



2023 Annual Progress and Services Report

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan

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

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Glossary of Acronyms

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ACF	Administration for Children and Families
ACHY	Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth
AI/AN	American Indian/Alaskan Native
APHSA	American Public Human Services Association
APSR	Annual Progress and Services Report
ARCH	Applied Research in Child Welfare
ARD	Administrative Review Division
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
ASO	Administrative Service Organizations
ASTHO	Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
BIPOC	Black and Indigenous People of Color
BPCT	Best Practice Court Teams
CANS	Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act
CARES Act	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate
CBA	Credit Builders Alliance
CBCAP	Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention
CBCAP ARPA	Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention American Rescue Plan Act
CBCS	Capacity Building Center for States
CCIA	Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs
CCR	Code of Colorado Regulations
CCWIS	Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System
CCWSC	Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CDEC	Colorado Department of Early Childhood
CDHE	Colorado Department of Higher Education
CDHS	Colorado Department of Human Services
CDPHE	Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
CEEX	Celebration of Educational Excellence
CFPS	Child Fatality Prevention System
CFRT	Child Fatality Review Team
CFSA	Colorado Family Support Assessment
CFSP	Child and Family Services Plan
CFSR	Child and Family Services Review
CHSDA	Colorado Human Services Directors Association
CYMHTA	Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act
CIP	Court Improvement Program
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
COYLN	Colorado Youth Leadership Network
CPA	Child Placement Agency
CPO	Child Protection Ombudsman

CPTF	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
DCA	Deputy Compact Administrator
DCW	Division of Child Welfare
DIFRC	Denver Indian Family Resource Center
DIHFS	Denver Indian Health and Family Services
DOH	Department of Housing
DR	Differential Response
DU	Denver University
DYS	Division of Youth Services
EBP	Evidence-Based Practices
EDI	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
ETP	Emancipation Transition Plan
ETV	Education and Training Voucher
FEM	Family Engagement Meeting
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FSE	Family Search and Engagement
FSPP	Family Support through Primary Prevention
FYI	Foster Youth to Independence
FYiT	Foster Youth in Transition
GAL	Guardian ad Litem
HCPF	Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
HIPPY	Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
HTTG	Human Trafficking Task Group
IART	Institutional Assessment Review Team
ICAMA	Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance
ICPC	Interstate Compact for Placement of Children
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
IDD	Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities
IDI	Intercultural Development Inventory
ILA	Independent Living Assessment
IMD	Institutions for Mental Disease
IY	Incredible Years®
LFS-RM	Lutheran Families Services-Rocky Mountain
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning +
LMS	Learning Management System
MAPP	Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting
MCV	Monthly Caseworker Visits
MEPA	Multi-Ethnic Placement Act
MIECHV	Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting
MST	Multi-Systemic Therapy
MSU	Metropolitan State University

NCWWI	National Child Welfare Workforce Institute
NDAP	Nurturing Dads and Partners
NEICE	National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise
NFP	Nurse-Family Partnership
NSTRC	National SafeCare® Training and Research Center
NTDC	National Training and Development Curriculum
NYTD	National Youth in Transition Database
OBH	Office of Behavioral Health
OCR	Office of the Child's Representative
OEC	Office of Early Childhood
OOH	Out-of-Home
ORPC	Office of the Respondent Parent Counsel
OSRI	Onsite Review Instrument
PAC	Policy Advisory Committee
PAT	Parents as Teachers
PFS	Protective Factors Survey
PIP	Program Improvement Plan
PPSS	Post-Permanency Supports and Services
PRIDE	Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education
PSSF	Promoting Safe and Stable Families
PTG	Permanency Task Group
QRTP	Qualified Residential Treatment Program
RCHY	Rural Collaborative on Homeless Youth
RFP	Request for Proposal
RGAP	Relative Guardianship Assistance Program
ROM	Results Oriented Management
RTS	Roadmap To Success
SANCA	Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Courts in America
SCC	SafeCare® Colorado
SFY	State Fiscal Year
SILP	Supervised Independent Living Placement
SLC	Supervisor's Learning Community
SLE	Supervisor's Learning Exchange
SLVBH	San Luis Valley Behavioral Health
Sub-PAC	Sub-Policy Advisory Committee
SUD	Substance-Use Disorders
SUIT	Southern Ute Indian Tribe
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TBRI	Trust-Based Relational Intervention
TOL	Transfer of Learning
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
TSC	Training Steering Committee
UCCS	University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
UMUT	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and

WIG
WWK
YARH

Children
Wildly Important Goal
Wendy's Wonderful Kids
Youth at Risk of Homelessness

Introduction

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) is pleased to submit the third Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) for the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). This report documents CDHS's progress towards accomplishing the goals, objectives, and interventions in the 2020-2024 CFSP, in addition to the requirements set forth in the Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) most recent program instruction ACYF-CB-PI-22-01¹ related to the 2023 APSR.

In recognizing that achieving the goals and objectives established in the CFSP is a collaborative effort, CDHS works closely with a variety of stakeholders in alignment with the CFSP vision statement "Stakeholders collaborate to achieve bold systems change, ensuring safety, permanency and well-being for Colorado's children, youth and families".

Colorado has a state-supervised, county-administered human/social services system, and county departments are the main provider of direct services to Colorado's families. CDHS' responsibility includes rule promulgation, guidance, program oversight and monitoring of county performance and practice, which is done by working closely with counties in collaborative workgroups. CDHS also collaborates with other Colorado state agencies, service providers, and community stakeholders to coordinate services and programs that serve Colorado's children, youth, and families. It is important to emphasize that these partnerships are not only important in the provision of services to children, youth, and families, but also to prevent children, youth, and families from being involved in the child welfare system altogether.

This year's APSR will feature a selection of major initiatives that exemplify collaborative efforts across a wide selection of partners and stakeholders. While this is not a comprehensive list of all collaborators CDHS partners with to achieve the goals and objectives in the CFSP, this year's APSR seeks to highlight the following collaborators:

- Office of Early Childhood (OEC)²
- Office of Behavioral Health (OBH)
- Judicial Partners
- Collaboration with Colorado's Native American Tribes
- Collaboration with County Staff/Frontline Workers
- Children, Youth, Families, and People with Lived Experiences.

¹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/policy-guidance/pi-22-01>

² The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) will be transitioning to the Colorado Department of Early Childhood in July 2022. For more information, please see <https://cdec.colorado.gov/>.

Collaboration

Prevention

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

This transformation has been made possible with the collaborative efforts of many partners and stakeholders. In an effort to coordinate and streamline programs, services, and to develop processes for blending, and braiding funding sources, the Child Welfare Prevention Task Group (CWPTG) was convened in summer 2021. Seated members represent all regions of the state's county departments of human services, community organizations, and service providers (including but not limited to the Tennyson Center for Children, Illuminate Colorado, the Family Resource Center Association, the OMNI Institute, and the Kempe Center), people with lived experience/family voice representation, state agency partners, and research and evaluation experts. The CWPTG was appointed through a Child Welfare Sub-Policy Advisory Committee (Sub-PAC) action and operates as an advisory committee for contributing to the designing of a broad statewide prevention infrastructure and is responsible for recommending updates to Colorado's Family First Five-Year Prevention Plan. The actions will be achieved through the development of processes to equitably identify appropriate services and supports to be included in future amendments, policy creation and revisions, subcommittee oversight, and monitoring progress towards identified goals. Members are not only developing the strategic infrastructure needed not only to implement Family First, but also ensuring sustainability and inter-agency collaboration across a network of state agencies and community partners. This cross-agency collaboration creates intentional working relationships, increased communication, strategic alignment, shared resources, and fosters mutual benefit towards a common goal. Underlying conditions that are foundational to the CWPTG include ensuring equity, valuing those with lived expertise, and is community-grounded, strengths-based, and inclusive throughout Colorado. This ensures that all children, youth, and families have timely access to services and supports that meet their needs and promote safety and well-being.

Within the CWPTG, tasks are delegated to three subcommittees:

- The State Prevention Integration Subcommittee: This subcommittee is tasked with identifying ways to streamline and align prevention processes, services, and funding streams. This subcommittee will operate within the following drivers of change: Foster connection points between systems and sectors working towards prevention, promote cross-system collaboration through shared knowledge of and decision-making structures for funding streams and service availability, inform policy and make recommendations through rule and

statute to ensure agility and responsiveness, create norms around prevention to reduce stigma and build protective factors. In efforts to foster cross-system collaboration efforts, members include: Family Resource Center, county departments of human services, OBH, OEC, Casey Family Programs, Colorado Home Visiting Coalition, Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab, Fatherhood Support, Colorado Association of Family and Children's Agencies, Fostering Colorado, Cornerstone Programs, Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, Shiloh House, and Illuminate Colorado. Participation in the subcommittee is open to the public and participation is invited and encouraged.

- The County/Region Prevention Implementation Subcommittee: This committee will operate within the following drivers of change: build collaborations across community and systems partners to advance prevention approaches, identify root causes, and address inequities. This subcommittee will build services and supports within the child welfare prevention framework that are flexible and tailored to meet unique family needs, create a referral, service, and support connection infrastructure to promote a child welfare prevention framework, support implementation of existing frameworks and plans around maltreatment prevention, build relationships, and partner across efforts, build collaborations across community and system partners to advance prevention approaches, identify root causes, and address inequities. Discussions in this subcommittee help inform prevention capacity building, implementation, and service delivery. Members include: OBH, OEC, county departments of human services, people with lived experience, the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families, Guardians ad Litem (GALs), family voice representation, Parent Possible, Cornerstone Program, Tennyson Center for Children, Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel, the Kempe Center, Illuminate Colorado, SafeCare® Colorado, Fostering Healthy Futures, Collaborative Management Program, Grand Family Coalition, and the Colorado Human Services Directors Association (CHSDA).
- The Data and Evaluation Subcommittee: This subcommittee leverages data, research, and evaluation to inform prevention strategies. Members include: OBH, OEC, OMNI institute, county departments of human services, Kempe Center, Family Resource Center Association, Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab.

Participation and facilitation of each of the subcommittees operates through a collaborative model. This model reflects an approach that is team-focused, diplomatic, curious, and built on trust. Each subcommittee has co-created working group agreements to ensure that all participants are included in the conversation, expectations are clearly outlined, and the foundational conditions of the Child Welfare Prevention Task group are upheld. Diverse perspectives and collaboration create progress in solving complex problems.

The Children and Youth Mental Health Treatment Act (CYMHTA)³ (C.R.S 27-67-101, et. seq.⁴), under the purview of OBH, allows for families to access mental health

³ <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/behavioral-health/cymhta>

⁴ <https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/olls/crs2017-title-27.pdf>

treatment services for their child or youth, as an alternative to child welfare involvement when a dependency and neglect action is not warranted. Additional prevention efforts are also highlighted through this APSR, with particular focus on efforts undertaken by the OEC, such as the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families, the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program, and extensive early intervention and prevention services targeted at children under the age of five.

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

CDHS recognizes the value of family participation and engaging the voices of those with lived systems experience. To meaningfully outreach and engage parent, youth, and family voices, CDHS has worked diligently through 2021 to discuss compensation for participants. Funding secured through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) will be used to compensate Family Voice representatives for their participation in the CWPTG, and the subcommittees. A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be published through Colorado's vendor system to identify an agency responsible for oversight and distribution of the compensation funds. The agency will be required to submit compensation records to CDHS. Further details on how DCW will be utilizing ARPA funds to promote family engagement and family voice can be found in the Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) report attached as Appendix C and will be reported in future APSRs.

Project Foster Power (housed within the Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center) is a group of current and former foster youth ages 15 to 25+ that will leverage youth voices and experiences to improve the Colorado child welfare system through youth-led organizing and advocacy. To help prepare and support youth in their transition to adulthood, Project Foster Power's issue for action for 2020-2021 was: Improving Supports for Young People Exiting Foster Care. The Child Welfare Prevention Task

Group is collaborating with Project Foster Power to ensure that the families and youth with lived experiences can help identify the challenges and solutions for a more effective prevention-focused child welfare agency.

Colorado's Family Preservation Act (Core Services)

Colorado's Family Preservation Act was passed by the Colorado General Assembly in 1994 to provide funding for strength-based resources and support to families. The program, known as Core Services, aims to safely maintain children and youth in the home, return children and youth home, promote the least restrictive setting for children and youth, and provide services for families at risk of involvement or further involvement in the child welfare system. Efforts are currently underway within the Core Services Program Workgroup and Rule Revision Workgroup to create efficiency within the program, consistency across Colorado, and maintain flexibility in spending for the counties with a concentrated effort to maximize Core funding to infuse Prevention efforts. Collaboration exists within the Core Workgroup between representatives from county departments of human services across the state and community partners, and is open to the public. This collaborative effort allows for diverse perspectives, co-creation of proposed rule changes, and input from community stakeholders.

Placement Continuum

Colorado has worked across multiple systems to improve the full continuum of out-of-home care for children and youth. There were several new federal requirements due to Family First, and Colorado took this opportunity to improve the system in its entirety beginning at the highest level of care. These improvements included the creation of a Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) level of care in Colorado, addressing Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) compliance across all placement providers. Colorado has begun using data obtained through independent assessments⁵ to help identify and address other gaps in the placement continuum. Colorado also worked with local providers to increase the availability of Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF) to meet the acute needs of those youth, including both medical and psychiatric. At lower levels of care, Colorado expanded its utilization of kinship providers and is actively working to support our foster care providers. Please see "Rules Regulating Therapeutic Foster Care" in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this APSR.

The Division of Child Welfare (DCW) partnered with OBH and the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), along with community stakeholders, placement providers, youth and families, the Office of the Child's Representative (OCR), the Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel (ORPC), the Court Improvement Program (CIP), and Administrative Service Organizations (ASO) to create the minimum requirements to become a QRTP in Colorado.

⁵ <https://co4kids.org/strengthening-families/family-first/placement-services/independent-assessment>

This cross-systems partnership began in monthly Family First implementation meetings and moved to provider-focused town halls, ASO-specific monthly meetings, county and regional presentations, statewide facilitated discussions, and case-specific question and answer consulting. As this work progressed, it was clear Colorado also needed to ensure all residential facilities for children and youth were in alignment with the federal IMD capacity requirements. This required daily conversations, collaboration, and partnership from all parties involved. Currently all IV-E reimbursable placement facilities are no longer IMDs.

The implementation of a standard independent assessment process to determine the required level of mental health treatment for youth entering care gathered a significant amount of data. This data is shared between OBH, DCW, HCPF, and other community partners to identify the gaps in the current continuum with CDHS leadership and help to create new levels of care. Treatment foster care was identified along with more Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment facilities for youth very early in implementation. CDHS will use this data to help ensure children and youth are in the lowest level of care required to meet their needs.

Members of the legal and judicial community have also taken an active role in the implementation of Family First in Colorado. Colorado's Court Improvement Project (CIP) has served as members on many implementation committees, including the Assessment Workgroup. The CIP has worked closely with CDHS to ensure that judicial officers and other legal stakeholders are aware of the new requirements as it relates to the QRTPs and prevention services. The CIP also supported the development of a bench card for judicial officers and other stakeholders that provides specifics about the QRTP review process. The CIP has hosted training for judicial officers, GALs, county attorneys, county department directors, juvenile justice stakeholders, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), and other partners. The CIP continues to work with CDHS, local Best Practice Court Teams (BPCTs) and other stakeholders to ensure that the judicial and legal communities receive information related to the implementation of Family First.

Colorado's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 3 Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP began case reviews and data collection in July 2019. The PIP activities' implementation period began in April 2020 and ended in March 2022. The implementation of the five PIP goals involved the collaborative efforts of DCW, county departments of human services, OCR, ORPC, the Administrative Review Division (ARD), and judicial partners as part of the PIP Implementation Team.

Six Colorado counties were selected as the counties to be a representative sample of Colorado practice through the implementation phase of the PIP. The counties represent both metro and rural areas of the state. DCW's county intermediaries and

program staff worked closely with PIP partners at the county departments of human services by providing technical assistance, reviewing data, and hosting regular check-ins on activity progress.

BPCTs⁶ from the six PIP counties completed local level plans for interventions to improve the data for their respective jurisdictions. The plans were submitted to DCW for review and presented at a virtual convening in June 2021. BPCTs continue to meet monthly to look at how they are improving practice. For more details on specific PIP activities, please see the PIP progress reports, which are submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

The CIP has continued to participate in supporting the local jurisdictions on the PIP activities. From November 2021 through March 2022, CIP and CDHS staff conducted court observations in all PIP Counties, observing 16 judicial officers and providing individual and group feedback, specifically linked to the PIP goals, to further the practice improvements. CIP also held a series of five Communities of Practice for judicial officers in PIP counties to provide peer learning opportunities based on the PIP strategies and activities. This included sessions on the Relative Guardianship Assistance Program (RGAP), concurrent goals and planning, and appellate delay.

Alignment with Judicial Partners

CDHS supported the planning and execution of the 2022 Convening on Children, Youth and Families⁷ and this event was open statewide this year. The 2022 Convening is centered around CIP's Strategic Plan⁸, which includes the impact areas of Safety-Based Decision Making, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Best Practices in Child Welfare, and Best Practice Court Team Infrastructure Redesign. CDHS has also partnered with CIP to provide training throughout the year, and those trainings are documented in more detail in the annual CIP Self-Assessment, which are submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

CDHS continues to collaborate with CIP, CASA, OCR and ORPC. In 2021, these agencies have committed to meeting quarterly to discuss worries, opportunities for improvements and what is working well.

CIP and CDHS continue to recognize the importance of high-quality legal representation of children/youth and parents involved in child welfare legal

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https://www.courts.state.co.us/userfiles/file/Administration/Planning_and_Analysis/Family%20Law%20Programs/CIP/Description_CIP_and_BPCT.pdf

7

https://www.courts.state.co.us/Courts/Supreme_Court/Committees/Committee.cfm?Committee_ID=8#:~:text=SAVE%20THE%20DATE%3A%20The%202022,is%20April%2025th%20and%2026th

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https://www.courts.state.co.us/userfiles/file/Administration/Planning_and_Analysis/Family%20Law%20Programs/CIP/cip_subcommittee/2021-2026%20CIP%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf

proceedings. CIP has designed its 2022-2026 strategic plan to incorporate high quality legal representation into every project by emphasizing its importance in implementing effective systems change.

The OCR pursued a large practice change for their contract attorneys to a direct-representation model instead of a best interest model, for youth over 12 in child welfare legal proceedings. House Bill 22-1038⁹ was signed into law in April 2022 aligning practice with federal legal representation guidance and expectations.

Dependency and Neglect System Reform (DANSR) and Circle of Parents Expansion (COPE)

The Colorado Judicial Department and CDHS, along with Illuminate Colorado and the Kempe Center, continue to partner on the Regional Partnership Grant (RPG) to bring the Circle of Parents in Recovery intervention to counties that use the DANSR approach in managing court cases. The grant continues to aim at increasing family well-being, improving permanency, and enhancing the safety of children who are in, or at risk of, an out-of-home placement due to a parent's or caregiver's opioid or other substance abuse and will do so by evaluating the efficacy of the COPE intervention. This year, the partners redesigned the evaluation structure to allow access to the intervention to more parents and children through an expanded eligibility definition. This allows all stakeholders to refer families to their local Circle of Parents in Recovery group and places a stronger emphasis on the relationships between the courts/ court team and the local peer support providers.

