



2027 Annual Progress and Services Report

In accordance with [ACYF-CB-PI-26-03](#) and its definition of “critical updates,” the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) incorporates by reference the information and data contained in its prior year Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) as if fully set forth herein. Accordingly, this submission provides only critical updates since the prior year APSR, consistent with the reporting requirements of 45 C.F.R. §1357.16.

Child and Family Services Review

Colorado’s child welfare system was last reviewed through the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process in 2017. CDHS is currently participating in Round 4 of the CFSR; Colorado’s Statewide Assessment was submitted in May 2026 and Colorado’s Onsite Review is scheduled for July 2026. CDHS anticipates utilizing the Round 4 results to inform upcoming continuous quality improvement child welfare projects.

Goal 1: Supporting child welfare workforce recruitment and retention efforts.

According to data from Trails, Colorado’s caseworker turnover rate for calendar year 2025 was 20.22%, a reduction from the baseline data of 20.80% in 2023.

The Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium (CCWSC) is a partnership between CDHS, county departments of human services, and participating schools of social work. The CCWSC supports child welfare workforce recruitment and retention by providing scholarships to social work students who commit to post-graduation public child welfare employment in Colorado. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026, Colorado Mesa University joined the CCWSC as the fifth participating university partner. Additionally, a partnership with the Center on Workforce Excellence and Leadership and the University of Louisville enhanced CCWSC program sustainability and supported a cohort increase of 31% to 67 scholars, including a 120% increase in rural scholarships.

Colorado is in the process of redesigning its training for new caseworkers. The new Pre-service Caseworker Academy aims to better prepare caseworkers through an updated curriculum, alignment with real-world job expectations, and evidence-informed interactive learning and skill practice. The redesigned Pre-service Caseworker Academy will launch with a five-cohort pilot phase scheduled for October 2026 through March 2027. The pilot will be evaluated using competency measures, skill assessments, observations, interviews, and focus groups.

Since 2016, Colorado's Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS), Trails, has been modernizing to transition to a modern web-based application while bringing the Trails system into compliance as a CCWIS. Trails is expected to be fully modernized by July 2026. Learning from each iterative modernization release, CDHS has expanded post-rollout support for Case Modernization in SFY 2026 to include tailored regional, in-person, and virtual training and job aids.

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.

Colorado submitted an amendment to its Family First Prevention Services Act plan to include Motivational Interviewing (MI) in spring of 2026. Colorado also launched a one-year MI Child Welfare Pilot in early 2026 to assess MI's impact on improving family engagement, increasing worker retention, and decreasing out-of-home foster care placements. Additionally, the pilot aims to support the development of a Community Pathway through Family Resource Centers and Child Welfare Title IV-E drawdown methods.

In 2024, the Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee partnered with Mile High United Way's 211 Help Center to develop the 211 Colorado Warmline, a confidential, multilingual, community-based prevention response housed outside of child welfare. The Warmline pilot launched in December 2025 in Boulder, Gilpin, and Pueblo counties and aims to connect families with resources and reduce unnecessary child welfare reports when child abuse or neglect is not a concern. The pilot utilizes phone pathways that allow callers to choose resource navigation with a 211 Navigator, who can refer callers back to the county department if safety concerns arise. In the first three months, the Warmline received approximately 30 calls, with nine routed back to counties due to safety concerns. Low initial utilization is attributed to a lack of community awareness and trust, especially among mandated reporters. The Reimagining Child Welfare Steering Committee is exploring approaches to inform and educate mandated reporters and community members to increase Warmline use.

While Plans of Safe Care (POSC) are intended to support infants and families impacted by prenatal substance exposure, results from a 2023 survey of child welfare professionals across Colorado highlighted that many professionals were unaware of or unsure of their role in POSC. To improve statewide consistency and compliance, CDHS developed a new POSC toolkit in May 2025, released a new web-based POSC 101 training on the CWTS in September 2025, expanded POSC fields in Trails to enhance accurate data collection, and provided technical assistance and in-person training throughout 2025. CDHS plans to re-administer the survey to Colorado's child welfare

professionals in 2026 to assess the success of these efforts. CDHS monitors timely completion (within 60 days of opening an assessment) of POSC for screened-in prenatal substance exposure allegations. Early analysis highlights an increase in timely POSC completion from below 50% in 2023 to 86% in 2025.

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

In April 2026, DCW and the National Center for Diligent Recruitment (NCDR) co-hosted a two-day summit to support agencies in strengthening foster parent recruitment and retention. The summit had 119 participants, including state, county, and child placement agency staff and community providers. It offered guidance toward more effective, targeted diligent recruitment, with breakout topics covering data-driven, community-based, and ICWA recruitment. Presenters included child welfare and NCDR staff, foster parents, and youth with lived experience in foster care.

