of Colorado’s Boards of County Commissioners and brings together human services directors from each of Colorado’s counties to advance the well-being and self-sufficiency of individuals, families, and communities. The association’s core functions are three-fold: developing and enhancing opportunities and resources to serve the needs of CHSDA members; advocating for proactive policy, regulatory, and

<sup>9</sup> [Colorado Human Services Directors Association](#)

statutory changes that support individuals and families; and driving innovation in Colorado's human service delivery system. 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<sup>10</sup>

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. PAC's primary responsibility is to develop and present draft program policies to be adopted by Colorado's State Board of Human Services, which are then entered into the Code of Colorado Regulations for caseworkers and county departments of human services to adhere to. 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.

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 sub-PAC includes, but is not limited to:

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

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<sup>10</sup> [Policy Advisory Committee](#)

## Specialized Response Team

DCW's Specialized Response Team (SRT) was established in 2020 to provide enhanced support for counties statewide. With Colorado having a state-supervised, county-administered human/social services system, the SRT enables consistency in practice across the State, and also ensures communications are aligned between the state and county agencies.

In CY 2024, the SRT created a checklist to quantify and track the percentage of counties who are receiving the proper support (Right County Support) from their CI. This will be measured quarterly, with the first baseline data point being captured in March of 2025. At minimum, CI support to counties includes monthly county contacts with at least quarterly in-person contacts. The purposes of measuring Right County Support are to ensure that DCW support to county partners matches the county's level of need, to identify areas of risk for county functioning, to provide meaningful change management to implement important practice and policy changes, and to create strong collaborations that recognize the unique needs of Colorado's communities. Additionally, DCW is working to operationalize all aspects of support to counties including an escalation protocol to inform consistent interventions based on the level of concern and/or impact on the individuals served.

## Alignment with Judicial and Legal Partners

### Court Improvement Program (CIP)

The Colorado Department of Human Services has a long history of collaborating with the Court Improvement Program (CIP). In the past year, DCW's Division Director joined the CIP Committee as CDHS' representative. DCW continues to partner with the CIP to provide training throughout the year, particularly on legislative changes that impact the courts. Those trainings are documented in more detail in the annual CIP Self-Assessment, which is submitted separately to the Children's Bureau. CDHS continues to collaborate with CIP, the OCR, and the ORPC, and these agencies have committed to meeting quarterly to discuss challenges, opportunities for improvements, and successes. In addition, during SFY 2025, the CIP helped to ensure the involvement of the CIP and/or judicial officers in the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) review, the Title IV-E Review, and preparation for CFSR Round 4.

This year, CIP participated directly in the Title IV-E review. The CIP Coordinator assisted with the review and also recruited a magistrate from Denver County to participate. The CIP Coordinator and Denver Juvenile Court Magistrate completed a

series of trainings and meetings regarding the review process and then spent four days onsite reviewing files and providing a judicial perspective regarding findings in those files. The findings from this review will be used to inform future training for judicial officers and will be a consideration for the 2026-2031 CIP Strategic Plan.

In CY 2023, CIP contracted with the Kempe Center to participate in a relational coaching program. The first coaching cohort with a small workgroup was completed in 2023 and upon the conclusion of that work, CIP recruited taskforce members, including DCW's Division Director, to participate in a second cohort. This second cohort began meeting in fall of 2024 and has continued into spring of 2025.

In August 2024, CIP integrated four lived experts into their taskforce: two parents who now serve as parent advocates and two former youth who serve on the OCR's Lived Expert Action Panel. These lived experts participate as voting members on the CIP taskforce and are compensated for their work with CIP. CIP has also continued to encourage and support best practice court teams in including lived experts on those teams.

The Circle of Parents Expansion (COPE) Project, in partnership with Dependency and Neglect System Reform (DANSR), came to a close in September of 2024. COPE celebrated the state-level and regional partnerships that were created and/or strengthened during the duration of the grantee period. The project served 89 families involved in Dependency and Neglect (D&N) proceedings including 99 parents who attended Circle of Parents in Recovery groups and impacted 165 children. The findings of the project did not indicate a statistically significant difference for parents with regard to substance use recovery outcomes, nor did it yield a significantly significant difference with regard to child welfare outcomes (system reinvolvement, child maltreatment recurrence, or permanency outcomes). However, when evaluating the quality of engagement of parents who attended Circle of Parents in Recovery groups through the process evaluation, families who engaged in focus groups expressed high levels of satisfaction with Circle of Parents in Recovery groups. For those who attended in-person groups, the provision of meals, social support, and linkages to other concrete supports were aspects that were particularly valuable to attendees.

## CQI Workshops and Change Management Framework

In CY 2023, CIP began working with best practice court teams to learn and use change management science in setting local goals related to best practices in child welfare. CIP hosted the third annual continuous quality improvement (CQI) workshop in April 2025. These workshops guide teams through purpose-to-practice activities and

through the CQI framework. Teams from almost every judicial district have participated in this work, including completing complexity mapping, data exploration, and action planning. The 2025 CQI workshop spanned two days and focused on evaluation planning.

This two-day workshop immediately followed the two-day 2025 Convening on Children, Youth, and Families, which had a theme of “Compassion in Action: Court Improvement through Connection.” Full-group sessions included Best Practice Standards for Family Time in Colorado, Status and Updates on Colorado’s Foster Youth in Transition Program, and How Colorado is Supporting Kinship Families Differently, among other topics. Attendees also had the opportunity to attend breakout sessions, which included topics such as maintaining and building family bonds, safety-based treatment planning, placement solutions and behavioral health for high acuity youth, Colorado’s prevention continuum, and ICWA compliance, among other topics.

CIP’s dedication to engaging in change management will ensure that the foundations are present for the CFSR Round 4. Further, because the CIP is leveraging the research that established the Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance, Colorado’s legal partners will be better able to engage in future rounds of CFSR activities. The CIP has reviewed CFSR reference materials and CDHS has begun conversations with CIP on how this guidance will be used.

## Court of Appeals Workgroup

The Colorado Judicial Branch Child Welfare Appeals Workgroup was appointed in 2018 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. Composed of legal and child welfare professionals, the workgroup released their final report in spring of 2021, and was authorized through HB22-1113: Appeal Procedures Dependency And Neglect Cases<sup>11</sup> to continue their work. The final report was submitted to the Colorado General Assembly in June 2024 and is available on the Colorado General Assembly website<sup>12</sup>. After considering data from the Court of Appeals, the State Court Administrator’s Office requested and received funding for four new Dependency and Neglect staff attorneys for the Court of Appeals.

Throughout CY 2024, an evaluation team assembled by the Timeliness to Permanency Subcommittee of the Child Welfare Appeals Workgroup worked toward publishing a

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<sup>11</sup> [HB22-1113: Appeal Procedures Dependency And Neglect Cases](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Child Welfare Appeals Work Group Reports Webpage](#)

report that identifies gaps and opportunities to improve permanency outcomes for children/youth. The final report was published in February 2025; see Intervention 3.2.2 for more information about the Court Process Evaluation final report.

## Office of the Child’s Representative (OCR)<sup>13</sup> and Office of Respondent Parents’ Counsel (ORPC)<sup>14</sup>

Colorado has two state level offices that oversee legal representation of children, youth, and parents in child welfare court proceedings. The Office of the Child’s Representative (OCR) was created by the General Assembly in 2000 to provide competent and effective legal representation to children and youth involved in judicial proceedings in Colorado by establishing minimum practice standards and providing litigation support, accessible high-quality statewide training, and oversight of the practice. The OCR oversees attorneys that provide legal representation through different roles, including Guardians ad Litem, Counsel for Youth, and Child’s Legal Representative.

The Office of Respondent Parents’ Counsel (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 Parents’ 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.

The Colorado Department of Human Services entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the OCR and the ORPC several years ago to draw down Title IV-E legal reimbursement funds. CDHS has regular meetings with these agencies to update existing MOUs and processes related to the reimbursements.

## Children’s Justice Act<sup>15</sup>

Section 107(c) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (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

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<sup>13</sup> [Colorado Office of the Child’s Representative](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Colorado Office of the Respondent Parents’ Counsel](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Children’s Justice Act Task Force](#)

criminal justice system and issues of child physical abuse, child neglect, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and child maltreatment-related fatalities. Please see the “Service Coordination” section of this APSR and the CJA Annual Report in Appendix B for further details on how program representatives are involved in service coordination and support of mutual goals and strategies.

## Collaboration with Tribes

There are two federally recognized tribes with land bases in Colorado: the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT). The SUIT is located primarily in La Plata County and includes 13,475 members as of 2023<sup>16</sup>. The UMUT is located primarily in Montezuma County with another community in White Mesa, Utah and includes 1,485 enrolled members as of 2023<sup>17</sup>. CDHS continues to consult, collaborate, and coordinate with both federally recognized tribes within the state, as well as with Colorado-based organizations that serve the state’s American Indian urban communities.

In addition to the two federally recognized tribes, CDHS partners with organizations such as the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, Denver Indian Center Inc., Denver Indian Family Resource Center, Haseya Advocate Program, and Denver Indian Health and Family Services 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 CDHS’ relationship with the tribes and organizations that serve the state’s American Indian urban communities.

Please see the “Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes” section of this APSR for additional information.

## Family Voices

CDHS believes in a people-first approach to human services that incorporates the participation, interest and awareness, and feedback of Coloradans. CDHS recognizes the value of family and community engagement and strives to involve the voices of those with lived systems experience into programs and service delivery.

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<sup>16</sup> [Southern Ute Reservation Census Profile](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Ute Mountain Reservation Census Profile](#)

## The Family Voice Council<sup>18</sup>

The CDHS Family Voice Council (FVC) is made up of people who have been involved with, or are currently engaged in, two or more CDHS services or programs. Current FVC members and alumni continue to inform and guide the Department's efforts. FVC's work in SFY 2025 included providing valuable feedback to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach programs, the State Unit on Aging, the Mental Health Transitional Living Homes, taxonomy and database searchability for 211<sup>19</sup>, the Best Initiative, the Family Affordability Tax Credit (FATC) messaging, and the Benefits Cliff policies, among other efforts. FVC also collaborated with the Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee and DCW to present to the Japanese Delegation that visited Colorado in February 2025 to learn more about the United States' child welfare system. Additionally, CDHS' Family and Community Engagement Team provided technical assistance to DCW's People-Centered Practice Specialist and shared best practices on coordinating and managing a council using the FVC Compass<sup>20</sup>, a resource guide for developing a family voice structure.

On March 26, 2024, Governor Polis signed a proclamation declaring the day as "Family Voice Council Day." A subsequent Family Voice Council Day event was held at the Capitol on March 26, 2025. About 50 statewide lived-experience council members gathered to meet one another, learn more about what councils exist, and develop a deeper understanding of the legislative process.

## The Child Welfare Family Advisory Council<sup>21</sup>

DCW created the Child Welfare Family Advisory Council (FAC) in 2022 to include family voices and those with lived experience in providing feedback on DCW's work. This includes planning, policies, and procedures to improve the design and delivery of high-quality child welfare services to the youth and families in Colorado.

The Child Welfare FAC consists of 11 Coloradans with lived experience in the child welfare system. FAC members are compensated for their expertise. The group is coordinated by DCW's People-Centered Practices Specialist and two FAC member co-chairs. Co-chairs serve six-month terms and co-facilitate the FAC meetings. FAC members' personal experience with the child welfare system includes youth formerly involved in the child welfare system, biological parents involved in the child welfare

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<sup>18</sup> [CDHS Family Voice Council](#)

<sup>19</sup> [211 Colorado](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Family Voice Compass](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Child Welfare Family Advisory Council](#)

system, kinship or family providing certified and non-certified OOH care, and foster and adoptive parents.

FAC members serve for a one-year term, with the option to renew for a second term. The group meets monthly and connects these members with policy and program staff, local departments of human services, and partner providers.

To ensure that the voices of those with lived experience are included in recommendations to the Child Welfare Sub-PAC, FAC members were invited to join Child Welfare Sub-PAC subgroups beginning in January 2025. FAC members currently participate in the Child Protection Task Group (CPTG), Child Welfare Prevention Task Group (CWPTG), Permanency Task Group (PTG), and Training Steering Committee (TSC).

## Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee<sup>22</sup>

CDHS has engaged in a multi-year project with people with lived experience and other partners to transform Colorado's child welfare system into a system that families trust: one that supports and uplifts families rather than inadvertently causing harm or relying on family separation as a means to provide safety for children. The Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee creates actionable solutions by listening to and learning from Coloradans who have been involved in Colorado's child welfare system and are committed to collaborating for positive change. They are joined by child welfare professionals, organizations serving children, youth, and families, and community members who stand alongside families to provide support and drive change.

The Steering Committee believes that families are strongest when they stay together, while recognizing that certain challenges can put families under stress and even threaten family unity. The Steering Committee is working toward three goals that will help to reshape Colorado's child welfare system into one that helps families overcome challenges, access resources, build community, and lead to a future of success:

- Building Lived Expertise into public and other systems such as public health, education, early childhood, human services, courts, etc. to inform policy and practice changes and innovation.
- Designing and piloting community-based prevention resource “warm lines” as an alternative to the child welfare hotline.

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<sup>22</sup> [Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee](#)

- Development of a Parent Handbook so that every parent, caregiver, and child can have a better understanding of how Colorado's child welfare system works when they become involved.

Since summer of 2024, the Steering Committee has taken many steps to achieve these goals; these steps include, but are not limited to:

- Holding statewide in-person convenings in June 2024 and February 2025 to bring partners together and foster collaboration.
- Co-leading a statewide child maltreatment prevention conference in September 2024 that allowed program-sharing information amongst agency staff and Colorado's lived experts.
- Establishing priority areas that focus on the most urgent needs within the child welfare system.
- Dedicating resources to compensating lived experts and ensuring the involvement of those with direct experience in the system.
- Identifying four counties willing to implement and test innovative prototypes for the "warm line" initiative that will be put into place to appropriately divert and support families who do not need child welfare involvement.

## Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO)<sup>23</sup>

The Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) is an independent agency that was created in 2010 to ensure that Colorado's complex child protection system consistently provides high-quality services to children and families in all 64 Colorado counties. The CPO engages with the public about their experience with or concerns about the child protection system, researches and investigates these concerns, and determines the best way to resolve each concern. In addition to elevating family and community voice, the CPO's work includes collaboration with lawmakers, professionals, and other stakeholders to advance legislation and policies that will have a lasting, positive impact on Colorado's children and families.

## Stakeholder Feedback

This 2026 APSR draft was shared with stakeholders statewide for their review and feedback. Stakeholders included state and county staff, interagency partners, service

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<sup>23</sup> [Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman](#)

providers, youth advisory boards, current and former youth in foster care, foster parents, Chafee coordinators, Colorado's federally recognized tribes, and organizations serving Colorado's American Indian communities. Feedback was directly solicited from the following groups:

- CDHS Family Voice Council
- DCW Family Advisory Council
- Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee
- Child Welfare Sub-PAC
- Child Protection Task Group
- Child Welfare Prevention Task Group
- Permanency Task Group
- County Departments of Human Services
- Children's Justice Act Task Force
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT)
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT)

A draft of the 2026 APSR was sent to the two federally recognized tribes in Colorado for their feedback. Additionally, four public teleconferences were held in May 2025 to solicit feedback from internal and external partners statewide. This report incorporates the feedback CDHS received from stakeholders and will be made publicly available on the CDHS Child Welfare Publications and Reports website<sup>24</sup> by September 30th, 2025, or when final approval is received from the Children's Bureau, along with previous reports. The final 2026 APSR will also be shared with the SUIT and UMUT after federal submission via email.

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<sup>24</sup> [CDHS Child Welfare Publications and Reports](#)

# Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes

Data is collected and reviewed through multiple mechanisms to ensure robust ongoing assessment and evaluation of Colorado’s child welfare system:

## The Administrative Review Division (ARD)

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 Item 25 within the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information about the ARD.

## Results Oriented Management (ROM) System

Colorado utilizes its Results Oriented Management System (ROM) to create performance reports based on data entered by county child welfare staff in Colorado’s Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS), Trails. CDHS contracts with the University of Kansas to manage this software. Public data is available through the CDHS Community Performance Center<sup>25</sup> to promote transparency in state performance and help ensure the best outcomes for Colorado’s most vulnerable children and their families. Additional reports are available to authorized ROM users as a continuous quality improvement and performance management tool.

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 CDHS management strategy program that reviews county and statewide performance on a quarterly basis to identify areas in need of improvement and target changes in practice to improve outcomes.

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<sup>25</sup> [CDHS Community Performance Center](#)

As they are often closely tied to federal and state goals, ROM reports are utilized in conjunction with CFSR Data Profiles provided by the Children's Bureau to monitor and maintain data accuracy and improve outcomes.

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

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

### Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

According to ROM data for CY 2024, investigations of reports of maltreatment were initiated timely in compliance with Colorado's state standard 85.88% of the time.

Colorado monitors statewide performance regarding timely response to abuse and neglect assessments through monthly meetings with county departments and their assigned county intermediaries. Colorado also continues to monitor performance of this measure through the C-Stat process.

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. In CY 2024, the C-Stat goal for this measure was 84.3% and Colorado exceeded this goal by meeting state-defined timeframes in 88.9% of required interviews. The C-Stat goal for this measure will incrementally increase from 84.3% to 95% by 2029.

Colorado is exploring opportunities within administrative rule to address when additional alleged victims are identified during the course of an assessment and how to measure initial response efforts in these circumstances; more information will be reported in future APSRs.

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

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

## Item 2: Services to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024, 74.33% of children/youth reviewed for the first time had a signed removal order that contains best interest or welfare of the child language, determines if reasonable efforts were made or an emergency justified lack of reasonable efforts, and does not contain "nunc pro tunc" language.

According to ROM data for CY 2024:

- 96.6% of children/youth with in-home services during CY 2024 did not have a substantiated report of maltreatment during in-home involvement.
- 80.62% of children/youth who entered foster care in CY 2022 and were discharged from care in CY 2023 maintained permanency within 12 months of discharge.

### 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. This requires assessing risk and safety in the same manner as required in a traditional response with two exceptions: scheduling interviews with families and the alleged victim child/youth are done with the family, and there is no substantiated "finding" of abuse and neglect against the family. See Intervention 3.1.1 in the "Updates to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision" section of this APSR for more information on statewide implementation, consistency, and fidelity of DR.

### Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative Efforts

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) oversees several programs that fall within the child welfare and prevention continuum. One example is the Family Resource Center Program (FRCP) funding, which is dedicated to creating stronger Colorado families by providing universal support through a statewide network of family resource centers (FRCs). The program uses training, technical assistance and grants to establish and maintain FRCs across Colorado. FRCs, as defined by statute, are local agencies that serve as a single point-of-entry for providing comprehensive and integrated community-based services to vulnerable families, individuals, children, and youth. They are located statewide but not yet at scale in every community. While

many FRCs are stand-alone non-profit agencies, some are directly affiliated with a school district or a faith-based organization. All FRCs share the common mission of providing integrated family-centered, holistic prevention services for children and families. The FRCP family development worker works one-on-one with a family to assess strengths and needs, supporting them to identify goals across 14 domains of family functioning as measured by the Colorado Family Support Assessment 2.0. Once goals are established, the family receives supportive services including resource referrals to other community agencies to support goal attainment. The intention is to create a strong and stable family environment where all members can thrive and reach their full potential. The CDEC also contracts with the Family Resource Center Association (FRCA) to provide support and technical assistance to FRCs throughout the state. During SFY 2024, 811 families participated in the Family Development program at a local family resource center. See the “Update on Services” section of this APSR for information on additional programs overseen by CDEC.

Colorado’s Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act (CYMHTA), under the purview of the BHA, provides an avenue for families to access mental health treatment services for their child or youth, as an alternative to child welfare involvement when there are no concerns of abuse/neglect. See Item 18 under the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information about CYMHTA.

See Objective 2.1 and Objective 2.2 under the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for information on additional prevention efforts in Colorado, including the expansion of accessible evidence-based services and Community Pathways in Colorado.

### Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 98.8% of children/youth who had new allegations of abuse or neglect identified during the review period had the allegation entered as a referral into Trails.
- 98.2% of children/youth who had a new safety concern identified during the review period had their safety needs adequately addressed during the review period.
- 79.6% of children/youth reviewed had objectives, action steps, and outcomes to be achieved documented in the Family Services Plan treatment plan that were measurable, realistic, specific, and time-limited.

According to ROM data for CY 2024:

- 59.7% of assessments had a safety assessment completed and documented timely. The goal for this measure is 58%.
- 34.4% of children/youth discharged to reunification had a safety assessment completed within 30 days prior to the reunification date. The C-Stat goal for this measure is 25%.
- 68% of children/youth discharged to reunification had a family engagement meeting held within 30 days prior to or 14 days following the reunification date. The C-Stat goal for this measure is 66%.

The Colorado Family Safety Assessment tool assesses the safety of children/youth at the onset of a child protection assessment and at certain points throughout an ongoing child protection case (ex. prior to reunification, prior to removal, and at case closure). Completion of Safety Assessments within 30 days Prior to Reunification and Family Engagement Meetings Held at Reunification are both C-Stat measures. Additionally, DCW continues to monitor these measures monthly and provides technical assistance and practice guidance to counties to ensure consistency and fidelity to the Safety Assessment tool.

The Safety Assessment instructions were updated in early 2025 to clarify timeframes for completion of the safety assessment and provide additional guidance for specific case circumstances. OM-CW-2025-0006<sup>26</sup> was released in February 2025 and details the changes made to the instructions, including:

- Clarification regarding documentation when contact with household members occurs on different days, when contact occurs outside of the 14 days, and how to calculate the 14-day timeframe;
- Clarification regarding documentation and supervisor approval when a decision is made to create a safety plan and guidance for when the reason for referral is that the caregivers are deceased;
- Clarification regarding how to define the primary and secondary caregivers when one caregiver has been removed or restrained from the home due to the referral incident; and
- Guidance around assessing child mental health.

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<sup>26</sup> [OM-CW-2025-0006: Updated Colorado Family Safety Assessment Tool Instructions](#) (PDF)

To increase transparency and provide tools to help families make informed decisions, the Child Protection Task Group (CPTG) is in process of developing a document for rights and remedies that will be provided to families when an assessment is assigned. This document is anticipated to be incorporated into assessment practice in summer of 2025.

## Intersection of Child Welfare and Domestic Violence

Colorado HB24-1046: Child Welfare System Tools<sup>27</sup> required DCW to establish a consistent screening process for domestic violence, to develop a disclosure process to notify callers that hotline calls are recorded, and to gather additional client demographics at referral. The bill also requires the CPO to contract with a third-party evaluator to conduct audits on the Colorado Family Safety Assessment and the Colorado Family Risk Assessment tools to ensure appropriate language and best practices are used when assessing risk factors that may directly or indirectly cause children harm. This audit has begun and will be completed with a report provided by February 2026; additional information will be provided in future APSRs.

The Domestic Violence Sub-Work Group was created in CY 2024 as a subgroup of CPTG to improve child welfare referral and assessment processes when domestic violence intersects with child abuse and neglect. The Sub-Work Group, which convened from July 2024 through November 2024, was facilitated by Mission Spark and included partners from DCW, county departments of human and social services, and domestic violence providers. The Sub-Work Group had three priorities: 1.) revising the domestic violence-related enhanced screening guide questions, 2.) identifying ways to track the intersection of domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, and 3.) exploring possible domestic violence screening tools that can be used within the context of child abuse and neglect casework. The Sub-Work Group revised the questions that hotline staff ask of reporting parties when they call to report child abuse and neglect and added one additional question. These questions, included in the enhanced screening guide, were revised to collect a high quality of information while remaining sensitive to the experiences of those who have experienced domestic violence. The group also drafted recommendations to revise assessment and case closure processes in Trails to better track the intersection of domestic abuse and child abuse and neglect. The Sub-Work Group is drafting the final report, which is anticipated to be released later in CY 2025.

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<sup>27</sup> [HB24-1046: Child Welfare System Tools](#)

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

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

## Item 4: Stability of Foster Placement

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 77.2% of children/youth reviewed had a Family Service Plan that contained a comprehensive description of the type and appropriateness of the homes or facilities in which the child/youth was placed during the review period.
- 33.1% of children/youth who experienced one or more moves during the review period had all of the placement changes planned by the agency in an effort to achieve the child/youth's case goals or to meet the needs of the child/youth. The most frequent reasons for a child/youth experiencing one or more unplanned moves during the review period were: provider request (63.72%), youth's behavior (33.37%), more than one move (21.64%), and temporary setting (19.81%).

According to ROM data for CY 2024, the average placement stability rate (moves per 1,000 days in care during a rolling 12-month period) from January 2024 to December 2024 was 3.18 (all children/youth).

The Placement Stability Work Group determined that the Kinship Needs Assessment and People Who May Be Involved In a Case tools developed for the 2023 Placement Stability Pilot provided valuable insight into newly-certified or kinship provider needs. However, these tools were less effective for anticipated placements of two weeks or less, in situations where disruption cannot be prevented, and with experienced placement providers. These tools will not be implemented state-wide, but are available on Colorado's Kinship webpage<sup>28</sup> for use on a case-by-case basis.

Colorado continues to innovatively address placement stability from a root-cause perspective and is committed to identifying and maintaining the most appropriate placements for children/youth in OOH care. Efforts are being made to identify the appropriate level of care for youth, especially those with complex and high acuity treatment needs, to identify longer-term OOH treatment stabilization options rather than short-term step-down placement/treatment. The Child and Youth Consultation

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<sup>28</sup> [CDHS Kinship](#)

Team (CYCT) is a cross-agency collaboration between the DCW, the BHA, and HCPF to review and analyze the needs faced by children and youth. This team focuses on situations where treatment providers have already been outreached while the child/youth remains in an inappropriate placement setting (ex. hospital, hotel, county office, etc.). The CYCT is a part of an escalated solutions process created by HCPF that escalates the most complex cases to higher levels of agency leadership when there is indication a child or youth cannot be served within the placement continuum. Agency leadership then strategizes the best approach to creating identified treatment options for the child or youth.

Efforts are also being made to increase the use of therapeutic and treatment foster care settings and respite for youth in care; see Intervention 3.3.1 and Intervention 3.3.2 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information. Colorado has adopted the Pressley Ridge Training and Model for treatment and therapeutic foster care certification to better equip placement providers to navigate challenges that may otherwise lead to placement disruption; see Item 28 in the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information on this curriculum and model.

One factor that has and will continue to negatively impact Colorado’s placement stability and re-entry rates is how kinship placements are recorded in Trails. In order to best capture and track data related to providers’ certification status and the holder of temporary legal custody, there are three placement types that can be selected from when a youth is placed with kin: uncertified kinship with County DHS temporary legal custody, uncertified kinship with kinship temporary legal custody, and certified kinship with County DHS temporary legal custody. If a child or youth is placed in kinship care under any of these statuses and either the holder of temporary legal custody or the kinship placement’s certification status changes, a new removal is created to accurately reflect the status of both criteria; this presents as a placement move, despite the child or youth not moving to a new location. Colorado examined the impact of these scenarios on re-entry rates and found that between April 2023 and April 2024, 318 children re-entered OOH care; 67 of these children (21%) reflected as a re-entry because of a change in kinship certification that did not involve a true placement move. With the passage of SB24-008: Kinship Foster Care Homes, Colorado anticipates an increase in the number of kinship providers electing to become certified, which will lead to an increase in Colorado’s placement change and re-entry rates despite children in these placements remaining in the same home. Despite this impact on quantitative data, Colorado remains committed to prioritizing placement with kinship and maintaining kinship placements. See Item 10 in the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of

this APSR for more information regarding kinship-specific placement stability efforts, including non-certified kinship reimbursement. See Intervention 3.1.2 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information on SB24-008 and the expansion of resources to kinship providers.

## Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 79.2% of children/youth who 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 contains reasonable efforts to achieve permanency language, and does not contain “nunc pro tunc” language.
- 41.1% of children/youth with a permanency goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement had case documentation that all other more permanent goals have been considered.
- 86.4% of children/youth had a primary court ordered permanency goal at the time of the review that, in the reviewer’s opinion, was appropriate for the child/youth.
- 35.8% of children/youth who did not have a petition/motion to terminate parental rights filed but had a compelling reason has been identified had an appropriate compelling reason.

DCW has created a Permanency Status Report to identify points in cases that may result in delayed permanency. Currently, counties can opt into receiving this report, and DCW’s county intermediaries are working closely with their assigned 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 OOH care. For more information on how use of the Permanency Status Report will be expanded, see Intervention 3.2.1 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision” section of this APSR.

## Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 97.5% of children/youth had reasonable efforts being made at the time of the review to achieve permanency.
- 17.5% of children/youth with a goal of return home had progress being made toward achieving the goal. The most common reasons found for lack of progress made were: parent lack of progress (97.91%), parent's whereabouts are unknown (19.66%), and parent/guardian incarceration or long-term treatment program (17.23%).
- 48.9% of children/youth with a permanency goal of permanent placement with a relative/non-relative through legal guardianship/permanent custody had progress being made toward the goal. The most common reasons found for lack of progress made were: no identified relative/non-relative permanent caregiver (66.00%), court delays (8.70%), and Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC, 6.02%).
- 44.7% of children/youth with a goal of adoption had progress being made toward finalizing the adoption. The most common reasons found for lack of progress made were: no adoptive home (31.34%), appeal of termination (26.54%), and lack of timely filing of termination of parental rights (TPR) (12.26%)

According to ROM data for CY 2024:

- 52.72% of children achieved permanency within 12 months of entering care.
- 50.12% of children who had been in foster care continuously between 12 and 23 months achieved permanency.
- 44.35% of children who had been in foster care continuously for 24 months or more achieved permanency.
- 51.89% of children/youth were adopted within 12 months of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR).
- 62 youth who emancipated from foster care.
- 0.85% of children/youth who were discharged to reunification, living with a relative, guardianship, or adoption during the last 12 months re-entered care during CY 2024.

Colorado places emphasis on reunification as the primary initial permanency goal for all cases where it is appropriate, and efforts to improve reunification outcomes are detailed throughout this APSR. In the "Update to the Assessment of Current

Performance in Improving Outcomes” section, see Item 8 for information on family time, Item 11 for information on supporting the parent-child relationship of children in care, and Item 29 for information on services provided to children/youth and families to promote family preservation and reunification. See Objective 3.4 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for targeted efforts to prevent re-entry to OOH care. Additional information on services provided to promote family preservation and reunification and to prevent re-entry to OOH care post-reunification can be found in the “Update on Services” and “Post-Permanency Services and Supports” sections of this APSR.

Colorado implemented the Adoption Assistance Negotiation Worksheet statewide in 2023 to ensure caregivers had the support they needed post-adoption. DCW is in the process of revising the questions in the Adoption Assistance Negotiation Worksheet to ensure that the needs of children/youth and their families are met and being addressed by counties in the most consistent way possible. The Child and Family Study is also in the process of revisions to ensure there is alignment with rules and statutes, as well as Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations; see Intervention 3.2.3 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information on these efforts.

Colorado’s Relative Guardianship Assistance Program (RGAP) supports permanency for children and youth in foster care when reunification and adoption are not appropriate legal permanency goals. RGAP provides assistance to relative guardians, non-relative guardians, and legal custodians that have a significant relationship with the child or youth in a defined manner based on the individual needs of the child or youth; the process and rate calculations are similar to those used in the Adoption Assistance negotiations, with the exception of health insurance. In order to be considered for RGAP, the prospective legal guardian/custodian must be certified as a foster care home; previously, this excluded many kinship families from receiving RGAP. With the passage of SB24-008: Kinship Foster Care Homes, Colorado anticipates an increase in the number of kinship providers who choose to become certified, which may lead to an increase in the number of applications for RGAP. More information on SB24-008 and the expansion of resources to kinship providers can be found in Intervention 3.1.2 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR.

DCW uses the Colorado Adoption Resource Registry (CARR) to initiate the recruitment of permanent homes for children/youth who are legally free for adoption. DCW partners with the Colorado Heart Gallery (COHG), managed by Raise the Future, and

Adopt US Kids to recruit permanent homes for children and youth in need of adoptive placement in cases where a permanent home has not already been identified. Annually, counties are responsible for filing either an initial or renewal CARR registration or a CARR exclusion in cases where a child should be excluded from recruitment. The most frequent reason for a CARR exclusion is that the current placement provider, either kinship foster or traditional foster family, is willing to adopt the child/youth placed with them. DCW issued OM-CW-2025-0002<sup>29</sup> in January 2025 with current requirements for CARR and a revised CARR exclusion form. DCW monitors the CARR registry and exclusions to ensure that every child/youth has a permanency plan, that the exclusions from recruitment are for appropriate reasons, and that alternative efforts to achieve permanency are being made in lieu of recruitment. As of January, 2025, there were 210 children/youth legally free for adoption and 237 children/youth registered with the COHG for recruitment of adoptive families. The number on the COHG is higher than the number of legally free children/youth due to the inclusion of the re-listing of children/youth from the previous year who are still awaiting adoption, along with those who no longer wish to be adopted, youth who are approaching the age of 18 and pursue emancipation, and those who participate in the Foster Youth in Transition program.

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

CFSR Round 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.

According to ROM data for CY 2024, siblings are placed together 80.6% of the time.

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024, 96.74% of children/youth were placed in the most appropriate setting to meet their individual needs. Sibling placement issues were the most commonly cited reasons for

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<sup>29</sup> [OM-CW-2025-0002: Colorado Adoption Resource Registry \(CARR\) and the Colorado Heart Gallery \(COHG\) \(PDF\)](#)

children/youth who were not found to be placed in the most appropriate setting, accounting for 18.01% of these children/youth.

Colorado continues to prioritize placing children/youth with their sibling(s) when OOH care is required. See Item 8 for more information on maintaining connections between youth and their sibling(s) when placement together is not possible.

## Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 47.3% of children/youth had a frequency of visitation with the mother/guardian/kin that adequately addressed the needs of the child/youth to maintain or promote continuity of the relationship. The most commonly cited parties responsible for frequency of visitation that did not address the needs of the child/youth were: mother/guardian/kin (88.03%), child/youth (14.48%), and the Court (4.29%).
- 38.3% of children/youth had a frequency of visitation with the father/guardian/kin that adequately addressed the needs of the child/youth to maintain or promote continuity of the relationship. The most commonly cited parties responsible for frequency of visitation that did not address the needs of the child/youth were: father/guardian/kin (80.48%), child/youth (12.70%), and the Court (8.23%).
- 78.8% of children/youth had a frequency of visitation with the sibling(s) that adequately addressed the needs of the child/youth to maintain or promote continuity of the relationship. The most commonly cited parties responsible for frequency of visitation that did not address the needs of the child/youth were: parent/guardian (26.62%), the county (16.20%), and sibling (15.97%).

Beginning January 2024, the definition of “Family Time” was clarified through HB23-1027: Parent And Child Family Time<sup>30</sup>. The bill set forth new requirements for Dependency and Neglect (D&N) court proceedings, and required the High Quality Parenting Time Task Force to conduct a statewide study on Family Time. The task force partnered with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab (CO Lab) to 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

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<sup>30</sup> [HB23-1027: Parent And Child Family Time](#)

funding high-quality parenting time. In October 2024, CO Lab released the final reports<sup>31</sup>, which provide evidence-backed recommendations to improve outcomes for families separated during child welfare involvement.

Additional efforts are being made to increase the frequency and quality of time that children and youth in care spend with their parent(s) or caregiver(s) and sibling(s) by ensuring that children and youth in care are informed of their rights. DCW is partnering with OCR to ensure that HB24-1017: Bill of Rights for Foster Youth<sup>32</sup> and HB19-1288: Foster Youth Sibling Bill of Rights<sup>33</sup> are being implemented with fidelity statewide. The Bill of Rights for Foster Youth became effective in August 2024, and OCR created a Notice of Rights<sup>34</sup> that is required to be provided to each child or youth in foster care between the ages of 5-21 by the county DHS, including those participating in the Foster Youth In Transition (FYiT) program. To support the implementation of HB24-1017, the OCR facilitated a child welfare town hall in July 2024 about the Bill of Rights for Foster Youth. DCW released OM-CW-2024-0014<sup>35</sup> in October 2024 to provide additional instruction to all county departments and providers regarding the Bill of Rights for Foster Youth, notice requirements, and notice documentation. DCW also provided training opportunities at the Foster Care Quarterly meeting in September 2024 and the Permanency Task Group in January 2025 to clarify county personnel's role as it relates to the Bill of Rights for Foster Youth and documentation guidance. DCW is working to identify additional opportunities for state-wide cross-training on the implementation of these bills and potential rule revisions to ensure more conformity across counties.

## Item 9: Preserving Connections

During OOH case reviews, ARD reviewers determine whether there is evidence that the department is making concerted efforts to maintain the child/youth's connections to their neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, activities, rituals, traditions, tribe, school, and friends.

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- The department was making concerted efforts during the review period to maintain the child/youth's connections for 99.7% of the time.

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<sup>31</sup> [Best Practices for Family Time in Colorado: A Data-Informed Approach to Drive Outcomes](#)

<sup>32</sup> [HB24-1017: Bill of Rights for Foster Youth](#)

<sup>33</sup> [HB19-1288: Foster Youth Sibling Bill Of Rights](#)

<sup>34</sup> [OCR: Foster Youth Rights](#)

<sup>35</sup> [OM-CW-2024-0014: Bill of Rights for Foster Youth](#) (PDF)

- ICWA requirements were met for 48.78% of children/youth reviewed. The most commonly cited reasons when ICWA requirements were not met were: no court ordered determination (86.49%) and ICWA order of preference for placement was not met (3.24%).

Within the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR, see Item 10 for information on maintaining kinship connections, Item 16 for information on maintaining educational connections, and Item 28 for information on training provided to foster and adoptive caregivers to support the maintenance of familial connections for children/youth.

See Goal 4 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for targeted interventions to promote preservation of connections for youth who are preparing to exit foster care.

## Item 10: Relative Placement

According to ROM data for CY 2024:

- 47.9% of children/youth entering care were placed with a relative as their initial placement.
- 51% of all children/youth in care were placed with a relative at some point.

SB24-008: Kinship Foster Care Homes<sup>36</sup> allows CDHS to promulgate rules for modified kinship foster care certification requirements that reduce barriers for kinship providers without compromising the safety of children/youth. The bill outlines information about provisional certifications for consistency across the state, and includes an expansion of financial assistance to non-certified kinship caregivers. See Intervention 3.1.2 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision” section of this APSR for more information about recent efforts related to kinship certification and reimbursement.

To increase public awareness and inclusivity of kinship care, CDHS created a successful campaign in fall of 2024 that garnered an impressive 3.21% click-through rate (a benchmark click-through rate is approximately 1%) and 177,727 engagements. To celebrate their impact on permanency, including reunification, kinship families are included in statewide recognition events such as foster care and adoption appreciation. There has been an increased effort to ensure their voices are included in panel discussions, legislation, rule-making, and other public forums.

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<sup>36</sup> [SB24-008: Kinship Foster Care Homes](#)

The Colorado Kinconnected (CO Kinconnected) kinship navigator program provides enhanced support to kinship caregivers both within the county departments and through the use of community services. See the “Kinship Navigator Funding” section of this APSR for more information on CO Kinconnected.

## Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care with Parents

### Incarcerated Parents Rule

In January 2024, SB23-039: Reduce Child And Incarcerated Parent Separation<sup>37</sup> took effect to support the relationship between children and their incarcerated parents by reducing family separation caused by parents’ detention. As a result, the Permanency Task Group (PTG) revised Volume 7 rule (sections 7.000.2, 7.301.22, 7.701.3, 7.304.64 and 7.601.2); the new rules went into effect in December 2024 and IM-CW-2025-0010<sup>38</sup> was released in March 2025 to provide additional information about the changes.

One notable practice shift resulting from SB23-039 is that termination of parental rights is no longer allowed solely due to long-term incarceration; while this ultimately supports the parent-child relationship and family preservation, it shifts the meaning of permanency for children of incarcerated parents. Colorado’s child welfare system values legal permanency for all children and youth, including those of parents who are incarcerated long-term. In order to preserve the legal parent-child relationship in line with rule and statute, some of these children/youth will be less likely to have permanency goals of reunification or adoption and more likely to have case closure after guardianship or allocation of parental responsibilities to kinship providers. In order to support the implementation of this statutorily-required practice change, DCW provided statewide training to counties; a virtual version of this training was made available on the Child Welfare Training System (CWTS) in July and August 2024. DCW also hosted a child welfare town hall on Incarcerated Parents Support in December 2024, and has created a folder of resources that is available to county staff working with incarcerated parents and their families.

Some correctional facilities have limited ability to provide in-person family time, which has complicated the implementation of family time between children/youth and their incarcerated parents as outlined in SB23-039. Generally, Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities have been better equipped to offer in-person family time than county jails, which are not often utilized for long-term detainment and have not had the same historical need to provide in-person family time. Caseworkers have also

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<sup>37</sup> [SB23-039: Reduce Child And Incarcerated Parent Separation](#)

<sup>38</sup> [IM-CW-2025-0010: Incarcerated Parent Support and 12-CCR2509-4](#) (PDF)

faced barriers regarding approval to enter facilities to supervise family time, sparking discussions about what documentation and personal information is required for county staff to be approved. As a result of SB23-039, the DOC hired a Family Services Coordinator who serves as the primary point of contact for DCW and county child welfare staff with regard to family time in DOC facilities. DCW has encouraged county personnel to work directly with their local sheriff’s department for concerns or barriers related to family time in jails.

## Father Engagement

Father Engagement continues to be monitored as a C-Stat measure, and county performance is reviewed on a quarterly basis. Father Engagement is measured using the Monthly Parent Contact Report in ROM, which measures the percentage of fathers contacted each month as required by rule. This report is aligned with federal and state laws and administrative rules, and is able to capture these four targeted areas: non-identified father, attempted contacts, non-face-to-face contact requirements met timely, and face-to-face contact requirements met timely. These areas help measure father identification, engagement, and the number of times the caseworker saw the father in person per month. The C-Stat goal was set at 35% in July 2022, after calculating the state’s average and setting the bar to increase engagement. Colorado continues to make progress in increasing father engagement each year. Statewide, Colorado met this goal each month during CY 2024, with a statewide average of 37.6% of total contacts met for CY 2024. The percentage of contacts with fathers met by CY are presented in Table 1.

Calendar Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total % of Contacts Met	32.0%	32.9%	33.3%	35.5%	36.2%	37.2%	37.6%

Table 1: Fatherhood engagement performance by CY

## Fatherhood Program

The Colorado Fatherhood Program (CFP)<sup>39</sup> is in its final year of a 5-year grant that is managed by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and involves collaboration between multiple state departments. CDHS supports fathers by offering

<sup>39</sup> [Colorado Fatherhood Program](#)

local child support services and coordinating domestic violence training through community organizations, while the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) partners with local workforce centers to assist fathers in finding employment. CFP is currently offered by seven programs with nine locations throughout the state, and participating fathers are supported in building healthy parent-child relationships, increasing economic stability, and building social connections. CFP is open to all father figures who are 18 years of age or older and have children or care for children up to 24 years old, including biological, adoptive, stepfathers, grandfathers, kinship, and expectant fathers. Participation in the program is voluntary and cannot be mandated or court-ordered. Each year the program continues to increase enrollment; the program served 428 fathers during FFY 2024. DCW recognizes the value of CFP for all fathers, regardless of child welfare involvement, and has collaborated with CDEC for the next cycle of grant funding to explore and ensure alignment with areas of need. More information regarding CFP will be provided in future APSRs.

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

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

### Child Support Rules

In May 2024, SB24-202: Assignment of Child Support Foster Youth<sup>40</sup> was signed into law to prevent automatic child welfare referrals to child support. Historically, all individuals in Colorado with a child in paid OOH placement were automatically referred to child support. Research has shown that pursuing families to recoup OOH placement costs can be detrimental to reunification efforts and increase the amount of time spent in OOH placements<sup>41</sup>. Additionally, not paying child support may subject parents to enforcement actions that can jeopardize reunification efforts. Since the implementation of the law, all child welfare referrals to child support must be created manually to ensure they are not created solely due to paid OOH placement, and are reviewed every six months to ensure that the referral to child support has not caused harm to the family's reunification efforts.

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<sup>40</sup> [SB24-202: Assignment of Child Support Foster Youth](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Making parents pay: The unintended consequences of charging parents for foster care](#) (PDF)

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

Colorado's CFSR Round 3 found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this item. Only 51% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength.

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 98.6% of children/youth had an OOH provider that was engaged in case planning during the review period.
- 55.0% of children/youth reviewed had services documented in the Family Services Plan that were directed at the areas of need identified through assessment, designed to assure that the child receives safe and proper care, and culturally and ethnically appropriate. The most common reasons found for lack of documented services that meet these criteria were: areas of need (69.85%), safe & proper care (21.59%), and some task time frames expired (21.51%).
- 67.1% of children/youth had a Family Services Plan that addressed all required parties. The most common required parties found to not be included were: out-of-home provider (43.72%), child/youth (26.79%), county (22.32%). An additional explanation provided when not all required parties were addressed was "all task timeframes expired" (23.61%).
- 34% of children and families received the services that were identified as being needed through ongoing assessment, that would assure the child received safe and proper care, and that were culturally and ethnically appropriate. The most common reasons cited when services were not received were: parent/guardian refused services (89.39%), child/youth refused services (5.2%), and waiting lists (4.47%).
- 90.5% of youth over age 14 years and 60 days were receiving independent living services identified to help the youth achieve successful adulthood.
- 90.77% of children received a developmental screening and/or evaluation, if a concern was identified.
- 53.58% of children who received a developmental screening and/or evaluation and had recommendations made were receiving the recommended services. The most common reasons cited when services were not received include: no

plan/early intervention plan (86.17%), wait list (7.71%), services (3.72%), and parent(s) refused (3.72%).

## Item 12A: Needs Assessment and Services to Children

Colorado's CFSR Round 3 found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this item. Only 80% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength.

## Item 12B: Needs Assessment and Services to Parents

Colorado's CFSR Round 3 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 Round 3 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.

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 98.7% of children/youth were engaged in case planning during the review period.
- Agency personnel had engagement with the mother in 85.16% of all of the months requiring engagement. Agency personnel had monthly engagement with the mother in 64.73% of cases.
- Agency personnel had engagement with the father in 73.18% of all of the months requiring engagement. Agency personnel had monthly engagement with the father in 48.63% of cases.
- Agency personnel had engagement with the other legal guardian in 79.59% of all of the months requiring engagement. Agency personnel had monthly engagement with the other legal guardian in 57.14% of cases.
- 93.9% of children/youth reviewed had all required parties invited to the review and given at least two-weeks' notice. The most common reasons or parties found to not be invited and/or given at least two weeks' notice were:

out-of-home provider (30.36%), father/guardian (23.10%), and not timely (18.48%).

- 30.0% of family engagement meetings were held when required, per Volume 7, during the review period. Most commonly, family engagement meetings were not held as required after the following events: child/youth was in out-of-home care for 15 out of the past 22 months (66.23%) and child/youth had two or more unplanned moves in 12 months (35.32%).

## Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- For in-state cases and cases involved in the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) for which Colorado still has supervision responsibility, agency personnel had contact with the child in 95.65% of all of the months requiring contact, and monthly contact with the child in 82.54% of cases.
- For ICPC cases for which the receiving state has supervision responsibility, agency personnel had contact with the child in 71.88% of all of the months requiring contact, and monthly contact with the child in 41.81% of cases.
- Agency personnel had contact with all children/youth in 94.45% of all months requiring contact.
- The frequency of contact with the child/youth in their place of residence occurred according to Volume 7 for 89.60% of children/youth reviewed.
- The quality of contacts with 75.89% of child/youth was sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child/youth and to promote the achievement of case goals. The most commonly cited reasons when the quality of contacts was not sufficient were: outside presence of provider (74.06%) and no assessment of safety (28.30%).

See the “Monthly Caseworker Visits Formula Grants and Standards for Caseworker Visits” section of this APSR for more information on caseworker visits with children/youth.

## Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents

According to ROM data for CY 2024:

- 47.88% of total adult caretaker contacts were met as required by rule. 47.62% of required face-to-face contacts were met and 50.81% of required non-face-to-face contacts were met.
- 61% of required face-to-face contacts with the mother were made.
- 36.93% of required face-to-face contacts with the father were made.

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- Agency personnel had contact with all legal caregivers in 62.25% of all months requiring contact.
- Agency personnel had contact with the mother/guardian/kin in 67.14% of all of the months requiring contact, and monthly contact with the mother/guardian/kin in 38.91% of cases. The quality of contacts with 87.33% of mothers/guardians/kin was sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child/youth and to promote the achievement of case goals.
- Agency personnel had contact with the father/guardian/kin in 55.64% of all of the months requiring contact, and monthly contact with the father/guardian/kin in 29.44% of cases. The quality of contacts with 84.76% of fathers/guardians/kin was sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child/youth and to promote the achievement of case goals.
- Agency personnel had contact with the other legal guardian in 78.37% of all of the months requiring contact, and monthly contact with the other legal guardian in 42.86% of cases. The quality of contacts with 93.33% of other legal guardians was sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child/youth and to promote the achievement of case goals.

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

CFSR Round 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

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 50.0% of children/youth reviewed had an education/school record in the case file.
- When there were barriers to meeting the educational needs of the child/youth during the review period, the most commonly identified barrier was a delay in enrollment (43.69%).
- 59.5% of children/youth who changed schools had a Best Interest Determination (BID) meeting, when required.
- 78.4% of children/youth who changed schools and had a BID made, had the required parties invited to participate in the determination. When not all required parties were invited, the most common parties not invited were: parents (53.13%) and child/youth (28.13%).
- 94.5% of children/youth who changed schools and had a BID made, had the BID implemented as required.
- 70.08% of children/youth who had a determination made that it was in their best interest to stay in their school of origin, stayed.

The Special Education Services for Students in Foster Care Workgroup met during 2023 and 2024 to identify and address issues related to foster youth education, transportation, and stability. Members included representatives from DCW, the Colorado Department of Education, Special Education Directors, county departments of human services, OCR, CPAs, educational advocates for children in OOH care, child welfare education liaisons (CWELs), and other appropriate school district staff. The workgroup identified six focus areas while reviewing school stability for students:

- Universal Best Interest Determination meetings (BIDs)
- Training
- Transportation
- Facility schools
- Educational disciplinary practices
- Special education

Best practice recommendations for each category were developed and shared with the General Assembly in January 2025 through the Special Education Services for

Students in Foster Care Report<sup>42</sup>. Notably, the workgroup made a recommendation to standardize the process for determining whether it is in the best interest of a child in OOH placement to remain in the child's school of origin. Updates will be reported as they become available in future APSRs.

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

CFSR Round 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 ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- Health information (including name and address of current health care provider(s), known medical problems and current medications) was documented in the case file for 56.2% of youth.
- 75.5% of children/youth received regular health care (including immunizations, and/or treatment for identified health needs).
- 55.1% of children/youth received regular dental care (including treatment for identified dental needs).

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases having an initial review in CY 2024:

- 51.3% of youth received a medical exam, medical screening, or had a medical exam scheduled within two weeks of initial placement.
- 48.3% of youth received a full dental examination or had a dental exam scheduled within eight weeks of initial placement.

ARD reviews differentiate health information documentation from health/dental needs. This allows Colorado to better monitor not only whether children/youth are having their health/dental needs met, but whether health information for children/youth in care is being stored in the statewide information system, which promotes continuity of care and continuation of health/dental needs being met in the event that a child/youth changes placement. DCW county intermediaries monitor

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<sup>42</sup> [Special Education Services For Students in Foster Care Report](#) (PDF)

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.

For more information about targeted efforts to improve the physical health outcomes of children/youth in care, see Appendix F for the 2025-2029 Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan, and Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan in the “Updates to Targeted Plans” section of this APSR for progress made during SFY 2025.

## Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024:

- 69.3% of children/youth had mental health services provided to meet their needs during the review period. The most common reasons cited when mental health services to meet children/youth’s needs were not provided were: delays of 2+ weeks (49.62%), changed mental health provider (35.68%), and child refused services (22.06%).
- 50.3% of children/youth had substance abuse treatment services provided to meet their needs during the review period. The most common reasons cited when substance abuse treatment services to meet children/youth’s needs were not provided were: child/youth refused services (50.70%), changed provider (25.35%), and delays of 2+ weeks (18.31%).

### 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)<sup>43</sup>. This program helps increase access to mental health treatment services for children, youth, and their families. CYMHTA is an alternative to child welfare involvement when a D&N action is not warranted. CYMHTA funding can be available when there are no other appropriate funding sources for treatment, such as private insurance. In SFY 2024, CYMHTA served 244 children and youth in Colorado. Of the children and youth discharged from CYMHTA during SFY 2024, 87% had no involvement with the child welfare system after leaving the program. Additionally, 65% showed improvements from baseline to discharge for the Life Functioning domain of the Colorado Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CO-CANS) tool, improving by an average of 4.74 points.

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<sup>43</sup> [Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act](#)

## Children and Youth Behavioral Health Implementation Plan

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Implementation (CYBHI) Plan<sup>44</sup> lays out a vision for a continuum of care that spans from prevention to recovery, that allows for youth and families to access needed care at the right time and place. It also lays the foundation for collaboration within existing work across the state to ensure that efforts to build upon existing behavioral health efforts in Colorado begin to create a true continuum where families move seamlessly between levels of care.

In CY 2024, the BHA's efforts to implement the CYBHI plan focused on the system of care infrastructure and delivering these services to Medicaid-eligible youth, co-designing the implementation plan for services for high acuity youth alongside partners at HCPF and CDHS, and including community partners in both leadership and implementation teams. These foundational elements ensure collaboration, alignment, and transparent tracking of cross-agency efforts to achieve the continuum of care, while setting the foundation of the system of care for youth with complex needs.

The CYBHI plan will shift focus in CY 2025 by leveraging this foundational collaboration to build a continuum of care with shared metrics across state agencies. This prevention-to-recovery view will include identifying ways to expand access to the system of care for youth with complex needs beyond Medicaid members.

### Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First)

Please see Item 29 in the "Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes," Objectives 2.1 and 2.2 in the "Updates to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision," and the "Service Coordination" sections of this APSR for more information regarding mental and behavioral health services provided to children/youth and mental health outcomes related to these services.

## Statewide Information System

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

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<sup>44</sup> [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Implementation Plan](#)

## 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 fully modernized the 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 more fluidly, taking less time to perform critical tasks, and ensuring more accurate and consistent entry of critical information. The team is working toward a full modernization of the application by the end of CY 2025. After accomplishing the updates and enhancements last year that focused on ensuring more consistent data quality for demographic information, the team is focusing this year on improved data quality as it relates to federal data extracts.