Domestic Violence Task Force

Colorado has identified the opportunity to lead among state child welfare systems with structural reform and policy and practice shifts to recognize the intersections between domestic violence and child welfare. The Domestic Violence Task Force was convened between September 2020 to August 2021, and was comprised of stakeholders across the state including but not limited to: OCR, ORPC, ARD, county partners, people with lived experience, Illuminate Colorado, community domestic violence agencies, treatment providers, and Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO). The Task Force sought to explore how to better protect victims and children from the impact often present when systems fail to consider all the complex dynamics of domestic violence.

The Domestic Violence Task Force developed a shared understanding of what domestic violence is, the safety issues it creates, and what roles agencies play in ensuring child safety and well-being. The group brought forward recommendations to the Child Welfare Sub-Policy Advisory Committee (Sub-PAC) detailing what the group found to be both necessary and impactful changes to administrative Volume 7 rule, child welfare structure and practice, as well as specific shifts in training and child

⁹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1038>

welfare culture to encourage movement toward a domestic violence-competent system.

The Domestic Violence Task Force recommendations prompted the creation of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Task Force. The purpose of the Statutory Task Force, reflected in Colorado's House Bill 21-1099¹⁰, is to bring together a diverse stakeholder group to propose a definition of domestic abuse to be included in C.R.S. Title 19, which governs child protective services in Colorado. Member applications were solicited, received, and a formal interview process was completed to secure voting members. The Domestic Violence Statutory Task Force convened in April 2022 and will conclude in June 2023.

Rule Writing and Revision Process

In 2021, DCW, through OCYF, promulgated 17 administrative rule packets through the State Board of Human Services.

The rule writing and revision process is a collaborative effort including a variety of internal and external stakeholders. The pre-rule clearance process begins internally for shared knowledge to identify the sections necessary for revision. This is presented to Sub-PAC, which is held as a public meeting, and a workgroup may be approved for assignment. The presentation at Sub-PAC may also present an opportunity to recruit stakeholders to be a part of a cross-functional, multisystemic workgroup. A public notice is also issued to ensure that community members are notified, and are able to join and/or review the meeting minutes. Once the workgroup has been assigned, the workgroup convenes and puts forth recommendations for formal stakeholder/staff review and feedback. A rule packet is then created by DCW through a formal clearance process, and the packet is presented again at Sub-PAC for approval. Once approved by Sub-PAC, the rule packet is presented at the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), also held as a public meeting, for additional approval, before moving to the Pre-Board Review process. The rule packet will then be reviewed and approved by the Attorney General's office, then presented twice, over the course of two months, to the State Board of Human Services, with an opportunity for feedback and modifications in between. Once the rule packet has been approved by the State Board of Human Services, the rule is promulgated with a one-month review period, and takes effect within thirty days.

House Bill 21-1094

On June 25th, 2021, Governor Jared Polis signed House Bill 21-1094¹¹, The Foster Youth in Transition program (FYiT) into law. This bill established reentry for eligible youth 18-21 years of age and reformed Colorado's extended foster care programming. Implementation of this law included extensive rule revisions and was an opportunity

¹⁰ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1099>

¹¹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1094>

for DCW to collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders. The rule writing task group contained statewide county representation, runaway and homeless youth providers, child placement agencies, foster parents, and two youth advocacy groups. DCW held three to four task group meetings per week for almost three months to draft the implementation rules. The rules were also presented to Project Foster Power for youth feedback. That presentation resulted in substantive improvements to the appeals process. This level of collaboration was made possible by the relationship building included in Colorado's participation in the Youth at Risk of Homelessness (YARH) grant, as well as Colorado's continuing partnership with county departments of human/social services.

The programming created by FYiT, and the rules this group created, positively impacted the interventions and measures of progress in Goal 4 of the CFSP. Further details will be provided in future APSRs.

For other examples of rule revisions, see the Parental Contact Rules, Foster Care Rules, and Adoption Rules subsections under Permanency Outcome 1, Substance-Exposed Newborn and Plans of Safe Care in the CAPTA report submitted in Appendix C, and the Institutional Assessment Review Team (IART) report submitted in Appendix E.

Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes

Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP implementation period began in April 2020 and ended in March 2022. Information about the implementation activities can be found in the PIP progress reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau. The measurement period on case review items will end in September 2023.

Looking ahead towards Round 4 of the CFSR, Colorado monitors qualitative and quantitative data through various means, such as ARD case reviews, CDHS C-STAT and Risk-STAT discussions, and regular usage of Results Oriented Management (ROM) reports.

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

Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. Only 75% of reviewed cases indicated that Item 1 was a strength.

- Data pulled in 2022 for CY 2021 from ROM shows that initiating investigations of reports of maltreatment was timely 84.67% of the time, per Colorado's state standard.
- Data pulled in 2022 for CY 2021 from ROM shows that initiating investigations of reports of maltreatment was timely 66.42% of the time, per the Federal standard.

In discussions with the Children's Bureau during the Fall of 2020, it was determined that for the purposes of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP, the Federal standard will be applied for Item 1. Therefore, all future Item 1 reporting methodologies in subsequent APSRs will reflect the Federal standard.

Item 1 is a part of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP measurement plan, and Colorado has been working diligently to reach the goal of 68.3% in a rolling 12-month period. DCW has released a Timeliness to Initial Response Toolkit¹² statewide as a resource for counties. Targeted efforts are also being made in the PIP counties as part of the statewide efforts to achieve this goal. Further details are reported in the PIP progress reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

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

Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. 75% of reviewed cases found that Item 2 was a strength, and 62% of

¹² <https://bit.ly/3JAEFYX>

reviewed cases indicated that Item 3 was a strength. Data pulled in 2021 for CY 2020 shows that:

- According to ROM, 86.07% of children/youth eligible to re-enter care (within 12 months of discharge from foster care, Jan 2021 - Dec 2021) maintained permanency.
- According to ROM in-home counts, 8,024 children/youth entered in-home cases between January 2021 and December 2021. During this same time, 8,996 children/youth exited in-home cases resulting in an exit rate of 0.89. A rate above 1.0 indicates that more people come into in-home counts than exit.
- According to ROM, 96.1% of children/youth involved in in-home cases (January 2021 - December 2021) remained safe (did not have a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect) while the case was open.

Colorado Family Safety and Risk Assessment

Please see “Safety and Risk Assessments” in the *Update on the Service Descriptions* section of this APSR.

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

Colorado’s CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. For Item 4, 73% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength. Item 5 found that 82% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength, and 55% of reviewed cases for Item 6 indicated that this was a strength. Data pulled in 2021 for CY 2020 from ROM shows that:

- The placement stability rate (moves per 1,000 days in care during a rolling 12-month period) from January 2021 to December 2021 was an average of 3.34 (all children/youth).
- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 12 months who have achieved permanency is 53.73%.
- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 12-23 months who have achieved permanency is 54.7%.
- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 24 months or more who have achieved permanency is 47.54%.
- The percentage of children/youth adopted within 12 months of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) is 46.58%.
- There were 202 youth who emancipated from foster care in 2021.

A Placement Stability Task Group was established in November 2021 to explore the data to determine underlying causes and develop strategies for improving placement stability for children and youth in out-of-home care. The group continues to meet monthly and is working on recommendations for support of resource families at the onset of the placement and throughout the ongoing case. A process map was completed to determine gaps in practice of supporting resource families and a basis for making recommendations.

In CY 2021, Colorado worked diligently to improve permanency outcomes for the children/youth and families served in the child welfare system. Colorado offered \$500,000 to Colorado counties to assist in achieving permanency for children/youth.

Examples of ways counties have used the funds include:

- Access to therapy and additional supports to foster care staff
- Transportation support to access services
- Developed a coaching model for staff to provide support to families
- A 24/7 crisis and/or therapeutic support (including in-home) system
- Building partnerships with nonprofits to provide intensive adoptive family recruitment for children/youth served in the child welfare system
- Supporting families and children/youth through training county staff
- Mental health services for foster families and kinship providers

Colorado is also working to revise rules around foster care standards and adoption practice. This extensive work was done in an effort to promote consistent practices across the state.

Foster Care Rules

DCW revised foster care requirements in Section 7.708 (12 CCR 2509-8) that became effective July 1, 2021. The rules were intended to meet the requirements for the National Model Foster Care Standards. The primary areas addressed in the rule include: safe sleep; pools and hot tub safety requirements; disclosure of current and past history regarding mental health, and use of legal and illegal substances by all adult residents in the home; and, functional language. A new rule was added allowing alternative care which provides foster parents an opportunity to choose trusted natural support(s) to care for the children/youth for limited periods of time.

Adoption Rules

The Division of Child Welfare revised the Adoption Rules (CCR) 7.3063.5. Rule revisions 7.306.5 through 7.306.6 are specific to post-adoption practice. The rule revisions were led by DCW in collaboration with many adoption services stakeholders including county departments, the Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO), OCR, HCPF and adoption advocates. The changes occurred in 7.306.52 Reimbursable and Non-Reimbursable Adoption Assistance Case Services, 7.306.53 Non-Recurring Adoption Expenses, 7.306.55 Post Legal Adoption Services and 7.306.6 The Right to Appeal. Families with children/youth who are served in the child welfare system now have clearly defined post-adoption rules allowing for improved understanding of processes and expectations when finalizing an adoption case.

Colorado continues to work on the adoption rules to create consistency in adoption practice across Colorado regarding adoption subsidy negotiations. This has resulted in over 30 stakeholder meetings that are continuing into 2022.

CDHS hopes to have this work done in 2022 and provide guidance and training for county adoption workers throughout 2022 and 2023.

Court of Appeals Workgroup

The CIP and CDHS continue to strive to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth. In April 2018, the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court appointed a Colorado Judicial Department Child Welfare Appeals Workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup is to consider necessary changes to practice, rules, and statutes to ensure that appeals in cases concerning relinquishment, adoption, and dependency and neglect are resolved within six months after being filed. The workgroup is composed of legal and child welfare professionals, and met through February 2021 to recommend changes in practices, policies, and procedures to help alleviate details in the appellate process. A final report was released in Spring 2021¹³. The Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 22-1113¹⁴, which was signed by Colorado's Governor in March 2022, which aims to minimize delays in the appeals process so that children in dependency and neglect cases achieve permanency in a timely manner.

Please see Goal 3 in the Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision, and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes section of this APSR for further information on how Colorado is working to improve performance in this outcome.

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

Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. While 90% of reviewed cases for Item 7 indicated that it was a strength, Items 8, 9, 10 and 11 were not found in substantial conformity. Data pulled in 2021 for CY 2020 from ROM shows that:

- Siblings are placed together 79.81% of the time.
- 46.27% of children/youth are placed with a relative as their initial placement and 46.72% are placed with a relative at any time across the case span.

Fatherhood Program

The Colorado Fatherhood Program focuses on promoting and sustaining healthy marriage, responsible parenting, and economic security. It is currently supporting fatherhood programming in seven sites serving the following counties: Boulder, Delta, Denver, La Plata, Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose, Prowers, and Pueblo. The program plans to outreach to 700 fathers this year. Eligible OEC Fatherhood participants include all fathers (biological, expectant,

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[https://www.courts.state.co.us/Media/Opinion_Docs/Appellate%20Workgroup%20Final%20Report%20\(2021-04-23\).pdf](https://www.courts.state.co.us/Media/Opinion_Docs/Appellate%20Workgroup%20Final%20Report%20(2021-04-23).pdf)

¹⁴ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1113>

adoptive, stepfathers, foster, kinship, grandfathers, and father-figures) over the age of 18, with children or caring for children up to age 24. In addition, the program will perform specialized outreach to those fathers with children receiving Medicaid, single parent fathers, non-custodial fathers, military veteran fathers, fathers without a high school diploma, fathers participating in Head Start, fathers re-entering after incarceration, fathers with a history of involvement with the foster care system, and unemployed fathers.

Participating fathers will receive integrated services that continually connect fathers to services and networks throughout the duration of their engagement through coordinated case management, resource referral and workshops. Fathers will complete a parenting curriculum called Nurturing Dads and Partners (NDAP), receive financial coaching, and set family goals. They are able to build social capital with other fathers and community members using a Strengthening Families Protective Factors approach.

In addition, there is a state-level Fatherhood Steering Committee that supports the sites in aligning services across systems and removing barriers. The Steering Committee has representation from state child welfare, Head Start, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child support, domestic violence, mental health, workforce centers, local fatherhood program managers, philanthropy, a certified master trainer for Nurturing Fathers, the Financial Health Institute, the Family Resource Center Association, the Colorado Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America (Illuminate Colorado), the Denver Indian Center, and several fathers. In addition, the Family Resource Center Association facilitates a fatherhood practitioners' network for all providers across the state that are working with dads.

Targeted activities set toward improving this outcome are detailed in Goal 3 of the CFSP and Goals 3 and 4 in Colorado's PIP. For further information, please see the PIP Progress Reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau, and Goal 3 in the *Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes* section of this APSR.

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

Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. Data pulled in 2021 for CY 2020 from ROM shows:

- 90.96% of caseworker monthly visits with the child/youth were made as directed in rule.

Child and Parent Contact Rules

DCW revised child welfare administrative rules 7.202.1 F and 7.204 regarding monthly case contact requirements to address discrepancies. The revisions will

provide a clearer guidance to child welfare staff to complete monthly contacts, not only for parents but also for child(ren) and youth. To ensure stakeholder feedback was captured, rule revision was presented at two well-attended stakeholder meetings; the Child Protection Task Group and the Permanency Task Group (PTG). The rule revision was conducted through PTG from June through October 2021. Representatives of PTG include county departments of human services, OCR, CPO, and HCPF partners. The revised rules were presented to the Child Welfare Sub-PAC and PAC, both of which passed the rule changes unanimously. The key changes in the administrative rules includes gender identity awareness, cohesion of the title and location of the rules and lastly, consistency of language throughout¹⁵. The revisions are expected to be finalized and approved by April 2022, and effective May 2022.

Goal 3 of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP includes targeted activities to identify and engage fathers throughout the life of the case. Please see the PIP Progress Reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau, for further information.

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

Colorado's CFSR found that Colorado was in substantial conformity with this item, with 90% of reviewed cases indicating that this was a strength. While the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues to create complex challenges for this goal, school districts were able to provide access to remote learning technology to students, ensuring that children are receiving appropriate services to meet their educational needs. Colorado has seen an increase in the five-year graduation rate for youth in out-of-home care. Please 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.

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

Colorado's CFSR found that while Colorado was in substantial conformity with Item 17, with 92% of reviewed cases indicating this as a strength, Colorado was not in substantial conformity with Item 18, with 63% of reviewed cases indicating this as a strength.

Efforts to ensure this outcome remains a strength in Colorado are detailed in Goal 3, Strategy 4 of the PIP. In 2020, DCW rolled out statewide training targeted towards caseworkers and supervisors to assess educational and mental/behavioral health needs and services. In another targeted activity, PIP counties developed processes for 90-day Supervisor case reviews, to ensure that educational and mental/behavioral health needs were assessed on a regular basis, and that adequate services were being

¹⁵ <https://www.coloradosos.gov/CCR/eDocketDetails.do?trackingNum=2021-00845>

delivered to the child/youth. For further information, please see the PIP progress reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

Statewide Information System

In Colorado's CFSR, this was rated as an area needing improvement.

Trails Modernization

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

The project has deployed two major releases in 2021, as well as a reestablishment of the connection to the judicial system which had been inoperable for approximately five years:

- Oracle Upgrade: April 2021 Brought the Oracle database into the most recent Oracle version; provides greater system stability and real-time reporting capabilities.
- Release 7: June 2021 Completely modernized all Division of Youth Services (DYS) functionality; which brings 50% of all Trails users into one system.
- Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Courts in America (SANCA) Release: After several years of a hardware malfunction preventing the flow of information between the court case management system and Trails, the connection was reestablished in July 2021. This reconnection will allow for a better exchange of information between the two systems.

Future releases for Trails will move away from the larger waterfall-style releases and towards smaller, agile releases. Coordinated partnership between the County ModSquad user group and the internal Trails Team has resulted in an outline of potential paths forward with smaller releases. These smaller future releases could include:

- Fiscal
- Case Sub-Types (ICPC, Adoption/RGAP, Chafee, Prevention)
- Medicaid
- Assessment
- FAR
- Case

For these releases, the Trails Team continues to clarify and refine internal processes to improve the efficacy of these and future releases. Some of these more recent process improvements have included:

- A code freeze window to thoroughly test these items was established two weeks before each release and to perform regression testing, ensuring that new code does not adversely affect previous code.
- All code is developed and deployed to a version-controlled repository.
- Ensuring the entire development team is familiar with the technical terminology and processes including git, branching, pull requests; this awareness ensures the entire team can develop, test, and deploy code more effectively and consistently.
- Ensuring the entire development team has the ability to read and act on application logs; these abilities allow developers to write high-quality, stable, performant software.

Additionally, the Trails Team, in close partnership with the County ModSquad user group, collaboratively undertook a process to explore the features, user stories, and epics developed previously by the vendor that encompass future functionality. These efforts are meant to explore the viability of migrating this code into production, and the level of effort needed to modify, or completely rewrite, code before it can be put into a production environment. After some business process mapping and user acceptance testing, it was determined that the Fiscal functionality was the most viable segment of functionality to prioritize for modernization. The Trails Team is currently exploring the level of effort needed to modernize Fiscal functionality.

Case Review System

In Colorado's CFSR, Items 20, 21 and 22 were rated as a strength. Item 23 was rated as an area needing improvement, and according to data from ARD reviews, the percentage of adoption cases with terminated parental rights was 54.7% (2016). This is an area of focus in the PIP.

Quality Assurance System

Colorado's CFSR showed that this item was rated as a strength. Please see the *Quality Assurance* section of this APSR for further details.

Staff Training

The Colorado CFSR found that while Item 27 was a strength, both Items 26 and 28 were areas needing improvement.

Targeted activities for Items 26 and 27 can be found in Goals 4 and 5 of the PIP, and Goal 1 of the CFSP. For updates on how Colorado is addressing Item 28, see Intervention 3.3.3 in the *Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes* section of this APSR.

Service Array

In Colorado's CFSR, this systemic factor was rated as an area needing improvement.

To further address this systemic factor, activities in Goal 5 of the PIP directly address improvement in Items 29 and 30. Please see the PIP Progress Reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

Pay for Success

In September 2018, Colorado launched "Fostering Opportunities", funding services in Jefferson County Public Schools to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. Managed out of CDHS, the project leverages state and philanthropic dollars to fund five school-based specialists over the next four years to advocate for, support and mentor students using trauma informed and evidence-based approaches, as well as ensure better coordination between teachers, families, foster parents, social workers, and other systems involved in the students' lives. As of February 2022, the Fostering Opportunities program has enrolled 117 students in the program.

The Colorado Lab partnered with Jefferson County to develop a program manual that helps practitioners implement the program with fidelity. The Colorado Lab also serves as the lead evaluator of the Fostering Opportunities program. Initial results of the randomized controlled trial evaluating the impact of the program on attendance, behavior and course completion became available Spring 2021, and demonstrated that the program had a significant impact on suspensions and a modest impact on attendance. Final outcomes are expected Fall 2022.

The Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) project was launched in January 2019 and supports underserved regions of Colorado. MST is an intensive family and community-based intervention program for at-risk youth to reduce criminal justice involvement. MST sites have been extended to underserved regions of Colorado, with therapists in Pueblo, Greeley, Grand Junction, Adams, and Broomfield counties. Two additional MST sites were added in CY 2020 for a second team in Pueblo, and another covering El Paso, Park, and Teller. Enrollment in the pilot ended in April 2021, with a total of 384 families receiving services under the Pay for Success period. Final outcomes are expected in Spring 2023.