CDHS continues to enhance kinship care support and implement kinship-focused legislative changes. CDHS is in process of promulgating rules for kinship foster care certification, and issued interim guidance to county departments in August 2025. According to Trails data, the number of certified kinship foster care homes increased by nearly 46% in the past year, from 611 certified homes on December 31, 2024 to 890 certified homes on December 31, 2025.

One of CDHS' Wildly Important Goals is to reduce the number of children/youth with high acuity needs on waitlists for out-of-home placement and treatment by 75% by June 30, 2027. A lead measure for this goal is the expansion of specialized foster care (including therapeutic, treatment, and professional foster care) bed options. CDHS has continuously increased specialized foster care bed options, with 226 licensed beds in June 2024, 271 licensed beds in June 2025, and 301 licensed beds in March 2026. CDHS is actively working with county departments and child placement agencies to assess further expansion, refine recruitment, and continue growing professional foster care beds, which started at zero and now totals seven contracted beds.

According to Colorado's Results Oriented Management System, 91.5% of children/youth in out-of-home placement were placed in a family-like setting (including county-certified foster homes, CPA-certified foster homes, certified kinship homes, non-certified kinship homes, and trial home visits) in calendar year 2025. This is an increase from the baseline data of 87.4% in 2023.

Colorado has a concerning population of youth with significant unmet needs who lack access to appropriate treatment and become "stuck" in detention, hospitals, or offices while waiting for placement. In September 2025, CDHS partnered with the Arapahoe

County Department of Human Services, the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, the Colorado Human Services Directors Association, and the Behavioral Health Administration to host a summit to support youth with highly acute behavioral health needs. The summit brought together system partners to discuss past and current solutions, increase understanding of the new Medicaid eligibility process for treatment, and prioritize immediate action to reduce youth awaiting residential treatment in inappropriate settings. Various subcommittees are continuing work on interventions and expansion of the out-of-home placement continuum, and a second summit was held in May 2026 to continue progress.

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

According to the Colorado Administrative Review Division's case review data for out-of-home cases in calendar year 2025, 65.47% of children/youth who changed schools had a Best Interest Determination (BID) meeting when required. Colorado's Special Education Services for Students in Foster Care Workgroup's recent school stability recommendations included Universal BIDs and transportation. The Workgroup anticipates finalizing Universal BIDs and Universal School Notification Letters during SFY 2027. Colorado's "Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care" training covers legislative background, BID meeting requirements, and agency roles. It has been required for new caseworkers, new supervisors, and new Child Welfare Education Liaisons since August 2024. Anyone who completes the training is required to complete the training every two years. The first round of retraining is occurring now and into SFY 2027. CDHS and the Colorado Department of Education are updating this training to address complex educational, special education, and facility school placements.

The Fostering Opportunities program continues to be implemented in Jefferson County, Denver, and Brighton Public Schools, serving 325 youth in the 2024-2025 school year, though enrollment dropped to 282 as of January 2026 due to resource reallocation in one district. In June 2025, the Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab published the [Year One Results Report](#) (PDF), which demonstrates that the fidelity has improved over the past year and that the program is improving coordination and collaboration between local child welfare and education systems. CDHS held two convenings in SFY 2026 for program staff that focused on fidelity, Positive Youth Development, Motivational Interviewing, and supporting transitions.

Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs) provide flexibility in housing options for youth participating in the Foster Youth in Transition (FYiT) Program. SILPs allow

youth to opt into housing options including college dormitories, kinship homes, transitional living programs, apartments, private homes, or other age- and/or developmentally-appropriate placements. Throughout SFY 2026, CDHS provided ongoing technical assistance and training to counties regarding SILP processes and requirements, while also working to resolve Trails Mod data accuracy issues. To further enhance the FYiT program, DCW launched a Continuous Quality Improvement workgroup in April 2026 to gather county feedback on SILPs, stipends, and overall program effectiveness. According to Trails data, the percentage of FYiT participants utilizing a SILP increased from 76.55% in 2024 to 78.12% in 2025.

The Fostering Success Voucher Program, established in 2023 by [SB23-082: Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program](#), provides up to 100 housing vouchers and mandatory case management for Chafee-eligible youth ages 18-25. The program launched in April 2024 and by February 2026, 85 youth had been issued a voucher and 76 were on active leases. As of February 2026, 73 youth were on the program waitlist, which operates under fluid prioritization to serve youth with the highest need based on the risk factors identified in the definition of "imminent risk of homelessness." Mandatory case management was provided by 14 counties and four contractors during SFY 2026. This case management involves collaboration between CDHS Transition Services Specialists and Chafee workers, and uses a proactive approach that has resulted in zero evictions to date. CDHS gathers youth feedback through the recertification process for program improvement, including developing "Move On Conferences" for transition planning and plans to develop a Post-Transition Feedback Loop survey.