During the Assessment Modernization phase in SFY 2025, DCW provided pre-rollout training for county-level child welfare staff to acclimate staff to the Trails Mod application. In October 2024, Colorado's federal CCWIS partners completed an on-site review of Trails Mod that included in-person visits to four counties to gather caseworker input on the implementation of the new application. These federal partners provided feedback to DCW on areas of needed support; one primary theme that emerged from this review was a lack of fundamental navigation skills for Trails Mod. In response, DCW created a Modernized Trails Navigation 101 Job Aid to help target these navigation skill gaps. This job aid will be made available to county staff through the CWTS website.

Incorporating the lessons learned from the Assessment Modernization in 2024, DCW will expand on post-rollout feedback and training during Case Modernization. The goal of these post-rollout supports is to provide the necessary tools to county-level staff and streamline acclimation to Trails Mod. In addition to pre-rollout training, post-rollout training will be provided both in-person and virtually to counties to revisit critical pre-rollout training topics and address questions encountered once workers begin accessing Modernized Trails. DCW will incorporate county voice and feedback to ensure that the training offered meets the general and individualized needs of county staff. These trainings will be offered regionally, for specific practice areas, and/or on specific sections of Modernized Case, depending on the needs of each county.

Additionally, a job aid will be made available to county staff once Modernized Case is live to guide staff in the navigation of specific areas of Modernized Case.

DCW holds drop-in technical assistance sessions for county staff twice weekly to address questions related to Trails Mod. Additionally, DCW re-launched the Trails Super User Group in January 2025. This group consists of county staff in different roles and levels from case-level support to managerial duties who serve as the first line of Trails support for their county or region. Super Users also serve as advocates for their county or region in areas of needed training, and serve as peer trainers when modernization phases occur. The Trails Super User Group meets monthly and will be instrumental in providing county-level support throughout the rollout of Case Modernization.

DCW is improving the quality of data required for federal reporting submissions as outlined in annual planning documentation with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) as it pertains to the ongoing CCWIS builds. One of these efforts includes rebuilding the NYTD application during CY 2025; more information will be provided 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 D&N civil case. 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 OOH care and timely adoptions.

With the rollout of Modernized Case, all previously shared information will continue to be deposited from ICON/Eclipse into Trails Mod in real time, and minute orders will also be included in the information deposited. This will be a meaningful shift for county staff as it will allow caseworkers and supervisors to access information about important case activities including protection orders and changes in custody in Trails Mod without needing to access a separate database.

As of November 2022, all 64 counties that have an open D&N case will have their child welfare case connected in the Trails Legacy and ICON/Eclipse programs 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.

## Case Review System

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

### Item 20: Written Case Plan

DCW's permanency team is planning to train statewide to the ARD's criteria for quality 90 day reviews. The 90 day review is a tool that is used by supervisors and caseworkers to review the family services plan and progress toward safety, well being and permanency for our families in Colorado. This is also used to update the Court in D&N cases about progress on the case. DCW will be offering training to all 64 counties for their caseworkers and supervisors as a means of increasing the quality of work toward permanency with families; more information will be provided in future APSRs.

### 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 OOH 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 OOH case reviews for children in Colorado. Each month, the ARD identifies children who are eligible for an OOH 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. Table 2 provides information about the timeliness of reviews between July 2024 and January 2025.

Month	Number of Review-Eligible Children/Youth	Number of Eligible Children/Youth with a Current Review by Month End	Percent of Eligible Reviews that are Current
Jul 2024	2653	2336	88.05%
Aug 2024	2609	2331	89.30%
Sep 2024	2607	2370	90.91%
Oct 2024	2613	2409	92.19%
Nov 2024	2561	2342	91.45%
Dec 2024	2608	2427	93.06%
Jan 2025	2651	2469	93.13%

Table 2: Timeliness of Periodic Reviews in SFY 2025.

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.), 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), and children/youth leaving county custody during the month they are scheduled for review. While some cancellations are unavoidable, 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 reviews to improve processes and ensure that children eligible for review receive the periodic review as a part of their case.

See Quality Assurance System in the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR 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 OOH cases in CY 2024, 79.2% of children/youth who 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 language, and did not contain "nunc pro tunc" language.

The Court Process Evaluation: Final Statewide Report was published by the Colorado State University (CSU) Social Work Research Center in February 2025. See Intervention 3.2.2 in the "Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision" section of this APSR for more information about court processes regarding timeliness to permanency and the Court Process Evaluation report.

## Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024, 55.3% of children/youth with a goal of adoption did not have progress being made toward finalizing the adoption, at the time of review. Of these cases, the primary reasons identified for lack of progress included: appeal of termination (26.5%), court delays (16.2%), and lack of timely filing of TPR (12.3%).

See Intervention 3.2.3 in the "Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision" section of this APSR for more information on efforts to decrease the time from termination of parental rights to finalized adoption.

## Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers

According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024, 93.9% 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), OOH care providers, pre-adoptive parents, relatives/kin who are providing OOH 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.

Notice of hearings is managed on an individual case basis by court staff and judges as part of routine case management. There is not a standard statewide process or monitoring procedure; however, judicial officers can verify the certificate of service through inquiry on a case-by-case basis.

## Quality Assurance System

CFSR Round 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 Round 3 showed that this item was rated as a strength.

### The Administrative Review Division (ARD)<sup>45</sup>

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.

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 OOH 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:

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<sup>45</sup> [Administrative Review Division](#)

- 45 CFR 1357.15 (u), 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, 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, 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)), 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, and 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 OOH 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 a Foster Home Certification Review by the ARD. 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 child welfare hotline system. Each month, reviews are conducted of three populations of calls: Child Welfare, Child Welfare Inquiries, and Information and Referral (non-Child Welfare). Reviews are based on a random sample (90% confidence level with a 10% interval) of statewide calls from each population. If the review identifies that either a call met the definition of a referral but was not entered into Trails as a referral, or a referral was screened out that was determined to have met criteria for assessment, the ARD identifies these as an Issue for Administration. The ARD notifies the appropriate county or the Hotline County Connection Center (HCCC) and notifies DCW of the resolution. 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 Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths in the “Update on Services” section of this APSR.

## CFSR Round 4 Planning

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 processes. These include:

- CFSR 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, one of the key changes Colorado made to the qualitative case review process was to use video and teleconferencing technology. In several county departments, participation of families and stakeholders (including Guardians ad Litem and Court Appointed Special Advocates) increased with the transition to virtual participation by reducing the need to travel to and from a county department office. The ARD has determined that virtual reviews can be an effective methodology, and that screen sharing functionality has proven an effective method of providing technical assistance and support to county staff. 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.

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

### 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 a subsequent Screen Out Review is scheduled for the week of September 29, 2025.

## Staff and Provider Training

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

## Item 26: Initial Staff Training

See Appendix H for the 2025-2029 Training Plan, and Training Plan in the “Updates to Targeted Plans” section of this APSR for progress made during SFY 2025.

## Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training

See Appendix H for the 2025-2029 Training Plan, and Training Plan in the “Updates to Targeted Plans” section of this APSR for progress made during SFY 2025.

## Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

### Foster and Adoptive Caregiver Certification Program<sup>46</sup>

The National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) has been adopted as DCW’s preferred curriculum for the certification of foster and adoptive caregivers. NTDC offers foster and adoptive caregivers 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.

In partnership with Spaulding, DCW implemented a statewide train-the-trainer program in CY 2024 designed to build the capacity of county and child placement agencies to facilitate the training independently. Currently NTDC is available in English via the Learning Management System (LMS) through CWTS. Spaulding, collaborating with various states, released a Spanish version of the curriculum in February 2025. CWTS is updating the LMS to incorporate this version, with plans to begin offering NTDC in Spanish by spring of 2025.

### Pressley Ridge

Colorado has adopted 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. Colorado’s goal is to build capacity across the state to increase options for children/youth in a more family-like setting than congregate care.

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<sup>46</sup> [Foster and Adoptive Caregiver Certification Program](#)

The Pressley Ridge training curriculum was initially provided to trainers and agencies in CY 2022. In CY 2024, DCW conducted two train-the-trainer cohorts for agencies that are ready to implement a therapeutic and treatment foster care program. As part of the state's capacity-building efforts, DCW's Learning and Development team has certified four individuals as master trainers who will deliver ongoing training across the state to ensure fidelity to the model, that training is up-to-date, and to provide technical assistance.

## Kinship Caregiver Certification Program<sup>47</sup>

This certification program is offered to those caring for a child/youth they are related to or with whom they have a previous relationship, and is required for those who want to be certified kinship caregivers. The Kinship Caregiver Certification Program comprises six hours of training, including an introduction to kinship caregiving in Colorado, child development and the effects of trauma, family dynamics, and responding to children in crisis. The kinship training is available through the CWTS website in both English and Spanish to meet language accessibility requirements and to expand the population of kinship caregivers who can benefit from the training. In addition to the Kinship Caregiver Certification Program, CWTS will continue to offer Kinship Caregiver Fundamentals, a 10-hour virtually facilitated seminar designed to meet the specific and different needs of kinship caregivers.

## Service Array and Resource Development

CFSR Round 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

During Colorado's CFSR Round 3, the Statewide Assessment and 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.

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<sup>47</sup> [Kinship Caregiver Certification Program](#)

## Core Services Program<sup>48</sup>

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 OOH placement, when they are in need of services to return home, or to maintain a placement in the least restrictive setting possible. The Program addresses four priorities:

- Focus on family strengths by directing intensive services that support and strengthen the family and protect the child/youth;
- Prevent OOH placement;
- Return the child/youth in placement to their own home, or unite the child/youth with their permanent families; and
- Provide services that protect the child/youth.

Core Services Program funds are allocated to all 64 counties and Colorado's two federally recognized tribes on an annual basis. Each jurisdiction develops annual plans to address the four goals through both required and county-designed services, resulting in a multifaceted array of services. Through ongoing conversations, counties are always encouraged to identify and utilize evidence-based programs and promising practices with their Core Services Program funding. 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 Colorado.

DCW's Core Services Team expanded in CY 2023 to include a Family Preservation (Core) Specialist that supports County DHS staff, CDHS staff, and community agencies navigate Core funding, Volume 7, and services. One of these supports includes the creation of the Core Services Handbook, which provides an overview of Core Services, best practices, and other helpful information to help promote consistency of practice across state and county staff.

In CY 2024, DCW's Core Services Team enhanced support to county and community partners through increased in-person and virtual connections. Core staff held in-person Core Quarterly Meetings, which serve as a hub for Core Coordinators and Managers from across the state to share programming initiatives, barriers, and opportunities. CY 2024 meetings occurred in-person throughout Colorado, prioritizing rural and frontier communities such as Greeley, Meeker, and Cañon City. These communities, unlike the metropolitan areas, have unique challenges including transportation to services, sparsity of services, and long waiting periods.

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<sup>48</sup> [Child Welfare Core Services Program](#)

DCW also began publishing a Prevention and Core Services monthly newsletter to provide monthly updates and guidance to County DHS staff, CDHS staff, and community partners. The newsletter focuses on Family First, Core, Program Area 3 (PA3): Prevention and Intervention Services, and highlights resources, training opportunities, funding and grant opportunities, and state-issued memos related to these topics.

DCW's Core Services Team seeks to continue meeting the needs of human services departments across the State of Colorado. The team will continue prioritizing rural and frontier communities in CY 2025 through in-person Core Quarterly meetings in Fort Morgan, Rifle, Durango, and Trinidad. The Core Services Team plans to provide additional training to County departments and Core Coordinators on the different Core service types, Core Services Contracts, and expanding on general prevention practices across the State. DCW also encourages counties to participate in cross-county consultation to identify promising practices, evidence-based services, and areas of collaboration for enhancing their Core Services Programs.

## Core Services Program Evaluation Results

The Core Services Program is evaluated by the CSU Social Work Research Center. Evaluation reports are due to the Colorado General Assembly, the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court and the Governor by October 1st of every year. The CY 2023 evaluation report findings support the Core Services Program as 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 CY 2023, 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 providing the appropriate levels of support, as evidenced by the findings that only 3% of children/youth had a subsequent placement after receiving or benefiting from Core Services.

The Core Services Program served 19,735 distinct individuals during CY 2023, a decrease of 5.9% in distinct clients served from CY 2022. Of the individuals served during CY 2023, 55% were children/youth directly receiving services and 45% were adults receiving services on behalf of the child/youth. Overall, 12,376 distinct children/youth from 7,515 cases/involvements received or benefitted from Core Services in CY 2023. This represents a 5.2% decrease in distinct children/youth receiving or benefiting from Core Services from CY 2022. In CY 2024, the Core Services Program served 9,825 children and youth across the state.

According to the CY 2023 evaluation report, there were 25,285 service episodes open at any time in CY 2023. This represents a 9.2% decrease in service episodes from CY 2022. The majority of this decrease may be due to a practice change in CY 2021 when counties started to more frequently utilize Medicaid and private insurance for mental health services traditionally paid for through Core Services. Specifically, mental health service episodes declined 32% from CY 2021 to CY 2023. County-designed services represent the most common type of service provided, with 35% of all episodes statewide. This general category encompasses an array of specific services that are identified by each county as necessary to meet unique needs in the community.

The CY 2023 evaluation report presents the Core Services Program’s performance on various outcome measures that are being tracked by caseworkers in Trails. The CY 2023 evaluation reported that 68.2% of service outcomes were “successful” or “partially successful.” Table 3 shows the percentage of services that were successful or partially successful by service goal for episodes closed in CY 2023.

Service Goal	% Successful/Partially Successful
Remain Home	81.4%
Least Restrictive Setting	70%
Return Home	59.9%

Table 3: Service Effectiveness Outcomes by Goal for Episodes Closed in CY 2023

Without the Core Services Program, it is estimated that Colorado counties would have spent an additional \$19 million in CY 2023 on OOH placements for children/youth. Over the past 11 calendar years, an additional \$467 million would have been spent by county agencies statewide if OOH placements had been provided exclusively instead of a combination of Core Services and OOH placements. An additional \$19,453,804 would have been spent by county agencies statewide in CY 2023 if OOH placements had been provided exclusively instead of a combination of Core Services and OOH placements.

## Item 30: Individualizing Services

### The Collaborative Management Program (CMP)<sup>49</sup>

The Collaborative Management Program (CMP) was developed in 2004 to manage and integrate the treatment and services provided to children and families who would benefit from multi-agency services. 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.

The CMP has a State Steering Committee (SSC) 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 SFY 2025 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;

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<sup>49</sup> [Collaborative Management Program](#)

- IV. The Executive Director of the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF);
- 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 (CDPHE); 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. 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. Currently, the CSU Social Work Research Center completes the annual external evaluation; the SFY 2023 evaluation briefs<sup>50</sup> were released in June 2024 and the SFY 2024 report will be published in summer of 2025.

## Agency Responsiveness to Community

CFSR Round 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 “Update to the Vision and Collaboration” section of this APSR for more information.

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<sup>50</sup> [CMP Evaluation Briefs for SFY 2023](#) (Drive Folder)

## Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services with Other Federal Programs

Please see the Alignment with Judicial Partners in the “Update to the Vision and Collaboration” section of this APSR for information about the Court Improvement Program (CIP) and Service Coordination within the “Services” section of this APSR for information about Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Grants and the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Program (title IV-B, subpart 2).

## Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

CFSR Round 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 Child Placement Agency (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 conducted by the 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. Information on this audit has been provided in prior APSRs, and found that despite the different review instruments used by ARD and DCW for the certification reviews, the requirements for foster care homes certified by the county and for those certified by a CPA are similar. The audit also found that both reviews are completed using the state and federal requirements for certification of a foster home in Colorado.

## Item 34: Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

Colorado rule (12 CCR 2509-8) includes requirements for background checks including a fingerprint-based criminal history check with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Name and date of birth searches are conducted through the court case management system, the Child Abuse and Neglect CCWIS system or Trails, out-of-state Adam Walsh abuse and neglect background checks, and both Colorado and National Sex Offender Registries. Adherence to the rule requirement is included in certification reviews prior to final approval.

## Item 35: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

Please see Appendix E for the 2025-2029 Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan, and Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan in the “Updates to Targeted Plans” section of this APSR for information on progress made during SFY 2025.

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

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) is a law that was enacted by all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Colorado’s engagement in the law establishes orderly procedures to facilitate the assessment of cross-jurisdictional placement options, determine permanency options with kinship and kin-like families out of Colorado’s jurisdiction, and to ensure the safety of Colorado children and youth when placed in higher levels of care.

In CY 2024 the state of Colorado ICPC, Colorado counties, Colorado child placement agencies (CPA), Colorado residential facilities, and Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains (LFSRM) received 566 ICPC requests that served 582 children/youth.

In CY 2024 Colorado processed 407 private and public home studies. A majority of these home studies were received from Florida, Texas, Arizona, Kansas, and Wyoming.

- Number of home studies completed by CO in CY 2024: 407
- Number of approved home studies: 268
- Number of denied home studies: 43

- Number of withdrawn home studies: 96

The majority of home studies completed in Colorado met Colorado’s Safe & Timely requirements with 75% of the home study recommendations submitted to the sending state within 75 days to include completion of training and support requirements. A home study is considered to meet national Safe & Timely requirements when the county or agency submitted a report to the sending state on the results of the home study within 60 days that address the extent to which the placement in the home would or would not meet the needs of the child. This requirement was met by all Colorado counties and agencies in CY 2024.

Figure 1 depicts the reasons provided for delays in completing ICPC home studies in CY 2024. The reasons that home studies received by Colorado took over 75 days to complete can be summarized by two primary categories: lack of staffing resources (40.5%) and provider issues (45.8%). “Other” reasons were due to timeframes to complete the foster certification process.

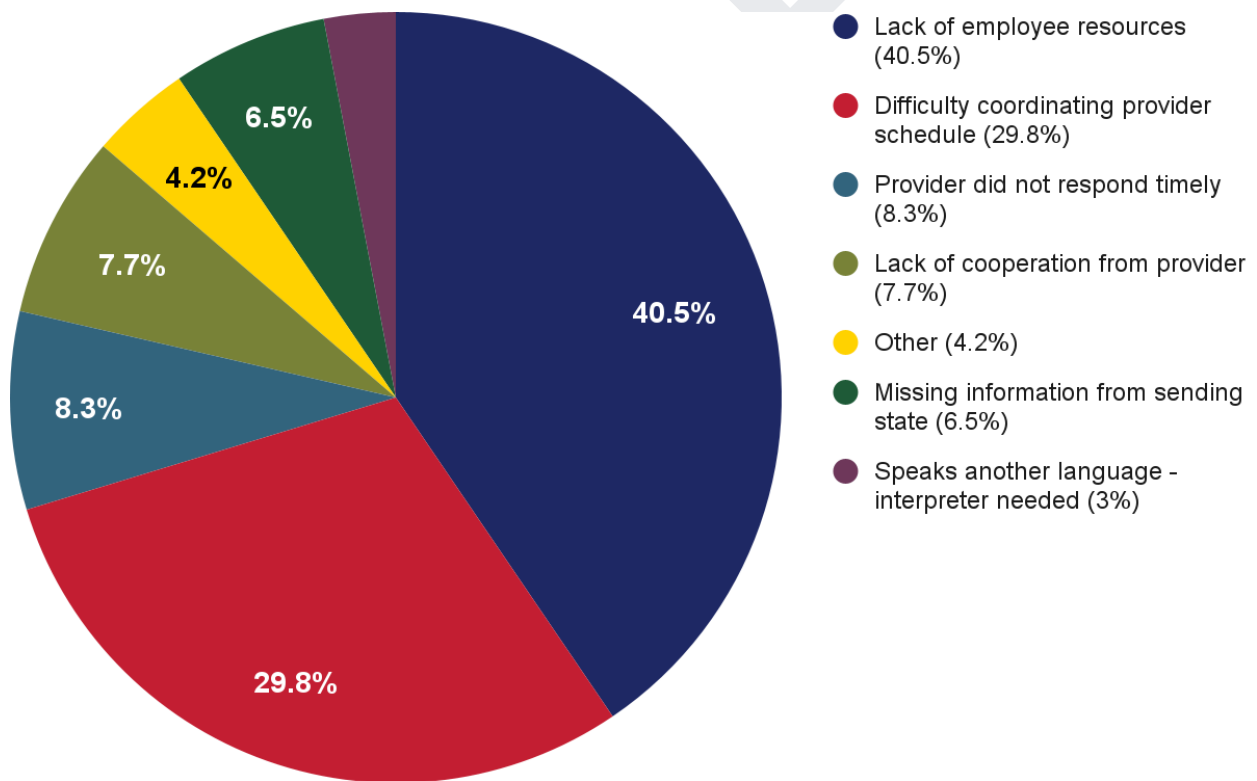


Figure 1: Reasons for delays in completing ICPC home studies in CY 2024.

In CY 2024 the Colorado ICPC, Colorado counties, Colorado child placement agencies (CPA), and LFSRM sent 864 ICPC requests to other states, impacting 896

children/youth. A majority of these home studies were sent to Texas, Florida, California, Missouri, and Arizona for relative placement requests.

Table 4 shows the number of ICPC documents sent and received by agency type in CY 2024.

Agency Type	ICPC home study requests or residential requests sent from CO	ICPC home study requests or residential requests received by CO	Number of CO children/youth placed out-of-state on an ICPC	Number of out-of-state children/youth placed in CO from other states
County	576	340	150	104
CPA	0	36	0	22
Residential	280	103	193	54
Private Adoption	8	58	8	58
Private International Adoption	0	29	0	41
Total	864	566	351	279

Table 4: Number of ICPC documents sent and received by agency type in CY 2024.

The CDHS ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator (DCA) provides ICPC training, technical assistance, and support to Colorado counties, CPAs, residential facilities, Medicaid providers and administrators, as well as family members throughout SFY 2025.

The CDHS ICPC DCA provided ICPC data reporting throughout CY 2024 to the CO counties to ensure cross-jurisdictional involvement data accuracy. In January 2025, the CDHS ICPC DCA sent out the final CY 2024 ICPC report to all 64 county ICPC Liaisons with detailed county specific information for review. Communications were also made with counties that reported no CY 2024 ICPC activities which resulted in

additional ICPC requests documented in Trails. The CDHS ICPC DCA assisted state IT Trails Analysts and Contractors to ensure all county data cleanup was processed timely. These intentional practices and additional data reporting resulted in a significantly lower amount of data corrections in comparison to previous years.

CO DCA 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 with the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children office, showing CDHS's commitment to prioritizing the permanency of children involved in the cross-jurisdictional interstate process.

In the summer of 2024, the CO ICPC DCW organized an ICPC workgroup with county ICPC leaders to create an ICPC training manual for all ICPC County Liaisons and to develop formal ICPC training modules for the current Trails system. This workgroup meets bimonthly and will continue to meet throughout CY 2025.

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. During SFY 2025, the implementation of an internal tool to track illegal placements and disruptions has been prioritized over the project to develop and implement Colorado's integration into the NEICE system. Reports and tools envisioned for the ICPC workflow BITS project will be reviewed for integration into Trails as a part of the NEICE project. The state of Colorado continues to use the NEICE Secured Document Portal (SDP) to transmit communications to other NEICE states who have implemented it.

In CY 2024 65% of the sending ICPC home studies and 65% of the receiving ICPC home studies involved kinship placement requests. The new kinship foster care certification standards will impact the way Colorado ICPC processes relative home studies for certified and non-certified kinship placements, in part by shortening the home study process. Colorado counties and child placement agencies (CPA) will utilize the CO Kinship Foster Care Assessment form, and the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) home study will not be required for kinship foster care home studies. Proposed rules to address kinship foster care certification requirements are in process; more information on certification requirements and their impact on ICPC will be provided in future APSRs.

# Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes

Goal 1: Supporting child welfare workforce 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)<sup>51</sup> 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.

The Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium (CCWSC) aims to grow and support a well-educated and prepared child welfare workforce through social work education and postgraduate professional development. CCWSC is a partnership between CDHS, Colorado county departments of human services, and participating schools of social work throughout Colorado. CCWSC provides scholarships to undergraduate and graduate social work students pursuing a career in public child welfare in Colorado, who in turn agree to accept a child welfare position following graduation and complete employment-based payback with a Colorado county DHS or Colorado Tribal Child Welfare agency serving Title IV-E eligible children and their families.

DCW monitors the number of education stipends and scholarship applicants who were turned away due to funding constraints, and 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. In SFY 2025, CCWSC funded all eligible applicants (52 total); demographics of the SFY 2025 scholars are listed in Table 5.

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<sup>51</sup> [Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium](#)

Scholar Demographic	Scholar Count	Cohort Percentage
Returning Scholars	10	19.23%
New Scholars	42	80.77%
Bachelor’s Level (BSW) Students	6	11.54%
Master’s Level (MSW) Students	46	88.46%
Rural Scholars	7	13.46%
Urban Scholars	45	86.54%
Current County Employees	29	55.77%
New to the Field	23	44.23%

Table 5: SFY 2025 CCWSC Scholars Demographics

CCWSC applications for SFY 2026 opened in November 2024, with rolling deadlines beginning in January 2025. As of February 2025, CCWSC has funded all eligible applicants for the 2025-2026 school year. During SFY 2025, CCWSC enhanced recruitment efforts to bachelor’s level students by presenting child welfare scholarship information at all Introduction to Social Work classes and offering CCWSC information sessions for all prospective students from September 2024 through March 2025. In addition, the CCWSC scholar selection committee modified the scoring rubric to account for the limited child welfare knowledge and experience of BSW applicants. Scholarships distributed for the 2025-2026 school year include an increased population of bachelor’s level scholars and four additional rural scholars.

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

SFY 2025 has seen an increase in Colorado’s use of educational waivers, particularly by Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) interns who are securing employment with their internship sites before graduation. During SFY 2025, DCW and CCWSC have

encouraged the use of educational waivers during monthly Consortium meetings, which include Colorado's schools of social work and county staff who support child welfare interns. During SFY 2024, there were 18 total active educational waivers, including 12 new educational waivers that were issued between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. Of the educational waivers that were expected to be completed by June 2024, 60% were successfully completed. The remaining 40% of educational waiver recipients withdrew; none of these individuals were CCWSC scholars. Of the educational waivers completed during SFY 2024, 88.9% of the recipients were CCWSC scholars earning a BSW.

DCW continues to 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.

CCWSC has incorporated targeted recruitment efforts to expand access to the program statewide. In SFY 2025, CCWSC provided six virtual information sessions for potential applicants from around the state, including current child welfare staff and other individuals considering pursuing a social work degree. In September 2024, CCWSC also hosted an information table and presented a hope-centered practice workshop at the Strengthening Colorado Families and Communities Conference, a biennial conference hosted by CDEC, CDHS, and Illumination Colorado to foster collaboration across the family support continuum.

Colorado Mesa University will join the CCWSC in SFY 2026 and scholarships will be available to bachelor's and master's level scholars throughout the region. Colorado Mesa University has a main campus located in Grand Junction, CO, with two satellite campuses also located in western Colorado. Colorado Mesa University's participation in CCWSC will enhance opportunities for rural social workers in local communities across the western region. CCWSC will continue to prioritize efforts that ensure the availability of stipends and scholarships specifically for those who reside or intend to work in a rural community.

