Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

Submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' Children's Bureau

Introduction

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 provide most direct services, including child welfare services, to Colorado families. The Colorado Department of Human Services' (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, monthly contacts, and technical assistance. 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. The CDHS Division of Child Welfare (DCW) monitors child welfare practice statewide to ensure alignment with statute, rule, and guidance.

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Colorado PIP Goals, Objectives, Activities, and Lead Measures

Goal 1: Safely reduce the number of children and youth in out-of-home care.

Objective 1.1: Strengthen family engagement to prevent out-of-home placement and support family reunification.

Activities

1. Expand consistent utilization of safety planning and support planning.
2. Increase parent involvement in the development of written case plans.
3. Enhance family search and engagement efforts, particularly for fathers and paternal relatives.

Objective 1.2: Enhance family needs assessment and service provision through the structured review of child welfare data.

Activities

1. Utilize 90-day case reviews as a quality assurance process to assess unique child and family needs and monitor safety or support plans.
2. Expand referral pathways to and utilization of evidence-based services through the implementation of Colorado's Family First Prevention Services Plan (PDF).
3. Partner with counties and state agency partners to maximize available funding streams for service access and service expansion.
4. Define clear action steps following Institutional Abuse Review Team reviews of maltreatment incidents in foster care that identify root causes and trends.

Objective 1.3: Enhance cross-system collaboration to promote safety and permanency for children and youth in out-of-home care.

Activities

1. Continue collaboration with medical and behavioral health partners to increase cross-system identification of services for children and youth in care.
2. Continue collaboration with judicial partners to enhance data sharing efforts and identify additional opportunities for cross-system partnership.

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3. Continue and enhance partnership with legal partners to identify opportunities for increased collaboration among case parties.

Goal 1 Lead Measures

A. Ratio of foster homes to sibling sets.

   - Numerator: Number of homes available to children in out-of-home placement on the last day of the reporting month.
   - Denominator: Number of sibling sets who were in foster care on the last day of the reporting month.

B. Percentage of out-of-home cases with a family engagement meeting held within six (6) months.

   - Numerator: Number of removals included in the denominator with a family engagement meeting held within the first six (6) months.
   - Denominator: Number of removals that reached six (6) months open during the reporting month.

C. Percentage of children who remain safe during in-home services.

   - Numerator: Number of children included in the denominator who did not have a substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment during the month.
   - Denominator: Number of children having in-home status during the month.

D. Rate of foster homes with a substantiated report of maltreatment (per 1,000 homes).

   - Numerator: Number of foster homes included in the denominator that had a substantiated report of maltreatment in that month. Foster homes include certified foster, certified kinship, noncertified kinship homes, treatment, therapeutic, and professional foster homes.
   - Denominator: Number of foster homes with a placement at the end of the calendar month.

E. Percentage of 90-day reviews completed timely.

   - Numerator: Number of children included in the denominator in cases that are compliant with Family Service Plan (FSP) review requirements. FSP reviews are required to be documented and approved in Trails within

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90 days of the initial treatment plan, and 90 days after each previous review (12 CCR 2509-4, 7.301.3C).
    - Denominator: Number of children involved in a child welfare case during the report period.

F. Percentage of appropriate services being provided in out-of-home cases.

    - Numerator: Number of cases included in the denominator that had an answer of "Yes" to the question: During the review period, has the child/youth/family received the services that have been identified as being needed through ongoing assessment, that assure the child/youth has received safe and proper care, and that are culturally and ethnically appropriate?
    - Denominator: Number of cases reviewed by the Administrative Review Division (ARD) during the reporting month for which this question is not marked as "N/A."

G. Median number of days to court disposition.

    - Count: Number of Dependency and Neglect court cases that held a first court disposition or adjudicated disposition hearing.
    - Median: Median number of days from a Dependency and Neglect court filing to the first court disposition or adjudicated disposition hearing held.

Goal 2: Increase the number of licensed foster homes.

Objective 2.1: Evaluate and refine current recruitment and licensing practices and monitoring.

Activities

1. Leverage partnerships with Child Placement Agencies (CPAs) to recruit foster homes in communities with placement resource gaps.
2. Increase consistency in the monitoring of licensing standards between counties and CPAs.
3. Create statewide recommendations for tiered foster parent training modules based on provider experience.

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Objective 2.2: Expand the use of certified kinship care to sustain family placements for children and youth when remaining home is not possible.

In Colorado, kinship care includes both non-certified and certified kinship caregivers.

Activities

1. Expand utilization of Kinship Navigator Programs.
2. Implement decreased requirements for kinship caregivers to be certified to increase access to foster care payments in Colorado.
3. Implement the allowance of provisional kinship certification to support certification earlier in the process of child welfare involvement.
4. Provide statewide training and technical assistance on the Relative Guardianship Assistance Program (RGAP) to increase the number of finalized RGAP agreements.

Objective 2.3: Expand the operational capacity of specialized foster care.

In Colorado, "specialized foster care" includes therapeutic, treatment, and professional foster care as defined below:

- Therapeutic foster care: a program of foster care that incorporates treatment for the special physical, psychological, or emotional needs of a child placed with specially trained foster parents, but does not include medical foster care.
- Treatment foster care: a clinically effective alternative to a residential treatment facility that combines the treatment technologies typically associated with more restrictive settings with a nurturing and individualized family environment.
- Professional foster care: a foster parent(s) who has a treatment foster care license and is under contract with DCW's Provider Services Unit to provide services to youth with high acuity needs. This is a pilot program under the treatment foster care license rather than a separate license type.

Activities:

1. Explore opportunities to reduce administrative burden for foster care providers seeking a therapeutic or treatment foster care license.
2. Collaborate with CPAs and county departments to identify services that are needed to sustain existing treatment and professional foster homes.
3. Increase the percentage of eligible children and youth referred to a state-contracted professional foster care placement admitted within 30 days.

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Goal 2 Lead Measures

A. Propose to remove: Ratio of certified kin foster homes compared to the prior 12 months.

   - Numerator: Number of certified kin foster homes in the reporting month.
   - Denominator: Average number of certified kin foster homes in the previous 12 months.

B. Percentage of initial placements with relatives.

   - Numerator: Number of children included in the denominator who were placed with a relative as their first placement setting.
   - Denominator: Number of children removed from home during the reporting month.

C. Ratio of new RGAP agreements compared to the average of the prior six (6) months.

   - Numerator: Number of children that had a finalized RGAP agreement during the reporting month.
   - Denominator: Average number of children that had a finalized RGAP agreement in the previous six (6) months.

D. Ratio of children placed in congregate care settings to specialized foster care homes awaiting placement.

   - Numerator: Number of children placed in congregate care settings at the end of the reporting month.
   - Denominator: Number of specialized foster homes certified at the end of the reporting month without a placement.

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