Agency Responsiveness to Community

In Colorado's CFSR, this systemic factor was rated as a strength, and continues to be an area that Colorado values as reflected in the many collaborative and cross-system workgroups throughout the child welfare continuum.

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)

As of September 2021, 28 communities submitted local child maltreatment prevention plans to CDHS that align with the Colorado Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action. The prevention framework, community planning toolkit, and local priorities can all be found at www.CO4KIDS.org. Each community formed a leadership team including parents, developed a community profile to examine existing data, cataloged available resources and services and solicited new feedback from families through a survey and focus groups. The communities identified and prioritized strategies to meet the needs of families and prevent child maltreatment. The identified strategies fall across all levels of the social-ecological model including direct services to families as well as system change efforts. Resources will continue to be identified annually to support planning. Parent leadership and involvement play an integral role in the ongoing planning, implementation, and evaluation of child maltreatment programs in Colorado. Colorado will continue to support implementation strategies connected to parent leadership including weaving parent leadership throughout Colorado's Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework using CBCAP. Additionally, CDHS is working to align the implementation of Family First for child maltreatment fatality prevention planning and Family First prevention services capacity building.

There are currently ten sites that have received CBCAP funding to implement strategies in their child maltreatment prevention plans. Many of the sites are family resource centers that provide comprehensive family case management and referral to resources. The OEC has been intentional about allowing communities to identify strategies across the social ecology and then allowing them to apply for CBCAP funding to implement some of these population-level approaches. In FFY 2021, CBCAP funding supported direct services in communities through evidence-based and evidence-informed parenting programs:

- The Nurturing Parenting Programs™¹⁶ are a family-centered, trauma-informed initiative designed to build nurturing parenting skills as an alternative to abusive and neglecting parenting and child rearing practices.
- The Incredible Years®¹⁷ evidence-based parenting programs focus on strengthening parenting competencies and fostering parent involvement in children's school experiences, to promote children's academic, social and emotional skills and reduce conduct problems.
- Circle of Parents®¹⁸ is an evidence-informed model shown to improve the resiliency of children by increasing the Protective Factors in their environment through a support group for caregivers.

¹⁶ <http://www.nurturingparenting.com/>

¹⁷ <http://incredibleyears.com/programs/parent/>

¹⁸ <https://www.circleofparentsco.org/>

Other activities implemented through the child maltreatment prevention plans funded in Colorado include: increasing community and family awareness around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to decrease intergenerational ACEs and maltreatment, two-generational model of parent education and financial literacy, and the creation of a data-sharing system to offer enhanced support services to families.

A portion of the Biennial Strengthening Colorado Families and Communities Conference is supported through CBCAP. The theme of the 2022 conference will continue to be Working Together to Maximize Resources, Best Practices, and Supporting Workforce Care. The next conference is planned for September of 2022 and will be jointly planned with the DCW.

Additionally, the Office of Early Childhood will leverage CBCAP American Rescue Plan Act (CBCAP ARPA) funds to support additional counties in the development of local child maltreatment prevention plans with the goal to support all 64 counties in plan development.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention

Rules Regulating Therapeutic Foster Care

With the implementation of Family First, CDHS is committed to supporting partners in building up critical levels of family-based care for some of the most vulnerable children and youth that CDHS serves. Therapeutic Foster Care rules¹⁹ went into effect in April 2021. The rules require the certifying agency to be approved by CDHS to provide therapeutic foster care. Once approved, the agency can certify foster homes based on requirements outlined in the rule. OM-CW-2021-0013²⁰ was issued in September 2021, and addresses standard operating procedures that promote consistent therapeutic and treatment foster care program practices. Three information forums regarding the differences in therapeutic and treatment foster care, requirements, and the approval process for county departments and county placement agencies (CPAs) were provided in October 2021. This was followed up with three learning community sessions that provided opportunities for agencies to brainstorm, network, and further discuss how they would approach policy and procedure development.

IM-CW-2022-0003²¹ was issued in February 2022 to promote a statewide training opportunity for counties, CPAs and individuals who are ready to implement

¹⁹ Section 7.703 (12 CCR 2509-8)

²⁰ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bE7cJVra-LJ_KChT6HNkQNpQ4yj_aBe5/view

²¹ https://drive.google.com/file/d/156hKJQBFPIk7tu-h_kMR_QIMvVBNoT1u/view

treatment/therapeutic foster homes. The Pressley Ridge training curriculum was provided to trainers and agencies in March 2022. Pressley Ridge will also be certifying master trainers to be able to coach trainers across the state. The master trainers will include representatives from DCW as well as from the county and CPAs, to ensure fidelity to the model, training is up-to-date, and to provide technical assistance. More information about the statewide Pressley Ridge training program will be provided in future APSRs.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

Please see the Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan in the *Updates to Targeted Plans* section of this APSR.

Foster Home Certification/Recertification Reviews

Please see the *Quality Assurance* section of this APSR for information on how ARD conducts Foster Home Certification Reviews. This is also detailed in Goal 5 of the CFSR Round 3 PIP, and details can be found in the PIP progress reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements

Colorado's engagement in the Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC) ensures county departments of human services have access to cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements of children and youth.

In CY 2021, Colorado sent ICPC home study requests on behalf of 47 Colorado counties. The following bullet points highlight the results of the home study requests where Colorado was the sending state:

- Number of home studies requested by Colorado: 799.
- Number of home studies requested by Colorado and completed by other states: 442.
- Number of approved home studies: 194.
- Number of Colorado placements resulting from an approved ICPC request: 156.

For CY 2021, Colorado also received requests for ICPC home studies from other states:

- Number of ICPC home study requests received from other states including requests that were withdrawn without a home study completed: 365, up 9% from CY 2020.
- Number of ICPC requests that were pending at the end of CY 2021: 42.
- Number of ICPC home studies completed by Colorado: 241.
- Number of ICPC home studies that were completed in 60 days or less: 84 (35%).
- Number of ICPC home studies that were completed in 61-75 days: 41 (17%).
- Number of ICPC home studies that were completed in over 75 days: 116 (48%).

Caseworkers have the ability to document reasons in Trails why a home study was not completed on time. These delays were primarily due to lack of employee resources, and general delays by the provider to mitigate concerns brought up during the home studies process and rescheduling to address these concerns. Additionally, counties are reporting an increase in foster certifications requested to meet the medical requirements of the child, which contributes to delays in completing timely home studies.

Staff retention also impacted home study completion rates across the state. Larger recruitment and retention efforts are being addressed in the *Measures of Progress for Goal 1* section of this APSR.

COVID-19 continued to impact home study timeliness throughout CY 2021. Examples of COVID-19 delays reported by counties were:

- Providers or members of their family were exhibiting COVID symptoms or were in quarantine. Home study reviewers did not have access to the home to complete their walk-through assessments.
- Reduction in the number of home study staff/contractors due to testing positive with COVID-19, or exposure to COVID-19 resulting in mandatory quarantine. This affected the timely completion of interviews and other home study requirements to ensure the safety of the caregivers and the home study staff/contractors.
- Data integrity errors have been consistently identified as areas for improvement to accurately track efforts in increasing the timeliness of home studies.

To mitigate timeliness issues, the CDHS ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator (DCA) provided numerous virtual county trainings for ICPC home study processes in CY 2021. The CDHS ICPC DCA implemented:

- Weekly ICPC Office Hours where County Liaisons, County staff, and caretakers could call in for ICPC guidance, discuss trends, and brainstorm best practices in developing new protocols. This practice will continue as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted in March 2022.
- Quarterly ICPC meetings with county ICPC liaisons, with a focus on best practices, timeliness protocols, and ICPC training.
- One-on-one meetings with Human Services staff on an ad-hoc basis.

Trails modifications have been utilized to augment reports to track the number of ICPC requests Colorado receives and sends, as well as the number of children/youth involved in those ICPC requests. The CDHS ICPC DCA also sent out numerous communications to Colorado counties in January through March 2022 to ensure all data entries for 2021 home studies were entered into Trails and to ensure accurate reporting. To address data integrity issues, which were identified as an area for improvement, DCW will provide counties with quarterly data updates so data can be cleaned up in a timelier fashion. The ICPC DCA will provide monthly training during ICPC Office hours to County staff invested in the ICPC process to secure data integrity

with new staff and turnovers. Additionally, DCW will also provide data reports to Colorado residential facilities and CPAs regularly for their staff to follow up with the sending states to request missing ICPC documentation, in order to remain in compliance with their ICPC placements.

To further streamline ICPC processes, the CDHS ICPC DCA also developed Google ICPC spreadsheets for tracking and reporting all residential and child placement agency approvals and placements. The CDHS ICPC DCA continues to provide ongoing training and technical assistance for residential facilities and CPAs.

CDHS anticipates Trails Modernization, the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) Secured Data Portal, ongoing training, and improved data integrity will lead to a more effective cross-jurisdictional facilitation of timely placements.

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

Goal 1: Colorado has a skilled, healthy and supported child welfare workforce.

Objective 1.1: Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) programs prepare workers to join the child welfare workforce.

Intervention 1.1.1: Increase the number of IV-E education stipends awarded each year in Colorado.

As of July 1st, 2021, the Child Welfare Stipend Program has become the Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium (CCWSC). MSU Denver is the main contract recipient in Colorado, and subcontracts with Colorado State University (CSU) at Pueblo, the University of Denver (DU), and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS). DU ensures alignment between the work from the CCWSC and research programs such as the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI), in an effort to develop and support a child welfare workforce that can meet the needs of children and families in an equitable manner. DU has successfully implemented the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) program that the stipend awardees participate in. Graduating scholars from all participating universities viewed an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) introductory presentation, completed the IDI assessment, participated in the IDI group profile presentation, and began meetings with a qualified administrator for their individual profile debrief. The qualified administrators will begin hosting monthly virtual learning exchange opportunities for scholars to discuss a variety of topics related to the IDI and child welfare work. This program will continue and expand along with the research from it each year as long as funding is available.

CDHS has also re-ignited the research sub-committee, which will be led by DU and the Butler Institute to build a short-term and long-term research agenda.

CDHS is working to centralize all communications for the consortium. A toolkit has been created for counties, universities, and other agencies to present on the CCWSC program for recruitment purposes. The toolkit also includes a central website for students to apply to the program online. CDHS is currently in the beginning stages of onboarding a database to track all awardees throughout the program, as well as their work payback. This database will also be a central location for all sub-contracted universities to submit their quarterly invoices, assisting MSU Denver with submitting one full and final invoice to CDHS. The application will also be revised in an effort to promote inclusivity and diversity.

Intervention 1.1.2: Increase the proportion of education stipends awarded to students who live and work in small, rural and/or mid-sized counties.

Out of the 67 awardees, 12 of them are in rural counties. Participation from small and mid-sized counties has increased in the consortium over the last year with Otero, Gilpin, and Garfield counties. DU offers a distance program in the Four Corners region as well as in Glenwood Springs. MSU Denver has an established and ever-growing online program that reaches every corner of the state, and CSU Pueblo offers a weekend program with many full-time employees attending. With additional funding, CDHS aims to attach a stipend to Educational Waivers for employment. This is intended to assist with recruitment efforts in rural communities who have great difficulty in recruiting candidates who meet the education requirements to be a social caseworker.

Objective 1.2: County departments of human/social services are equipped to retain caseworkers, supervisors, managers, and directors.

Intervention 1.2.1: DCW and CWTS will convene and facilitate regional communities of practice for county departments to design and implement strategies to increase worker retention.

As part of the CFSR Round 3 PIP, DCW created Supervisor Learning Communities (SLC), as a way for supervisors to participate in a mutual exchange of ideas, strategies, and processes, utilizing data to improve outcomes. Sub-PAC authorized the expansion of the SLC statewide in September of 2021, continuing beyond the duration of the PIP and renamed the Supervisor Learning Exchange (SLE), as a permanent learning exchange to share data and best practices amongst supervisors across the state. In March 2022, a key area of focus for the SLE will be on the role of the supervisor in decreasing turnover and stress. Two sessions will be held, and supervisors may enroll in the learning exchanges on the Child Welfare Training System (CWTS).

Intervention 1.2.2: The CWTS will expand offerings that support assessing and improving organizational health so that managers and leaders are equipped to support case workers and supervisors.

CWTS utilized the Transforming Organizational Culture Assessment Tool to assess counties' agency-wide perspectives on organizational culture around race. The assessment was reviewed with county leadership teams and was used in planning future action steps within county agencies. In the Fall of 2021, CWTS administered the first annual Workforce Survey to over 2000 caseworkers and supervisors, to gather data on organizational culture and individual perspectives. While the response rate of the survey reached over 30%, one barrier is the challenge in maintaining mailing lists in a county-administered agency. CWTS, in partnership with DCW, will work to ensure data quality for continuing outreach efforts. CWTS plans to analyze the data and provide a report to county agencies and DCW for awareness, planning, and opportunities to learn.

Due to COVID-19, CWTS offerings remained virtual through 2021. DCW and CWTS will be engaging in a critical examination of this impact to explore a hybrid system in 2022.

Measures of Progress for Goal 1

- 1. By 2024, improve caseworker retention rate by decreasing caseworker turnover from a baseline of 26% to 24%.**

At the beginning of CY 2021, there were 1503 caseworkers across Colorado. Over the calendar year, 369 caseworkers left their positions. This equates to a 24.6% turnover rate.

30 CCWSC scholars participated in the new caseworker Fundamentals training between September and December 2021, and are completing internship requirements at various county departments of human services across Colorado. In December 2021, DCW hosted a town hall to address the staff turnover challenges throughout the child welfare system. CDHS will continue to work with counties to monitor caseworker retention and turnover data, identify trends and continue its efforts to support the county workforce.

DCW and the Capacity Building Center for States (CBCS) are meeting on a regular basis to identify challenges and trends with caseworker recruitment and retention. DCW also participates in webinars and resources hosted by the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI).

County departments have expressed concern with their ability to recruit and hire child welfare social casework staff with the minimum education requirements currently outlined in 7.603.1. DCW partnered with counties from Fall 2021 to Spring 2022 to recommend rule revisions, and these recommendations will be presented to the Child Welfare Sub-PAC in April 2022. More information will be reported in future APSRs.

- 2. By 2024, increase the number of IV-E stipends awarded each year from 57 (SFY 2018-19) to 80.**

From February to June 2021, the CCWSC received 90 total applicants, however due to state funding limitations, only 67 students were awarded stipends.

The CCWSC staff at MSU Denver met with consultants from Kay Casey to plan and develop a process for fiscal monitoring for the quarterly cost reports submitted by each university. This process was introduced in November 2021 and will begin monitoring quarterly cost reports in January 2022.

Goal 2: Children, youth, families and communities are strengthened and thrive through ongoing prevention efforts.

Objective 2.1: Broaden knowledge, understanding and implementation of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework.

Intervention 2.1.1: DCW and CWTS will utilize a CQI process to identify learning activities that help caseworkers, casework supervisors and child welfare leaders understand and utilize the protective factors in their work with families.

CWTS offers the following courses that provide in-depth coverage of understanding and utilizing protective factors with families:

- Audience: All (includes caseworkers, caseworker supervisors and child welfare leaders)
 - All Families Have Strengths
 - Harnessing Protective Factors with Families
 - Understanding Opioid Use Disorder: Protective Factors, Child Safety, and Intervention
 - Enhancing Practice With Families Impacted by Substance Use
 - A Closer Look at Child Sexual Abuse
- Audience: Supervisors and Leaders
 - Superman Has Nothing on You: Supervising to Safety & Risk
- Audience: New Caseworkers
 - Safety Through Engagement
 - Working Toward Closure
 - Building Safety with Families Impacted by Domestic Violence

In addition, any course that touches on the safety assessment also reviews protective factors as a required element of the assessment and tool completion.

DCW and CWTS have updated the Transfer of Learning (TOLs) activities in early 2022 so that they are up to date with current practices. DCW and CWTS have developed a course to support caseworkers working with children and families with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) and began piloting the course in January 2022.

The Training Steering Committee also presented their EDI statement to the Child Welfare Sub-PAC in December and received approval to move forward with ensuring that EDI principles are embedded into training, courses, and practices.

Objective 2.2: All counties are implementing local child abuse prevention plans.

Intervention 2.2.1: Support counties and Tribes in developing and implementing Colorado Child Maltreatment Prevention plans.

There are currently 29 counties in Colorado covered by local child maltreatment prevention plans that are aligned with the Colorado Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action. An additional five counties will be recruited to develop their local prevention plans utilizing the framework for action in 2022. Due to COVID-19, these five counties will be utilizing virtual platforms for local leadership teams to meet, to gather community input and identify strategies.

The Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families is hosting a community forum to help communities walk through the Prevention Framework to develop local prevention plans. The OEC will be working with stakeholders to include an equity lens in the framework. Cultural brokers will be identified to support the revision to the framework. For more information, see “Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families” in the *Update on Service Descriptions* section of this APSR.

Colorado launched a Child Welfare Prevention Task Group in May 2021. This task group will be aligning prevention activities to the work of the partnership. Please see the *Collaboration* section of this APSR for more information on the Child Welfare Prevention Task Group.

As of the writing of this APSR, the OEC currently does not have the capacity to provide support to more than ten counties at a time. Additionally, there is limited CBCAP funding to support the costs associated with counties developing local child maltreatment prevention plans. The OEC and OCYF-DCW will continue to explore possible funding sources to support the remaining counties not funded through the CBCAP formula and CBCAP ARPA.

There are currently two programs providing funding for Colorado Tribes. SafeCare® is available to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds are available to both the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe as well as the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. CDHS has worked with Tribes to learn more about how we can support the spending of these funds. However, in the past few years, both of these funding streams have gone unspent. Most recently, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe has expressed interest in starting the SafeCare® program back up in their Tribal community. These conversations are underway. See the *Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes* and “SafeCare®” in the *Update on Service Descriptions* sections for additional details on SafeCare®.

Objective 2.3: Explore and advocate for innovative ways to braid and blend funding for prevention strategies.

Intervention 2.3.1: Identify prevention services in the FFPSA clearinghouse and how they are funded in Colorado.

Family First includes an opportunity to draw down Federal IV-E funding for approved, evidenced-based services to prevent out-of-home placement. The Child Welfare Sub-PAC has approved the creation of a Child Welfare Prevention Task Group. The purpose of the Child Welfare Prevention Task Group is to act as the child welfare prevention

practice advisory group. Please see the *Collaboration* section of this APSR for more information on the Child Welfare Prevention Task Group.

The Colorado Family First Prevention Plan identified ten programs and/or services with ratings in the clearinghouse that are currently being provided in the state or are being developed for implementation in Colorado and these will be the foundations of the prevention continuum. Additional information will be provided in future APSRs.

Objective 2.4: Coordinate efforts across systems.

Intervention 2.4.1: Modify the Colorado Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action to include the Child Fatality Prevention Plan.

The Colorado Maltreatment Prevention Framework²² provides a tool for empowering communities and guiding strategic investments to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being. The 2020-2024 CFSP sets the goal for all counties to develop a local Child Maltreatment Prevention Plan (see intervention 2.2.1 and “Agency Responsiveness to Community” in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this APSR). The framework was not modified in 2021 due to pandemic-related delays.

Intervention 2.4.2: Explore the need for statutory change to expand the CCTF Board to include representation from additional systems.

Legislation was passed in 2021 (House Bill 21-1248²³) to modernize the Colorado Children’s Trust Fund Statute. The fund was renamed the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund and the board was expanded to 17 members, including representation from counties and persons with lived experience. The powers and duties of the board were increased to include a focus on preventing adverse childhood experiences and implementing trauma-informed supports. In addition, a sub-account of the trust fund was created to pool future reimbursement on Title IV-E Family First Prevention Services claims. The pooled fund will be used to expand capacity to implement prevention services statewide.