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. MCV funds continue to support the Alvarado Consulting and Treatment Group in providing 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, through CAPTA funding, continues to provide vicarious and secondary trauma training and consultation for child welfare workers throughout the state to support resiliency and mitigating the impacts of secondary trauma. For more information on the THRIVE program, see the CAPTA Report in Appendix A.

DCW recognizes the impact of meaningful education and connection in bolstering resiliency in the workforce. In SFY 2025, CWTS developed two specialized courses to enhance workforce resiliency: Caseworker Resilience and Supervisor Resilience, which includes strategies for maintaining psychological safety in the workplace. DCW continues to promote Caseworker and Supervisor Learning Exchanges for caseworkers and supervisors to participate in a mutual exchange of ideas, strategies, and processes by utilizing data to improve outcomes.

DCW continues to offer child welfare town halls as an opportunity to expand and enhance the child welfare workforce community across Colorado. Feedback from county staff, community partners, and other stakeholders has shown that town halls have been an effective mechanism for keeping the child welfare workforce up-to-date and that these virtual connection opportunities support workforce resiliency. These occurred twice monthly during CY 2024 and will occur once monthly during CY 2025. Town halls during SFY 2025 included information about the Bill of Rights for Foster Youth, educational stability for students in care, youth transition services and programs, kinship foster care and non-certified kinship reimbursement, the National

Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and missing youth reporting requirements, support for incarcerated parents, Plans of Safe Care, and the child welfare prevention services continuum, among other topics.

In SFY 2025, DCW continued Employee Appreciation efforts from 2023 by inviting counties to nominate staff from their county child welfare agencies for recognition. DCW had 38 nominees for CY 2024, each of whom received a certificate of recognition from DCW and a gift at an in-person celebration. Future efforts to continue this event may include creating regional appreciation events, coordinating media stories with CDHS' Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF) communications team, and designing additional retention-focused appreciation events with local county engagement.

Feedback on these resiliency resources and strategies will be continuously gathered from caseworkers and supervisors through various platforms, with refinements made as needed. One opportunity for feedback includes the Annual Workforce Survey, which is administered yearly to Colorado's child welfare workforce with a focus on workforce retention and recruitment. The CY 2023 survey results<sup>52</sup> found that 40% of child welfare staff left their roles between the distribution of the CY 2022 and CY 2023 surveys, a higher turnover rate than observed during the previous survey (25%). The CY 2023 survey results also showed that 33% of respondents experienced high or severe levels of secondary traumatic stress, an increase from CY 2022 (30%). The Annual Workforce Survey will continue to measure the effectiveness of efforts to address caseworker retention and resiliency. The SFY 2025 survey is currently in circulation, and results will be reported to the state in the first quarter of SFY 2026.

**Intervention 1.2.2: Develop a new Child Welfare Training Academy to update and clarify the objectives and expectations of caseworkers and supervisors.**

In February 2024, DCW contracted a research team from the University of Washington to conduct focus group discussions with various stakeholders regarding the current state of the Colorado Child Welfare Training Academy, and the research findings report was released in June 2024. During SFY 2025, DCW, CWTS, and the Training Steering Committee (TSC) engaged in ongoing discussions to develop a comprehensive training content and structure for the new Child Welfare Training Academy. A draft of the updated training is anticipated to be presented to the Child Welfare Sub-PAC in summer of 2025; more information will be provided in future APSRs.

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<sup>52</sup> [Results From a 2023 Survey of Colorado Child Welfare Staff](#) (PDF)

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

### CCWSC Coaching Opportunities

CCWSC has developed a range of coaching opportunities to support field instructors and county intern supervisors. The Coaching for Field Instructors and Task Supervisors series provides an opportunity for field instructors and task supervisors to connect with one another and engage in coaching related to supporting interns' growth in the field of child welfare. This group is open to field instructors and task supervisors for both CCWSC scholars and non-scholars who are completing child welfare internships.

CCWSC offers several coaching opportunities for alumni scholars as they embark on their child welfare careers. In SFY 2025, the Butler Institute provided structured group coaching for CCWSC alumni to support their professional development. The group met five times throughout SFY 2025 to engage in discussions on professional development topics during 90-minute sessions. A total of eight individuals from Denver, Adams, and Garfield counties enrolled in the group coaching, though attendance varied and ranged from two to six participants per session. Despite this fluctuation, each session generated meaningful discussions on challenges, next steps, and strategies for participants to thrive in their profession.

In SFY 2026, the Butler Institute will provide monthly drop-in coaching opportunities that offer CCWSC alumni a unique opportunity to connect and grow through group coaching events. These 60-minute drop-in sessions will provide a supportive space to delve into the successes and challenges of applying social work values and skills in child welfare and are designed to foster a holistic approach to personal and professional development. Rather than focusing on specific cases, participants will be encouraged to bring their whole selves, share experiences, and tap into the collective wisdom of their peers. These events will be facilitated by coaches trained by the International Coaching Federation<sup>53</sup> to ensure a trusting and enriching environment for all attendees. CCWSC is also working with the Butler Institute to offer a 3-series group coaching program designed for CCWSC alumni who are within two years of graduating from their social work program. This opportunity is intended to help mitigate common concerns among graduates related to burnout and enhance resilience in the early stages of their child welfare career. These sessions will focus specifically on how alumni can continue to support families while focusing on social work ethics and values. Progress on implementation of these coaching programs will be reported in future APSRs.

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<sup>53</sup> [International Coaching Federation](#)

## DCW Coaching and Coach-Like Practices

To foster resiliency, identify areas of practice improvement, and support the development of leadership skills among child welfare staff, DCW has engaged in different tiers of training that promote the use of coaching tools and coach-like skills with stakeholders and partners. It is important to differentiate coaching from coach-like; coaching is a process that requires fidelity, whereas coach-like incorporates elements of coaching. Coaching differs from supervision in that Coaches do not direct or advise the Coachee on their actions. DCW's three primary sources of coaching and coach-like training include the Co-Active Training Institute (CTI)<sup>54</sup>, the Butler Institute for Families (Butler Institute) coach training<sup>55</sup>, and the Engaging Youth in a Coach-Like Way (EYCLW) course offered by CWTS. As of January 2025, 18 DCW staff members have completed one of the three training models, with some individuals participating in multiple programs.

The CTI and Butler Institute programs are both accredited, and training hours count towards coach certification. Those who have completed these programs participate in small groups with DCW intended to provide ongoing coaching practice. This small group model offers ongoing opportunity to further develop coaching skills and practice trust and vulnerability, which are both key components of a coaching relationship. These relationships operate with fidelity to the coaching model and ultimately expand support to county staff.

The EYCLW course is a condensed version of what is offered through CTI and the Butler Institute, and is only open to DCW's Youth Services team and to county and nonprofit agencies providing the Pathways to Success (Pathways) intervention. EYCLW is used in the Pathways intervention, in which Colorado is currently in a Phase 3 summative evaluation with the Children's Bureau and the Center for Policy Research<sup>56</sup>. Pathways staff use the coach-like skills developed through EYCLW to support youth in identifying their goals, taking action, developing a personal support system outside of the child welfare system, and ultimately developing critical thinking and problem solving skills. DCW staff trained in the CTI model of coaching provide direct and ongoing support to county and non-profit entities delivering the Pathways intervention by facilitating coaching calls (similar to DCW's small group model, but for Pathways staff) and providing consultation and technical support regarding coaching skills and coach-like engagement with youth.

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<sup>54</sup> [Co-Active Professional Coach Training & Certification Programs](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Butler Institute for Families Coach Training](#)

<sup>56</sup> [Pathways to Success](#)

## Measures of Progress for Goal 1

1. Through 2029, stabilize the caseworker turnover rate to between 18% and 21%, with a baseline of 20.8% in 2023.
  - According to ROM data for CY 2024, the statewide caseworker turnover rate is 21.59%. See Objective 1.1 for targeted interventions to enhance workforce recruitment and Objective 1.2 for targeted interventions to support workforce retention.
2. By 2029, maintain an 80% completion rate of approved educational waivers.
  - 60% of the educational waivers that were expected to be completed by June 2024 were successfully completed. See Intervention 1.1.2 for targeted efforts to increase utilization of the educational waiver to promote county caseworker recruitment 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.**

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

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

The Colorado Lab serves as the Family First Evidence-Building Hub on behalf of the CDHS. In this role, the Colorado Lab provides strategic guidance to meet the evidence-based aspects of Family First, coordinates rigorous evaluation efforts, and ensures strategic investments in evidence building.

In August 2024, the Colorado Lab provided an update to the comprehensive analysis of statewide service gaps and needs<sup>57</sup> to help guide prevention investments for the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Board.

This analysis, along with continuous input and recommendations from partners, is the guiding force for CDHS's continued efforts to address the needs of Colorado's children, youth, and families. In collaboration with communities, CDHS strives to determine what services, resources, and support are best suited to meet these needs, and what agencies, organizations, or approaches are best positioned to deliver them. As reported in the 2025-2029 CFSP, efforts to collaborate with cross-sector partners include but are not limited to:

- The Child Welfare Prevention Task Group (CWPTG) and Core Coordinator Quarterly (CCW), (described in the "Update to the Vision and Collaboration" section of this APSR)
- The Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Board.
- Collaborations with the CDEC, BHA, HCPF, and other state agencies.
- The Colorado Lab.

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

To ensure families are paired with services that align with their needs, location, and circumstances, CDHS highlights two methods that community members can use to best understand what services in the Family First Services array may be the best fit. The Matching Families to Services online decision-making tool<sup>58</sup> helps users begin the search for appropriate evidence-based services, taking into consideration unique needs and service eligibility requirements. The Colorado Family First website<sup>59</sup> was launched in late 2024, and enables live search capability to find evidence-based services locally and their descriptions.

In August 2024, CDHS launched a Prevention and Core Services monthly newsletter. This electronic communication is sent to all Colorado counties, as well as partners that sign up to receive it. The newsletter consistently informs readers about the status of program availability and state-wide changes to rule/process, as well as

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<sup>57</sup> [Prevention Investment Strategy: Policy and Practice Recommendations for the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund](#) (PDF)

<sup>58</sup> [Family First Service Array: Matching Families to Services](#)

<sup>59</sup> [Family First in Colorado](#)

solicitation for feedback. By utilizing the internet to convey monthly updates, CDHS is able to reach communities at greater distance from the metro area.

CDHS continues to consult with the Colorado Implementation Science Unit (CISU) and the Colorado Lab to provide dedicated implementation support and evidence building strategies for services that meet the unique needs of Colorado's communities.

**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.

Colorado has different funding mechanisms that support prevention in child welfare, with the ability of each county to design services that meet the needs of their community. Given the flexibility in the use of funds, by both category and county, there are instances where leveraging dollars is confusing, and opportunities are missed.

In CY 2024, CDHS created a new position dedicated to supporting the identification of potential evidence-based services, scaling of current services, and expansion of availability across Colorado. This Family First Prevention Specialist collaborates with all 64 counties and numerous community partners across the state to determine barriers and gaps, services needed specific to regions, and funding opportunities to ensure maximum reimbursement opportunities. The specialist also provides ongoing education and guidance to county partners, ensuring different funding streams and their documentation in Trails are understood and correctly captured.

In addition, groups such as the Core Coordinator Quarterly (CCQ) and CWPTG, are prime settings where suggestions about braiding and blending funding streams are shared with members. Through various conversations, counties are encouraged to boldly identify and utilize evidence-based programs and promising practices not covered by Medicaid or private insurance 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.

Historically, mental health and substance misuse services were minimally or not covered by Medicaid; there has been a shift in coverage with more services meeting criteria for coverage. With the increase in Medicaid eligible programs comes the realization that availability of providers is often limited in certain locations. Rural counties in Colorado experience this lack of accessibility when trying to locate local

Medicaid providers, especially for in-home or intensive services. Additionally, counties and providers have experienced inadequate and inconsistent reimbursement rates across the state, compounding an already limited workforce. To effectively leverage and maximize the use of all available funding streams, collaboration between the HCPF, Regional Accountability Entities, the BHA, CDHS, and counties is vital. There is an increased focus on services covered by Medicaid or private insurance to clearly highlight when a county should look to their different funding mechanisms to ensure finances are not the barrier to service. By networking with partners, CDHS seeks to identify ways in which Medicaid and private insurance can be used to support specific services and resources that prevent further penetration into the child welfare system and allow other funding streams to be used for prevention services not covered by insurance.

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

**Intervention 2.2.1: Operationalize “Community Pathways” beyond Family First.**

CDHS began Phase One of the Prevention Plan focused on families with children who were in-home with an open child welfare case or open juvenile justice involvement. This allowed Colorado to meet the federal guidelines at the time of submission, as well as provide flexibility in the candidacy definition, to capture different strategies and approaches for Colorado to fully reach its vision.

Phase Two of the implementation plan looks toward further operationalizing Colorado’s candidacy definition using a strategy called “Community Pathways”. Community Pathways does not change Colorado’s candidacy definition; however, it allows the state to increase opportunities for federal reimbursement through the availability and utilization of evidence-based services to more children and families, who may or may not have current child welfare involvement. Knowing that child welfare involvement is a risk factor to OOH placement, by providing these services upstream outside of child welfare involvement, Colorado aims to keep families together and prevent OOH placement altogether.

Community Pathways will vary between services, and Colorado continues to analyze and adjust approaches to implementation opportunities. In December 2024, the Children’s Bureau approved Colorado’s proposed Community Pathway for SafeCare® Colorado. Due to requirements for reimbursement under Family First, such as open child welfare involvement, a large percentage of families currently accessing

SafeCare® do so without Colorado receiving reimbursement under Family First. By implementing this first Community Pathway, families who meet the Family First candidacy criteria, but do not have open child welfare or juvenile justice involvement, can continue to proactively access these high-quality, evidence-based prevention services with the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust collecting the federal reimbursement.

CDHS, in partnership with Core Program Coordinators across the state, has prioritized developing best practice guidance to those counties utilizing Program Area 3 (PA3) for prevention efforts. PA3 families are those at risk of child welfare involvement but not currently meeting criteria for open assessment for abuse/neglect. These families are often experiencing poverty or situational need, which historically has been reported to child welfare. In those circumstances, the need is not tied to abuse or neglect but left unresolved can lead to increased reports to child welfare and increased risk of involvement with the system. PA3 is not currently an approved program area for federal reimbursement due to it being voluntary in nature, and other factors such as it lacks a statewide assessment tool. Directing efforts to address the reasons behind that omission through development of guidance, may increase access to evidence-based services and increase 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.

To increase access to resources for children and families when child abuse or neglect is not a concern, the Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee began conversations with Mile High United Way's 211 Help Center<sup>60</sup> (211) in spring of 2024 to design a community-based prevention response "warm line" as an alternative to the child welfare hotline. 211 is a multilingual and confidential service that connects individuals to critical resources including food, shelter, rental assistance, childcare, and more. The unique model of 211 is not closely replicable by county departments, yet a direct warm line from county departments to 211 could compromise the county's responsibility to screen referrals for safety concerns. In summer of 2024, the Steering Committee and 211 began exploring possible models for a warm line to appropriately divert and support families who do not need child welfare involvement, without compromising the safety of children who do. The Steering Committee and 211 have worked in spring of 2025 to develop phone scripts for Colorado's child welfare

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<sup>60</sup> [211 Help Center](#)

hotline and county-based hotline staff to educate reporters about the purpose of 211 and encourage them to access this resource when appropriate. Additionally, the partnership is currently discussing training needs for 211 staff to ensure that child abuse and neglect concerns are routed to county departments appropriately. The Steering Committee has identified four counties willing to implement and test a pilot for the warm line project, which is anticipated to occur later in CY 2025. More information about this innovative project will be reported in future APSRs.

DCW is working to enhance prevention efforts through PA3 and will be promoting consistency and utilization across Colorado's counties; see Intervention 2.2.1 for more information.

**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.**

CDHS has convened 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. The workgroup has identified three populations for its work:

1. Families with children under 1 year of age involved with child welfare due to parental substance use concerns
2. Youth involved with child welfare with substance use concerns
3. Child welfare involved caregivers of children over the age of 1 with substance abuse concerns.

For each population the workgroup will review available measurable data, collect and review experiential/narrative data, identify key themes and priority areas, review best practice, and develop recommendations.

During SFY 2025 the workgroup has focused on better understanding the impact of substance use for child welfare involved families with children under the age of one. The workgroup has reviewed qualitative and quantitative data and will provide a draft

report of its findings in April 2025. The workgroup will then shift its focus to assessing youth involved with child welfare with substance abuse concerns.

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

In SFY 2025, CDHS began efforts to improve and develop training and resources for caseworkers to support the consistent implementation of POSC, including:

- The development and pilot of a POSC 102 training for caseworkers. This training has focused on enhancing the use of POSC in case work through collaboration with community partners.
- Re-developing a POSC 101 web-based training that will be available on demand. It is expected to be released in summer of 2025.
- POSC education and tools are in development for inclusion in Colorado's New Caseworker Academy. This includes a POSC Quick Guide and built-in scenarios for learners to consider how to utilize a POSC when working with a family impacted by prenatal substance exposure.
- A POSC Toolkit for child welfare caseworkers is currently under development and is expected release in April 2025.

Additionally, DCW's Substance Use Policy and Practice Administrator facilitates in-county trainings and regional forums throughout the state to provide education and address the needs of county child welfare staff, local and regional hospitals, and local and regional mental and behavioral health staff related to POSC.

DCW is working to enhance the Trails functionality to support the timely completion and use of a POSC and to develop distinct pathways for identification, notification, and reporting to achieve broader engagement of other systems to meet the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act amendments to CAPTA. As of November 2024, a caseworker can no longer close an assessment in Trails where there has been an allegation of Substance-Exposed Newborn (SEN) concerns without completing a POSC. Beginning in spring of 2024, a POSC will be accessible in both referral and assessment pages. These pages will also include fields to guide the development of a POSC that is in alignment with current best practices and reflective of the suggested Colorado POSC Comprehensive Template<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> [Colorado Comprehensive Plan of Safe Care](#) (PDF)

In January 2025 CDHS launched a new public POSC website<sup>62</sup> which includes information about POSC, frequently asked questions for healthcare providers and community members, links to resources and training opportunities, and information on statewide implementation efforts.

CDHS also began a three-phase launch of a new process for the notification of Infants Exposed Prenatally to Substances (IEPS) to better meet federal reporting requirements. Through this new process, healthcare providers may now fill out the IEPS Notification Form to notify the Colorado child welfare system when they are involved in the delivery or care of infants affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Information collected in this form does not include identifying information about the infant or family. Data collected is aggregated and strictly used for required federal reporting and to better understand how common prenatal substance exposure is in Colorado and how state policies, like POSC, are working to support families. Information will not be shared or used for any other purpose. Notification is not intended to replace a report for potential abuse and/or neglect; if hospital staff have a concern about infant abuse or neglect, they are mandated to make a report to the Colorado child welfare hotline or contact their local child welfare team.

CDHS is collaborating with Colorado Hospital Substance Exposed Newborns Collaborative (CHoSEN), The Kempe Center, the Colorado Lab, and Illuminate Colorado to support the phased implementation of the notification portal among Colorado birth hospitals. With each phase, selected birth hospitals will be provided training and support for implementation of the new notification process. Learnings from each phase will be used to rapidly modify and adapt tools for the successful implementation of the notification statewide. State and county child welfare departments will also be engaged to support collaboration and communication between healthcare providers and child welfare staff, to monitor trends in child welfare reports versus notification of prenatal substance exposure, and to ensure the safety and well being of children.

**Intervention 2.3.3: Address the rise in accidental marijuana exposure in children under age six through expansion of safe storage.**

In collaboration with other state agencies and cross-sector partners, DCW is working to increase training opportunities and resources for county child welfare staff to engage in conversations with caregivers about safe storage and safe caregiving

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<sup>62</sup> [Plans of Safe Care](#)

practices to prevent accidental marijuana exposure or ingestion in young children. A budget request was submitted in January 2025 for funding to support a safe storage program to enhance awareness of accidental exposure among child welfare professionals across the state, support education of caregivers, and increase access to safe storage and overdose reversal resources (ex. safe storage bags/boxes, education, naloxone).

Requested funds will be used to:

1. Provide education to child welfare staff on how to talk with caregivers about safe storage and safe caregiving. Professionals are trained on how to have strengths-based conversations with families about substances and safe storage and also explore topics like stigma, bias, boundaries, screening tools, and resource/referral options.
2. Develop and provide education materials for caregivers in alignment with the Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) recommendation detailed above.
3. Provide safe storage and overdose prevention/reversal resources to caregivers
4. Lived experience stipends to support the development of material and education activities.

More information will be reported in future APSRs.

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

DCW's Substance Use Policy and Practice Administrator continues to work in partnership with the Child Welfare Sub-PAC Substance Use Disorder Work Group, the Training Steering Committee Substance Use Disorder Work Group, lived experts, and other key state and local partners to inform the development and delivery of training. Current activities to training have been focused on enhancing understanding and use of POSC as described in Intervention 2.3.2.

DCW is beginning to develop a process for the regular review of the percent of POSC completed for infants identified as being impacted by prenatal substance exposure and screened in for assessment. Figure 2 represents the percent of IEPS in Trails that received a POSC in CYs 2020-2024. In CY 2025 this data will be disaggregated by county and shared with local child welfare departments to encourage local monitoring and improvement of completion rates.

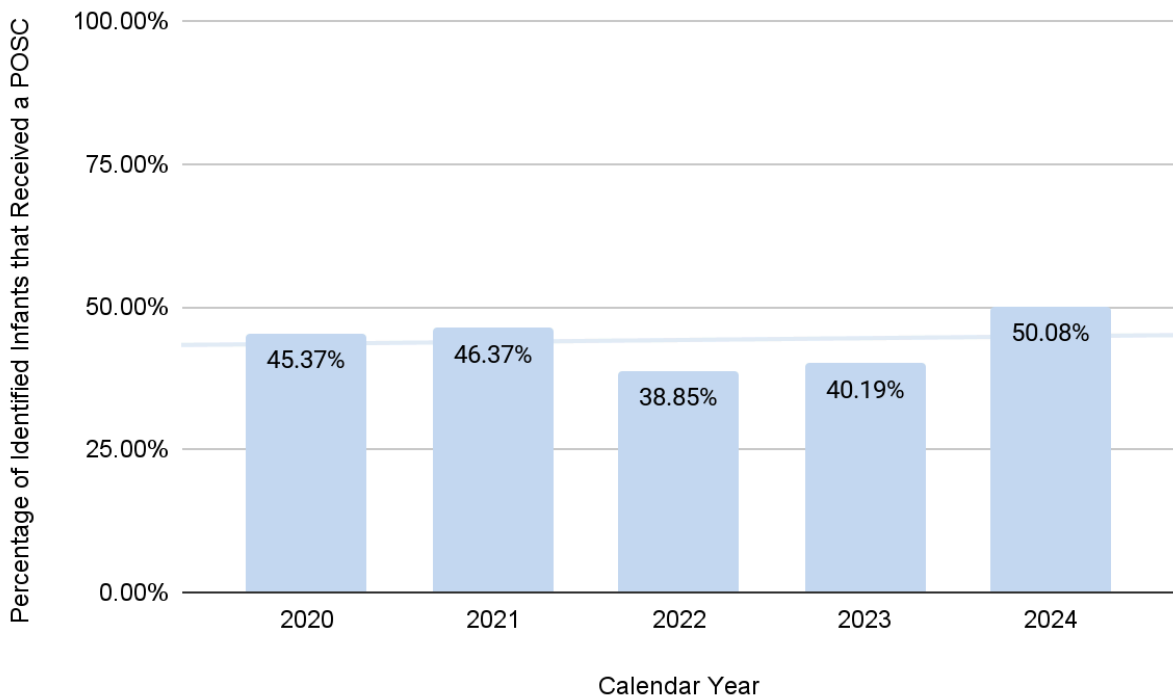


Figure 2: Percentage of IEPS in Trails that Received a POSC by CY

## Measures of Progress for Goal 2

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.
  - According to ROM data for CY 2024, 9.65% of all substantiated reports of abuse or neglect were instances of repeat maltreatment. See the interventions under Objective 2.1 and Objective 2.2 for progress made on efforts to expand the array of services and practices that enhance safety within families, support the prevention of child abuse and neglect, and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families with high substance use needs.
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 2022 to 75% by 2029.
  - According to ROM data for CY 2024, 72.99% of children/youth exiting in-home child welfare involvement maintained permanency in-home. See the interventions under Objective 2.1 for progress made on efforts to

enhance the array of services that promote family preservation and prevent OOH placement.

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 2022 to 78%.
  - According to ROM data from CY 2024, 74.02% of children/youth who met the definition of a Prevention candidate who also received an evidence-based service during CY 2023 remained home within one year of receiving the service. See the interventions under Objective 2.2 for progress made to enhance prevention efforts through PA3.
4. Develop expansion and sustainability plans with all nine evidence-based service program intermediaries<sup>63</sup> to ensure that existing program sites can accept referrals when they are made.
  - CDHS meets regularly with Colorado's Family First Program Intermediaries (PIs) to discuss topics around site expansion and program sustainability. CDHS staff offer support and brainstorming opportunities to partner with PIs as they oversee fidelity in current sites and engage those organizations in discussion about expansion. Ongoing efforts include movement of evidence-based services into rural Colorado communities, which continues to be a gap. The cost of living in these areas, coupled with geographic landscape and population, lends to the difficulty in attracting new providers in rural communities. CDHS is in the process of renewing contracts with all PIs to ensure their ability to remain in place to ensure fidelity at sites, as well as exploration of expansion possibilities. CDHS was given command of the Family First Prevention Fidelity Dashboard in February 2025. This will allow ease in tracking the exact number of onboarding and off-boarding of sites across the state. Additionally, CDHS is working to build out the dashboard to track additional data points to broaden the understanding of accessibility versus availability in different communities across the state.

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<sup>63</sup> At the time of writing this APSR, 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.
  - As of SFY 2025, the Colorado Lab has been contracted by CDHS to develop the following rigorous evaluation plans:
    - i. Child First (Supported): Rigorous evaluation toward a well-supported designation;
    - ii. Fostering Healthy Futures for Preteen (Supported): Rigorous evaluation toward a well-supported designation;
    - iii. Trust-Based Relational Intervention® - Caregiver Training (Promising): Rigorous evaluation underway, evidence building to request re-review;
    - iv. Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (Promising): Feasibility study underway, evidence building to request re-review;
    - v. Fostering Healthy Futures for Teens (Does not meet criteria): Rigorous evaluation underway, evidence building to request initial review.
  - Reports from SFY 2025 that contributed to these plans include:
    - i. Evidence-Building for Family First: Rigorous Evaluation Annual Report<sup>64</sup> (published in May 2024 by The Colorado Lab)
    - ii. Family First Annual Evidence Building Strategy Report for SFY 2025<sup>65</sup> (published in November 2024 by The Colorado Lab)

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<sup>64</sup> [Evidence-Building for Family First: Rigorous Evaluation Annual Report](#) (PDF)

<sup>65</sup> [Family First: Annual Evidence-Building Strategy Report SFY 2025](#) (PDF)

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. DR implementation is a multi-step process that has been in progress throughout Colorado for over 15 years, which has ensured that DR practice is becoming fundamentally integrated into the philosophical practice of Colorado's child welfare system. When a county starts DR implementation, they complete a Professional Development Plan in partnership with DCW and CWTS. This plan often includes a combination of training, technical assistance, and coaching experiences, each intended to boost the county's child welfare practices and to ready the county for DR implementation. After completing the Professional Development Plan, each county hosts a Community Forum with an expert panel of DR practice leaders to address any questions or concerns the community might have about DR practice. This event is meant to help garner support from the community and engage stakeholders to support the county practice. Following the Community Forum, each county has a "DR Kick-Off," which serves as an opportunity for DCW to observe the county's practice and celebrate their efforts to embrace DR practice. Finally, each county must submit a DR application explaining how DR practice serves their specific community, before receiving a CDHS Director Letter of congratulations that initiates the request to turn on their dual track in Trails.