Intervention 2.4.3: Expand public access to services and resources.

Public access to services and resources are expanded through several service areas discussed elsewhere in this report, including but not limited to the Fatherhood Program (see “Fatherhood Program” in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this APSR), Prevention initiatives (see “Prevention” in the *Collaboration* section of this APSR), and Child First through PSSF and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funds (see the *Update on Service Descriptions* section of this APSR).

²² <https://co4kids.org/stenghtening-families/framework>

²³ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1248>

CBCAP funds are also being used to implement a universal home visiting approach, Family Connects, in three counties, expand the Healthy Steps program in pediatricians' offices, and expand Circle of Parents support groups for fathers.

DCW and OEC work to build strong collaboration between county human service departments and the statewide network of family resource centers. Information about that network can be found at cofamilycenters.org.

Intervention 2.4.4: Revitalize the Child Welfare Executive Leadership Council (CWELC), creating an interagency oversight group of specifically identified state agencies, community stakeholders and constituents.

After close consideration of existing groups who are already focused on this work, CDHS has determined that this intervention is no longer necessary, and will be removed from the CFSP.

Measures of Progress for Goal 2

- 1. By 2024, the child maltreatment rate for children zero to five in Colorado will decrease from 15.7 per 1,000 (2017 baseline year) to 15 per 1,000.**
In 2021, the child maltreatment rate for children zero to five in Colorado is 10.76 per 1,000. Through ongoing collaboration with the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF), the Child Fatality Prevention System (CFPS), and the Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT), Colorado continuously monitors and evaluates factors in child maltreatment incidents that result in egregious, near fatalities or fatalities. The data will be used to create recommendations for reducing child fatalities. CDHS has convened a work group and provided support and resources to follow up on outstanding recommendations. This expanded layer of attention has resulted in streamlined processes and improved communications across the system.
- 2. By 2024, child maltreatment fatalities will decline from 2.77 per 100,000 (2017 baseline year) to 2.32 averaged over five (5) years.**
According to the Children's Bureau, child maltreatment fatality rates dropped to 1.92 in 2020²⁴. Please see the previous Measure of Progress for how Colorado is decreasing child maltreatment rates, and subsequently child maltreatment fatalities.
- 3. By June 2024, all 64 Colorado counties will be represented by child abuse prevention plans and all plans will include a Child Maltreatment Fatality Prevention Plan.**
See Intervention 2.2.1, and "CBCAP" in the *Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes* section of this APSR.

²⁴ https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/child-maltreatment-report-2020_0.pdf

Goal 3: Children and youth have safe, permanent, and stable living situations with appropriate support.

Objective 3.1: Families receive support to ensure that children/youth remain safely at home.

Intervention 3.1.1: Expand Differential Response (DR) as a statewide intervention. Differential Response has been implemented in 46 of the 64 counties, with six additional counties in the process of DR implementation. Counties have been encouraged to discuss any concerns or barriers in moving forward so that DCW can effectively plan for and utilize training and technical assistance needs in the most efficient way possible.

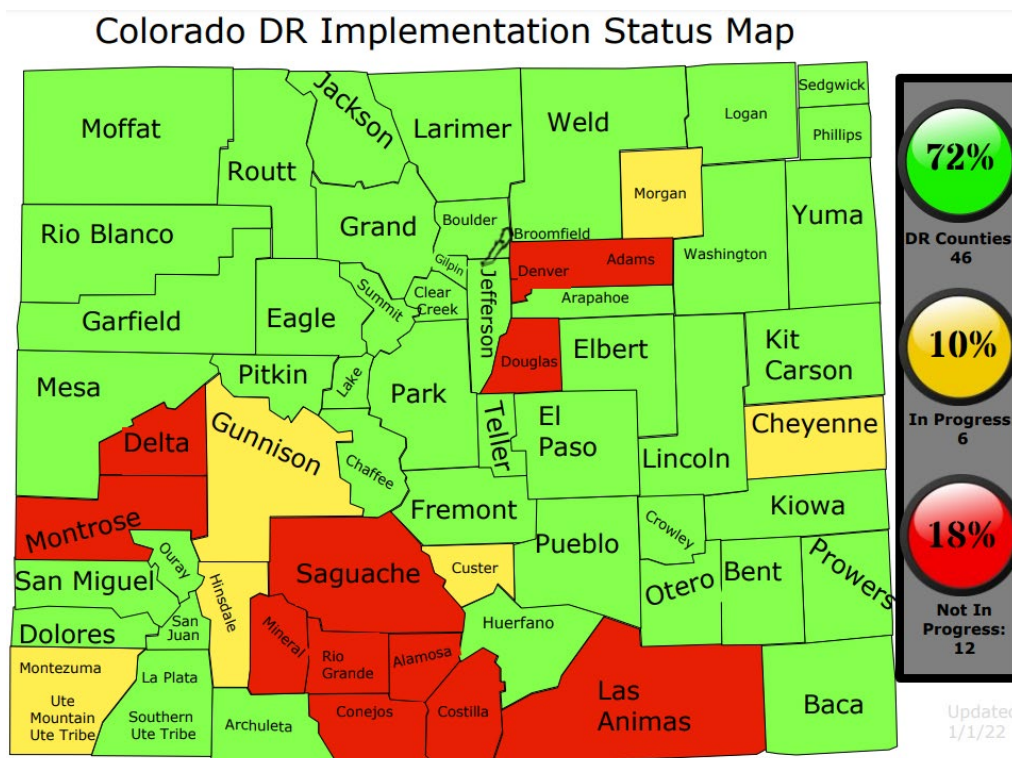


Figure 1: Map of DR counties (as of 01/01/2022)

Concerns and barriers include capacity to train and undergo practice shifts due to the COVID-19 pandemic and caseworker turnover, which greatly limits DR implementation timeframes. Continued outreach efforts include DCW hosting a town hall, issuing OM-CW-2022-0006²⁵, connecting counties with other DR counties, the Differential Response Learning Exchange, and individual county outreach.

²⁵ https://mcusercontent.com/cd781c9bc8f90270567729e9e/files/31d34f60-0d3e-0416-b501-f6bc4abe652e/OM_CW_2022_0006.pdf?mc_cid=90939e1174&mc_eid=649d5faad5

Intervention 3.1.2: Enhance the social history process and include families in identification of the child/youth/family needs.

In Goal 3 of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP, counties participating in the PIP had reviewed and enhanced their social history process to include more focus on fathers. Lessons learned from the PIP counties will be shared with other counties statewide in the June 2022 PIP Symposium.

As part of ongoing efforts in this intervention, DCW will research models and practices from other states to further enhance the family social history process, and continue building on Family Engagement Meeting (FEM) and Family Search and Engagement (FSE) practices already in place. By applying the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework (Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Concrete Supports in Times of Need, and Social and Emotional Competence of Children), DCW will select a model which builds upon the family's strengths and gives families the opportunity to self-identify the supports they need.

Objective 3.2: When children/youth must be temporarily removed, they are placed with kin, and kin receive support to maintain connections between the child/youth and family.

Intervention 3.2.1: Enhance the social history process and include families in identification of the child/youth/family needs.

Please see Intervention 3.1.2.

Intervention 3.2.2: Design, implement and evaluate the Kinship Navigator Model Pilot.

The first year of the Colorado Kinnected pilot implementation ran from June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2021. A report of the findings will be released in Spring 2022. After the report is posted, CDHS and the evaluation team will submit the pilot to the Prevention Services Clearinghouse for a rating. A rating decision is anticipated by Summer 2022.

To further test specific components of the intervention, a 2.0 version of the pilot was implemented July 1, 2021. Six-month data will be pulled in Spring 2022 and compared with the initial data. The intent of this additional pilot is to pinpoint specific effective interventions and analyze longevity of outcomes in hopes of achieving a higher rating through the Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

CDHS was awarded an additional \$200,000 for 2021. The funding is being allocated to five county departments and the evaluation team to wrap up the Colorado Kinnected pilot. Next steps will include finalization of a report of findings, a request for submission to the Clearinghouse, and internal discussions to determine the best course for adding it to Colorado's IV-E plan.

Intervention 3.2.3: Kinship assessments will be completed for all placements with kin.

Section 7.304.21 in the Code of Colorado Regulations requires the kinship evaluation to be completed for all in-home and OOH placements with kin. Completion of this evaluation is monitored through the kinship review process. In CY 2021, 17 counties were reviewed, with a passing rate of 59%. The cumulative score of all counties was 77%. This is a decrease in compliance from previous years and is heavily dependent on the effects of COVID-19. The ability of kinship caregivers and adult household members to get fingerprinted in a timely manner was the primary barrier. At least a portion of a kin assessment was completed in every case, however not in every topic as required by rule. As a full assessment continues to be a struggle for some, DCW created a statewide template for counties to utilize. The template and an accompanying information memorandum was issued in February 2022²⁶. A statewide template will be developed and implemented for counties that do not currently use a county-specific template.

Objective 3.3: Families are reunified with supports and services to ensure safety.

Intervention 3.3.1: Coordinate with CIP and BPCTs to develop processes to improve the timeliness of permanency hearings.

Targeted interventions in Goal 4 of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP were completed as part of the process to improve the timeliness to permanency. DCW has completed court observations in several jurisdictions, and provided feedback to the judicial officers on areas of opportunity to inquire about permanency. Additionally, CIP has scheduled five communities of practice lunch-and-learns with members from the PIP counties to discuss lessons they can learn from each other. The communities of practice sessions ran between November 2021 to March 2022.

Intervention 3.3.2: Improve ICWA compliance in Dependency and Neglect cases.

DCW hired an Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) specialist in April 2021. The ICWA specialist has established a tracking report for American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) clients in out-of-home care across Colorado, and is using the report to ensure that clients' tribal affiliations are entered correctly into Trails. This report will also include other data fields to track days out-of-home and timeliness to permanency.

The ICWA specialist is also analyzing ICWA compliance data from ARD as part of targeted interventions in Goal 4 of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP. The ICWA specialist met with the PIP counties to review the data, provide resources, identify areas of improvement and trends in casework practice. These meetings will expand to other counties across the State as part of this intervention. Please see the PIP Progress Reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

²⁶ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WyFpctAnipMeFICjxUlgfmV4wDf4feUd/view>

Intervention 3.3.3: Redesign the foster care system in Colorado so foster/kinship providers provide ongoing support to the child/youth's family.

DCW has created a work plan based on the Kinship Foster Care Task Group recommendations, which includes creating a practice guide for working with kinship, working with partners to make training more accessible, and a proposed level of kinship foster care with reduced requirements to aid timeliness to permanency. These changes would require approval from the legislature, and updates will be provided in future APSRs.

OM-CW-2021-0013 was issued in September 2021 to provide standard operating procedures for therapeutic and/or treatment foster care programs (see the “Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention” section in *Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes* for further details about Therapeutic Foster Care). DCW conducted training in October for counties and CPAs on the process for approval for therapeutic and treatment foster care. Throughout 2021, discussions were held around different family support models to continue promoting the philosophy that foster parents are supports to families of the children they serve, in order to promote permanency and transitions to reunification. Foster parents shared their experiences on working with families during the Foster Care Quarterly meetings, to highlight best practices in promoting the continuation of family/foster care relationships after reunification or adoption.

Intervention 3.3.4: Family engagement meetings are held throughout the family's involvement and in a way that supports safety, permanency, and well-being.

Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP included strategies to create a foundation for utilizing family engagement meetings at critical points in time, including prior to reunification and prior to case closure. For detailed information on those strategies, please see the PIP progress reports, which are submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

DCW's Family Engagement Specialist facilitated a statewide discussion regarding the progress of facilitated family engagement meetings at reunification in early 2021, and linked resources developed through the PIP to ROM, including county-developed resources in the Summer of 2021. DCW also facilitated a quarterly “Introduction to Family Engagement Meetings” training in 2021 through CWTS for Child Welfare and Collaborative Management Program facilitators. An ECHO series targeting different critical topics of facilitation began in August 2021 and is scheduled through June 2022.

COVID-19 has impacted service delivery across a wide range of programs, and many facilitation meetings have been moved to a virtual platform. DCW's Family Engagement Specialist met with facilitators across the state in 2021 to discuss lessons learned from the transition to virtual meetings.

The Family Engagement Specialist continues to provide ongoing technical assistance and training at the request of county partners, reviews data on family engagement

meetings held at reunification on a monthly basis, and coordinates county outreaches with county intermediaries if necessary.

An exploration through a stakeholder feedback process will guide Colorado's next steps to increase participation in FEMs and hold them with more consistent frequency throughout the family's involvement to promote improved outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Measures of Progress for Goal 3

1. By 2024, all 64 counties will implement DR.

See Intervention 3.1.1 above.

2. Colorado will decrease the average daily OOH population per 1,000 from 4.2 (ROM average for CY 2018) to 3.8 by June 30, 2024.

The average daily OOH population per 1,000 has decreased from 3.71 in CY 2020 to 3.36 in CY 2021. This measure is a Wildly Important Goal (WIG) for DCW's accountability to the Governor's office. This measure is also closely tracked in C-STAT, and DCW's permanency specialist reviews any child under the age of 12, who is in residential care, on a quarterly basis, and works with counties to discuss how each individual child is working towards permanency.

Timeliness to Permanency is also a key focus of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP, which also impacts the average daily out-of-home (OOH) population. Please see the PIP Progress Reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

Another initiative that Colorado utilizes is Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK). Please see "Permanency" in the Updates on the Service Descriptions section of this APSR for further details on WWK.

3. Colorado's five-year average of the number of children/youth who re-enter care will decrease from 1.0% (ROM, Point-in-Time data March 2019) to 0.5% by June 30, 2024. The state's re-entry measure monitors the percent of children/youth discharged to reunification, living with a relative, guardianship or adoption during the last 12 months who re-entered care during each month.

The five-year average of the number of children/youth who re-entered care is 1.01 in CY 2021. Please see the Permanency section in *Updates on Service Description* for detailed information on how Colorado is ensuring permanency for children/youth.

4. By 2024, the rate of initial placement with relatives (of those entering care) will improve from 39.5% (ROM data CY 2018) to 50%.

In CY 2021, the rate of initial placement with relatives (of those entering care) is 46.3%. See Intervention 3.2.2 above.

5. Redesign foster care recruitment processes and communications to align with the FFPSA philosophy that foster parents are supports, not substitutes, for families.

DCW conducted a series of four focus groups with current and potential foster parents, to better understand the barriers and motivations of foster parents. A new digital advertising campaign is in development to highlight the insights gathered from the focus groups. This campaign will also emphasize support towards reunification.

For National Adoption Month, DCW is also working on a campaign to feature families who have supported biological families and reunification. The families will also highlight the importance of maintaining connections to biological families when appropriate.

In 2022, an episode of CO4Kids Live: The Arena²⁷, a foster parent panel discussion, will be filmed. This discussion will focus on overcoming barriers to becoming foster parents, the fear around biological families, grief, and loss when a child is reunified, and how foster parents can build lasting relationships with biological families and continue to be a part of the child/youth's life after reunification.

6. Develop a communication plan with internal and external stakeholders regarding messaging about the redesign in foster care recruitment processes.

CDHS employs a variety of tactics to communicate with internal and external stakeholders regarding the need for foster and adoptive parents.

The Colorado Heart Gallery highlights children and youth who are waiting to be adopted. CDHS contracts with Raise the Future, a non-profit dedicated to helping youth in foster care achieve permanency, to manage this project. At the beginning and end of CY 2021, in-person photoshoots were not held due to COVID-19. However, website analytics indicate interest in the Colorado Heart Gallery has remained consistent since 2019. In CY 2021, the Colorado Heart Gallery website was visited by 80,640 visitors who viewed nearly 600,000 pages and viewed 51,100 videos. Additionally, child-specific videos on the Raise the Future website and county websites were viewed 30,500 times.

In CY 2021, the adoptions of 17 children and youth who had been on the Colorado Heart Gallery were finalized (76% of whom were youth of color), an additional 7 children and youth were placed with families who had taken guardianship or permanent custody (29% of whom were youth of color), and 19 children and youth were placed or matched with a pre-adoptive family (74% of whom were youth of color). During CY 2021, 37 youth were photographed and 25 videos were produced for the Colorado Heart Gallery. The Colorado Heart

²⁷ <https://co4kids.org/blog/the-arena>

Gallery Facebook Page shared 157 posts featuring Colorado Heart Gallery Youth, which had an average reach of 3,346 during CY 2021. Promoted (i.e. paid) Facebook posts for 18 children and youth reached an average of 8,015 individuals.

Social media and digital advertising continue to be a key awareness tactic for Colorado. In CY 2021, general foster care posts on the Colorado Foster Care Facebook page received an average of 666,909 engagements per month, and posts on the Colorado Heart Gallery Facebook page received an average of 69,945 engagements per month.

During CY 2021, digital ad campaigns ran for four weeks every other month to build up consistent awareness and consideration from February through June. The digital video campaigns earned 7,742,254 impressions and generated a 171% increase in website sessions. During the remainder of SFY 21-22, a similar digital campaign will focus on the need for foster parents in Colorado and the positive impact foster parents make in their communities. Additionally, Google Ads are used, so when people in Colorado search targeted keyword phrases related to foster care or adopting a child, they are served a CO4Kids text ad with links to landing pages where they can easily access more information.

Since 2018, CDHS has incorporated storytelling into digital advertising campaigns to educate the public about becoming a foster or adoptive parent. CDHS and select counties have identified Latinx, Black and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning + (LGBTQ+) individuals as important audiences for foster parent recruitment. Given this, digital ads developed specifically to reach these audiences are planned for the remainder of SFY 2021-2022. Using the demographics and online behaviors of current foster parents, CDHS is able to target ads to a “lookalike” audience that shares many of the same qualities as current foster parents.

Campaigns also lead people to an inquiry form on CO4Kids.org where interested parties can request a follow-up from county departments of human/social services and child placement agencies in their area to get more information about the certification process. During CY 2021, 1,685 people submitted an inquiry form to counties and child placement agencies.

The use of photos and stories from current foster and adoptive families is a key element of the recruitment communication strategy. Although many family videos had to be filmed remotely, CDHS produced 10 new family videos in 2021 that show foster parents as a support to biological families and address misconceptions, benefits, and perceived barriers around becoming a foster or adoptive parent. When selecting families to feature, CDHS considers the families’ race and ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity, location within the state, experience, dedication to foster care and adoption, and unique story. Five videos for National Foster Care Month received an average of

1,233 organic views while five videos for National Adoption Month received an average of 786 organic views on Facebook. All family videos on CO4Kids.org received 6,515 views during CY 2021. These views are in addition to video views from the paid digital advertising campaign.

In February 2021, CO4Kids Live: The Arena, a Facebook Live series to give foster parents a place to connect and have honest conversations, was launched. Leveraging a partnership with Foster Source, three episodes aired in February, April, and June and an additional three episodes are planned to air during the remainder of SFY 21-22. With a modest pre-event and post-show promotion this first three episodes received 739,993 impressions and 3,562 completed video views. Although a smaller audience size than the campaign targeting potential foster parents, the audience was engaged and created interest among potential foster parents while receiving positive comments from current foster parents, expressing their gratitude for this resource.