DCW's DR Specialist completes check-in conversations with counties after three and six months of their dual track being turned on. Counties are encouraged to request any ongoing support needs, and DCW's DR Specialist continues to provide technical assistance and guidance to all counties who have implemented DR beyond their first six months. Efforts will shift towards increasing flexibility of the DR model, while maintaining consistency across the state. The Differential Response Leadership

Council (DRLC) meets quarterly to discuss opportunities for model fidelity, and offers counties an opportunity to discuss DR successes and challenges with one another to get feedback and best practice recommendations.

SFY 2025 saw the expansion of DR implementation into all 64 counties; 62 counties have fully implemented and two counties are in the process of implementing DR. Figure 3 shows the map of Differential Response implementation in Colorado as of May 2025.

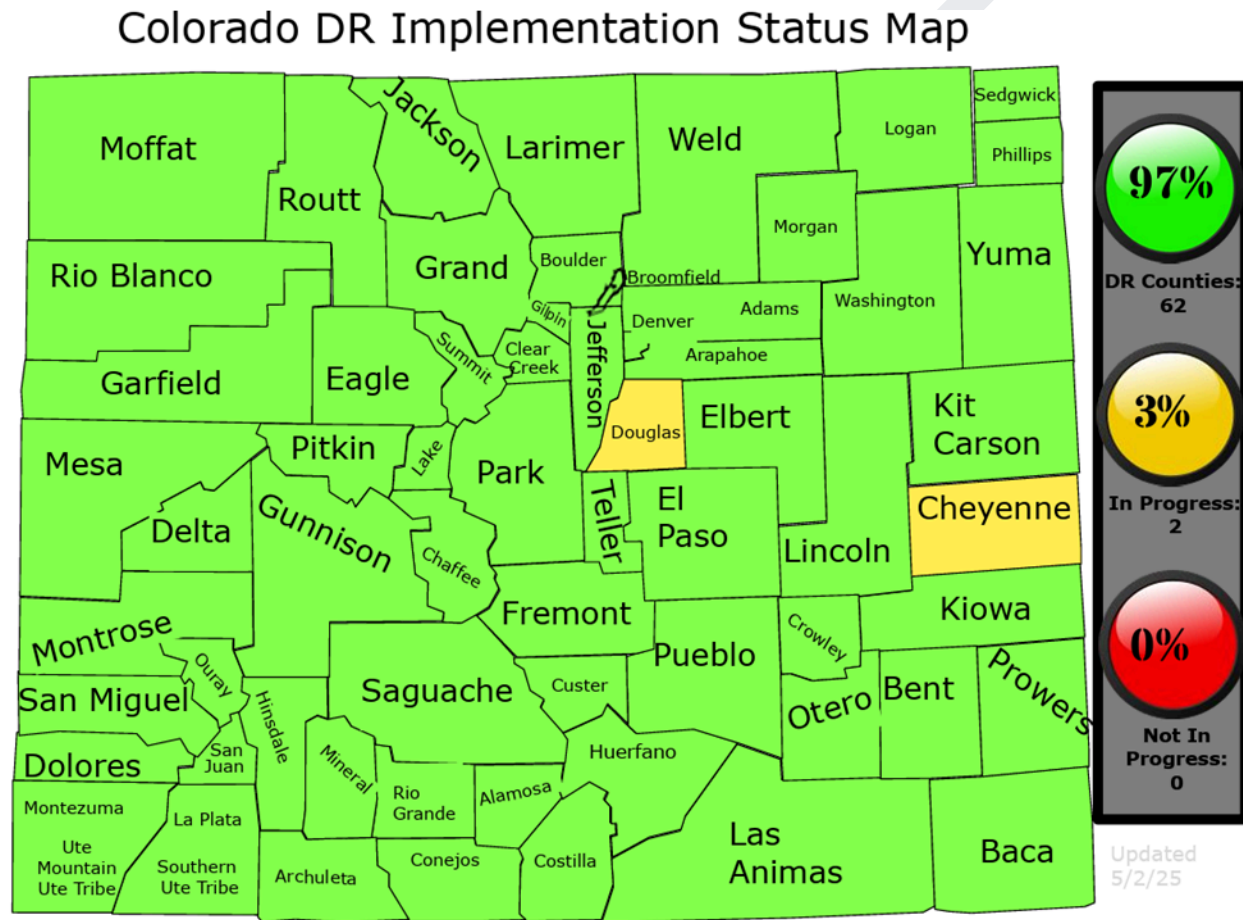


Figure 3: Map of Differential Response Implementation in Colorado in SFY 2025.

### Intervention 3.1.2: Expanding resources to kinship providers.

During the 2024 Legislative Session, SB24-008: Kinship Foster Care Homes<sup>66</sup> passed and required CDHS to promulgate rules for modified kinship foster care certification requirements that reduce barriers without compromising the safety of children/youth. The bill outlines information about provisional certifications for consistency across the

<sup>66</sup> [SB24-008: Kinship Foster Care Homes](#)

state. SB24-008 also includes an expansion of financial assistance to non-certified kinship caregivers. While there was insufficient time to promulgate rules for the September 1, 2024 implementation date in the legislation, DCW released an Operational Memo (OM-CW-2024-0011<sup>67</sup>) and an Informational Memo in December 2024 (IM-CW-2024-0060<sup>68</sup>) regarding the reimbursement of non-certified kinship care. DCW has implemented the non-certified kinship care reimbursement process, and in the first two months of operationalization, 958 non-certified kinship providers received a payment on behalf of 1,412 children/youth. Colorado's kinship rule is currently being revised to include language regarding the expectations of HB23-1024: Relative and Kin Placement of a Child<sup>69</sup> 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. Rule promulgation for non-certified kinship care reimbursement (12 CCR 2509-5) and kinship care requirements (12 CCR 2509-4) are anticipated to be effective July 2025. An operational memo (OM-CW-2024-0018<sup>70</sup>) was released in December 2024 with interim kinship foster care certification guidance and requirements per the legislation. Proposed rules to address certification requirements and county responsibilities in Section 7.500 (12 CCR-2509-6) and Section 7.700 (12 CCR-2509-8) are in process and anticipated to be effective before the end of CY 2025.

SB24-008 also required CDHS to explore the possibility of funding brief legal services or legal representation, which prompted the development of a time-limited Kinship Legal Representation Opportunities Workgroup<sup>71</sup>. This group convened in September 2024 and will meet monthly through May 2025. A report will be sent to the General Assembly no later than October 1, 2025 and will include findings of the exploration of possible use of Title IV-E, Title IV-B, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), or grant funds, plus any recommendations for next steps.

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<sup>67</sup> [OM-CW-2024-0011: Reimbursement for Non-Certified Kinship Caregivers with Out-of-Home Kinship and Kinship Kinship Service Types in Trails](#) (PDF)

<sup>68</sup> [IM-CW-2024-0060: Follow-Up Clarification for Non-Certified Kinship Care Reimbursement](#) (PDF)

<sup>69</sup> [HB23-1024: Relative and Kin Placement of a Child](#)

<sup>70</sup> [OM-CW-2024-0018: Kinship Foster Care Certification](#) (PDF)

<sup>71</sup> [Kinship Legal Representation Opportunities Workgroup](#)

Intervention 3.1.3: Examine the outcomes of families who have had child welfare system involvement that resulted in a substantiated allegation of “neglect.”

CDHS is collaborating with county departments to identify necessary demographic data about children, families, and child welfare professionals and make recommendations for improving data collection statewide. DCW’s People-Centered Practices Specialist has collaborated with DCW staff, the Trails Team, and DYS to begin addressing the areas of lacking data and strategize for implementing improvements in the data collection process.

To ensure ongoing and active participation from families that have navigated or are currently involved with seeking services in their communities, during SFY 2025 several Family Advisory Council (FAC) members joined the Child Protection Task Group (CPTG), Child Welfare Prevention Task Group (CWPTG), Permanency Task Group (PTG) and Training Steering Committee (TSC). See Child Welfare Family Advisory Council within the “Update to the Vision and Collaboration” section of this APSR for more information on the Child Welfare FAC. Child Welfare FAC members who have joined these Sub-PAC subgroups will participate in and provide feedback on the task groups’ planning, policy recommendations, and procedures in order to improve the design and delivery of high-quality child welfare and prevention services to the youth and families in Colorado.

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).

DCW created the Permanency Status Report during the CFSR Round 3 Program Improvement Plan for counties to identify points in cases that may result in delayed permanency. Aggregate data from the Permanency Status Report can be used to identify trends or next steps for needed process improvements, and DCW plans to promote usage of the Permanency Status Report statewide as an example of a tool that counties and county intermediaries can use to collaboratively monitor permanency statuses and proactively identify data entry issues and processes that are

within the counties' control. DCW's data analysis team is in discussion with ARD and the ROM contract holder about whether this report can be incorporated into ROM to make it accessible statewide; more information will be provided in future APSRs.

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

The Permanency Task Group (PTG) is a subcommittee of the Child Welfare Sub-PAC that works on various permanency-related issues including identifying barriers to permanency and possible solutions. PTG includes representation from DCW, county child welfare personnel and county attorneys, adoptive parents, the OCR, the ORPC, Raise the Future, CDEC, and the ARD. In SFY 2025, PTG's primary focus was 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; see Item 11 for more information on Incarcerated Parents Rule.

In February 2025, the CSU Social Work Research Center published the Court Process Evaluation: Final Statewide Report<sup>72</sup>. This report was developed by an evaluation team assembled by the Timeliness to Permanency Subcommittee of the Child Welfare Appeals Workgroup with the goal of identifying gaps and opportunities to improve permanency outcomes for children/youth. Using data from the court case management system and Trails, the goal of the report was to identify gaps and opportunities to improve permanency outcomes for children/youth. The final report summarizes statewide trends for cases filed between 2012 and 2021, including which timeframes have increased in that period, which timeframes have decreased, and which have remained relatively consistent. The report has been shared with child welfare stakeholders statewide and was included in IM-CW-2025-0011<sup>73</sup> issued in March 2025. The final report is meant to assist local districts in having conversations about timeliness to permanency for all D&N outcomes and what next steps each jurisdiction would like to take to improve outcomes.

### Intervention 3.2.3: Decrease time from termination of parental rights (TPR) to finalized adoption.

There are several factors that can complicate the timeline between TPR and finalized adoption; see Item 23 in the "Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes" section of this APSR for the most common reasons identified by case review data in CY 2024 for lack of progress toward finalizing adoption. Additional

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<sup>72</sup> [Court Process Evaluation: Final Statewide Report](#) (PDF)

<sup>73</sup> [IM-CW-2025-0011: Court Process Evaluation Timeliness to Permanency Report](#) (PDF)

factors that can delay timeliness to finalized adoption include the time required for adoptive parents to complete background checks and home studies, as well as the adoption assistance negotiation. County departments should also be completing the Child and Family Study, which is required to be completed within 90 days of termination or relinquishment of parental rights.

Community partners have raised concerns about the extent of birth parent-related content of the Child and Family Study. The information in this document is used to provide all known information about a child/youth to an adoptive family prior to placement with an identified adoptive family and/or adoption finalization. Concerns have included the extent of family medical and mental health information that is disclosed and whether this violates birth parents' rights to privacy and HIPAA regulations. DCW is in the process of revising the Child and Family Study to provide best practice guidance to staff writing child and family studies.

As mentioned under Item 6 in the "Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes" section, the Adoption Assistance Negotiation Worksheet was implemented statewide in 2023 to promote consistency across the state in how adoption assistance agreements are determined and provided to adoptive families, and to ensure that adoptive families have the resources needed to care for a child/youth. DCW has partnered with the CSU Social Work Research Center for evaluation of this worksheet and is in the process of updating the Worksheet to collect more data that will aid in the original goal of the Worksheet.

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

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

Colorado has made great strides in recent years to increase the number of skilled therapeutic and treatment foster care options across the state. From March 2024 through January 2025, CDHS increased the therapeutic and treatment bed capacity from 144 to 165 beds, and CDHS continues to work to grow these foster homes as a part of the Colorado Governor's Wildly Important Goals (WIGs). 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 Item 28 in the "Update to the Assessment of Current Performance

in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information on the use of Pressley Ridge.

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

HB22-1283: Youth And Family Behavioral Health Care<sup>74</sup> mandated the creation of a respite program for children/youth in foster care. The Contracts Administration Team within Provider Services Unit (PSU) executed contracts for respite services at Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF), Residential Child Care Facility (RCCF), and foster levels of care. These contracts encompassed 22 beds and served 65 children; however, this legislation was sunset on June 30, 2024. The Contracts Administration Team utilized HB23-1269: Extended Stay And Boarding Patients<sup>75</sup> High Acuity Cash Fund dollars to continue the contracts at half capacity for an additional six months. As of December 31, 2024, these programs have ended as no further funding or statutory authority existed for them to continue.

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

CDHS continues to utilize the Performance Management Outcomes (PMO) team within PSU to better support residential treatment providers and promote high quality practice. The PMO team proactively partners with providers through coaching and training so that they can live into the vision of all children/youth having access to appropriate, responsive, and effective therapeutic and treatment services. The PMO team was written into law through HB24-1038: High-Acuity Crisis for Children & Youth<sup>76</sup> along with additional funding to build up the capacity for support for licensed providers and to improve treatment, discharge, and aftercare services, planning, and support in Colorado’s residential settings. The PMO team has created a five-phase Theory of Change model that addresses all required components within all mandated Trauma-Informed Care Plans. Additionally, the PMO team has created assessment tools and implemented CQI strategies to gather information related to each specific phase. To date, the PMO team has completed their first phase of assessments with all QRTPs and is now working to assess all PRTFs.

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<sup>74</sup> [HB22-1283: Youth And Family Behavioral Health Care](#)

<sup>75</sup> [HB23-1269: Extended Stay And Boarding Patients](#)

<sup>76</sup> [HB24-1038: High-Acuity Crisis for Children & Youth](#)

Intervention 3.3.4: Ensure QRTP and 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.

PSU has developed the Colorado Provider Training Academy (CPTA) for all RCCF, QRTP, and PRTF providers. The CPTA will also include an online resource library with an updated collection of trauma-informed training, including appropriate interventions and treatment models, based on evidence and research. HB24-1038 and 26-6-923(2), C.R.S. require that the rules for the training academy be promulgated on or before September 15, 2025; the PMO team is working diligently and currently on track to meet this deadline of promulgation.

CDHS has set a goal to ensure that 90% of residential providers will have at least 50% of their direct care staff trained in the CPTA Curriculum by June 30, 2029. Progress toward training residential staff through the CPTA began in February 2025 through the implementation of a pilot program that included 38 facility staff and 10 CDHS staff. Future progress will be reported in subsequent APSRs.

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

Colorado has created and is piloting the CPTA for direct care staff in QRTPs and PRTFs in order to better prepare them to serve more behaviorally challenging children and youth. See Intervention 3.3.4 for more information on the CPTA.

HCPF, BHA, and CDHS began a cross-agency collaboration in 2023, the Child and Youth Consultation Team (CYCT), 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. Consultations occur weekly and focus on state-level intervention and analysis of system gaps; all children and youth on the list are reviewed at minimum every 14 days, with youth who score high staffed weekly. See Item 4 in the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information on the CYCT. As a component of this collaboration, the three agencies are creating a plan to address the high acuity crisis called the Colorado Youth Behavioral Health Implementation Plan (CYBHI). See Item 18 in the “Update to the Assessment of

Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information on CYBHI.

CDHS is also closely tracking data on high acuity youth specific to the Governor’s Wildly Important Goal (WIG). Components of the WIG include expanding capacity at PRTF and QRTP, expanding specialized foster care capacity, expanding QRTP contracted beds, piloting and getting off the ground the Colorado Provider Training Academy for residential staff recruitment, training, and retention, and the implementation of a clinical strategic plan aimed at improving aftercare, discharge, and treatment planning in facility settings in Colorado. CDHS also continues to analyze funding streams, rates through actuarial analysis, recruitment strategies, and other avenues to increasing capacity in the OOH placement continuum and to ensure trauma-informed and quality treatment for children/youth.

### Objective 3.4: Prevent re-entry to OOH care.

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

The OCYF communications team and DCW program managers collaborate with county and community partners to celebrate different permanency outcomes, such as adoption, the Relative Guardianship Assistance Program (RGAP), kinship, and reunification. In September 2024, OCYF launched a two-part campaign to raise awareness about kinship care. OCYF ran a carousel social media ad<sup>77</sup> for ten consecutive days in September 2024 about kinship care. In October 2024 OCYF launched the video portion of the campaign<sup>78</sup>, which ran for two months. The combined campaign garnered 1,209,419 impressions, 177,727 engagements, and a 3.21% click-through rate (industry benchmark is 0.5-1%).

OCYF celebrated National Adoption Month in November 2024 and recognized four Colorado adoptive families, two of whom met the children they adopted through kinship care. In addition to providing gift certificates for family-friendly activities, the communications team featured each family in a CO4Kids.org blog post. To honor National Foster Care Month and encourage more Coloradans to become foster parents, CDHS recognized five foster families during a luncheon at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in May 2025. The communications team also made videos about each of the five families that highlight how foster families support reunification and

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<sup>77</sup> [National Kinship Care Month Social Media Ad](#) (PDF)

<sup>78</sup> [Kinship Video](#) (MP4)

other forms of permanency for the children and youth in their care, while providing a safe and loving home temporarily.

OCYF is collaborating with the CIP, the OCR, the ORPC, and the CASA Program to recognize the collaborative efforts that help families stay together. This group will host an event for reunified families at the Denver Zoo in June 2025 to commemorate National Reunification Month and to celebrate the successes of reunified families. This event will include community members, the media, and county and state partners.

Strong recruitment and retention of foster families supports positive permanency outcomes for children and youth in OOH care. The communications team worked with an independent marketing agency to develop and launch a recruitment campaign informed by research to address barriers and increase foster provider enrollments. This included six focus groups at the end of CY 2024 with current, former, and prospective foster families to gather the perspectives of those with lived experiences, which helped inform the communications team on the best marketing strategies to attract and retain foster families. The resulting research report offered data-driven insights on ways to improve the information, messaging, and searchability about foster care, kinship care, and adoption on CO4Kids.org. It also highlighted improvements to accessibility, streamlining navigation, and bolstering information and resources for foster, kinship, and adoptive families. The report also discussed the need to improve county and agency communication protocols to ensure timely and responsive interactions with prospective foster parents, while also creating more clarity around the certification process and resources/networks available to foster families. OCYF will work to ensure that marketing efforts highlight the challenges of fostering while providing practical solutions and showcasing positive outcomes, as highlighted in the research report.

In CY 2025, a new digital advertising campaign will be created to recruit foster families. Each year the communications team participates in community events and invites counties and child placement agencies to talk with families about the role they play in helping children and families achieve permanency. In CY 2025 the communication team will participate in the Denver March Powwow, Cinco De Mayo Denver, Denver's Juneteenth Music Festival, Denver PrideFest, and the Pueblo Chile and Frijoles Festival.

Each year the Colorado Heart Gallery (COHG)<sup>79</sup> champions permanency efforts by recruiting families for children and youth who are waiting to be adopted. During CY 2024, the COHG photographed 28 new children and youth. In CY 2024, one child from

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<sup>79</sup> [Colorado Heart Gallery](#)

the heart gallery was adopted, eight children were placed in their pre-adoptive homes, and 18 children and youth were matched with a family.

### 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 Process<sup>80</sup> is a federally required review and approval process that Colorado follows to determine when to extend QRTP placements for children/youth who have been residing in a residential setting for more than a year. Youth are reviewed by a multidisciplinary team to determine the youth’s current level of need and what support is needed to assist counties in finding an appropriate family/family-like permanency option within their community. Reviews include a comprehensive psychosocial assessment from an independent assessor, quarterly Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) reviews, clinical treatment notes, and casework documentation to determine whether this level of treatment is most appropriate for the needs of the child or youth and their family.

As Colorado fully opted into the Family First Prevention Services Act in October 2021, QRTP Lifetime Limits first became applicable to children and youth with active IV-E benefits in April 2022. Since 2023, Colorado has expanded the target population for the multi-agency lifetime limit waiver request reviews to include all children and youth who have been residing in a QRTP for more than a year, regardless of Title IV-E status. This expansion occurred due to 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. In CY 2024, waiver requests were submitted for 14 youth; of these youth, six had IV-E status, and eight did not.

In March 2025, DCW released OM-CW-2025-0009<sup>81</sup> to provide an updated QRTP Lifetime Limit Waiver Request Form and checklist. These updated forms outline information that county departments should include when submitting a waiver request, including:

- an explanation of the need for the waiver;
- the county’s plan during the waiver extension period, if granted;
- reasonable efforts made toward stepping down the child/youth from QRTP;
- reasonable efforts made toward achieving permanency for the child/youth;

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<sup>80</sup> [County Overview of the QRTP Lifetime Limits Waiver Request Process](#) (Google Doc)

<sup>81</sup> [OM-CW-2025-0009: Updated County Checklist & QRTP Lifetime Limit Waiver Request Form](#) (PDF)

- a copy of the most recent independent assessment summary;
- the estimated discharge date from the QRTP;
- a copy of the most recent 90-day review;
- all CANS tools completed for the child/youth; and
- a treatment progress summary.

In addition to including clinical treatment notes related to the youth’s progress toward stabilization and permanency, counties should also include information on the caregivers’ treatment plan to ensure that there is sufficient progress being made to maintain the youth-caregiver relationship while the youth is in care, and that the caregiver is becoming prepared to meet the needs of the youth post-QRTP placement. This focus on youth and family treatment and clinical needs better supports determinations of when it is appropriate for a waiver request to be approved.

## Measures of Progress for Goal 3

1. Decrease the percentage of children/youth who re-entered OOH placement after achieving permanency in the past 12 months from a baseline of 1.1% in FFY 2022-2023 to 0.8% by 2029.
  - According to ROM data for CY 2024, 0.85% of all children/youth who were discharged to reunification, living with a relative, guardianship, or adoption during the last 12 months re-entered care during CY 2024. From this population:
    - i. 51.00% re-entered from living with parents.
    - ii. 22.86% re-entered from living with relatives/guardianship.
    - iii. 24.08% reflected as a re-entry due to a shift in custody but maintained in the same kinship placement.
    - iv. 0.2% re-entered the Division of Youth Services (DYS).

See the interventions under Objective 3.4 for targeted efforts toward preventing re-entry to OOH care.

2. Increase the number of kinship foster care homes by 15%, from 594 in 2023 to 683 by 2029.
  - According to ROM data for CY 2024, there were 611 total certified kinship foster care homes as of December 31, 2024. See Intervention

3.1.2 for more information about resources provided to kinship providers.

3. Increase the number of counties implementing CO Kinnected, from 5 counties in 2024 to 15 counties by 2029.
  - As of February 2025, there are five counties fully implemented in CO Kinnected and two additional counties in the active implementation process. See the Kinship Navigator Funding section of this APSR for more information on CO Kinnected.
4. By 2029, increase the percentage of children/youth adopted within 12 months of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) from 49.3% to 55%.
  - According to ROM data for CY 2024, 51.89% of children/youth were adopted within 12 months of TPR. See Intervention 3.2.3 for more information on efforts to decrease the time from TPR to finalized adoption. See the interventions under Objective 3.2 for progress made toward efforts to prioritize timeliness to permanency when a child/youth must be temporarily removed.
5. 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.
  - According to ROM data for CY 2024, 89.18% of children/youth in OOH placement were placed in a family-like setting. A “family-like setting” includes traditional foster care, certified kinship, and noncertified kinship homes. See the interventions under Objective 3.3 for progress made toward ensuring necessarily OOH placements are in a family-like or least restrictive- high-quality treatment setting.
6. 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.
  - According to Trails data for CY 2024, PRTF CIRs increased 20% from 2023; QRTP decreased 24.4% from 2023; and total CIRs from both settings increased 5.7% from 2023.
7. 90% of residential providers will have at least 50% of their direct care staff trained in the Colorado Provider Training Academy (CPTA) Curriculum by June 30, 2029.

- Progress toward training residential staff through the CPTA began in February 2025, in which a pilot program has been implemented to include 38 facility staff, and 10 internal CDHS staff. See Intervention 3.3.4 for more information regarding the development and implementation of the CPTA Curriculum.
8. 90% of QRTP providers will have completed updated CANS assessments within the timeframe required in state rules and regulations by June 30, 2029.
- There is ongoing work between the BHA, counties, and CDHS to ensure data sharing of the initial CANS assessments and compliance with completing updated CANS within the timeframes outlined in 12 CCR 2509-8; Section 7.705. Rules that require the completed updated CANS assessments for the PSU to regulate and monitor are in the process of being promulgated and anticipated to be implemented in May 2025. To date, PSU has not been able to track if providers are submitting the CANS Assessments to counties/placing authorities; however, following the implementation of the new rules, providers will submit a copy to CDHS for tracking purposes.

**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 (SILPs) for youth 18 and older, who participated in the Foster Youth in Transition (FYiT) Program.**

SILPs offer flexibility in housing options for youth participating in the FYiT program, 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. 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, kinship homes, transitional living programs, apartments, private homes, or another age- and/or developmentally-appropriate placement.

Counties are monitored for their use of SILPs with youth participating in the FYiT program through ARD and ROM data reports, and current performance was discussed at the DCW C-Stat meeting in November 2024. DCW is discussing the addition of the use of SILPs as an ongoing C-Stat measure as one mechanism for continued performance monitoring; more information will be provided in future APSRs. Currently there are differing practices across counties regarding when and how to enter a SILP into Trails, which has been a barrier to capturing accurate statewide data. DCW's Youth Services Specialist works closely with county staff across Colorado to provide guidance on the use of SILPs and entering these placements into Trails.

Many of the questions counties pose are related to SILP funds. Based on the individual needs and preferences of the youth, the county can use SILP funds to pay a placement provider directly or to pay the youth directly to cover living expenses. Counties often refer to paying the youth directly as a "stipend," which the youth can use and budget on their own with support from the county. Statute and rule require specific processes regarding the use of SILPs, and counties are required to have their own policies in place to ensure consistency. However, state guidance is often case-specific in addition to being policy-based, in order to meet the individual and varying needs of young people. In addition to the FYiT open houses, DCW's Youth Services Unit regularly updates the SILP guidance reference, FYiT desk guides, and other resources in the public-facing FYiT Folder that is available to county staff. DCW is having internal conversations about how to provide additional statewide guidance regarding SILPs to continue supporting and ultimately increase the use of SILPs for youth participating in the FYiT program; more information will be provided in future APSRs.