Family videos are shared online at CO4Kids.org, on Facebook, and are made available to counties and CPAs. In addition to sharing stories through videos, CO4Kids.org hosts the Parent Partner blog, which provides a space for adoptive parents, foster families, and nontraditional families to share their experiences raising children and youth who have experienced abuse and neglect. The blog seeks to create an online platform to elevate the authentic voices of families involved in child welfare. CDHS publishes a monthly foster, adoptive and kinship parent email newsletter that aggregates the blog posts and provides additional information from the child welfare field. In CY 2021, the Parent Partner newsletter had an average open rate of 21.6%. CDHS also distributes a professional newsletter with information and resources about recruitment and retention. In CY 2021, the average open rate was 40%.

Community outreach is an integral part of Colorado's recruitment and retention plan. In CY 2021 CDHS participated in Denver PrideFest and Juneteenth virtually. The Department will continue to collaborate with county departments of human/social services, CPAs, and community partners to participate in community gatherings that reach targeted audiences at events such as the Denver March Powwow, Cinco de Mayo, Denver PrideFest and Juneteenth in CY 2022. The Department will also participate virtually when there is an opportunity to do so.

Finally, appreciation is a key element to Colorado's recruitment and retention strategy. CDHS hosts annual celebration events during National Foster Care Month and National Adoption Month to recognize families for their contribution to the community. In the past, this event was held at the Governor's Mansion; however, these events have been held virtually during the pandemic. CDHS recognized 10 families (five at each of the two events) from several Colorado counties at two virtual events attended by senior leaders at CDHS as well as the families' extended family members and friends from around the country.

During the events, each family was recognized and their video was shown. All families were sent gift certificates for a family meal and a family activity and plaques in recognition of their exceptional dedication to foster care and adoption. These families' stories are leveraged to earn media coverage. In CY 2021, 14 newspaper and television stories profiled these families.

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

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

Intervention 4.4.1: Increase access to Independent Living Arrangements (ILA) for youth 18 and older.

Implementation of House Bill 21-1094 has significantly increased access to Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP), which was formerly known as the ILA. This new law further codified the placement type, and more counties are requesting technical assistance on how to use this placement type. Additionally, DCW's Youth Services staff has worked with the Trails Modernization team to begin the process of updating Trails so that the service authorizations for this placement type are more user-friendly and payment types can be more flexible when needed. Finally, new rules were published in December 2021, which add further description regarding how a youth's share of any costs should be determined in an effort to replicate the transition process a non-child welfare involved youth might experience.

Intervention 4.1.2: Ensure services to support all students in foster care in earning a high school credential.

Efforts to promote school stability for all students in foster care, and especially older youth, continue and are increasing. Training for county staff ensures that more caseworkers each year are fully aware of best practices to ensure school stability. Funding from House Bill 18-1306²⁸ continues to be available to support transportation to school of origin, and utilization of the funding increased from the fall semester of 2020 to the fall semester of 2021, suggesting more students have been able to access appropriate education to remain in their schools of origin.

Senate Bill 21-274²⁹ created a statewide Facility Schools Model Workgroup to revamp and improve Colorado's facility schools. Representatives from DCW and county departments of human/social services are participating in the workgroup, encouraging improvements that will allow for better educational outcomes for students in foster care who depend on facility schools for education.

²⁸ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb18-1306>

²⁹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb21-274>

DCW continues to partner with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to ensure that staff at all school districts are appropriately trained and prepared to provide support for students in foster care required by the Every Student Succeeds Act and Colorado House Bill 18-1306. Conversations continue with CDE around increasing the use of the multiple pathways model to support more students in achieving graduation in a variety of ways that are appropriate to their skills and experience.

Intervention 4.1.3: The Chafee Program for a Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) will be available to every eligible youth currently and formerly in foster care in Colorado.

There was increased coverage through the existing Chafee programs for FFY 2021. Utilizing existing programs and diminishing federal funding, the program has been able to cover 37 counties and tribes.

The state continues to utilize the recommendations made through the Chafee Modernization task group to ensure that the state is covered with existing funding through the federal award.

The additional supplemental funding provided through the Consolidated Appropriations Act has been awarded to existing Chafee programs and guidance provided through the Chafee Modernization work group.

House Bill 21-1094 created a state grant program that ultimately will be funded through state funding that ensures that Chafee-like services are accessible throughout the state of Colorado. The first step is assembling the advisory board as laid out in the legislation. The advisory board will make recommendations on the application and funding process of the new state grant program.

With the passage of House Bill 21-1094, CDHS was tasked with assembling an advisory board to provide recommendations on how the Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood Grant program will be implemented. The goals of the grant program are to ensure that Chafee-like services are accessible throughout the state as well as provide additional funding to existing Chafee programs to supplement the consistently reduced Chafee Award from ACF. The advisory board will provide recommendations on the application process, scoring of applications, and funding allocation methodology. The advisory board had their initial meeting in December 2021 and have started to discuss the application process and format.

The Chafee Funding Methodology work group finalized their recommendations in August 2021 and received DCW approval in September 2021. These recommendations create more equity in how the funding is awarded to programs throughout the state.

Objective 4.2: Youth are involved in case planning, and their voice is valued and respected in decisions.

Intervention 4.2.1: Roadmap to Success (RTS) plans will be in place for all eligible youth.

In CY 2021, 89.44% of all youth in OOH care and age 14 and older had a RTS completed in Trails. In 2022, DCW will ensure that the Roadmap to Success will be referenced as such (formerly the Supervised Independent Living Plan) in Trails Legacy. DCW will continue to provide technical assistance to counties to support documentation while Trails Modernization continues to work to align with the current format detailed in Volume 7 rule. While the support remains available, some counties have requested RTS training not occur until after the changes have been made in Trails. DCW will revisit training and technical assistance when the format has been updated in Trails and is required.

House Bill 21-1094 also included provisions for courts to ensure that the county department made reasonable efforts to implement the participating youth's case plan, including the Roadmap to Success plan.

Intervention 4.2.2: Coordinate with BPCT and CIP to ensure youth have meaningful, current Emancipation Transition Plans (ETP) prior to emancipation.

Implementation of House Bill 21-1094 should increase the completion rate of ETPs prior to emancipation, as it requires that an ETP must be completed no more than 90 days prior to the youth's emancipation discharge hearing date. DCW is tracking ETP completion rates in ROM and working on completing an audit to ensure data quality and accurate tracking.

Intervention 4.2.3: Youth, caregiver and parent representation have an active voice in training and professional development activities.

The Training Steering Committee (TSC) currently includes caregiver and foster parent representation, and is working on a plan to involve youth and parent participation in 2022. Members of the TSC decide on training needs for development and may also participate in pilot trainings before they go live on the statewide Learning Management System (LMS).

Training continues to occur remotely due to COVID-19. DCW's Learning and Development team continues to use established mechanisms of youth and family engagement, such as leveraging existing relationships with youth-serving organizations, and working with other state agencies. DCW maintains a collaborative relationship with Project Foster Power, and most recently incorporated their guide, written by youth, into professional development opportunities in DCW's monthly mailing list to county staff. There is also a plan for a youth-led Trainer of Trainers in Positive Youth Development in 2022.

More information on how parent and youth representation on the TSC will be provided in the next APSR.

Measures of Progress for Goal 4

1. **By 2024, 90% of all youth in OOH care and age 14 and older will have a Roadmap to Success (RTS) completed in Trails. These counts will not include youth in DYS.**

In CY 2021, 89.44% of all youth in OOH care and age 14 and older had a RTS completed in Trails. Please see Intervention 4.2.1 for more details on how DCW is working towards this goal.

2. **By June 2024, the percentage of emancipating youth from OOH care (over the age of 18) whose last placement was an ILA will increase from 29% to 40%, by decreasing the percent of youth whose last placement was a residential facility, foster care, or runaway. These counts will not include youth in DYS.**

In CY 2021, the percentage of emancipating youth from OOH care (over the age of 18) whose last placement was an ILA is at 32.2%. With the passage of House Bill 21-1094, foster youth who meet eligibility criteria are able to voluntarily continue to receive certain child welfare services (services) up until the last day of the month of the youth's twenty-first birthday.

3. **By June 2024, 90% of youth emancipating from OOH care will have timely transition plans (completed during the 90 days prior to emancipation). These counts will not include youth in DYS.**

In CY 2021, 24.8% of youth emancipating from OOH care had timely transition plans (completed during the 90 days prior to emancipation). See intervention 4.2.2.

4. **Increase the five-year high school graduation rate for youth in OOH care from 29.6% (SFY 17-18) to 40%. These counts will not include youth in DYS.** The five-year high school graduation rate for youth in OOH care for SFY 20-21 has increased to 36.7%. While COVID-19 continues to create complex challenges for this goal, school districts were able to provide access to remote learning technology to students, ensuring that children are receiving appropriate services to meet their educational needs. Due to remote learning, students were able to maintain the same school, regardless of placement changes.

As reported in previous APSRs, the primary area of intervention is to increase school stability. Please see Intervention 4.1.2 above for more information on how Colorado is working to improve school stability.

Quality Assurance

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Team

The Learning and Development team within DCW conducted a CQI training in the Fall of 2021 for county intermediaries, and DCW is in the process of rolling out an internal CQI team to build a broader CQI framework internally and externally. The CQI team is currently setting the foundation for this framework to ensure sustainability, adherence to fidelity, consistency, and alignment with statewide initiatives. In early 2022, DCW began an internal CQI process to improve statewide performance on monthly parent contacts. Strategies involved working with the DCW subject matter expert on Father Engagement, using data to assess performance and drive initiatives, and identifying the larger impact of improvement on this measure.

As this internal CQI team works to build the broader CQI framework, more information will be reported in future APSRs.

The Administrative Review Division (ARD)

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. ARD is a neutral third party that facilitates case reviews, gathers and analyzes data, publishes research, and provides training and technical assistance to affect change in practice, policy and programs that lead to improved outcomes for Colorado's children and at-risk adults.

Within Colorado's child welfare system, the ARD serves as an independent third-party review system under the auspices of CDHS. The ARD manages quality assurance and quality improvement programs for Colorado's child welfare systems. Specifically, the ARD is the mechanism responsible for the federally required Case Review System and the broader qualitative case review portion of the Quality Assurance System.

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

The ARD currently conducts reviews of the following populations:

Administrative/Periodic Reviews

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

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

- 45 CFR 1357.15 (u)³⁰, 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 Act³¹, 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,
 - Determines:
 - 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 Act³², 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.

³⁰ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2014-title45-vol4/pdf/CFR-2014-title45-vol4-sec1357-15.pdf>

³¹ https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title04/0475.htm

³² https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title04/0475.htm

This process also meets the federal requirements outlined in 5 CFR 1355.34 (C (3))³³, 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., sending notification of a child/youth with potential Native American heritage to specific tribes) as well as those that are broader, systemic issues (e.g., Native American Tribes not responding to inquiries of Native American heritage).
- Provides reports to agency administration on the quality of services evaluated and areas of needed improvement.
 - The ARD's case review instrument, implemented within Colorado's CCWIS, 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.
- Evaluates 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.

³³ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2011-title45-vol4/pdf/CFR-2011-title45-vol4-sec1355-34.pdf>

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

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

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

Foster Home Certification Reviews

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

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

Institutional Abuse Screen-Out Reviews

The purpose of the monthly statewide institutional abuse screen-out review is to determine if county departments of human/social services are appropriately screening out institutional abuse referrals as outlined in the Code of Colorado Regulations and Colorado Revised Statutes. A random sample (90% confidence level

with a 10% interval) of statewide screened out institutional abuse referrals is reviewed monthly and a thorough and qualitative case review of the counties' decision to screen out the institutional abuse referrals is completed based on information contained within Trails. The source for all information used during this review is the Colorado Trails database. A review of each hotline call can be completed when needed. If the review determines the referral should have been assigned, it is then sent for a second level consideration by staff from DCW and two county departments. If the second level concurs that the referral should have been assigned, ARD staff notify the county department of the finding. Additionally, the ARD compiles aggregate data reports on a quarterly basis and provides those to DCW.

Hotline Reviews

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

Child Fatality Review Team

The ARD is responsible for managing the CDHS Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT). CFRT reviews incidents of fatal, near fatal, or egregious abuse or neglect determined to be a result of child maltreatment, when the child or family had previous involvement with the child welfare system within the last three years. The process includes a review of the incident, identification of contributing factors that may have led to the incident, the quality and sufficiency of service delivery from state and local agencies, and the families' prior involvement with the child welfare system. After considering the identified strengths, as well as systemic gaps and/or deficiencies, recommendations are put forth regarding policy and practice considerations that may help prevent future incidents of fatal, near fatal, or egregious abuse or neglect, and/or strengthen the systems that provide direct service delivery to children and families. Each incident reviewed by the CFRT results in a written report that is posted to the CDHS public notification website (with confidential information redacted)³⁴. The ARD also publishes a CFRT Annual Report each summer, please see Appendix A for the 2020 Child Maltreatment Fatality Report.

³⁴ <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/child-fatality-reviews>

CFSR Round 3 PIP

The ARD is responsible for the completion of the measurement methodology for Colorado's Round 3 CFSR PIP. This includes conducting 65 reviews across six counties and the Division of Youth Services every six months. While the ARD is using the federal OSRI as a measurement tool throughout the duration of Colorado's PIP, due to the lack of generalizability of the findings, it is not used as part of Colorado's routine CQI/QA system. However, information from the other qualitative case review process, administrative/quantitative data, and stakeholder feedback groups are used to provide more in-depth and generalizable information as to Colorado's statewide performance across the CFSR Items.

In planning for the CFSR Round 4 reviews, CDHS is having ongoing discussions around the ability to conduct a State Case Review process, and the continuation of aligning internal tools with the OSRI during Colorado's CQI/QA processes. Discussions are ongoing, and further details will be provided in future APSRs.

Use of Qualitative Case Review Data

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

- CFSR Program Improvement Plan Implementation Team meetings and discussions.
- CDHS C-STAT discussions
- CDHS Risk-STAT discussions
- CDHS Child Welfare Sub-PAC rule and work group assignment

Child Welfare Quality Assurance Updates

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

Having conducted these reviews via virtual platforms for almost two years, the ARD has determined virtual reviews can be an effective methodology. Notably, in several county departments, participation of parents and other stakeholders has increased since the transition to virtual participation. In many ways, virtual participation, through reducing the need to travel to and from a county department office, may reduce barriers to participation for families and others (such as Guardian ad Litem and Court Appointed Special Advocates). ARD staff have also indicated that screen sharing functionality has proven an effective method of providing technical assistance

and support to county staff. Examples include walking through the Trails CCWIS to locate information, and showing sections where information is required to be stored.

Additionally, remote/virtual reviews have created a net gain of available review days. Specifically, remote reviews eliminate extensive and frequent travel demands related to conducting reviews in person within the county department offices. As an example, in-person reviews required almost a full day of travel for ARD staff to get to more distant, remote locations across the state, before reviews could be conducted. Many of these are smaller counties that may only have one or two reviews per month. This required two full days of travel for only one or two reviews. Conducting reviews remotely reduces the need for travel days, making those days available for conducting reviews. As another example, if a staff member needs to take time off for sick leave, previously the reviews often had to be canceled. It was not possible to locate staff who could travel a greater distance to cover the reviews. In a virtual platform, any staff member can assist in providing coverage.

Due to the extra review days gained, the ARD is exploring the potential ability to re-start conducting reviews on the Assessment and In-home Services populations. The ARD used to conduct these reviews on a routine basis. The resource impact of conducting the CFSR Round 3 PIP reviews required the ARD to cease these reviews. While the ARD may not be able to conduct these reviews with the same frequency as before, any cadence of review would begin to provide valuable information about these critical populations back into the overall continuous quality improvement system for Colorado.

As part of the Family First implementation, the responsibility for reviewing the ongoing necessity and appropriateness of QRTP placements was added to the ARD. 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. The ARD collaborated with key stakeholders to design and implement a QRTP Placement Review instrument. The instrument was added into the Trails system, so data from the reviews is stored directly in Colorado's CCWIS. These reviews started during CY 2021.

Update on Service Descriptions

Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program

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

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

Colorado is in the fourth year of a contract that gives Lutheran Families Services-Rocky Mountain (LFS-RM) the authority to provide oversight of the intercountry adoption application process. LFS-RM is responsible for ensuring that applicants wanting to adopt from other countries meet suitability and eligibility criteria, required by Colorado statute and federal law. This oversight includes fingerprint background checks, child abuse and neglect background checks, Colorado and national sex offender registry checks, and home study requirements. In CY 2021, 82 families requested approval to move adoption applications to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for approval. Of these, 44 were initial requests and 38 were updates to prior requests.

Colorado is in the fifth contractual year with Raise the Future (formerly known as The Adoption Exchange) to provide post-permanency support to families who have achieved permanency, including families who have adopted children/youth through the intercountry process. Further information is in the Post-Permanency Services and Supports (PPSS) section of this document.

In CY 2021, two licensing child placement agencies, which provided intercountry adoption services, informed CDHS of their intent to close their agencies in early CY 2022. The agency records for all adoptions will be forwarded to CDHS for storage and access as allowed.

In CY 2022, CDHS will update the data system used to track records for adoptions completed through the county departments of social services. As part of this project, the domestic and intercountry adoption records for all closed child placement agencies will be added to this data system. This will ensure more timely research and access to adoption records for those allowed to receive them under statute.

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.

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

Colorado’s MIECHV federal grant funds voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs in 19 of Colorado’s highest-risk counties: Adams, Alamosa, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Denver, Dolores, Huerfano, Las Animas, Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose, Morgan, Otero, Prowers, Pueblo, Saguache, and Teller. These counties were selected based on Colorado MIECHV’s [2020 needs assessment](#) (an updated needs assessment took effect in October 2021), identifying “at-risk communities” by the following indicators:

- Premature births as a percent of total births
- Percentage of low birth weight babies
- 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 disorder
- 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 have access to a program that fits their needs and eligibility. Programs include Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), and Parents as Teachers (PAT). Child First will be added as a new supported program in response to the updated needs assessment. Together, they serve families from the prenatal stage to kindergarten entry. The programs are administered by 16 local implementing agencies, and the following table provides information about the geographic distribution of the programs and their approximate caseloads.

Program	# of Counties Served	Caseload
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)	9	419
Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)	2	420
Parents as Teachers (PAT)	12	813
TOTAL	19	1,652

Table 1: Number of counties where MIECHV programs are available and have funded caseloads in FFY 2021-2022

The MIECHV grant also helped lift a Home Visiting Investment Task Force to develop a strategy to scale a continuum of home visiting services in Colorado. A [Home Visiting Investment Plan](#) was released in August 2021. This task force is currently focused on securing the resources needed to implement the plan, including expanding access to home visiting services for an additional 1,700 families.

Colorado Nurse Home Visitor Program

The Colorado Nurse Home Visitor Program (Nurse-Family Partnership or NFP) provides state funding for home visiting service 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. Eligibility requirements include voluntary participation, being a first-time mother, low-income 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 and the first two years of the child's life. 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 CDHS, 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 2021, the Nurse Home Visitor Program served approximately 4,671 families, and in SFY 2022, the program is expected to serve a similar number of families.

NFP is funding cycle is based on the state fiscal year; therefore, NFP data reflects the period beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022.

Healthy Steps

The Home Visiting for School Readiness line in the Colorado Budget currently supports the implementation of Healthy Steps, an evidence-based program, housed in pediatric offices. It pairs a Healthy Steps 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. In 2020, 1,411 families received the service in six counties. The program has demonstrated an increase in a caregiver's activities to build early literacy skills. Mothers who have participated in Healthy Steps 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 Healthy Steps, an estimated \$2.63 in savings is realized by state Medicaid agencies each year.

The Incredible Years®

The Incredible Years® (IY) is a suite of evidence-based programs that includes three prevention components for parents and teachers of young children:

- Teacher Classroom Management is a framework through which care providers learn positive classroom management strategies, how to build positive relationships with children demonstrating challenging behaviors, and how to help those children control their behaviors, among other essential strategies for classroom management, including parent engagement.
- Dinosaur School is a social-emotional curriculum that includes 60 lessons delivered two to three times per week in early childhood classrooms (preschool through first grade). Trained teachers co-lead the lessons using engaging activities, role-play, and video vignettes. The lessons focus on how to solve problems, control one's anger, self-monitor emotions, succeed in school, and form friendships.
- The Preschool BASIC Parenting Program (Parent Program) is delivered by IIC-trained co-facilitators over 14 weeks through weekly two-hour sessions. During these sessions, parents learn strategies and skills to promote children's social competence and reduce behavior problems such as effective praise and use of incentives, establishing predictable routines, effective limit-setting, strategies to manage misbehavior, and teaching children to problem-solve.

Each works to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors by leveraging positive parent-child and teacher-child relationships to promote preschool-aged children's social-emotional skills, which prepare young children for success in school and in life. During the 2020-2021 academic year, OEC partnered with Invest in Kids and community partners across 20 counties to support the delivery of IY for parents, teachers, and young children impacting 4,027 children, 399 teachers and educational staff, 67 Parent Program Facilitators, and 375 Parent Program participants. The annual [evaluation report](#) demonstrated positive outcomes across the three components.

Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families

The [Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families \(the Partnership\)](#) works collaboratively across Colorado to create the conditions for strong families and communities where children are healthy, valued and thriving. The aim is to significantly reduce child fatalities and child maltreatment for all children zero to five by positively and proactively supporting strong and healthy family formation.

The three strategic priority areas of the Partnership are:

- **Systems Alignment:** Align state and county human services, public health, and health care systems to place family well-being at the center.
- **Early Touchpoints:** Strengthen the family well-being system service array to improve outcomes for parents and infants throughout pregnancy and up to age 1.
- **Community Norms:** Change community norms related to social connectedness to increase access to information on child development and support with parenting with the intent to reduce parental stress and decrease child maltreatment.

The Partnership fosters an ecosystem of champions that include families and leaders from human services, public health, early childhood, and health care.

In the previous year, the Partnership has secured a new ACF grant (Family Support through Primary Prevention) to implement three demonstration projects across the state, educated decision makers on how the pandemic stimulus funds and the creation of a new Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) could positively impact families with young children by wrapping support around them right from the start, responded to a request for information from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) on priorities for the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, created an Equity Council, launched the Partnership Evaluation Toolkit, completed the development of a community norms survey with Montana State University and hosted listening sessions with families across the state, secured a Foster America fellow to support the network, continued a learning collaboration with Texas, presented at the Prevent Child Abuse America conference, applied to participate in an

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) & American Public Human Services Association (APHA) National Learning Collaborative on Boundary Spanning Leadership, and participated in Thriving Families Safer Children network activities.

In 2022, the Partnership will focus on a Stories of the System project with the Family Caregiver Space, collecting stories from those with lived experience around the state. The three Colorado Family Support through Primary Prevention (FSPP) demonstration projects will begin by implementing Family Connects in the Denver Metro area, strengthening the family resource center networks in two counties, and distributing the community norms survey in six counties. The Partnership is also working with DCW on a Blueprint to reimagine the Child Welfare System. Members of the Equity Council are participating in a Thriving Families Safer Children Equity Action Network with the Burns Institute.

SafeCare® Colorado

SafeCare® is a nationally recognized, evidence-based, in-home parent education program that provides direct skills training to parents and caregivers in the areas of parenting, home safety and child health. SafeCare® was brought to Colorado in 2013 as a part of then Governor Hickenlooper’s “Keeping Kids Safe and Families Healthy 2.0” plan and continues to be implemented throughout Colorado as a voluntary service for families in an effort to prevent entry or re-entry into the child welfare system. The program is designed for families with children ages zero to five who are at risk of abuse or neglect, and typically takes 18-20 weekly sessions to complete, with each session lasting one to one and a half hours. SafeCare® Colorado (SCC) is delivered by trained providers in a parent’s home or another convenient location, and due to COVID-19, has been available virtually since March 2020. The program is offered in both English and Spanish across the state. Families are referred to SCC through a partnership with child welfare and other organizations such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), 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
- Must reside in one of the 40 counties or two tribal nations currently offering the program in the state
- Must meet certain high-risk eligibility criteria
- Families with non-court-involved child welfare cases

The SCC program is funded and managed through the OEC and is currently implemented in partnership with the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect. The program is supported by the National SafeCare® Training and Research Center (NSTRC) at Georgia State University. NSTRC, in collaboration with Kempe and OEC, oversees

implementation and fidelity for this manualized, structured home visiting program. The FY 2022 appropriation for SCC programming is \$5,251,169. Sites are selected through competitive procurement solicitations. A new five-year grant cycle started July 1, 2021. Currently, 14 sites are providing SCC programming to residents of 40 Colorado counties, with one additional county added in SFY 2022.

SafeCare Colorado Service Areas by County (FY 2022)

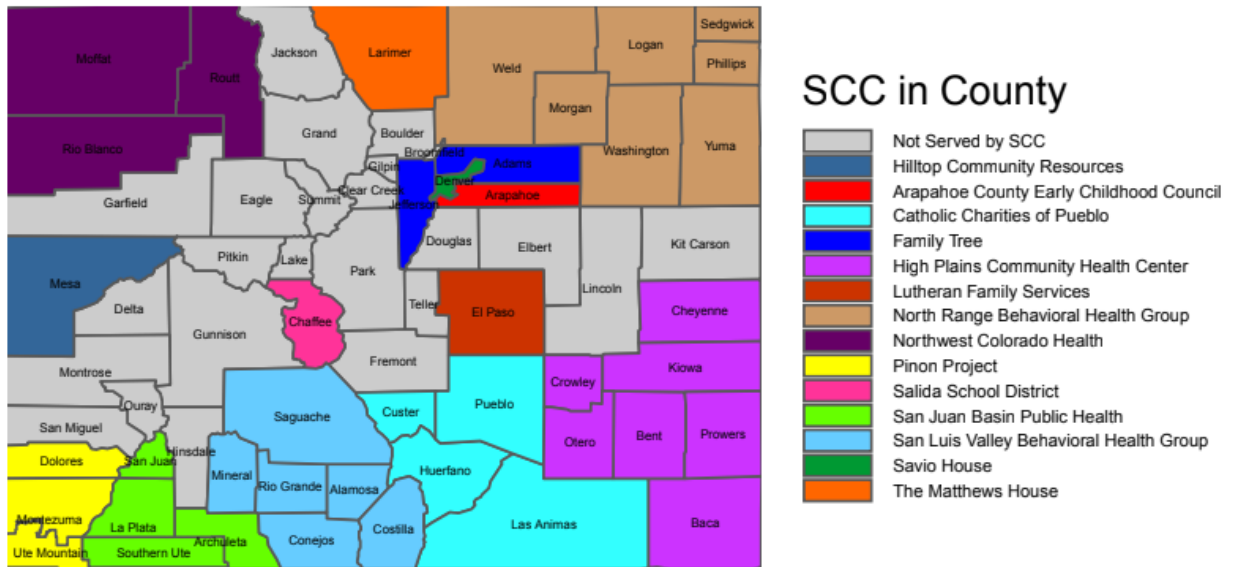


Figure 2: Map of SafeCare® Colorado Service Areas

SafeCare® has a long history of success, and the program’s effectiveness has been evaluated in numerous studies during the past 40 years. SafeCare® has high child welfare relevance and is rated as a supported practice in the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

SafeCare® Colorado also partnered with E-Squared Communications to create a new paid media campaign, new marketing materials, as well as a Communications Toolkit for all SCC providers. All materials are available in English and Spanish. E-Squared Communications also created a text message SCC campaign that began in October of 2021 and ran through February 2022. More than 7,600 parents in the counties where SCC is offered received the first text in October, and 240 clicked through to view the SCC website.

CSU has created a rigorous two-year evaluation plan that kicked off in January of 2022, which includes two components. A descriptive evaluation will continue to assess implementation activities, proximal impacts, and participant populations reached for families served by SCC in SFY 2019, through SFY 2022. The second component, a quasi-experimental study, will rigorously evaluate

the program's effectiveness at improving outcomes in four broad domains: child well-being, adult well-being, parenting practices, and protective factors. In partnership with all SCC stakeholders, including families SCC serves, the current rigorous evaluation will further build the evidence-base for SCC, comprehensively demonstrate the holistic impact of SCC for Colorado families, and pioneer new directions in child maltreatment prevention.

Detailed information on how SCC has adapted through COVID-19 was reported in the previous APSR. Although referrals to SCC were initially down at the start of the pandemic, service delivery across SCC's 14 sites serving 40 counties and two tribes has greatly increased since SFY 2020. In SFY 2021, 2,445 total families participated in 11,282 home visits, completing 1,173 SafeCare® topics. During this same time period, home safety hazards decreased, knowledge of child health increased, and there was an improvement in the observed quality of parent infant/child interactions for participating families.

Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths

The CDHS Child Fatality Review Team (CDHS CFRT) reviews incidents of fatal, near fatal, or egregious abuse or neglect determined to be a result of child maltreatment, when the child or family had previous involvement with the child welfare system within the last three years. The process includes a review of the incident, identification of contributing factors that may have led to the incident, the quality and sufficiency of service delivery from state and local agencies, and the families' prior involvement with the child welfare system. After considering the identified strengths, as well as systemic gaps and/or deficiencies, recommendations are put forth regarding policy and practice considerations that may help prevent future incidents of fatal, near fatal, or egregious abuse or neglect, and/or strengthen the systems that provide direct service delivery to children and families.

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

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

children safe, all systems and communities have a responsibility to help make families healthier and more resilient.

Reviews of fatal, near fatal, and egregious incidents of child maltreatment have shown that prior concerns which were reported to child welfare initially appeared as episodic events; however, timelines leading up to a fatal, near fatal, and egregious incident of child maltreatment share a different story; they often illustrate complex families systems and relationships, layers of stressors, trauma histories, extensive risk factors, patterns of abuse or neglect, and patterns of caregiver behaviors, etc. Child welfare needs to have adequate time and staffing in order to be able to sort through, assess, and provide effective services to children and families. Additionally, previous family and community violence is a prevalent risk factor identified in the histories of the families involved in fatal, near fatal, and egregious incidents of child maltreatment, and research indicates that violence is a predictor of future maltreatment. Families' histories often involve domestic violence and it is evident that Colorado needs more resources for victims, and a system that holds perpetrators accountable for their actions. For more information, please see "Domestic Violence Task Force" in the *Collaboration* section of this APSR.

The CDHS CFRT staff work closely with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Child Fatality Prevention System (CFPS) team to consider data from each system and make joint recommendations based upon these findings. Each review process serves a different purpose and each process is supported by the respective agency. The CFPS staff members at the CDPHE serve as the two state appointees from the CDPHE to the CDHS CFRT, and the CFRT staff are involved with and participate in CFPS workgroups and state review meetings. Senate Bill 13-255 requires that, as a result of collaboration, the two child fatality review teams make joint recommendations.

CFPS conducts a process each year to review trends and patterns in child deaths, including child maltreatment deaths, and develop prevention recommendations to prevent future deaths. These recommendations are submitted in an annual legislative report to the Colorado General Assembly each July 1st. The most recent CFPS legislative report can be found in Appendix B (see Appendix A for the CFRT's Annual Report).

Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act

Per Attachment A of [ACYF-CB-PI-20-01](#), Colorado is not eligible for the Disaster Relief Act funds.

Supplemental Funding to Prevent, Prepare for, or Respond to, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Colorado was awarded \$714,583 through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), and the entirety of the award was distributed for front-line

work in the counties. The funds were used to address COVID-19 issues, and supported the program goals of Title IV-B and child welfare services, which include:

- Protecting and promoting the welfare of all children
- Preventing the neglect, abuse, or exploitation of children
- Supporting at-risk families through services which allow children, where appropriate, to remain safely with their families or return to their families in a timely manner
- Promoting the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in foster care and adoptive families
- Providing training, professional development, and support to ensure a well-qualified child welfare workforce.

All funds were spent by September 30th, 2021.

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

The OEC oversees Colorado's PSSF program. The overarching objectives for Colorado's program include:

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

These objectives are addressed through the provision of services in four service categories or areas through family support, family preservation, time-limited family reunification and adoption promotion and support services.

PSSF released a new RFP to select PSSF sites in Colorado for five-year contracts to provide services. Awarded sites may be renewed by option if following the current contracted programming or must submit applications for renewal each year incorporating any changes to the plans of agreed-upon services or budget. The released RFP included a change in eligible applicants for funding that no longer limited applications to county departments of human or social services. The RFP was open to any local government agency, any private non-profit or not-for-profit community-based organization or tribal nations with a focus on child safety, permanency, or child well-being.

As a result of the RFP there were 22 PSSF sites selected, and those sites serve 35 counties in Colorado. The RFP shifted funding that enabled applicants with larger programs to request and be awarded at a higher funding level than the previous

contracts and enabled us to raise the funding levels for smaller rural programs to enhance more evidence-based or promising practices.

Funded PSSF service priorities mostly remained the same, although some were added, and some were incorporated into more broad categories of service programming for the application process.

The following options for funded service priorities were included in the new RFP:

1. Intensive family case management or home-based intervention: High Fidelity Wraparound, PSSF Case Management Guidelines, Child First (limited to specific activities)
2. Family Team Decision Making
3. Incredible Years Program
4. Parenting Education Models: Nurturing Parents/teen module, Parents as Teachers, Child First
5. Fatherhood programs: Nurturing Fathers, Caring Dads, Inside Out Dads
6. Respite Care
7. Colorado Community Response
8. Post-Adoption/Permanency Support: Adoption Navigator, PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency Support Services Guidelines, Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE), Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP), National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC)
9. Kinship Navigation
10. Parent Peer Support Programs/Mentoring programs: Parent Cafes, Circle of Parents

Service Priority	Model(s) Allowed	Service Population/Category: (service areas: FS-Family Support, FP-Family Preservation, R-Reunification, A-Adoption)
Intensive Family Case Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High Fidelity Wraparound 2. Child First (limited to certain activities) 3. PSSF Case Management Guidelines 	FS,FP,R, A
Family Engagement Meetings	<p>Must identify the model to be used.</p> <p>Family Team Conferencing; Family Group Decision Making; Permanency Teaming, etc.</p>	FP,R, A

Incredible Years Program	1. Parent Group 2. Dinosaur School	FS,FP,R,A
Parenting Education Models	1. Nurturing Parents/teen module 2. Parents as Teachers 3. Child First	FS,FP,R, A
Fatherhood Programs	1. Nurturing Fathers 2. Caring Dads 3. Inside Out Dads	FS,FP,R, A
Respite Care	Emergency or planned.	FS,FP,R, A
Colorado Community Response (CCR)	Prescribed Colorado model	FS
Post Adoption/Post Permanency	1. Adoption Navigator 2. PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency/Kinship Guidelines 3. MAPP 4. NTDC	FP, R, A
Kinship Navigation	1. PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency/Kinship guidelines	FS,FP,R, A
Parent Peer Support Programs/Mentoring Programs	1. Parent Cafes 2. Circle of Parents	FS,FP,R, A

Table 2: Models allowed per PSSF Service Priority

PSSF provider agencies implement assessment tools and surveys with fidelity to the service models selected. All programs should participate in CQI activities identified by the program or an assigned designee. Assessment tools and surveys are used by the advocate to build trust, identify strengths, and assist the family during goal development. Program participant data collected is also used to evaluate activities in achieving program goals and service effectiveness.

Colorado PSSF programs use the Colorado Family Support Assessment Tool (CFSA) 2.0, when required, prior to beginning the provision of services. Assessment tools should be used to capture baseline information, at specified intervals, and during post-test to measure progress. PSSF providers work with families to complete the CFSA 2.0 to reflect on their family functioning, determine strengths and needs of the family, set goals, and measure overall progress. The CFSA 2.0 identifies strengths across 14 domains and allows families to select areas where they are most ready to make changes. The CFSA 2.0 is also used during goal setting with families.

Setting goals with the family can increase motivation, participation, and satisfaction regarding identified outcomes. The intention of PSSF goal setting is to recognize a family's expertise in identifying the goals that will lead towards stabilization and family well-being.

As part of the CFSFA 2.0, PSSF providers complete the Protective Factors Survey (PFS). The PFS is a 20-item survey which has undergone national field-testing for reliability and validity for use with families engaged in child neglect prevention programs. The stated purpose of the PFS is to provide agencies with feedback regarding a snapshot of the families they serve, changes in protective factors, and opportunities to increase individual family protective factors.

Community Based Services

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

Service Decision-Making Process for Family Support Services

In Colorado, agencies apply for PSSF funding based on the prescribed state priorities that were developed based on a statewide needs assessment and literature review of best/promising practices. Counties applied to provide services after assessing their local needs and determining best fit in the communities they serve.

In Colorado, PSSF sites provide prevention and early intervention services to families who are at risk of becoming involved with the child welfare system through self-referrals or by agencies helping families seek out resources and support.

Families connected to a PSSF site and currently engaged in PSSF services can access flex funds, when approved, for concrete supports to help the family achieve or mitigate barriers to reaching family identified goals. Sites are encouraged to partner with other agencies in their community to address families experiencing crisis situations and pool resources. PSSF sites are valued partners, and many have representation on collaborative management groups to wrap around families to provide a continuum of community-based services in their communities.

Ancillary resources from PSSF were targeted to fund consultants, training, and special projects to support PSSF programs and services benefiting families. Contracts included certified trainers in the Nurturing Fathers and Nurturing Parenting programs to provide training and in-depth work to successfully implement parenting education classes in several local sites and projects promoting fatherhood initiatives and services. The Colorado Fatherhood Network through the Family Resource Center

Association will be instrumental in elevating and maintaining the involvement of fathers in their children's lives in Colorado. PSSF also provides resources to families through a community agency/Family Resource Center that serves American Indian/Alaskan Native families in the metro area through collaborative and culturally responsive services. Additional activities included supporting the Biannual Strengthening Colorado Families and Communities Conference, providing respite care funds focused on serving adoptive families, and providing support collaboration to assess agency readiness for the Child First programming in Colorado.

CDHS provides training to PSSF sites through multiple venues including virtual sites visits, webinars and informational sessions held at conferences or grantee meetings training topics include:

- Implementation science
- Embedding learning into practice
- Incredible Years parent group facilitators
- Intensive Case Management training and monitoring
- Nurturing Parents facilitator training
- Nurturing Fathers facilitator training
- Adoption support services training
- Colorado Family Support Assessment Tool
- Motivational interviewing
- Children's safety
- Family engagement, and
- Strengthening Families Protective Factors

Services offered during COVID-19 through PSSF have required flexibility and creativity for service delivery. Sites have experienced and are still facing major challenges with the public health restrictions and requirements in their community. Many are unable to provide in-person services and have resulted in pivoting to virtual models of participation. Some services are more amenable to adjustments and have been successful while other services struggle with continued participation rates. Sites have struggled to hire and keep staff in their programs during this time and have had the numbers of families served affected by all the obstacles associated with the pandemic. Unfortunately, with these challenges there are some locations that have seen increased needs for crisis intervention services mainly around housing or concrete needs and families have indicated that they don't have the capacity to participate in parenting education classes while they are teaching their children at home and/or working at the same time. Case management and connecting families to resources was a high priority for programs, and sites worked at being creative with families to engage since they could not in person many times.