#### Intervention 4.1.2: Ensuring post-transition housing success through the Fostering Success Voucher Program.

The Fostering Success Voucher Program ("Voucher Program") was established in 2023 by SB23-082: Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program<sup>82</sup> and provides funding for up to 100 housing vouchers and mandatory case management support services for Chafee-eligible youth beginning at age 18 through their 26th birthday. Chafee enrollment is not a prerequisite to Voucher Program acceptance due to the extended

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<sup>82</sup> [SB23-082: Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program](#)

age range; however, once enrolled in the Voucher Program, youth are expected to maintain case management services through their local Chafee provider.

The Voucher Program launched in April 2024 when DCW’s Transition Service Specialists presented the program to counties and contractors in attendance at the Chafee quarterly meeting. Additional program roll-out included targeted outreach to shelters in the Denver Metro area and El Paso County, virtual communications with rural counties, and broader publicity efforts including a CO4Kids blog post<sup>83</sup> and Denver Metro area news interviews. The Voucher Program began receiving referrals in May 2024, which continued at a steady rate until the program entered a waitlist in January 2025. As of February 2025, 50 youth are on active leases and 35 youth have been issued a voucher and are seeking appropriate housing. While SB23-082 provides funding for up to 100 vouchers, the appropriated funds cover about 80 housing vouchers at a time based on the fair market rate across Colorado. The Voucher Program waitlist operates based on risk factors as identified in the definition of “imminent risk of homelessness” and the homelessness risk assessment, and prioritization will be fluid based on the highest need at the time a voucher becomes available. DCW is collaborating with the Colorado Implementation Science Unit (CISU) and OCYF Performance Analysts to build a data management system that ensures the program prioritizes youth most in need of housing. Voucher Program data is collected in Trails and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the local information technology system used to collect data on the delivery of housing and services to individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Per SB23-082, case management is provided to all youth in the Voucher Program by either county departments of human services receiving Chafee funding or vendors contracted with CDHS through the Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood Grant Program (“State Grant Program,” see John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood in the “Update on Services” section of this APSR for more information). The Voucher Program is also available to youth exiting DYS who are eligible for Chafee services and DCW has partnered with DYS to develop processes for these youth. 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. Case management agencies are encouraged to determine how to best provide case management to youth in a way that is developmentally appropriate, youth-led, and individualized to the youth. During SFY 2025, 15 counties and four contractors provided case management services for Voucher Program participants.

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<sup>83</sup> [Blog Post: CDHS Provides 100 Housing Vouchers for Former Foster Youth](#)

To ensure program success, the Voucher Program has collaborated with numerous agencies including Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), DYS, Continuum of Care providers including Metro Denver Homeless Initiatives, and Runaway Homeless Youth providers. The State Grant Program Advisory Board is responsible for reviewing and advising the State Grant Program and the Voucher Program, and membership includes youth with lived experience in addition to professionals from regions across the state. The development and implementation of the Voucher Program is being supported by CISU and will measure the percentage of youth who receive this voucher and 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. Additionally, the Voucher Program will collect feedback surveys from youth and their case managers on an annual basis at the time of program recertification. More information on these measures and surveys will be provided in future APSRs.

**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 August 2024 the “Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care” training was added as a component of Colorado’s New Caseworker Academy. Additionally, certified caseworkers and supervisors are required to complete the training every two years, and will be automatically enrolled in the re-training when required, to ensure the child welfare workforce receives regular ongoing training related to educational rights of youth in care.

The Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care training includes information on legislative background and requirements around the Best Interest Determination (BID) meetings; see Item 16 in the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information about BID meetings and practice in Colorado. DCW utilizes reports from ARD and ROM to monitor whether students are being offered these meetings when a school move is being discussed. DCW also utilizes NYTD to gather students’ self-reports of graduation and continuation

to higher education. Table 6 reflects the educational outcomes self-reported by youth ages 17 and 19 who completed the NYTD survey for FFY 2024.

Outcome Reported	Age 17	Age 19
High school diploma/GED	5%	61%
Associate’s degree	0%	0%
Bachelor’s degree	0%	1%
Higher degree	0%	1%
None of these completed	93%	28%
Current enrollment and attendance	92%	37%

Table 6: Self-Reported Educational Outcomes from FFY 2024 NYTD Survey

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

The success of the Fostering Opportunities pilot with Jefferson County Public Schools prompted HB22-1374: Foster Care Success Act<sup>84</sup>, which continued funding for the program in Jefferson County Public Schools and required the expansion of the intervention to at least two and up to five additional school districts. Denver Public Schools and Brighton Public Schools were selected as expansion sites for the 2023-2024 school year based on a site readiness assessment completed by Colorado’s Implementation Science Unit (CISU)<sup>85</sup>. CISU is supporting the expansion effort, and the Colorado Lab continues to support the evaluation process through a fidelity monitoring evaluation emphasizing fidelity to the model in each of the expanded school district programs.

Beginning in SFY 2024, DCW began organizing Fostering Opportunities convenings to bring together program coordinators, specialists, and county staff to share knowledge, build relationships across school districts and human services agencies,

<sup>84</sup> [HB22-1374: Foster Care Success Act](#)

<sup>85</sup> [Fostering Opportunities Expansion: Site Readiness Considerations & Assessment](#) (PDF)

and learn practical skills in supporting students who have experienced foster care. The second convening was held in October 2024 and focused primarily on skill building for school district specialists. This convening brought together 24 attendees with a focus on Motivational Interviewing. A third convening was held in March 2025 and focused on case consultation, case supports, and supervising within the Fostering Opportunities context. There were 24 attendees representing all three districts and the Colorado Lab.

An updated Fostering Opportunities Program Manual<sup>86</sup> was released by the CO Lab in June 2024. This manual includes updated information regarding program implementation including tools and framework for the building year (the year prior to program launch).

Over the course of the 2023-2024 school year, 260 youth were served by the Fostering Opportunities program across the three school districts. As of January 2025, 312 students were being served by the three district sites, a 45% increase from the number of students being served in January 2024. Per HB22-1374, additional performance indicators required to be reported on by CDHS include:

- Percentage and number of core content area (English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies) classes completed;
- Percentage of students who graduate or complete high school; and
- Percentage of students who engage in postsecondary and workforce readiness pathways.

Performance metrics will be monitored through the Colorado Lab fidelity evaluation beginning in SFY 2025 and will be reported on in future APSRs. DCW continues to partner with Colorado Lab 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. More information on progress made will be reported in future APSRs.

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<sup>86</sup> [Fostering Opportunities Program Manual](#) (PDF)

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.

DCW is working to expand the reach of Chafee-like services throughout the state through the continued implementation of the Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood Program and through the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program for youth ages 18-26. See John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood in the “Update on Services” section for more information on the Chafee program. See Intervention 4.1.2 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information on the Voucher Program. If county departments of human/social services do not apply for funding, DCW will create a request for application process to find a vendor to serve portions of the state that are currently not covered.

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 the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program and FosterEd without young people having to wait for a report through the court system. Incorporating the feedback from young people, this document will be incorporated into an updated report that will be accessible through Trails Mod once application modernization is complete. CDHS will meet with young people to evaluate if the changes met their needs and update the form as necessary.

DCW’s youth services and data teams will explore 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 (CDHE), 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 (SILPs) for youth 18 and older who participated in the Foster Youth in Transition (FYiT) Program from 74.1% in CY 2023 to 90%.
  - According to ROM data for CY 2024, 76.55% of FYiT participants were utilizing a SILP. See Intervention 4.1.1 for more information on efforts and progress toward increasing the use of SILPs.
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.
  - According to ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024, 59.5% of children/youth who changed schools had a BID meeting when required. See Intervention 4.2.1 for more information on efforts to provide training to child welfare caseworkers and supervisors about the educational rights of youth in care.
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).
  - The FFY 2022 NYTD Youth Outcomes Data Summary Report for the 19-year-old follow-up population represents self-reported outcomes from the full sample of youth in Cohort 4. During FFY 2022, 25% of youth in foster care and 27.4% of youth discharged from foster care reported having been homeless. 11.9% of youth discharged from foster care reported receiving public housing assistance.
  - The FFY 2024 NYTD Youth Outcomes Data Summary Report for the 21-year-old follow-up population represents self-reported outcomes from 99.35% of youth in Cohort 4. During FFY 2024, 34.3% of youth discharged from foster care reported having been homeless. 28.6% of youth discharged from foster care reported receiving public housing assistance.
4. Increase Roadmap to Success completion rate from 84.53% in 2023 to 95% by 2029.

- According to ROM data for CY 2024, 86.54% of required Roadmaps to Success were completed.
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.
- As the Fostering Success Housing Voucher Program was launched in late spring of 2024, there have not yet been any youth who have graduated from the program. Factors that affect a youth's length of participation in the Voucher Program include their age at initial receipt of the voucher (youth are eligible from the time of receipt until age 26), continued eligibility based on income requirements (50% of the area median), and continued voluntary engagement in case management. This will be measured and reported on in future APSRs.

DRAFT

# Update on Services

For a comprehensive list of services offered in all segments of the Child and Family Services Continuum, please see the 2025-2029 CFSP.

## Service Coordination

### Coordination with the Title IV-E Prevention Services Plan

Please see Prevention in the “Update to the Vision and Collaboration” section, Item 29 in the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section, Objectives 2.1 and 2.2 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision” section, Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program in the “Update on Services” section, and the “Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Grants” section of this APSR.

### Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)

CBCAP is managed by CDEC’s Division of Community and Family Support, Family Strengthening Unit, aligning with research showing that early childhood services, including child care and education, have considerable implications for preventing child maltreatment. CBCAP program funding is used to develop, implement, operate, expand, and enhance community-based and prevention-focused programs and activities designed to strengthen and support families to prevent child abuse and neglect. Specific CBCAP initiatives for FFY 2024 are highlighted below.

### Colorado Thriving Families Framework

Colorado created the Child Maltreatment Prevention (CMP) Framework for Action in 2014 to guide strategic thinking at the state and local levels about resource investments to prevent child maltreatment and align strategies to maximize progress on shared outcomes. CDEC identified the need to update the tool and incorporate research, progress, and learnings from the past decade. The CBCAP State Lead and a strategic consultant gathered significant stakeholder feedback across state agencies, providers, and coalitions, including caregiver representatives, to inform the update. Using CBCAP funds, the Framework update was completed and presented to stakeholders at the biennial Strengthening Families Conference in September 2024 as the newly refreshed Colorado Thriving Families Framework, also available in Spanish. Moving forward, CBCAP funding will be used to make accompanying updates to the

Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action Toolkit, including a new website and refined digital presence for all Framework and community planning resources.

## Child Maltreatment Prevention (CMP) Planning and Implementation Sites

CBCAP funding was used to pair experienced facilitators with county stakeholders to use the CMP Framework for Action and CMP Toolkit to create community-wide plans. The facilitators helped to convene community partners, lead collaboration, and manage planning logistics. Facilitators also co-led the development of a parent and community survey in partnership with the Butler Institute at the University of Denver to assess current family strengths and needs. Five communities that completed planning were selected for CBCAP Implementation funding in FFY 2024. Each site integrated multiple prevention strategies into their cross-agency work at the county and community levels, ranging from direct services to system-change efforts.

## Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF)

CBCAP funded the overall management of the CPTF, a collaboration between families, county human service and public health directors, state agencies, and other statewide partners such as the CDHSA, Colorado Association of Local Public Health Organizations, the Colorado Lab, Casey Family Programs, and Illuminate Colorado, the local Prevent Child Abuse America chapter. CPTF aims to significantly reduce child fatalities and child maltreatment for all children zero to five years old by positively and proactively supporting strong and healthy family formation. CPTF works to identify levers for change within state and county governments, to demonstrate that intentional, coordinated investments in a full continuum of prevention and community-based networks will promote overall child and family well-being, and to highlight a process for how government agencies and nonprofits can share power and codesign with experts to transform systems.

## Strengthening Families Protective Factors

CBCAP funding annually promotes Strengthening Families Protective Factors by updating and providing Protective Factors training, supporting a facilitated Strengthening Families Network, and planning the Strengthening Colorado Families and Communities conference, grantee meetings, and Child Abuse Prevention Month activities.

## Child Abuse Prevention Month

CBCAP funded Illuminate Colorado in leading the Pinwheels for Prevention® Campaign in 2024, a large-scale communication campaign that includes local organizations and individuals displaying hundreds of thousands of pinwheels each year. CBCAP also provides financial support for a statewide community norms campaign, Colorado Connected, to increase family connectedness and decrease stigma around help-seeking with additional intent in April.

## Additional CBCAP Activities in FFY 2024

CBCAP funding was also used to support additional family-strengthening initiatives, including evaluation for the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems program, training for parents and providers in infant and early childhood mental health, intermediaries for Healthy Steps and Family Connects, advancing tax credit outreach via dedicated CDEC personnel, stipends for family representatives on the CDEC Family Voice Council, and the launch of Circle of Fathers.

## The Children's Justice Act (CJA)

The CJA Task Force reviews and evaluates State investigative, administrative, and civil and criminal judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, cases involving suspected child maltreatment-related fatalities, and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions. The task force also makes policy and training recommendations.

Members include the CIP Coordinator, 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 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 (ex. 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;
- (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 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 Appendix B for the CJA Annual Report.

## The Court Improvement Program (CIP)

See Alignment with Judicial Partners in the “Update to the Vision and Collaboration” section of this APSR.

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

## Services and Data for Children Adopted from Other Countries (section 422(b)(11) and 422(b)(12) 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. Trails requires county departments involved in child welfare investigations to identify whether a child/youth that was removed from the care of their legal guardians had previously been adopted. However, an additional field capturing intercountry adoptions does not exist in the current Trails system and, as a result, CDHS does not have accurate data on children/youth who were adopted specifically through the intercountry adoption process and who were identified in reports of child maltreatment via Trails. Through ongoing updates and developments within the Trails system, CDHS continues to address this gap in data collection, with the intent that data regarding children/youth who joined their families through intercountry adoption and who are subsequently identified in reports of child maltreatment can be tracked.

CDHS gathers annual data directly from all adoption-focused Child Placement Agencies (CPAs) licensed by CDHS. Annual reports of data are required to be submitted to CDHS on the State prescribed form, “Annual Adoption Report for the Placement of Children” within 60 days following the end of each calendar year. Data collected relates to both private domestic and intercountry adoptions in Colorado. CDHS strives to find a reporting system to consistently report data on private domestic and intercountry adoptions within Colorado.

CDHS continues to maintain a contract with Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains (LFSRM) giving the organization authority to perform administrative review and approval/denial functions of home studies completed for intercountry adoptions by licensed CPAs throughout the State. Originally established in 2018, the current contract maintained by CDHS and LFSRM took effect July 1, 2023 and is updated annually for a period of five years. LFSRM is responsible for ensuring that applicants seeking to adopt children/youth from other countries meet suitability and eligibility criteria, as required by Colorado statute and federal law. This oversight includes completion of fingerprint background checks, child abuse and neglect background checks, Colorado and national sex offender registry checks, and all other home study requirements to determine an applicants’ suitability for intercountry adoption.

In CY 2024, LFSRM reported that CPAs made 36 requests on behalf of adoptive applicants for review of new home studies to ensure compliance for recommendation to the United State Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS), the approval of which is required to accompany application documents (e.g. Form I600A and form I800A) to USCIS. CPAs further made 25 requests on behalf of adoptive applicants for review of updated home studies, the approval of which is required to accompany application documents (e.g. Supplement 3 - Request for Action for Approved Form I600A and Supplement 3 - Request for Action for Approved Form I800A). LFSRM further reported having received 41 notices of children arriving in Colorado through intercountry adoptions in CY 2024, though annual reports obtained from all CPAs throughout the state indicate 38 children arrived in Colorado after their adoptions finalized in foreign courts, while six children arrived in Colorado and have/will finalize in Colorado courts upon recommendation by the respective central adoption authorities in their countries of origin.

During FFY 2024, no children entered CDHS custody as a result of adoptive placement disruption or the dissolution of an adoption. In CY 2024, one intercountry adoptive placement dissolved. However, the dissolution of this adoption did not occur within Colorado; the adoptive family was placed through intercountry adoption by an Accredited Adoption Service Provider based in Colorado but resided in and dissolved their adoption in another state. During CY 2024 there were 14 licensed CPAs in Colorado providing private domestic and intercountry services; of these, seven agencies provided services related to intercountry adoptions, including three Adoption Service Providers Accredited by the Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Maintenance Entity (IAAME) and one Adoption Service Provider Approved by IAAME. The remaining three agencies involved in intercountry adoptions provided home study, training and post-placement/adoption services. Hague Convention Countries for which services were provided by Colorado CPAs include: Belize, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Ghana, Haiti, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, and Thailand.

CDHS continues to maintain adoption records for all CPAs that have ceased to provide adoption services and has established systems for which closed agency records are stored, tracked, and searched as mentioned in past reports. CDHS continues to contract staff for the digitization of paper adoption records back to the year 1800 and has made significant progress to that end.

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

Consistent with Colorado's efforts to expand prevention and early intervention services in the state's child and family services continuum, CDHS continues to support a number of programs that seek to prevent children under the age of five from entering the child welfare system, as well as reducing the length of time children under the age of five remain in foster care.

### Addressing Developmental Needs

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 Work Group was established in 2013 as a partnership between 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). This group works to improve the developmental screening and referrals system to ensure that children from birth through age five who are involved in Colorado's child welfare system have their needs identified and are connected to relevant family-driven services and supports. The Work Group 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 Advisory Work Group 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. The Advisory Work 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.

With the help of contracted facilitators, The CAPTA & Beyond Work Group convened two working sessions in CY 2024 with leadership across state agencies. The purpose of these sessions was to create and refine an action plan to meet the Work Group's goals. The first session was held in October 2024 and included leadership from CDEC, CDPHE, CDHS, the Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five<sup>87</sup>, and the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Council. This session resulted in a draft model that included the following: 1.) statewide access to the Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional, Second Edition<sup>88</sup> or other identified screening tool, 2.) community-identified structure, and 3.) statewide guidelines and standards. The second session was held in November 2024 and gathered internal Work Group leaders to identify next steps and create an action plan for securing funding and potentially necessary policy changes. The action plan was broken down into policy-focused goals and funding-focused goals.

The CAPTA & Beyond Work Group contracted with a vendor in 2024 to perform cost analysis activities for the draft model. This work was initiated with community and state interviews and estimated costs associated with the model and scenarios are underway. Additional data will be gathered on the current target population and an expanded population of all children involved with child welfare to be referred for screening broken down by age, county, and other relevant categories. Once finalized, the draft model and action plan will be shared widely.

Three CAPTA Briefs were finalized and approved for dissemination in November 2024; these are posted on the CDPHE website<sup>89</sup> and will be shared across relevant state agencies. Additionally, the CAPTA & Beyond Work Group began Early Intervention Comprehensive Rule Review to draft language to adopt post-referral screening policy to align with developed screening practices. Further information and progress made will be provided in future APSRs.

## 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

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<sup>87</sup> [Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five](#)

<sup>88</sup> [Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional, Second Edition](#)

<sup>89</sup> [CDPHE: Data and evaluation related to children and youth with special health care needs](#)

partner violence), parental characteristics (young age, low income, low education), 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): a home visiting program that serves first-time, low-income parents. See Colorado Nurse Home Visitor Program later in the "Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program" section of this APSR for more information about NFP and its availability across Colorado.
- SafeCare® Colorado: a home visiting parent education program that targets risk factors for maltreatment by providing direct skills training to parents and caregivers in the areas of parent-child interaction, home safety, and child health. See SafeCare® Colorado later in the "Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program" section of this APSR for more information about SafeCare® and its availability across Colorado.
- Parents as Teachers: a home visiting parent education program that teaches new and expectant families skills to promote positive child development and prevent child maltreatment. Parents as Teachers is currently available in 35 counties in Colorado as well as both recognized tribal communities.
- Child First: a two-generation mental health intervention offered in the home to serve young children and families. 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 parents. Child First is available in 24 counties in Colorado.
- Healthy Families America: 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. Healthy Families America is available in 4 counties in Colorado.
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT): 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.

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

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. These counties were selected based on a 2021 state solicitation process and Colorado MIECHV's 2020 needs assessment, identifying "at-risk communities" by the following indicators:

- Premature births as a percent of total births
- Percentage of low birth weight
- Infant mortality rate
- Percentage of women with three risk factors (under age 25, not married, and without a high school education)
- Child death rate
- Percentage of children in poverty
- Overall child maltreatment rate
- Juvenile crime arrest rate
- Percentage of high school dropouts
- Adult crime rate
- Substance use disorders
- Percentage of unemployment
- Percentage of individuals below the federal poverty level

Colorado MIECHV 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. Programs include Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), and Parents as Teachers. Together, they serve families

from the prenatal stage to kindergarten entry. The programs are administered by 16 local implementing agencies, and Table 7 shows the number of counties where MIECHV programs are available and have funded caseloads in FFY 2025.

Program	No. of Counties Served	Caseload
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters	7	248
Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)	2	437
Parents as Teachers	18	640
Total	21*	1,325

Table 7: Geographic distribution of MIECHV programs and approximate caseloads in FFY 2025.

\* Nine counties are served by more than one home visiting model

## Additional Services for Young Children and Their Families

### HealthySteps

The Home Visiting for School Readiness line in the Colorado Budget currently supports the implementation of HealthySteps, an evidence-based program housed in pediatric offices. It pairs a HealthySteps Specialist with families who request it during their well-child visits in the first three years of their child's life. The program is voluntary but all families in a practice have access to a professional with expertise in child development and early childhood mental health, in addition to the pediatrician. Families have access to a range of supports which include routine screenings, brief behavioral consultation over a few visits, or ongoing team-based well-child visits depending on the family's needs. This state funding supports the program in eight clinics, including three at Children's Hospital Colorado. The program has demonstrated an increase in a caregiver's activities to build early literacy skills. Mothers who have participated in HealthySteps are 22% more likely than those who have not participated in the intervention to show picture books to their infants every day. National research found that for every \$1 invested in HealthySteps, an estimated

\$2.63 in savings is realized by state Medicaid agencies each year. In SFY24, HealthySteps served 35,815 children ages 0-3. Of those served, 4,148 children received Tier 2 services and 2,773 received Tier 3 services. The CDEC contracts with Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) as the state intermediary for HealthySteps. As the state intermediary, ABCD provides training and technical assistance to HealthySteps providers, data collection, continuous quality improvement, and monitor model fidelity for the almost 30 HealthySteps sites in Colorado.

## Family Connects

Family Connects is an evidence-based universal home visiting support program. 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. During the previous reporting period, four counties participated in the planning and implementation of Family Connects in their counties. Among all families who welcomed a newborn in 2024 in those counties, 1,011 families received an Integrated Home Visit (IHV). Additionally, Family Connects nurses provided 27 “pre-IHV” visits and 65 follow up visits. Nurse home visitors offer these additional supportive visits when necessary, for example, to assist with lactation support or urgent mental health concerns. Additional pilot site funding was allocated to CDEC from the state legislature to expand program sites and reach. With the addition of state funding, the Family Connects Pilot Program will serve 12,000 births in multiple hospitals across eleven counties (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Eagle, Garfield, Jefferson, Mesa, Pitkin, and Weld).

Illuminate Colorado, a nonprofit addressing child maltreatment, is serving as the state intermediary and coordinates with Family Connects International to support implementation sites and model fidelity.

## Colorado Nurse Home Visitor Program

The Colorado Nurse Home Visitor Program, Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), provides state funding for home visiting services to first-time, low-income parents in all 64 counties in Colorado. NFP is a relationship-based program that partners highly trained professional nurses with vulnerable first-time mothers and their babies. It is an evidence-based voluntary program that shows significant improvement in the health and lives of families experiencing overlapping and concentrated barriers. Eligibility requirements include voluntary participation, being a first-time mother, living below

200% of the federal poverty level at intake, and enrollment in the program no later than 30 days post-partum. Mothers who enroll in the program receive one-on-one home visits with a nurse home visitor throughout pregnancy until the child's second birthday. The NFP program is currently administered by 21 agencies across the state, including public health departments, community health centers, community nursing agencies, and hospital systems. This program is managed by a four-part team that includes the CDEC, the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus College of Nursing, the NFP National Service Office, and Invest in Kids. This team, known as the Colorado NFP Coordination Team, meets quarterly to review implementation data from all 21 sites, monitor program improvement plans, and discuss trends.

In SFY 2024, the Nurse Home Visitor Program served approximately 3,609 families, and in SFY 2025, the program is expected to serve a similar number of families. NFP always serves more than the funded caseload because the clients do not stay the same throughout the year as they graduate or leave the program and new clients are enrolled. NFP's funding cycle is based on the state fiscal year; therefore, NFP data reflects the period of July 1st through June 30th of each year.

### SafeCare® Colorado (SCC)

SafeCare® is a nationally recognized, evidence-based, manualized home-visiting parent education program that provides direct skills training to parents and caregivers in three topics, including parent-child interaction, home safety, and child health. SafeCare® focuses on three key outcomes that are universally important for families. Those outcomes include creating positive relationships between caregivers and their children, reducing the risk of unintentional injury by ensuring homes are safe, and keeping children as healthy as possible. This program is implemented in Colorado as a voluntary service for families to prevent entry or re-entry into the child welfare system.

Families are referred to SafeCare® Colorado (SCC) through a partnership with Child Welfare and other organizations such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), other home visiting programs, schools, churches and faith-based organizations, community groups and organizations, public health agencies, family resource centers, and medical providers. Parents and caregivers can also refer themselves directly to the SCC program.

Eligible families include:

- Families with children ages five and under.
- Families that reside in a county or a tribal nation currently being served.

- Families who meet certain high-risk eligibility criteria.
- Families with non-court-involved child welfare cases.

Once referred, a SafeCare® Colorado parent support provider contacts the parent or caregiver to explain the program and inquire about their interest in participating. Participating parents and caregivers work side-by-side with a parent support provider to build on the skills they already have. Completing the entire program typically takes 18 to 20 weekly sessions (about 4-6 months). Each session typically lasts 60-90 minutes.

The SCC program is funded and managed through Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and supported by the National SafeCare® Training and Research Center (NSTRC) at Georgia State University. The Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect (Kempe Center) provides implementation services, including training and technical assistance, continuous quality improvement, and model fidelity monitoring for all SCC sites in Colorado. SCC is evaluated by the CSU Social Work Research Center.

The SFY 2024 appropriation for SCC programming was \$5,168,149. Sites are selected through competitive procurement solicitations. The most recent five-year grant cycle started July 1, 2021. In SFY 2024, a total of 15 sites provided SCC programming to residents of 39 Colorado counties and two tribes. SCC providers provided 10,711 visits, to 1,230 caregivers, who completed 1,207 topics.

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

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Prevention Services Division houses the Child Fatality Prevention System (CFPS), a statewide, legislatively mandated, multidisciplinary, multi-agency network to prevent child deaths. The CFPS has reviewed child deaths in Colorado since 1989 to describe trends and patterns and identify prevention strategies. CFPS consists of local child fatality prevention review teams, a State Review Team, and the CDPHE State Support Team. The State Review Team was established by the Child Fatality Prevention Act of 2013 (C.R.S. 25-20.5-401 and is charged with reviewing individual case findings of the local/regional child fatality prevention review teams across Colorado. Based on those findings, the CFPS State Review Team develops a report that is submitted to the Colorado General Assembly annually. The Child Fatality Prevention System: 2024 Annual Legislative Report includes specific recommendations regarding systemic trends across the state to prevent future child deaths. This report was submitted to

the Colorado General Assembly in August 2024 and is posted publicly on the CDPHE website<sup>90</sup> under CFPS Legislative Reports.