Division X Supplemental Funding from the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mary Lee Allen PSSF program has allocated additional funding to each State to provide some relief to families experiencing

unexpected expenses and income disruption. The Colorado PSSF program is awarding supplemental funds to each PSSF site to use for families experiencing a hardship or loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds will be awarded to each site upon request.

The funds will be used to address temporary but critical needs, the supplemental funds should address a concrete economic need that has immediate implications for child well-being or family stability. Sites were provided with a list of possible uses for the supplemental funds. In addition, Colorado has utilized and earmarked resources to support sites.

PSSF has contracted with an agency to provide community-based respite care for families located throughout the metro area in Colorado. The agency brings churches and communities together to provide host homes and volunteers to provide respite opportunities for children who need temporary care. The agency believes it will be able to expand its existing respite care services, coaches, and volunteers to increase the number of extended family-like relationships available using the additional support from PSSF.

Additional funding has allowed for more program staff to receive training in the CFSA 2.0 tool, allowing advocates to complete comprehensive assessments with families to identify strengths and needs of the family.

Supplemental supports enabled Colorado to provide resources to a statewide community agency, Raise the Future to serve families through the Family Navigator program to help families develop lifetime connections. Raise The Future received additional funding to serve families in the Denver metro area and surrounding Counties without access to a PSSF site. The agency provides “support to families early and often to prevent disruption in a family’s commitment to adoption, placement, and finalization.”

The supplemental funding through Division X was a welcomed increase in resources for families although it did pose some challenges in appropriating funding in the quick timeframe. There are some limitations to using the supplemental resources to building infrastructure or capacity in programs that may not be able to sustain the level of implementation without continued resources.

In FFY 2021, Colorado served 1,349 individuals in 1,155 families. 1,779 services were delivered in total, and the PSSF service area breakdown is as follows:

PSSF Service Area	Numbers Served FFY 2021
Family Support	977
Family Preservation	491
Time-Limited Reunification	148
Adoption Promotion and Support	158
Total	1779

Table 3: FFY 2021 services provided by Colorado’s PSSF program.

Population at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment

According to 2016-2020 data from the Child Fatality Prevention System, the rate of maltreatment for children under the age of one is seven times greater than the rate for that of all ages³⁵. For further details on how Colorado provides services for children under the age of five, please see the *Services for Children Under the Age of Five* section of this APSR.

OEC was recently awarded a federal grant for Family Support through Primary Prevention (FSPP). The project will create the conditions necessary for all families to thrive in five Colorado counties where a significant portion of the population is impacted by disparities in the social determinants of health. Through the project, OEC and project partners will shift focus from a reactive child protection system to an intentional coordinated primary prevention system co-designed with communities and families, including those with lived child welfare expertise. Three demonstration projects will be implemented: a community norms change campaign increasing social connection and informal supports for families, a universal home visiting program and referral infrastructure in three counties, and a family resource center network and “no wrong door” strategy in two counties.

Kinship Navigator Funding

DCW conducts periodic reviews of non-certified kinship care placements. These reviews monitor compliance with rules for background checks, and evaluation of the kinship family and home. The evaluation must cover, at minimum, the following topics: a home inspection, safety, parenting practices, strengths, needs, support systems, potential for permanency, and other topics as deemed necessary by the county department. Two trends were observed during these reviews in 2021. There was a decrease in compliance with fingerprints for kinship caregivers when a placement was made in 2020. This is heavily dependent on the effects of COVID-19. The ability of kinship caregivers and adult household members to get fingerprinted in a timely manner was the primary barrier. The second trend was related to the kinship evaluation. During the reviews, it was observed that county departments using a template for the assessment scored higher than counties that did not. DCW staff, in partnership with county kinship staff, developed and implemented a statewide Kinship Care Evaluation template. It is anticipated that counties using this template will produce more thorough evaluations on their kinship families and will consistently receive higher scores on the kinship evaluation component of the review.

See Intervention 3.2.2 and 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.

³⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_ty9U5p6Pz9L_HY50bvFhb6vVj2lXq3P/view

Monthly Caseworker Visits (MCV)

In FFY 2021, Colorado met the federal goal of 95% of monthly caseworker visits completed. The state completed 93% of those visits in the child/youth’s residence. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ACF allowed for videoconferencing technology to be used under limited circumstances in lieu of face-to-face contact for ongoing cases until June 1, 2021.

Colorado’s Use of the Monthly Caseworker Visit Grant

In addition to the ongoing evaluation of MCV data, CDHS distributes MCV funds to counties for the purchase of goods, services, programs, and technologies that support efforts to ensure children and youth in OOH care are visited monthly. In FFY 2021, an announcement was sent to county departments to inform them of grant funding opportunities through MCV to increase the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children and youth in OOH care. Due to the pandemic, the Sex Offender Management Board Annual Conference was held virtually in July of 2021. MCV funds paid for scholarships for Child Welfare caseworkers and supervisors to attend. MCV funds were also used to send the new ICWA specialist and ICWA Supervisor to the National Indian Child Welfare annual conference which was held virtually in April of 2021. MCV funds are blended and braided with other funding sources to ensure services are delivered to county partners as effectively as possible. The following table highlights several organizations that have already received MCV Grant funds for FFY 2021:

County/Agency	Award	MCV Expenditures
Regents of the University of Colorado	\$57,374	Secondary trauma services; supervisor training on secondary trauma.
MSU THRIVE Secondary Trauma Support	\$33,000	Secondary trauma services, group debriefing, resiliency training.
Thomson Reuters	\$52,593	CLEAR software for the following county agencies: Bent, Archuleta, Chaffee, Teller, Montezuma, Yuma, Washington, Morgan, Park, Fremont, Kit Carson, Phillips, Rio Blanco, Prowers, Moffatt, and Saguache.

Sex Offender Management Board (SOMB) conference	\$1,330	County agencies served with scholarships: El Paso, Lincoln, Pueblo, Mesa
CSU/Summitstone	\$5,500	Applied Research in Child Welfare (ARCH)

Table 4: FFY 2021 Distribution of MCV Grant funds.

CDHS used MCV funds to expand access to specific tools and services throughout the state. CDHS renewed an agreement with Thomson Reuters to provide access to a web-based investigation software called CLEAR to caseworkers in Colorado’s balance-of-state counties. The service is expected to increase family search and engagement capacity in small- and medium-sized counties. Previously, child welfare staff in small- and medium-sized counties had limited access to such technology.

In FFY 2021, there was continued high demand from county agencies to expand secondary trauma services across the state. Throughout COVID-19, CDHS increased availability of these services through MCV funding, which directly impacted staff retention and staff efficacy in providing services to children and youth in OOH care. While the providers were unable to travel as often to see staff in person, they made services available virtually to address staff needs. Currently they are providing a blend of face-to-face services as well as virtual services to meet county needs. CDHS continued to contract with Regents of the University of Colorado and THRIVE (at MSU) to expand access to secondary trauma services and consultations to all counties. This included providing facilitators and resources funded by MCV and the Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) to address secondary trauma to child welfare supervisors and providing supports to staff.

MCV funds continue to be utilized for the Applied Research in Child Welfare (ARCH) project. ARCH is a collaboration between CSU’s Social Work Research Center, CDHS, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, El Paso, Garfield, Jefferson, Larimer, and Pueblo counties to provide applied research and evaluation for child welfare prevention and intervention practices in Colorado. Now in its eighteenth year, ARCH is one of the longest standing child welfare research-practice partnerships in the nation. ARCH is currently conducting and preparing for the following activities:

- Placement Stability Study Brief (Final Version) and Comparative Study Brief (Final Version) featuring a descriptive, comparative, and predictive study of the trends, characteristics, and drivers of placement stability/instability in Colorado over the past 10 years.
- Fatherhood Engagement Study
 - Two infographics: All About Dads & Be Bold for Needs of Dads
 - Three literature review presentations: Caseworker Perspectives, Father Perspectives, Engaging Paternal Relatives

- Updated list of resources, tools, and literature with categories, subcategories, and keywords
- Child Welfare Workforce Analytics Institute
 - Establish a Workforce Analytics Team
 - Participate in a Community of Learning
 - Develop and Implement an Action Plan to Improve Agency Workforce Analytics Practice

CDHS continues to oversee applications and distribution of funding for FFY 2022. MCV data for FFY 2022 will be reported in a separate submission to the Children’s Bureau by December 15th, 2022.

Additional Services Information

Child Protective Services

Safety and Risk Assessments

Colorado continued to convene the safety assessment workgroup through 2021 in response to Goal 2 of Colorado’s PIP. Workgroup members consisted of geographically diverse county human services caseworkers and supervisors, court partners, DCW staff and ARD staff. All workgroup meetings were held virtually due to COVID-19. The workgroup held focus groups with youth involved in the child welfare system, caseworkers, and supervisors. Information from the focus groups along with a detailed survey with county caseworkers and supervisors was used to inform the development of supplemental safety assessment guidance documents, safety planning learning activities and enhancing the safety assessment instructions. There was a group consensus that no changes to the safety assessment tool were necessary. Fidelity reviews identified improved documentation of formal safety assessments.

In 2022, the supplemental safety assessment documents will be disseminated throughout all counties in Colorado, with open “office hours” to address any questions or suggestions scheduled for early in the year. The SLE scheduled sessions in early 2022 to provide a platform for supervisors and other county leadership to discuss best practices for supervising safety and risk throughout the life of an assessment or case.

Institutional Abuse and Neglect Assessments

In 2021, Colorado convened an institutional referral and assessment stakeholder workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup was to review, explore and make recommendations for revisions to practice guidance and administrative rules for institutional assessments of allegations of child abuse and/or neglect that occur while a child/youth is in out of home placement, and when the provider is the person alleged to be responsible for the abuse and/or

neglect. The workgroup was comprised of representatives from geographically diverse county human services departments, OCR, CPO, CPAs, Facilities, DCW's Child Protection and Prevention Services Unit, DCW's Provider Services Unit, DYS, ARD, as well as a kinship provider also employed by a county department. Recommendations from the workgroup will be implemented in 2022 and include administrative rule changes along with developing digital resources for supervisors, caseworkers, and providers.

Substance-Exposed Newborns

The Colorado Plans of Safe Care was added to the referral and client details page in Trails. All Colorado counties' child protection departments now have access to the Plans of Safe Care to utilize at the time of hotline, referral, and assessment. Statewide training sessions were offered to begin implementing the Plans of Safe Care. A Plan of Safe Care job aid and a training video was created for CWTS that is available to caseworkers and supervisors statewide.

A rule writing task group developed rules related to the implementation of the Plans of Safe Care in child welfare practice in 12 CCR 2509. The recommendations included the development and delivery of Substance Exposed Newborn evidence-based and best practices. The updated rule and guidance went into effect Spring 2022. Training and practice guidance conversations will be facilitated between child protection departments and community providers to ensure consistent protocols at critical points.

Partnerships with the Colorado Hospital Substance Exposed Newborns (CHoSEN) Collaborative and the Colorado Perinatal Care Quality Collaborative led to the development of a pilot program to create a working model to be utilized throughout the state for the implementation of the Plans of Safe Care in Colorado's birthing hospitals. CDHS staff, partnering with multidisciplinary community partners, and led by the Colorado Attorney General, have established a steering committee for all substance-exposed newborns which has six individual task groups reporting to it. The Plans of Safe Care task group worked on updating The Colorado Plans of Safe Care Guidelines & Checklist to reflect newest evidence-informed best practices with Plan of Safe Care work group members and community partners. In 2022, the task group will be drafting best practice recommendations for Plans of Safe Care implementation, collaboration, integration based on the oversight and consultation of the child welfare-hospital pilot. In 2022, a RFP will be issued for a pilot project that will enhance cross-system collaboration in the implementation of the Plan of Safe Care for different populations, communities and entry points.

In addition, collaboration between the OEC, the Substance Exposed Newborns Steering Committee, community partners, and Illuminate Colorado launched a Mobile Child Care for Substance Abuse Treatment Pilot Program. Many mothers who have substance use disorders end up needing the intervention of child welfare. An identified barrier to mothers getting substance abuse treatment is

a lack of affordable and flexible childcare. Resources were braided using the State General Fund, Federal behavioral health grants, and philanthropic support to launch a pilot program identified as [Illuminating Child Care](#). This included purchasing and retrofitting recreational vehicles to become mobile, on-site childcare classrooms, hiring and training staff for the units, building collaboration with local substance abuse treatment agencies and early childhood councils, and training 211 operators to support families with substance use disorder in finding child care when seeking treatment. There are now three mobile units that have been retrofitted to provide care to young children while their parents attend out-patient substance abuse treatment. The units support the Denver metro area, the San Luis Valley, and Pueblo. An evaluation of the program was delayed due to the pandemic but will be implemented over the next three years.

Human Trafficking of Minors

In 2017, CDHS was awarded a \$1.5 million dollar Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking: A Jurisdictional-Wide Approach grant and has staffed a full time Human Trafficking Specialist position within DCW. This grant was awarded to CDHS with the Colorado Department of Public Safety as a sub-recipient.

The goal of the Improving Outcomes grant is to develop, enhance and coordinate programs and activities serving youth victims of trafficking through the enhancement of jurisdictional wide coordination and multi-disciplinary collaboration. These goals are accomplished through four main activities:

1. Enhanced coordination between law enforcement and child welfare
2. Training and public awareness
3. The development of regional specialists and community task forces, and
4. Utilization of a developmental design evaluation.

The final year of the project incorporated findings from the process evaluation into an outcome evaluation³⁶.

The Human Trafficking Task Group (HTTG) reconvened in May 2021. Members included staff from state and county child welfare, DYS, and youth facing service providers, and multi-disciplinary team members. In collaboration with the Colorado Human Trafficking Council, the HTTG focused on contributing to the National Advisory Committee's on the Sex Trafficking of Youth and Children in the United States survey. The group met twice a month to review best practices and recommendations in the following sections: multi-disciplinary response, screening and identification, child welfare, and service provision.

³⁶ Alessi, L., Casamassima, M., McConnell, L., Everson, C., Winokur, M., Blackwatters, C., & Pettigrew, J. (2021). Innovate Colorado: Final Evaluation Report. Fort Collins, CO: Social Work Research Center, Colorado State University.

Following the completion of the survey, the HTTG transitioned its focus to the implementation of recommendations for enhancing a multi-disciplinary response to youth trafficking. The task group identified recommendations for enhanced multi-disciplinary teams, a validated screening tool, and child welfare response as future action items to enhance the state’s response to child trafficking.

In 2021, CDHS utilized \$15,000 in grant funds to support the creation of media for the “child trafficking is child abuse” campaign. This effort included media campaign graphics as well as resource cards for law enforcement, child welfare staff, and parents, to help them to identify and respond to concerns of child trafficking.

CDHS contributed \$214,893 in an in-kind match for the 2019 Child Sex Trafficking campaign which included strategic planning, message development, graphic design, posters, billboards, bus sides, public relations and social media, and culturally inclusive marketing.

Permanency

Wendy’s Wonderful Kids (WWK) Youth Connections Advocates

Colorado has continued to contract with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Raise the Future and Colorado Counties to provide permanency support and youth advocates for children/ youth that have not yet achieved permanency. This program is really targeted to support those young people who have not yet achieved permanency and need to have long term connections.

Progress data point	Current Period*	Contract Period*	Since Scaling Contract Inception*	Since Inception
Children served	1	14	201	467
Children matched	9	19	167	368
Children in pre-adoptive placements	6	NA	NA	NA
Children adopted**	6	12	95	194

*Includes only additional results for that timeframe

**Includes legal guardianships and reunifications

Table 5 - Statistical status report for the report period October 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021

In 2020, DCW created the Foster Care online Inquiry Application form on CO4Kids.com to have an accessible and easy method to start the foster care certification process. Anyone across the state of Colorado can submit an inquiry form and submit it to multiple county departments and agencies expressing interest in becoming a certified foster parent. In 2021, there were a total of 1,542 inquiries received across the state.

Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments

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's FFY 2018 and FFY 2019 funds were expended on Post-Permanency Services and Supports (PPSS). Colorado was awarded \$200,000 in FFY 2020 and \$281,500 in FFY 2021. These funds are used according to the plan outlined in the CFSP, with a focus on funding PPSS statewide. In addition to incentive funding money, Colorado earned \$661,533 in FFY 2019, \$777,989, in FFY 2020 and \$937,965 in FFY 2021 through adoption savings. The legislature authorized \$1,394,000 spending authority for adoption savings. Of this amount, \$600,000 was authorized to supplement Post-Permanency Services and Supports to be expended by September 30, 2021. CDHS used the Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive and Adoption Savings funds for the following:

Post-Permanency Services and Supports (PPSS)

CDHS renewed a contract with Raise the Future for FFY 2021 from a request for proposals to provide PPSS using Adoption/RGAP incentives funding supplemented with Adoption Savings funding (see explanation below). PPSS was implemented in all 64 counties excluding respite funding in Denver-metro counties. DCW continues to emphasize services and support in the rural areas of the state, where traditionally they had been underserved. The purpose of PPSS is to: improve equity in service arrays; 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 from October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021. Due to the pandemic, most of the in-person services were provided virtually.

- Trauma-informed/evidence-informed Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) training for families and professionals. There were 46 virtual and 16 in-person TBRI® classes were held with 349 unduplicated attendees served.
- In-home coaching to assist TBRI®-trained families in successfully implementing the parenting model was offered in all counties once

TBRI® training was completed by families. A total of 625 hours of coaching were provided to 54 families (unduplicated count).

- Regional implementation and connection groups provided ongoing support, learning opportunities and natural points of connection for families. This was offered in all counties following TBRI® training. There were 12 in-person groups held with 74 instances of adult attendance and 83 instances of child and youth attendance. Additionally, 19 virtual caregiver groups were held with 50 instances of attendance and 6 virtual groups for youth were held with 42 instances of attendance. A notable lower attendance when compared to previous years may be attributed to COVID-19 concerns for in-person events, and virtual fatigue on virtual platforms.
- Access to a pool of TBRI®-trained families and/or individuals to provide respite care, as needed, for program participating families. This is not offered in the metro area, as this is generally accessible to families connected to the county post-permanency support worker. An unduplicated count of 141 hours of respite was provided to 8 families in the rural service regions.
- Online directory of mental health professionals was made available to offer crisis intervention and ongoing therapeutic services for all families. A total of 3297 hits on the searchable database were recorded.
- Resource navigation for post-permanency families is available to all families and 79 unduplicated individuals utilize this resource coordination service. (This does not include resource coordination that occurred as part of coaching services for those engaged in that service).
- Specialized in-person and web-based training for families and professionals was provided in all 64 counties.
- Family Camps
 - Three camps were held and served 28 families, including 50 caregivers and 60 children and youth ranging in age from 2-17 years old (unduplicated count).
 - Throughout the camp days, each child and youth had a one-on-one mentor.
 - Each activity was facilitated and based on furthering TBRI® skills and included the service provision of teaching and modeling of TBRI® skills, hands-on coaching, connection groups, and rest and recharge.

COVID-19 variations in service and utilization:

- Virtual caregiver and youth groups were offered throughout this reporting period with relatively low engagement. Rest and Recharge as well as Implementation and Connection groups were the most impacted prongs of service, as a result of the use of virtual platforms. Virtual variations of in-person groups were offered in response to safety precautions set forth by COVID-19. Coaching was offered in-person or virtually, depending on safety precautions and individual preferences.