The ARD is responsible for managing the Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT), which is composed of up to 20 multidisciplinary team members including the child ombudsman, medical professionals, law enforcement, child advocacy, 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 Colorado's Comprehensive Child Welfare Statewide Information System, Trails. CFRT reviews fatal, near fatal, and egregious incidents determined to be a result of child maltreatment, when the child or family had previous involvement with the child welfare system within three years of the incident. In addition to reviewing these incidents, CFRT puts forth recommendations 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.

In addition to relevant criteria for excellence in child death reviews, as published by the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention in 2018, the CDHS CFRT has also recently incorporated more aspects of the Social Determinants of Health through the context of the Socio-Ecological Model. 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 in order to keep children safe, all systems and communities have a responsibility to help make families healthier and more resilient.

In 2022, the CFRT noticed an increase in incidents related to fentanyl use, ingestion, and exposure, and made a recommendation to track those incidents in order to make better informed legislative recommendations and to share data about the opioid crisis. From that recommendation, the ARD issued an informational memo<sup>91</sup> and Trend Alert to be shared with all counties regarding the need for awareness of Fentanyl's lethality, as well as mitigation efforts to reduce fentanyl related incidents, especially fatalities, through the use of safe storage and Narcan. Since the alert was issued, the CFRT has noticed a reduction in Fentanyl related fatalities, with an increase in near fatal incidents; however, this increase is believed to be correlated to more accessible and available resources, such as Narcan, which has helped to save many lives. Please see the Interventions under Objective 2.3 in the "Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision" section of this APSR for information on efforts to enhance child

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<sup>90</sup> [Child Fatality Prevention System](#)

<sup>91</sup> [IM-QAOJ-2023-0002: CFRT Trend Alert- Fentanyl Crisis](#) (PDF)

welfare's response to families when substance misuse or abuse is an identified concern.

The CDHS CFRT and CDPHE CFPS team work closely to consider data from each system and make annual 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. The two child fatality review teams are required by SB13-255 to make joint recommendations, which are submitted in an annual legislative report to the Colorado General Assembly each July 1st. These joint 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. The most recent joint recommendation can be found in the CDHS CFRT 2023 Annual Report in Appendix C. A guide about Colorado's Child Fatality Review and Prevention System<sup>92</sup> 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 continue to diligently comply with this requirement.

Please see Service Coordination within the "Update on Services" section of this APSR for information on how the 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)

### Overview

The PSSF program in Colorado is managed through the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (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:

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<sup>92</sup> [Child Fatality Two-Pager](#) (PDF)

- **Secure Permanency and Safety:** Support families through flexible, family-centered collaborative community efforts to foster strong family connections and provide comprehensive support services to ensure children live in safe, stable, and supportive environments.
- **Enhance Family Support Networks:** Increase well-being through enhanced family support services.
- **Prevent Unnecessary Separation:** Keep children with their families whenever possible.
- **Reunite Families:** Help reunite children with their parents or provide permanent living arrangements through adoption or kinship care.
- **Preservation Efforts:** Support families in crisis with 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.

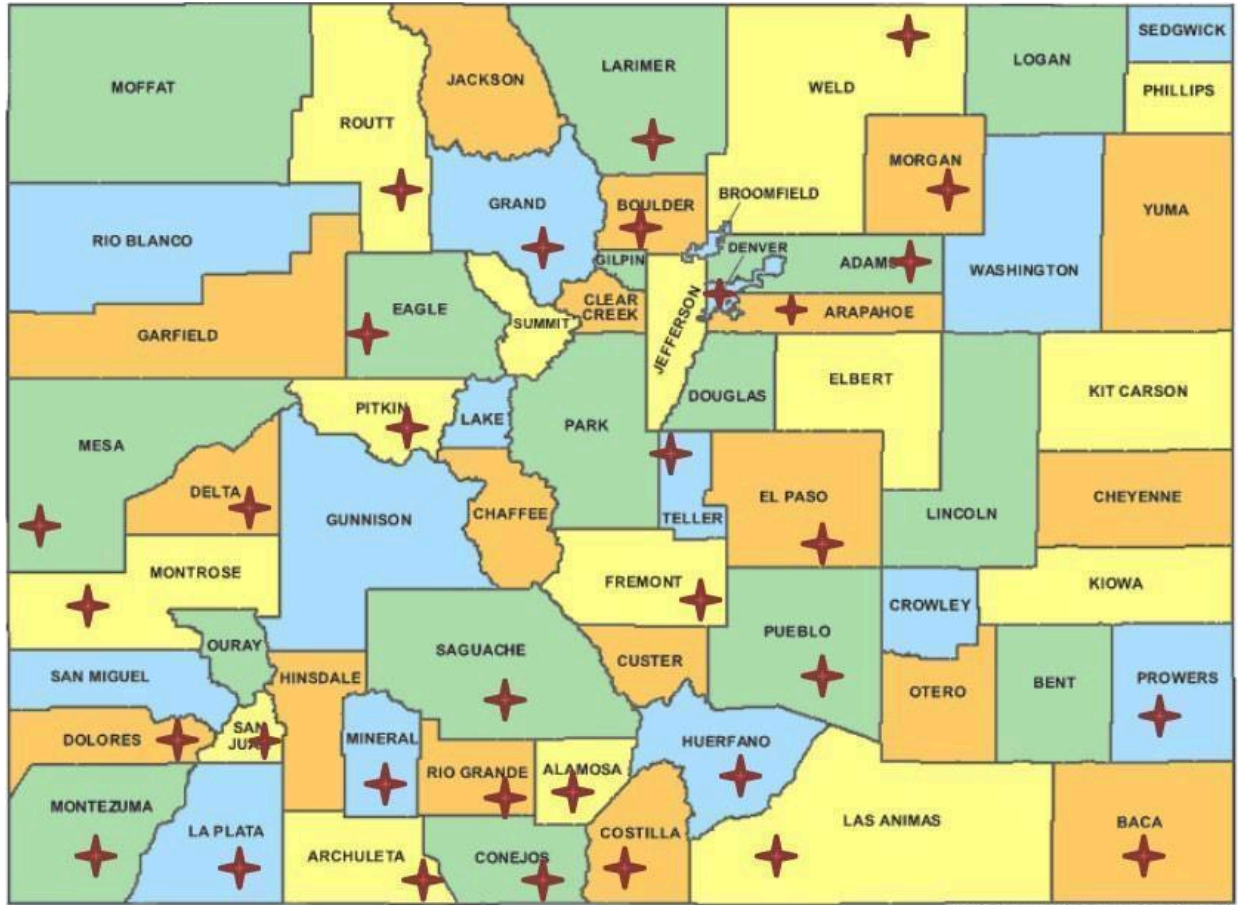
PSSF funds in Colorado are awarded through five-year contracts, with grantees currently in the fourth year of their contracts. Agencies continue to provide the services outlined in their initial applications for funding.

## Sites and Coverage

Colorado PSSF sites include local government agencies, private non-profit or not-for-profit community-based organizations, and tribal nations. They focus on child safety, permanency, and well-being. There are 22 PSSF contracted sites serving 35 counties across Colorado, including rural, frontier, and urban communities. The Family Strengthening Unit within CDEC offers support programs covering most of Colorado, ensuring widespread access to PSSF services.

PSSF funds were also available to the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Tribes. However, neither tribe accessed those resources during the last year. The opportunity to support both tribes with PSSF funds remains available annually in Colorado.

Figure 4 shows the map of PSSF counties served in Colorado through 5-year contracts.



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 = PSSF Counties Served through 5-year contracts

Figure 4: Map of PSSF counties served through 5-year contracts.

Funded PSSF service priorities for the five-year contracts were selected before the release of the request for proposals. These decisions were based on evaluations of different curricula, best practices, input from communities and parents, and service providers around the State.

### PSSF Service Priorities

Although some priorities have not been empirically validated, they integrate other curricula that have been evaluated and shown to have evidence or promising practice. PSSF services are implemented with fidelity when possible. The limitations on some sites due to capacity require minor adjustments to delivery, but those still adhere to dosage recommendations and assessment tools. Over the past year, at least two sites have indicated that the curriculum they implemented previously is no longer relevant

in their community or no longer meets the population's needs. Those programs have requested to change to other curriculums that will have a more meaningful impact on families.

All PSSF service priorities will be revisited and updated for the next Request for Proposal, consistent with input and feedback from stakeholders.

Below are each of the current PSSF Service Priorities, and the model(s) allowed and service area(s) of each.

### Intensive Family Case Management

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - High Fidelity Wraparound
  - Child First (limited to certain activities)
  - PSSF Case Management Guidelines
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Support, Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

### Family Engagement Meetings

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - Must identify the model to be used.
  - Family Team Conferencing; Family Group Decision Making; Permanency Teaming, etc.
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

### Incredible Years Program

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - Parent Group
  - Dinosaur School
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Support, Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

### Parenting Education Models

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - Nurturing Parents/teen module
  - Parents as Teachers
  - Child First
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Support, Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

## Fatherhood Programs

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - Nurturing Fathers
  - Caring Dads
  - Inside Out Dads
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Support, Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

## Respite Care

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - Emergency or planned.
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Support, Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

## Colorado Community Response

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - Prescribed Colorado model.
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Support

## Post Adoption/Post Permanency

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - Adoption Navigator
  - PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency/Kinship Guidelines
  - Model Approach To Partnerships In Parenting
  - NTDC
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

## Kinship Navigation

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency/Kinship guidelines
- Service Area(s):
  - Family Support, Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

## Parent Peer Support Programs/Mentoring Programs

- Model(s) Allowed:
  - Parent Cafes
  - Circle of Parents

- Service Area(s):
  - Family Support, Family Preservation, Reunification, Adoption

## Data Collection and Reporting

Program participant data is collected to evaluate activities that achieve program goals and service delivery. For most PSSF programs, data is collected in the CDEC Salesforce database. A few outlying programs collect data through a method different from Salesforce for various reasons.

Data reporting for PSSF has improved over the last year, and the method sites use to document PSSF activities has changed. The result is increased consistency and accuracy in the collected information. Current data no longer includes old cases that remained open for years with no activity.

There was no significant change in the families and individuals served in the last year; Table 8 shows the number of individuals served by each service area during FFY 2024.

PSSF Service Area	Numbers Served in FFY 2024
Family Support	840
Family Preservation	123
Time-Limited Reunification	102
Adoption Promotion and Support	95
Total	1160

Table 8: Number of Individuals Served by PSSF Service Area in FFY 2024

Table 9 shows the total number of services provided by each service during FFY 2024.

Service Provided	Total Services
Family Team Decision Making	59
Incredible Years Parent Program	53
Intensive Case Management	341
Kinship Navigation	39
Mentoring Programs	38
Not Entered	1
Nurturing Fathers	10
Nurturing Parenting	124
Parent Peer Support Programs	300
Parents as Teachers	36
Post Adoption Support	48
PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency Guidelines	40
Respite Care	71

Table 9: PSSF Service Numbers by Service Provided

In addition to the total numbers served above, there are three agencies supported by PSSF that are not using the Salesforce data system to collect information. These agencies serve families for a shorter period, just on an emergency basis, or cannot

enter the data for security reasons. These agencies track the families and services provided through PSSF resources. The information from those sites is reported in Table 10 and is not included in the numbers provided in the above sections.

Agency	Service(s) Provided	Number of Services	Number of Unique Families Served	Service Target Area
Safe Families for Children	Crisis Respite Care and one-time tangible needs	132 separate instances of respite care for families	28 (not unique, not tracked)	50% Family Support; 50% 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	Nurturing Parenting classes (NPP)	90 separate instances of services	10 adults through NPP; 80 adults through general family support services	Mostly Family Reunification; some Family Preservation

Table 10: PSSF Separately-Tracked Service Numbers by Agency

## Special Events

In addition to the numbers above, special events are hosted by a few local sites that are too large to collect individual data regarding the attendees. These events are crucial to meeting the needs of the communities and include the following:

- Adoption Support Gatherings: Held at parks or other family fun locations.
- Training/Learning Sessions: Organized for community families.
- Special Holiday Events: Where families can gather and receive support.

## 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. This is believed to be due to families reaching out more frequently and earlier for support, in addition to an increased focus on prevention services, which are provided more often in community-based settings. 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 a 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.

## Population at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment

As reported in the 2025-2029 CFSP, Colorado has identified children under the age of five as the population at greatest risk of maltreatment in Colorado. The PSSF program tracks trends of populations at risk of child maltreatment through collecting data and information on child welfare cases, including demographics and risk factors, through assessment. Program sites are also engaging in continuous quality improvement to determine if they are meeting the community needs and reaching the populations identified as being at risk. The program collaborates with other agencies and stakeholders to identify trends and adapt services as necessary.

Additional factors that can increase the risk of maltreatment include families experiencing financial stress, children with disabilities, families facing substance abuse issues, and communities where there are limited resources or support systems. The PSSF program does outreach to families experiencing factors that put them at higher risk for abuse and neglect. Several sites are located in communities where resources are more limited, such as rural and frontier areas. PSSF offers some financial assistance to those families experiencing a crisis, financial wellness programs, and nurturing parenting education programs so that parents/caregivers learn about realistic developmental milestones for their young children and how to nurture a child and be empathetic.

## Kinship Navigator Funding (title IV-B, subpart 2)

CDHS has implemented the Colorado Kinconnected (CO Kinconnected) kinship navigator program, receiving support from CISU. CO Kinconnected provides support to kinship caregivers both within the county departments and through the use of community services. This model provides a holistic approach by using a three-pronged approach, combining 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).

The 2022 Impact Study of the Colorado Kinnected Kinship Navigator Program<sup>93</sup> showed that families served through CO Kinnected had significantly higher rates of reunification, that children/youth remained in lower levels of care (primarily in the care of kin), and that kinship caregivers received more support services. CO Kinnected was rated as “supported” in the federal Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse in March 2024. Additionally, CO Kinnected has been designated as an Exemplary Program by the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center<sup>94</sup>.

As of February 2025, there are five counties fully implemented in CO Kinnected and two additional counties in the active implementation process.

## 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. The FFY 2025 MCV completion rate will be made available in late CY 2025 and will be reported in future APSRs.

While grant funding opportunities are available through MCV to increase the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children and youth in OOH care and to promote workforce retention, no counties completed applications for FFY 2024. MCV funds continue to be used for secondary trauma services to county casework staff and are blended and braided with other funding sources to ensure services are delivered to county partners as effectively as possible. Table 11 highlights the organizations that received MCV Grant funds for FFY 2024:

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<sup>93</sup> [Impact Study of the Colorado Kinnected Kinship Navigator Program](#) (PDF)

<sup>94</sup> [Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: CO Kinnected](#)

County/Agency	Award	MCV Expenditures
Alvarado Group	\$79,000	Secondary Trauma Services
Thomson Reuters	\$55,222	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 11: MCV awards and expenditures for FFY 2024.

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. DCW’s Permanency Services Folder is available to county staff, and houses contact note templates that include each area to be focused on in the visit to guide newer workers and remind seasoned workers to address each item on the treatment plan during the visit. Implementation of these templates has become an ongoing part of training and technical assistance provided to counties by county intermediaries and subject matter experts to ensure that there is continued momentum to move cases toward reunification and case closure.

DCW also believes that access to resources to combat secondary trauma are critical for the retention of the workforce. The Alvarado Group provides 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. The Alvarado Group offers 10 annual training days in 7 locations across the state to make this accessible for our rural and frontier counties, and regular office hours and leadership coaching are also included.

DCW will continue to use MCV funds 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 to improve the quality of caseworker visits.

## Progress Reporting for Other Grants and Requirements Coordinated Through the CFSP/APSR

### Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments (section 473 of the Act)

The ACF's Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments program awards eligible states or other Title IV-E agencies with incentive funds, which are used to improve performance in finding permanent homes for children and youth in foster care. Colorado was awarded \$120,000 in FFY24; these funds are used in accordance with the plan outlined in the CFSP, including post-permanency services and permanency recruitment activities. In addition to incentive funding money, Colorado earned \$1,000,755.00 in FFY2024 through adoption savings. For SFY 2025 the Colorado General Assembly authorized \$1,852,553 of spending authority for adoption savings.

See Item 6 in the "Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes" section and Intervention 3.2.3 in the "Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes" section of this APSR for information on Colorado's use of the Adoption Assistance Negotiation Worksheet in providing adoption and relative guardianship assistance.

### Post Permanency Services and Supports (PPSS)

Post Permanency Services and Supports (PPSS) began a new contract with Raise the Future beginning October 1, 2022, using Adoption/Relative Guardianship Assistance Program incentives funding. DCW continues to emphasize services and support in the rural areas of the state, where traditionally they had been underserved before PPSS and all areas of the program are available there. Post-permanency services are intended to preserve stable permanency for families who were previously served in child welfare and achieved permanency through guardianship, reunification (parents or relatives), reinstatement of parental rights, and adoption.

Below are examples of specific activities that were completed during FFY 2024:

- Trauma-informed/evidence-informed Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) training for families and professionals.
  - 47 TBRI classes were provided
  - 401 instances of attendance at a TBRI class (\*If one individual attended 4 classes, they were counted 4 times). It contains duplicated counts
- In-home coaching to assist TBRI®-trained families in successfully implementing the parenting model was offered in all rural counties once TBRI® training was completed by families. 361.14 hours of coaching were provided to 38 unduplicated families. The individualized coaching has been well received by families.
- Professional Consultation groups—11 virtual groups were held with professionals from different community organizations. Sharing TBRI® implementation ideas and creative Services.
- Limited services are being provided in the metro area through alternate philanthropic funds obtained by Raise the Future that are not part of this contract.

## Adoption Savings (section 473(a)(8) of the Act)

Colorado does not foresee any challenges in accessing and spending the Adoption Savings funds. Colorado is not making changes in its Adoption Savings Methodology calculation at this time. CDHS will use incentive funds in FFY 2025 according to the plan outlined in the CFSP, but again with a special focus on increasing permanency and post-permanency support.

Expenditures do and may include:

- Provision of post-permanency supports and services statewide; and
- Training to county child welfare staff regarding how to provide post-permanency support for families in their jurisdictions, what existing resources are available statewide and within their jurisdictions and how to support the development of post-permanency programs in their local communities. DCW staff continues to provide information about PPSS to counties. Counties are encouraged to provide information about PPSS for families that are achieving permanency through adoption, guardianship, and other forms of legal permanency (legal custody and reunification)

- DCW continues to contract with an independent contractor to assist with adoption assistance reviews and private adoption applications to ensure timeliness and quality of oversight amongst adoption practice. The maximum allotment is \$18,000.
- DCW is in the process of establishing a contract related to adoption processes and updating the Adoption Assistance Negotiation Worksheet. This contract is in the process of approval by DCW leadership. These updates will include enhancing the existing form with key modifications to improve usability, data collection, and accessibility, which will enable CDHS to address immediate needs while strategically planning for a comprehensive and user-centered solution. Improving data aggregation, enhancing accessibility, and streamlining workflows will promote greater transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the adoption assistance process, ultimately ensuring that all Colorado families receive the support they need to provide safe and nurturing homes for adopted children. This contract is estimated to be \$156,786.
- DCW is in the process of establishing a contract with an independent contractor to assist in transforming adoption, foster care and kinship forms into fillable PDFs and translating them to Spanish. This will allow county departments and families to have easier access to current forms. The cost is not anticipated to be more than \$2,000.

## Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)

CDHS continues to have a membership with The Association of Administrators of the ICAMA. This membership allows CDHS to utilize agreements between and among its member states enabling coordination of provisions of medical benefits and services to children/youth receiving adoption assistance in interstate cases. ICAMA prevents and/or eliminates geographic barriers that may delay or deny the provision of medical assistance and post-adoption services to families who have adopted children/youth with special needs. This membership increased this year to pay for enhancements to the ICAMA database and website, to \$11,500 which is funded through state funds.

## Voice for Adoption

CDHS continues to have a membership with the Voice for Adoptions organization and serves on their board. This organization is a bipartisan task force that provides accurate information on national adoption issues, common problems facing

children/youth who are awaiting adoption, and advocacy for policies that support adoption. Voice for Adoption costs \$1,500 annually and is paid through 2024. This item is funded through state funds.

## Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Grants

CDHS continues to use Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Fund grants to support the state's Family First implementation efforts, and to increase the ability to serve in-home open child welfare cases in adherence to the candidacy definition in Colorado's Family First Prevention Plan<sup>95</sup>, approved by the ACF. These funds have been used in the form of county/regional grants and directly by the state to accomplish these goals and are critical to building and expanding the capacity of the state's services array and placement continuum.

As of February 2025, all of the Family First Transition Funds have been encumbered, mostly through five rounds of Requests for Application, awarding a total of 37 projects/programs a total of \$5,268,854.00 from the transition funds. In their project/program, Transition Fund applicants sought to address the following three priorities identified for Colorado's services continuum array:

- Priority Funding Area 1: Expand the prevention services continuum to meet Family First requirements and to address locally identified needs and gaps in services across the state.
- Priority Funding Area 2: Develop a continuum of placement options that include high-quality QRTPs and sufficient options for lower levels of family-based care.
- Priority Funding Area 3: Address known and potential barriers to Family First implementation.

As of February 2025, 24 of the projects/programs that were awarded funds have concluded their work. DCW has drafted and will distribute a brief survey about the awardee experience to these 24 programs, in part to identify how successful they were in meeting one or more of the priority funding areas and sustaining improvements to Colorado's services continuum array. The remaining programs will be surveyed upon completion and no later than the end of the funding cycle on September 30, 2025.

The transition funds were also used to purchase a new web domain which will better support the Family First website content and make it easier to update as needed. This

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<sup>95</sup> [Colorado Five-Year Family First Prevention Services Plan](#) (PDF)

website revision project included the services of a graphic designer who assisted with reviewing, consolidating, and improving ease of access to Family First information for the public. Colorado's Family First website<sup>96</sup> was launched in June 2024 and includes improved navigation features and dynamic directories of prevention services<sup>97</sup> and licensed agencies and facilities<sup>98</sup>.

## Family First Transition Act Funding Certainty Grants

Prior to H.R 133, the federal government calculated Colorado's funding certainty baseline at \$52,189,338 (ACYF-CB-PI-20-08). An estimated certainty baseline of \$54,836,444 was established for FFY 2021 (ACYF-CB-PY-21-04, Attachment G) to accommodate the enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage. While FFY 2020 utilized 90% of the baseline calculation for grant qualification, the FFY 2021 calculation is 75% of the baseline amount. Colorado does not qualify for Funding Certainty Grants as it earned over 75% of the certainty baselines during FFY 2021.

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

### Description of Program Design and Delivery (section 477(b)(2)(A) of the Act)

DCW supervises and oversees the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood ("Chafee") 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. Through this plan, the counties and tribes identify how they or their contractors will implement the Chafee program. Chafee integrates youth voice throughout service planning and delivery, and counties identify in the annual plan how they integrate youth voice into the areas of education, employment, permanent connections, housing, and health.

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,

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<sup>96</sup> [Family First in Colorado](#)

<sup>97</sup> [Prevention Services Directory](#)

<sup>98</sup> [Colorado Licensed Agencies & Facilities Directory](#)

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 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. See *Serving Youth Across the State* within this “John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood” subsection for more information on two state-funded programs (the State Grant Program and the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program) that are expanding the access of Chafee and Chafee-like services.

The new Chafee model in Colorado will incorporate the coach-like engagement model of Pathways to Success, which is currently in the final phase of the Children’s Bureau’s Youth at Risk of Homelessness grant. 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 and to provide guidance on how to integrate the State Grant Program and the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program into existing Chafee programming.

Ongoing guidance is provided through Chafee Quarterly Meetings. This provides the opportunity for the DCW staff to provide updates on changes to the program, get feedback from program staff through subcommittee meetings, and bring in partner agencies to present on relevant topics that pertain to transition-age youth. The following partners and topics were discussed at the Chafee quarterly meetings during CY 2024 and SFY 2025:

- Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) discussed expanding apprenticeship programs for foster youth including recruiting additional employers in parts of the state that have fewer apprenticeship opportunities.
- Pathways to Success implementation updates.
- Implementation of the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program and updates about the process and utilization of the vouchers.
- Colorado NYTD Review updates and outcomes.
- Colorado Sexual Health Initiative facilitated a Positive Youth Development (PYD) training.
- Scholarship program updates and information.

- Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) provides ongoing updates about the Education and Training Voucher, FosterEd, and EmpowerEd programs.

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, CDPHE, and the Colorado Judicial Branch regularly engage youth from COYLN.

The COYLN held a retreat in August 2024 to address how to enhance youth voice, plan future events, and celebrate 10 years as a foster youth voice-centered network. Youth and professionals from the COYLN assisted with the planning and implementation of the 2024 Foster Youth Voice Awards and Celebration held in Colorado Springs.

The COYLN also represents foster youth voices with a conglomerate of 28 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 Celebration and other activities held in the month of 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 and youth representatives of DYS).
- Elevating Connections Youth Council
- Boulder County Youth Advisory Board
- Youth MOVE CO!
- Fostering Great Ideas!
- Lived Experience Action Panel
- Advocates for Children, CASA
- The Denver Indian Family Resource Center

The Chafee program integrates the principles of PYD throughout the planning and implementing process, with a focus on respecting youth as the experts in their lives. Youth participate in the Chafee program voluntarily, and Chafee workers foster positive and collaborative relationships with each youth to achieve their goals. The

Chafee program builds on the strengths of the youth and supports them to overcome any barriers.

In October of 2024 COYLN hosted a PYD Training in collaboration with the Colorado Chafee Program during a Chafee Quarterly meeting in celebration of Foster Youth Voice Month. The training was facilitated by the CDHS Tony Grampas Youth Services (TGYS) Program and over 40 participants attended.

### National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

NYTD information continues to be relayed to a broad audience. Communication tools such as websites, blogs and newsletters continue to be sent to the courts, foster parents, child placement agencies, and other community members. NYTD data is also presented at the Youth Services Chafee Quarterly and to the YABs via the COYLN.

The 2024 Federal NYTD Review was a comprehensive evaluation of the entire Colorado NYTD Independent Living Program. The evaluation occurred in three phases:

- Pre-onsite phase: kick-off virtual meeting for introductions and planned expectations along with several other virtual meetings;
- Onsite phase: case file reviews, NYTD system demonstration, two youth focus groups and stakeholder interviews; and
- Post-onsite phase: presentation of federal findings and conclusions.

Colorado is working to address several areas to improve the State's NYTD Independent Living Program. These areas of improvement include, but not limited to:

- Format the survey to the federal questions without including additional state questions. Previously, Colorado's survey included supplemental questions to gather more specific information from youth. While these questions allowed for more detailed data to be gathered, they increased the overall length of the survey and had a negative impact on completion rates.
- Embed the federal survey questions in the online survey and include the "skip logic" format.
- In the online NYTD chart, include a timestamp of the date and approximate time when each survey was completed and entered in the Trails system. This action step has been completed.
- Create a consistent NYTD training process for caseworkers across the State.
- Include a Spanish version of the Colorado NYTD survey.

The goal for the NYTD Program is to expand training and outreach to the Foster Youth in Transition Housing Program managed by DYS and to potential new YABs. NYTD outreach will continue at the Celebration of Educational Excellence in June 2025, among other events.

## Serving Youth Across the State (section 477(b)(2)(B) of the Act)

Colorado makes Chafee services, including the ETV Program, available to youth formerly in foster care who moved Colorado after exiting foster care in another state. Colorado coordinates regularly with Independent Living Coordinators from other states to verify foster care experience and then links youth with their local Colorado program. In some situations youth reach out directly to staff members at DCW and then are linked with a local Chafee program; in others the youth connect with the local program and DCW staff assist in the outreach to other states.

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," HB21-1094) and The Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program ("Voucher Program," SB23-082).

The State Grant Program was created to increase the funding for existing Chafee programs and to expand services to areas of the state that don't have coverage. The program has expanded through four additional contractors who provide services to an additional 16 counties that previously did not have coverage. Two of the contractors were brought on in FFY 2023 and other two in FFY 2024. This expansion will continue during this planning period until there is statewide coverage for eligible youth.

The Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program (SB23-082) is currently being implemented by DCW to provide up to 100 state housing vouchers to eligible youth throughout Colorado. SB23-082 provided additional funds specifically for case management services for youth who are eligible for the Voucher Program and youth who are receiving Family Unification Program, Foster Youth to Independence (FYI), and other housing vouchers to ensure that supportive services can be provided for a longer period of time if needed for eligible youth. Programs that are eligible to apply for case management funds include existing Chafee programs and/or State Grant Program recipients that can serve eligible youth ages 18 up to their 26th birthday. See Intervention 4.1.2 in the "Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes" section of this APSR for more information on the Voucher Program.

Through legislative changes DYS was able to hire four housing specialists to assist youth leaving their system to have supports in transitioning to a successful adulthood. DYS also applied to become a State Grant Program recipient so their housing specialists could access the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher program.

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 Colorado is consistently meeting its response rates, the data that is obtained through the NYTD process is more meaningful. CDHS will use data 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 Colorado Department of Education to implement the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Part of this collaboration includes obtaining annual data on the graduation rates for students in foster care, which 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 HB21-1094: Foster Youth in Transition Program<sup>99</sup> 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 young people 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 (SB23-082); see Intervention 4.1.2 in the "Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes" section of this APSR for more information on the Voucher Program.

Chafee programs apply for funding on an annual basis and within that application they identify which services they will provide for different populations. Since Colorado

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<sup>99</sup> [HB21-1094: Foster Youth in Transition Program](#)

expanded eligibility for the program as widely 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.

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

County Chafee programs continue to utilize Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers in the continuum of services provided to eligible youth. 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 continue to collaborate with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs Division of Housing and discuss how the two teams can best support each other. This has enabled the Division of Housing partners to provide technical assistance and guidance around pertinent housing resources for eligible youth.

At the county level, 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:

### 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, community-based, integrated and accessible system of care for transition-age youth and young adults, ages 14 to 25.
- Colorado Sexual Health Initiative: provides access to training in comprehensive sexual health curricula to the state and will continue to be utilized by Chafee and county staff.

### Permanency Outcome Area Partnerships

- Permanency Task Group (PTG): a Sub-PAC subgroup focused on improving permanency outcomes for youth.

## Housing Outcome Area Partnerships

- Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood Advisory Board: created through HB 21-1094 to guide decisions on the creation of the State Grant Program, and more recently has been utilized to provide recommendations on the implementation of SB23-082 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 CDHE or their designee.
- Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing Collaboration: provides administrative oversight of the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program payment system and provides programmatic guidance as the subject matter experts for implementing housing assistance.
- Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth: 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 for youth formerly in foster care.

## Education Outcome Area Partnerships

- Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE): administer the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program through an interagency agreement with CDHS. They also administer the FosterEd EmpowerEd programs for the state.
- My Colorado Journey (Formerly College in Colorado): 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 the Colorado Department of Education to implement the requirements around Every Student

Succeeds Act and to reduce the barriers that youth in foster care experience in secondary education.

### Employment Outcome Area Partnerships

- Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)/Workforce Centers: The Chafee program is working with CDLE 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.

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

In FFY 2024, 822 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.

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

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

Colorado's 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. DCW previously created an interagency agreement with CDHE to administer the ETV program to

ensure that ETV can be utilized for eligible youth alongside the state funding created through SB22-008: Higher Education Support for Foster Youth<sup>100</sup>. 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 five Postsecondary Options Navigators that support and advocate for youth who are eligible for the ETV and FosterEd programs as well as a new program called EmpowerEd (through HB24-1403: Higher Education Support Homeless Youth<sup>101</sup>) throughout 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 the 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, along with the many public and private scholarships and grants and campus-based programs, coordinate outreach so that 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.

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<sup>100</sup> [SB22-008: Higher Education Support for Foster Youth](#)

<sup>101</sup> [HB24-1403: Higher Education Support Homeless Youth](#)

CDHS will continue to coordinate with CDHE to administer the ETV program and 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.

Training about PYD, trauma informed-care, permanency and Chafee/ETV Wraparound Supports, and NYTD will be provided for counties, Chafee caseworkers, CASAs, workforce center staff, higher education staff, and the Colorado State Foster Parent Association. Youth Voice/YABs, Permanency, and Normalcy Chafee funding has been utilized to integrate more youth-focused classes into the Child Welfare Training System (CWTS). The training provides 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 and will continue to hold quarterly meetings to provide targeted technical assistance and training pertaining to youth in and formerly in foster care.

Table 12 reflects the annual reporting of ETVs awarded by school year.

School Year (SFY)	Total ETV's Awarded	New ETV Recipients	Total Eligible ETV Applicants
2020-21 School Year (SFY 2021)	115	45	n/a
2021-22 School Year (SFY 2022)	104	28	n/a
2022-23 School Year (SFY 2023)	84	45	n/a
2023-24 School Year (SFY 2024)	125	78	177
2024-25 School Year (SFY 2025)	133	n/a	289

Table 12: Annual Reporting of ETVs Awarded by School Year

### Chafee Training

See Education Training Vouchers (ETV) Program within the “John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood” subsection of this APSR and the 2025-2029 Training Plan in Appendix H for information about the training that Colorado provides to foster parents, relative guardians, adoptive parents, and professionals to support them in promoting and assisting youth in their transition to adulthood.

### 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 Tribe (UMUT) and Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT). CDHS takes this opportunity to provide information on many programs, including the Chafee and ETV programs. DCW staff met with the Director of the Southern Ute Tribal Department of Human Services throughout SFY 2025 to discuss the logistics of applying for Chafee funding in FFY 2026. DCW will continue to meet with the Southern Ute Tribal

Department of Human Services, and continue engaging with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Department of Human Services. 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. See the "Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes" section of this APSR for more information on CDHS' consultation with the SUIT and UMUT.

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# Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes

## Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT)

During SFY 2025 the CDHS Tribal Affairs Specialist had several layers of contact with the SUIT. The primary form of contact is a set weekly meeting between the Tribal Affairs Specialist and Shannon Eastwood, SUIT Tribal Services Director, as requested by SUIT Tribal Services. This weekly meeting allows for continuous work and communication to occur at the direct program level by bringing in CDHS subject matter experts and program directors to discuss matters and problem solve directly with the SUIT Tribal Services Director. These weekly meetings also allow for a more immediate response to any changes and concerns that come up throughout the year.

The second level of contact with SUIT is a monthly meeting between the Tribal Affairs Specialist and Lindsay Box, SUIT Executive Officer, which began in December 2024. Previously, meetings with the Executive Director occurred during in-person visits by the Tribal Affairs Specialist as time allowed. The decision to establish monthly meetings was made in partnership between the Tribal Affairs Specialist and the Executive Officer was made to create a consistent date and time for partnership.

DCW's Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Specialist also had continuous contact with SUIT. The ICWA Specialist had monthly scheduled online meetings with the SUIT Tribal Services Director, Shannon Eastwood, to keep up to date on any concerns and to provide information as necessary. The ICWA Specialist also made quarterly in-person visits to SUIT to discuss any matters requested by the SUIT Tribal Services Director. SUIT handles child welfare concerns within their Tribal boundaries and has a highly effective Tribal Service team, public safety team and process, Tribal child code, and extensive court system to handle any Indian Child Welfare concerns within their boundaries. The ICWA Specialist position helps the local counties, La Plata and Archuleta, connect with SUIT on cases where non-native children living within the Southern Ute boundaries have concerns. SUIT is a checkerboarded reservation that requires consistent communication between the State, county, and Tribal offices.

CDHS held an in-person formal consultation with the SUIT on October 18, 2024. The consultation was kept to a small group consisting of the CDHS leadership available for the consultation and the SUIT Tribal Council. Individuals in attendance included:

- Michelle Barnes, Executive Director, CDHS

- Minna Castillo, Deputy Executive Director of Community Partnerships, CDHS
- Shelley Banker, Director of Office of Economic Security, CDHS
- Debra Oldenettel, Director of Office of Children, Youth, and Families, CDHS
- Misgana Tesfaye, Director of Business, Innovation, Technology, and Security, CDHS
- Dr. Dawna Haynes, Director of People-Centered Practices, CDHS
- Phillip Gover, Tribal Affairs Specialist, CDHS
- Melvin J. Baker, Chairman, SUIT Tribal Council
- Lorelei Cloud, Vice Chair, SUIT Tribal Council
- Marvin Pinnecoose, Treasurer, SUIT Tribal Council
- Vanessa Torres, Councilwoman, SUIT Tribal Council
- Marjorie Barry, Councilwoman, SUIT Tribal Council
- Marty Pinnecoose, Councilman, SUIT Tribal Council
- Andrew Gallegos, Councilman, SUIT Tribal Council
- Shannon Eastwood, Director, SUIT Tribal Services
- Kathryn Redhorse, Director, Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs

The consultation focussed on presentations of each CDHS Director's departments and one-page descriptions of the varying programs CDHS supports. The Tribal Council was allowed time to ask questions and give comments, and following the presentations each Tribal Council member was also given time to inform CDHS leadership of the variety of needs that the Southern Ute would like to support. The requests were captured in notes taken from several perspectives and then added to the consultation Action Log, which will be a focus of a work group of CDHS and SUIT personnel over the next year until the next in-person consultation.

During this consultation, the presentation from OCYF included information about the continuation of the child welfare contract that SUIT has access for reimbursement of foster care expenditures. Additionally, the discussion included a reminder that any changes could be made that SUIT would want to consider. The presentation also included acknowledgement of SUIT being consistent on sending documentation of

expenditures that allows for consistent reimbursements to be processed quickly. The ICWA Specialist position had recently been vacated at the time of the consultation and Director Oldenettel informed the Tribal Council that the position description would be sent to allow the SUIT Council with time to review the description before the position was posted. The position is currently in process to be filled.

The OCYF presentation also included information about the Chafee Program, which was included in the program descriptions that were handed out to all in attendance. The SUIT Council did not ask any direct questions about the Chafee program; prior to and after the consultation, DCW's Transition Services Administrator has had Chafee-focused meetings with the SUIT Tribal Services Director, Shannon Eastwood, supported by the CDHS Tribal Affairs Specialist. The NYTD collection and ETV benefits and services have been the focus of the early discussions and are being considered by the SUIT Tribal Services Director. Currently the Transition Services Administrator and the SUIT Tribal Services Director have weekly set meetings to support SUIT in applying to become their own Chafee program site in Colorado under the next grant cycle.

Following the October 2024 consultation, CDHS and SUIT established a quarterly meeting to report to the Tribal Council on the consultation action items' current status. The initial meeting was set for January 28, 2025 to include the SUIT Tribal Services Director and the CDHS Tribal Affairs Specialist; however, this meeting focused on more immediate legislation regarding the Grand Junction Indian School property and the discussion on consultation action items was postponed to April 2025.

## Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT)

There has been continuous contact between the Tribal Affairs Specialist and the UMUT through email, online meetings, and in-person visits. The relationship and communication has occurred often, though has not been as regimented as CDHS' connections with SUIT. The CDHS Tribal Affairs Specialist has set monthly in-person visits to UMUT to discuss the particular needs identified by UMUT Social Service personnel through email and virtual meeting discussions. The primary SFY 2025 discussions with UMUT have included Saleena Boyington, Director of the UMUT Social Services (who vacated the position in September of 2024); Tim Root, supervisor of the UMUT Social Services Director and interim Director while the position was vacant; and Kenny Victor, the newly hired Director of UMUT Social Services. Additionally, the Tribal Affairs Specialist met with Terry Knight, the UMUT Cultural Preservation Office personnel. This partnership centered on the Grand Junction Indian School and memorialization efforts at the CDHS Grand Junction Regional Center property.

A formal consultation has not occurred with UMUT Tribal Council in SFY 2025. The Tribal Affairs Specialist has reached out to UMUT regarding an in-person consultation, and made efforts to meet with the UMUT council on October 17, 2024. Due to unforeseen conflicts the UMUT Tribal Council members were not available for that date; however, John Trocheck, UMUT Executive Officer, and the UMUT Behavioral Health Director appeared for the meeting. These individuals spoke with CDHS leadership about some of the needs and concerns that UMUT contends with on a daily basis.

DCW's ICWA Specialist also had continuous contact with UMUT throughout SFY 2025. The ICWA Specialist had monthly scheduled online meetings with the UMUT Tribal Services Director, Saleena Boyington, during her tenure to keep abreast of any concerns and to provide information as necessary. The ICWA Specialist also made quarterly in-person visits to UMUT to discuss any matters requested by the UMUT Social Services Director. UMUT handles child welfare concerns within their Tribal boundaries, and utilizes the Bureau of Indian Affairs for public safety and court process utilizing the UMUT Tribal Code. The ICWA Specialist helps the local county, Montezuma, connect with the UMUT Social Services as needed.

The CDHS Tribal Affairs Specialist has been making efforts to connect the Child Welfare and Chafee Programs with UMUT's previous interim Director of Social Services, Tim Root, and the newly hired Director of Social Services, Kenny Victor. Meetings were scheduled for discussion but did not occur due to schedule conflicts. The CDHS Tribal Affairs Specialist is making additional efforts including sharing program descriptions and scheduling additional meeting dates to have in-depth discussions about the programs.

## Child Welfare Contracts

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 OOH placements and 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 have separate contracts with CDHS to access this funding.

## The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

DCW has taken various measures to monitor and work to increase ICWA compliance, including 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' individual practice with ICWA cases. While the ICWA Specialist position has been vacant since October 2024, these office hours have been on hold and DCW's Ongoing Child Protection Administrator has instead worked with counties individually as questions arise. Once the ICWA Specialist position is filled, these office hours will resume.

The ICWA Supplemental Tool<sup>102</sup> continues to be available to counties to help increase ICWA compliance across Colorado and to create more consistent practice for all ICWA cases. The Supplemental Tool includes a checklist of areas that must be completed during an ICWA case as well as timelines for each step, and can serve as a reminder for important areas such as ICWA preferred placement preferences and helpful avenues for counties to pursue in terms of placements.

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 permanency is not delayed for the child. ARD case review data for OOH cases in CY 2024 shows the county-based performance assessment for ICWA compliance to be 86.43%.

As reported in the 2025-2029 CFSP, DCW's ICWA Specialist and In-home Permanency Specialist began a project proposal during SFY 2024 to request additional court information from judicial court partners via the Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Act (SANCA). The proposal includes adding data from judicial partners informing which American Indian/Alaska Native families are involved in the judicial court system via a Dependency and Neglect (D&N) court case to the SANCA agreement to allow DCW to better monitor active efforts to achieve permanency, Tribal involvement/partnership, and strengthening family engagement of American Indian/Alaska Native families. The data will be used to monitor how many ICWA cases are currently open in Colorado and allow counties to verify information pertaining to an open D&N case. Conversations between CDHS and judicial partners have begun about existing data sharing agreements; future progress will be reported in subsequent APSRs.

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<sup>102</sup> [ICWA Supplemental Tool](#) (Google Sheet)

# Updates to Targeted Plans

## Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

DCW is working with the National Center for Diligent Recruitment (NCDR) to develop a sustainable and flexible approach to the 2025-2029 Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan. DCW seeks to be adaptable to adjusting when conditions and circumstances change, while maintaining the integrity of the plan and partnering to develop mutual agreement and support for strategies for desired change. While there are no changes to the planned projects outlined in the Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan, not all objectives targeted for SFY 2025 were able to be completed prior to July 1, 2025. The updated plan with revised target dates can be found in Appendix E.

DCW's permanency team supports recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents on a broader statewide basis. These staff review county departments and child placement agency diligent recruitment plans to determine trends, recruited populations, and needs, based on the size of the agencies. All the diligent recruitment plans received by CDHS in June 2024 have been reviewed to enable the DCW staff to understand the strengths and challenges of each agency, thereby facilitating support for the implementation of their respective plans. The findings have been shared with NCDR and collaboration has begun on an implementation plan focused on the items of the 5-year diligent recruitment plan strategy matrix that were marked to begin in SFY 2025. NCDR has expressed readiness to attend in-person meetings in Colorado during SFY 2026 and planning has begun for NCDR to attend an event to review and share promising recruitment and retention strategies/practices learned or achieved. This is anticipated to occur in summer 2025; more information will be provided in future APSRs.

DCW staff 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 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. Future quarterly meetings will continue conversations with NCDR to focus on an implementation plan for 2025-2029 Plan items prioritized for SFY 2026.

The DCW staff continues to hold virtual meetings with the county department and CPAs located outside the Metro Denver area and has conducted in-person meetings

with several county department and CPA staff to gain insights into their recruitment and retention efforts. These meetings have focused on providing individualized support to agencies and addressing questions as they arise.

Colorado continues to be committed to kinship-centered practice; see Item 10 in the “Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes” section and Intervention 3.1.2 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information on kinship-centered practice in Colorado. DCW will explore the impact as practice changes take effect by seeking feedback from non-certified kinship, kinship foster parents, and traditional foster parents about changes in practice and their needs, 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 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. More information will be provided in future APSRs.

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

## Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan

The DCW’s Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan remains in effect as submitted with the 2025-2029 CFSP. The goals continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure work is being accomplished and remains relevant.

Colorado has continued progress on updating its Psychotropic Medication Guidelines and anticipates releasing an updated version in spring of 2025. To accompany the new Guidelines, a provider training course has also been co-developed by the BHA and CDHS highlighting the most important changes and updates. The CWTS Caseworker Fundamentals training continues to include guidance to assure safe prescribing of psychotropic medications for children/youth in care. Work continues to develop procedures and protocols to ensure that children/youth in foster care are not inappropriately diagnosed with mental illness, other emotional or behavioral disorders, medically fragile conditions, or developmental disabilities, and placed in settings that are not foster family homes due to inappropriate diagnoses.

During SFY 2025, several child welfare town halls were held related to behavioral, physical, and mental health and well-being of children and youth whose families are

involved in the child welfare system. Topics include Lead Testing as a part of Early and Period Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT); emergency and voluntary commitment; Plans of Safe Care for working with families impacted by prenatal substance exposure; and Managed Care Entities and upcoming changes for SFY 2026.

CDHS and HCPF have created and co-supervise a small unit to problem solve individual and system level barriers in the state's processes for maintaining Medicaid coverage for children/youth in county custody. Though not yet fully staffed, this team has mapped and streamlined current processes and has created a weekly collaboration of county, residential provider, CDHS, HCPF, BHA and OIT partners to problem-solve in real time. This has already decreased time without Medicaid access for some children and youth and has started to inform system and technical fixes to prevent some barriers in the future.

The Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan requires that caseworkers provide information to youth emancipating from foster care regarding advance medical directives and medical insurance. Caseworkers are required to document that this information has been provided to the youth in the youth's Emancipation Transition Plan (ETP); however, there is currently no data field in Trails where caseworkers can enter information regarding advance directives or former foster youth Medicaid. Because of this, documentation is often captured in narrative format, is inconsistent across caseworkers and counties, and monitoring of this requirement is manual as it is not possible to generate a report to monitor whether information on these topics was provided. As the Trails Team makes progress on the modernization of Case functionality (see Item 19 in the "Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes" section of this APSR for more information), there will be added fields in the ETP to document the review of information regarding advance directives and former foster youth Medicaid. This is anticipated to occur by the end of CY 2025, and will ensure more consistency in documentation and allow the creation of a report for automated monitoring of this requirement.

Finally, CDHS was able to obtain state funding to create a team of behavioral health and mental health clinicians focusing on assessing treatment plans for children and youth with the highest acuity needs and who struggle to find appropriate residential therapeutic environments when that level of care is indicated. An implementation plan for this team is currently underway, and this team will be onboarded by late summer of 2025. This team will also integrate into the collaboration with HCPF and OCYF's medical director in efforts around preventing inappropriate diagnoses for children and youth in foster and other OOH care settings.

No changes are needed to the Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan this year. Please see the 2025-2029 Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan in Appendix F.

## Disaster Plan

Since the submission of the 2025-2029 CFSP, Colorado has not been affected by a natural disaster.

Colorado has continued hosting a weekly statewide virtual conference call with all county human services departments and state leadership across CDHS. Additionally, DCW has continued hosting town halls on a variety of topics as detailed in Intervention 1.2.1 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR.

DCW has increased the required frequency of monitoring contact between DCW staff and all counties, which has proved beneficial to support county practice improvement efforts. See Specialized Response Team in the “Update to the Vision and Collaboration” section of this APSR for more information regarding Right County Support. In addition to returning to more in-person county visits across the state, DCW has maintained the Directors' Digest monthly distribution to ensure county staff have all essential updates in one place. Counties continue to respond positively to in-person visits, and continue to leverage virtual meetings when appropriate. These visits help DCW staff gain insight into how communities across Colorado continue to recover from COVID-19, and what challenges they continue to face.

In fall of 2024, Colorado’s hotline application was upgraded; this change is reflected in the 2025-2029 Disaster Plan in Appendix G under Emergency Action #4. DCW and county departments continue to discuss the importance of data integrity efforts in our child welfare database system regarding the accuracy of race/ethnicity that represents self-identification.

CDHS has three family voice advisories/councils (two of which are overseen by DCW) that work 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. See Family Voices in the “Update to the Vision and Collaboration” of this APSR for more information on these groups.

The Family First Transition Funds have 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 American Rescue Plan Act funds have also been used to translate state forms into commonly spoken languages to increase access across communities in Colorado. See Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Grants in the “Update on Services” section of this APSR and the CAPTA Report in Appendix A for more information.

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

## Training Plan

DCW is in the process of redesigning the Child Welfare Training Academy to update and clarify the objectives and expectations of Caseworkers and Supervisors. DCW has convened a work group with members from county departments, the Training Steering Committee, CWTS, and DCW to align on what competencies the training system should focus on and to redesign a Caseworker Fundamental Academy that is comprehensive and addresses the newly established competencies. See Intervention 1.2.2 in the “Update to the Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes” section of this APSR for more information regarding current progress toward this effort.

In CY 2024, DCW’s Learning and Development Team began a proactive bill analysis process with the Kempe Center to determine impacts to CWTS and identify needed changes to the new caseworker academy and ongoing training. This includes modifications to existing training, such as changes to terminology, and the development and implementation of new training in response to legislation. The process of reviewing, analyzing, and integrating legislative changes with CWTS will support alignment between the child welfare workforce knowledge and current legislative initiatives by ensuring timely updates to training materials. This process will be continued and improved upon in coming years to help determine future changes or modifications to Colorado’s child welfare training system.

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

# Financial Information

Colorado's CFS-101, Parts I, II, and III are submitted with this report as separate files. CDHS included information regarding the number of individuals, families, population, and geographic areas to be served wherever possible; however, data for some services/activities are not readily available. Title IV-B, subpart 1 are allocated to Colorado counties through a block allocation that also includes Title IV-E and state funds; the number of individuals and families served through PSSF can be found in "MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) (title IV-B, subpart 2)" in the Updates on Service Descriptions section of this APSR. CAPTA funds are allocated to CDHS and are used for interventions and programs at the county level and are made available for all 64 Colorado counties. However, because CAPTA funds cannot be used for direct client services there is no way to determine the number of individuals or families served by the funds.

As noted in the "Update on the Services" section, CDHS continues to work to improve data collection related to the Title IV-B, subpart 2 PSSF grant. There are multiple methods of collecting data, and data related to one-time services may include duplicate counts of individuals served in other PSSF service areas. It is anticipated that enhancements through the Trails Modernization project and implementation of the new CDEC information system will resolve these issues. As a result, more reliable data will be available to report on future CFS101 forms.

The requested amount for FFY 2024 in Part I and Part II of the CFS-101 is \$4,557,474. As PSSF sites are determined through a competitive procurement process, it is not possible to anticipate the geographic areas where services will be available until after the procurement process is completed. This information is included on line seven, population served, of the CFS101, Part III form which covers FFY 2022 grants. FFY 2022 state and local share expenditures for the purpose of Title IV-B, subpart 2, amount to approximately \$1,081,952.

Lastly, CDHS is not currently able to separate out foster care maintenance expenditure estimates between foster family and relative foster care and group/institutional care. The data sharing between Trails and the state's financial information systems complicates attempts to cleanly separate expenditures between the two categories. For this submission, the expenditure estimates for both categories are reported on line seven (a) of the CFS-101, Part II form. The 2024 APSR program instructions request information on the amount of FY 2005 Title IV-B, subpart 1 and non-federal matching funds that Colorado expended for foster care maintenance. In FFY 2005, \$2,890,135 Title IV-B, subpart 1 funds were expended for foster care

maintenance and \$630,045 non-federal funds, applied as a state match, were expended for foster care maintenance. Title IV-B, subpart 1 funds were not used for expenses related to childcare and adoption assistance payments. Title IV-E funds are used for those purposes.

The CFS-101 Part II form references Population A and Population B in column (k) - Population to Be Served. For the purposes of this form, Population A includes all children and youth in foster care, while Population B includes all children and youth who are eligible for funds per rules in the Code of Colorado Regulations.

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# Glossary of Acronyms

ACF	Administration for Children and Families
ACYF	Administration on Children, Youth, and Families
APSR	Annual Progress and Services Report
ARCH	Applied Research in Child Welfare
ARD	The Administrative Review Division
BHA	Behavioral Health Administration
BID	Best Interest Determination
CANS	Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
CARR	Colorado Adoption Resource Registry
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CBCAP	Community Based Child Abuse Prevention
CCR	Code of Colorado Regulations
CCWIS	Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System
CCWSC	The Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium
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
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
COYLN	Colorado Youth Leadership Network
CPA	Child Placement Agencies
CPO	Child Protection Ombudsman
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 (January 1 through December 31)
CYMHTA	The Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act
DCA	Deputy Compact Administrator
DCW	Division of Child Welfare
DR	Differential Response
DYS	Division of Youth Services
ETV	Educational Training Vouchers

FAC	Family Advisory Council
FAR	Family Assessment Response
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year (October 1 through September 30)
FYI	Foster Youth to Independence
FYiT	Foster Youth in Transition
HCPF	Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
HRA	High Risk Assessment
IART	Institutional Assessment Review Team
ICAMA	Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance
ICON	Integrated Colorado Online Network and Management Information System
ICPC	Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
IOG	Interagency Oversight Groups
ISST	Individualized Service and Support Teams
LFSRM	Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains
MCV	Monthly Caseworker Visit
MIECHV	Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting
NCDR	National Center for Diligent Recruitment
NEICE	National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise
NFP	Nurse-Family Partnership
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
ORPC	Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel
PA	Program Area
PAC	Policy Advisory Committee
PCIT	Parent-Child Interaction Therapy
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
RCCF	Residential Child Care Facility
RGAP	Relative Guardianship Assistance Program
ROM	Results Oriented Management
SANCA	The Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Court Act
SCC	SafeCare® Colorado
SFY	State Fiscal Year (July 1 through June 30)
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

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