- Most TBRI® classes were held virtually, which limited the class size from the capacity of in-person, so classes were held more frequently to meet the need.
- Engagement efforts with community partners were impacted due to competing demands and capacity limitations.
- Despite challenges presented by the pandemic, adjustments were made and more people were served than in previous reporting periods.

Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)

CDHS has a three-year membership with 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 costs \$7,500 which is funded through the FFY 2022 award.

Voice for Adoptions

CDHS has a two-year membership with the Voice for Adoptions organization. This organization is a bipartisan policy 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. CDHS pays \$3,000 for a two-year membership which will end in SFY 2022. Colorado is currently exploring other organizations that provide similar resources.

Adoption Savings

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 2022 according to the plan outlined in the CFSP, but again with a special focus on increasing permanency and post-permanency support. Expenditures may include:

- Provision of post-permanency supports and services statewide; and,
- DCW staff continue to provide information about PPSS to counties. Counties are encouraged to provide information about PPSS for families that are achieving permanency through adoption, guardianship, reunification, reinstatement of parental rights and permanent custody (Allocation of Parental Responsibilities).

Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Grants

Through the Family First Transition Act, which passed in December 2019, Colorado received \$7,723,580 to spend over five years (through September 30, 2025). While these funds can be used for a variety of purposes, CDHS, Colorado's Family First Implementation Team, and key stakeholder groups have been ensuring that these

funds are used to support and accelerate the state's Family First implementation efforts. While Colorado has been fully engaged in laying the groundwork for initial Family First implementation, there are critical implementation infrastructure and capacity building needs that benefit from an infusion of one-time funds to cover necessary upfront costs.

Due to the overwhelming interest from stakeholders regarding the use of transition funds, the Department created a diverse 15-member group charged with reviewing and prioritizing funding proposals and developing recommendations for the Department. Of the 15 members, six represent diverse county departments of human services and 6 represent other key stakeholder groups (former foster youth, research/evaluation, judicial/legal, public health, providers, and Tribes). The other three members are representatives from across CDHS.

Although CDHS has until 2025 to spend down transition funds, CDHS has front-loaded most investments and will continue to do so over the next year for maximum impact. Family First transition funds represent an opportunity to pivot the child welfare system by putting resources behind the changes Colorado wants to see - in expanding evidence-based prevention services statewide, in adapting and right-sizing the placement continuum, and in innovative locally-driven approaches to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. Through strategic investment and responsive grant-making, Family First transition funds will bring Colorado closer to realizing its bold vision for a transformed child welfare system.

Colorado has identified the following priority funding categories for Family First transition funds:

- Outcome 1: Children, youth and families have timely access to a continuum of community-based, prevention-focused services that meet their needs, promote safety and well-being, and keep families together.
 - Priority Funding Area 1: Expand the prevention services continuum in a way that addresses locally identified needs, meets Family First requirements, addresses inequities across the state, and emphasizes cultural responsiveness.
- Outcome 2: When necessary, children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting possible that is aligned with their individual needs, high-quality, time-limited and focused on treatment.
 - Priority Funding Area 2: Build a continuum of placement options that includes small, high-quality QRTPs as well as sufficient options for lower levels of family-based care that are responsive to the needs of children and youth.
- Outcome 3: Colorado has a strong foundation from which to launch Family First implementation efforts and support a successful and smooth roll-out.
 - Priority Funding Area 3: Address known and potential barriers to initial Family First implementation.

To date, Colorado has awarded the following:

Outcome 1: Children, youth and families have timely access to a continuum of community-based, prevention-focused services that meet their needs, promote safety and well-being, and keep families together.

- Developing a Prevention Services Expansion Strategy
 - Recipient: Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab
 - Amount: \$36,990
 - Summary: The overall goal of this scope of work is to develop a short, medium, and long-term strategy for expanding Family First-eligible prevention services statewide. Colorado wants to ensure that selected Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) are aligned with locally identified needs and prevention goals, while also maximizing the ability to draw down federal funds. Through data analysis, interactive discussion, and implementation science principles, the end-product will not only identify services for the state to pursue, but also offer concrete recommendations regarding strategic investments needed to build capacity for services implementation.

While the overall scope of the project is the state as a whole, particular attention will be made to identify region-specific opportunities, and ensure services are culturally responsive and tailored, whenever possible, to meet the unique needs of underserved populations. The final report can be accessed [here](#).

- Responsive Grantmaking - Community Support Grants
 - Recipients: Multiple
 - Amount: \$1.5 million over 3 years
 - Summary: Colorado has set aside \$1.5 million in transition funds over three years to fund innovative proposals that align with Family First implementation priorities 1 and 3.
 - The first round³⁷ funding closed on January 31, 2021. Colorado received 51 proposals from a diverse range of applicants, including counties, nonprofit organizations, providers, and universities. Five applicants were funded for a total amount of \$231,075:
 - Garfield County Department of Human Services
 - Safe Families for Children
 - Savio House
 - Servicios de la Raza
 - Shiloh House
 - The second round³⁸ closed July 31, 2021. There were 40 applications, and seven applicants were funded for a total of \$426,187:
 - All American Families dba Families Plus
 - Community Partnership Family Resource Center (FRC)
 - The Cornerstone Resource Center
 - The Matthew's House
 - Gunnison County Juvenile Services
 - Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence, Inc. (SPAN)

³⁷ <https://co4kids.org/blog/family-first-transition-funding-awarded>

³⁸ <https://co4kids.org/blog/second-round-family-first-transition-funding-awarded>

- Washington County Department of Human Services
- Statewide CQI Platform
 - Recipient: Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab
 - Amount: \$479,166
 - Summary: Colorado is developing a statewide CQI Platform to meet federal Family First requirements for ongoing fidelity monitoring and CQI for IV-E prevention services. High fidelity mock-ups of the platform have been created. This scope of work is to develop and release the platform, lead onboarding and training, and test the user experience. The scope also includes translating program-specific CQI measures to a standardized scale for state-level adherence monitoring.
- MST Telehealth Pilot
 - Recipient: Rocky Mountain MST Services
 - Amount: \$487,208
 - Summary: Transition funds will cover the 2-year implementation costs for this evaluation. The goal is to better understand the feasibility of further evaluating a hybrid model of MST, especially in rural areas of the state.
- San Luis Valley Behavioral Health - SafeCare® Gap Funding
 - Recipient: San Luis Valley Behavioral Health (SLVBH)
 - Amount: \$115,452
 - Summary: San Luis Valley was at risk of losing their SafeCare® program. There was a technical glitch with their application submission that resulted in them not receiving SafeCare® funds for the current 5-year cycle. In collaboration with SLVBH, the counties, and the Office of Early Childhood, transition funds were utilized as a solution.

Outcome 2: When necessary, children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting possible that is aligned with their individual needs, high-quality, time-limited and focused on treatment.

- Research to Inform the Future Placement Continuum in Colorado
 - Recipients: Signal Behavioral Health Network and Praed Foundation/University of Kentucky
 - Amount: \$55,500
 - Summary: This scope of work includes a one-time paper review CANS assessment on a sample of about 200 DCW youth currently in congregate care settings. The assessment and subsequent data analysis will determine the number of children/youth who would qualify for QRTP placement, and therefore allow for better estimates of the number of QRTP beds needed. Colorado will also identify key clusters or sub-populations of youth in congregate care and their primary needs, which will inform the right-sizing and refinement of the placement continuum. The final data analysis and report was received in February 2022.
- Enhanced Independent Assessor Training
 - Recipient: Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Amount: \$179,924
- Summary: The Kempe Center will develop robust web-based training for Qualified Individuals to ensure consistent and high-quality independent assessments.
- RFA for Residential Providers (SB21-278)
 - Recipients: Multiple
 - Amount: \$1,100,000
 - Summary: This RFA was statutorily required through SB21-278 and set aside about \$1.1 million in transition funds for residential providers to support them in transitioning to a Family First-aligned business model. We also explicitly included in this RFA those providers transitioning to PRTF. The awardees were as follows:
 - Griffith Centers for Children: \$107,211. GCC will continue to train all new staff in the Sanctuary Model; clinical staff will also receive Trauma-Focused CBT training as well as Motivational Interviewing training. GCC will also address the issues that result in longer stays, and difficult placements post care by putting into place measures to combat AWOL, citations and property destruction by the residents.
 - Shiloh House: \$262,200. Shiloh House will increase staff capacity (hire four new youth counselor positions) to work at three facilities that are transitioning from RCCF to QRTP. New staff will allow Shiloh to reduce the youth-to-staff ratio from 4:1 to closer to 8:3. Shiloh will also increase training through a full-time QRTP Implementation Specialist to ensure all staff are supported and educated in trauma-informed care.
 - The Dale House Project: \$70,644. With Family First, Dale House's organizational mission and priority remain focused on providing independent living opportunities for youth. With transition funds, Dale House will identify how former foster youth over age 18 can use the eleven transition apartments available at the Dale House Project for a Supportive Housing program.
 - Southern Peaks, Third Way and Denver Children's Home: \$709,945 total. These three facilities are transitioning from RCCF to PRTF (Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities). Transition funds will help cover daily room and board costs for youth receiving PRTF-level care during the licensing process, before Medicaid can reimburse for these expenses.
- RFA for the Placement Continuum
 - Recipients: Multiple
 - Amount: \$352,089
 - Summary: This RFA was focused on building out the placement continuum to ensure youth can remain in family-like settings whenever possible. The awardees are as follows:
 - A New World Child Placement Agency: \$52,260. A New World CPA will develop a respite program for new and current foster parents

as well as county partners. Transition funds will also be used to implement two virtual support groups geared towards foster parents and their needs in the role of caregiver.

- CHAMPS / Foster Source: \$124,500. With transition funds, CHAMPS will launch programs in three additional counties/regions focused on innovative and data driven efforts to recruit and retain foster parents. In addition, Foster Source will be providing therapeutic services to the counties, which includes equine assisted therapy and mental health therapy.
- La Plata County DHS (\$71,883) and Weld County DHS (\$103,446) will use transition funds to design and implement therapeutic foster programs.
- State-Sponsored Pressley-Ridge Training
 - Recipient: Colorado Division of Child Welfare
 - Amount: \$115, 215
 - Summary: DCW will host two cohorts of Pressley Ridge Train-the Trainer for County and Child Placement Agencies in Colorado who are interested in implementing a Treatment and/or Therapeutic Foster level of care.

Outcome 3: Colorado has a strong foundation from which to launch Family First implementation efforts and support a successful and smooth roll-out.

- Local Implementation Support for Family First
 - Recipient: Colorado Human Services Directors Association (CHSDA)
 - Amount: \$211,972
 - Purpose: This funding is for a 100% Family First-dedicated position at CHSDA to support county-level implementation for two years.
- Crossover Youth Data Project
 - Amount: \$14,654
 - Summary: Trails does not indicate the type of court case - dependency and neglect, delinquency case, or both - that is associated with placement in out-of-home care. Connecting information across the child welfare and court systems will help meet federal reporting requirements and inform policies and practices aimed at serving crossover youth.
- Family First Graphic Design
 - Recipient: INTERROBANG
 - Amount: \$10,000
 - Summary: Funding to develop a variety of Family First communications products and graphics.

Family First Transition Act Funding Certainty Grants

Prior to H.R 133[1], the federal government calculated Colorado's funding certainty baseline at \$52,189,338 (ACYF-CB-PI-20-08³⁹). An estimated certainty baseline of

³⁹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/pi2008.pdf>

\$54,836,444 was established for FFY 2021 (ACYF-CB-PY-21-04, Attachment G⁴⁰) 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.

⁴⁰ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/pi2104.pdf>

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

Chafee-Funded Services

Colorado's Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (the Chafee program) provides an array of supports and services to youth as young as 14 who are likely to emancipate out of foster care, and to young adults between the ages of 18-23 who have left foster care. The Chafee program services are offered statewide through county departments of human/social services. In FFY 2021, 42 counties and tribes had access to the Chafee program supports and services through 17 host counties, and in FFY 2022, 43 counties and tribes had access to the Chafee program services. In addition, a portion of the Chafee program funding is set aside to provide services to eligible youth in counties that do not host a program or have a service agreement with a host county.

In FFY 2021, 848 youth were served through the Chafee program. Colorado anticipates this number to remain consistent for FFY 2022. This is an increase of 138 youth served in FFY 2020. The expanded eligibility through the waivers of Division X have expired but the state will be implementing programming through House Bill 21-1094 in this federal fiscal year to ensure that services are available throughout the state for eligible youth. Similar to last year, there will be an increase in youth that are served throughout the state with the implementation of the recommendations from the Chafee Modernization Task Group, but there will also be a decrease as some of the Chafee county programs start rolling out the Pathways to Success program model, which has lower caseloads than the Chafee program. CDHS continues to redesign the state's Chafee program to provide more robust services and integrate counties with the Pathways to Success model.

Following the implementation of the Chafee modernization recommendations, DCW has reconvened a work group to update the funding methodology to ensure funding is provided to youth in an equitable manner and that the Chafee program has statewide coverage. The funding methodology work group made final recommendations to the division in August 2021 and were implemented for FFY 2022 county allocations. A meeting is scheduled in April 2022 to evaluate the process and discuss any changes that need to be made going forward with implementation. These quality assurance meetings will continue on an annual basis.

Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act, Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Division X)

Division X was enacted on December 27th 2020, and expands services for Chafee eligible youth, places a moratorium on requiring youth to exit care due to age, permits youth to reenter care if they exited during the pandemic period, and waives the five required activity areas to claim IV-E. DCW immediately notified county departments of human/social services by issuing IM-CP-2021-0001⁴¹ in January 2021.

Funding award letters were sent to existing Chafee programs in September 2021 for FFY 2022. The total budget being awarded to local programs including existing programs and new programs in areas not previously supported for FFY 2022 was \$2,450,000. Additional technical assistance teleconferences were offered to provide programs with additional guidance.

In January 2021, the first youth re-entered care through the provisions included in Division X. While there is not a legal structure in place in Colorado yet, House Bill 21-1094 will provide the structure required to fully implement the re-entry requirements of Division X. In the meantime, Colorado is moving forward using voluntary service agreements.

House Bill 21-1094 was created to support eligible youth to successfully transition to adulthood and created an advisory board. This bill ensures that all eligible youth throughout Colorado are served. In June 2021, applications to participate on the House Bill 21-1094 Advisory Committee were posted. The advisory board was fully seated with a former foster youth serving as the co-chair. The board convened in December 2021 and continues to meet monthly. House Bill-1094 funds to provide services to eligible populations will be distributed to counties and communities through an application process, overseen by a committee. The committee will create a merit-based application process prioritizing existing Chafee-run programs and communities that do not have Chafee programs but are willing to develop one to deliver services.

As part of the annual plan template, CDHS asks county programs to identify what services and community partners they collaborate with, how they address the needs and/or barriers young people face, including but not limited to services to support LGBTQI+ youth/young people, how young people can access former foster care Medicaid and support to promote wellness/addressing young people's mental health needs. The report also indicates strengths and barriers programs faced with Division X allocations.

⁴¹ https://drive.google.com/file/d/11wwJdw98zlllRnay-EJa_-ULTDwBU2r8/view

DCW collaborated with agencies such as the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative (COSHI), to provide inclusive trainings and education to both staff and young people. Several staff members have attended a training that is offered for Child Welfare Professionals called, Setting the Foundation: LGBTQ+ Competency Training for Child Welfare Professionals. The training is part of the All Children-All Families program and it equips child welfare professionals with a comprehensive foundation of knowledge on LGBTQ+ individuals and their experiences in the child welfare system. The training concludes by outlining steps every child welfare professional can take to welcome and affirm LGBTQ+ youth and families within their program, their agency and beyond.

Counties are highly aware of young people's need to access mental health services. While young people are still in care, counties ensure that young people are on Medicaid. When a young person reaches the age of fourteen they complete a Roadmap to Success, which is updated when meaningful and significant changes occur in the young person's life. One part of this plan documents the young person's medical insurance, how to access Former Foster Care Medicaid, and identifying medical facilities they can access in order for them to utilize medical services, including mental health services. Counties also partner with local mental health agencies to come in and speak with young people about the services they provide to normalize reaching out if the service is needed.

Several counties reported barriers around the quick nature of Division X. There were also some barriers with the change of eligibility in the second fiscal year. It was reported that during the first fiscal year, agencies were able to collaborate with young people and work towards their stability, however, there were also several reports that cases had to close in the second fiscal year while the young person had not been able to achieve full stability.

CDHS released several information memorandums to counties and community agencies to make people aware of the additional funding. A specific email was set up designed for inquiries and connecting young people to what resources/services they were eligible for, including but not limited to Division X. Conversations occurred with OCYF to educate GALs on the new legislation. Individual counties utilized their social media accounts to spread the word of the additional resources available. DCW also partnered with Think of Us, who reached out to potential eligible youth through text message, along with providing contact information in order to get them connected with funding.

During FFY 2021, Colorado served a total of 848 young people in areas such as family support and healthy relationships, budget and financial management and career preparation. All counties reported that the funding was utilized to help youth find stability. Examples of ways the funding was used include to help pay for housing deposits, rent, past debt, groceries, gas, prevention services and more. Young people reported feeling grateful to have the opportunity to utilize funding to help them with their future goals and feeling more prepared.

Implementation of Pathways to Success program

Colorado's Youth at Risk of Homelessness (YARH) grant, also known as the Pathways to Success program, has been implemented in approximately half of the Chafee programs in Colorado. The Pathways to Success program was selected to participate in the phase 3 summative evaluation in the Summer of 2020. The national evaluation team led by Mathematica and the local evaluator, Center for Policy Research, has been working to finalize the evaluation which includes obtaining institutional review board and Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation approvals. The evaluation started enrolling youth in September 2021 and will continue enrollment for two years. There will be an additional one year follow up period.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Data

CDHS continues to collaborate with other agencies and community partners to share data and better locate youth who are scheduled to complete the NYTD survey. CDHS coordinates with partners who have separate information systems to help locate youth. CDHS also coordinates internally across all programs to ensure that all eligible youth are located. Although a date has not been scheduled for the next NYTD review, CDHS is continuing to prepare, and staff are being proactive by reviewing its process and procedures for NYTD surveys to assess potential vulnerabilities in advance of the review.

CDHS continues to engage staff and stakeholders about the NYTD Review in the Chafee Services Quarterly meetings that were held in January, April, July, and October of 2021. Additionally, CDHS continued to provide technical assistance to Chafee Workers, county caseworkers and DYS client managers in preparation for the follow-up cohorts.

Trails Modernization efforts are still in process. A new NYTD platform will be developed and streamlined for youth, caseworkers, and Chafee coordinators. This new functionality has not been put into production in FFY 2021 so the results from the changes cannot be evaluated yet in this APSR. DCW is currently evaluating new applications to utilize for surveying youth and streamlining the incentive payment process for youth participants. DCW is also consulting with local youth advisory boards utilizing focus groups with local youth advisory boards to gather youth feedback on the current incentives and processes for survey completion. Recommendations from the youth advisory boards were to increase incentives to increase the response rate for youth participation.

In FFY 2021, the latest NYTD data was released by the ACF. Colorado-specific NYTD data will be compiled, distributed, and presented to stakeholders and youth. This data will compare all cohorts to look for trends, explore strengths and weaknesses to improve service delivery to Colorado youth.

The Colorado Youth Leadership Network

The Colorado Youth Leadership Network (COYLN) is a conglomerate of youth advisory boards and councils (county and local partners) across the state. The function of the COYLN is to align, integrate and leverage collaborative youth voices for positive youth outcomes. As the pandemic continues, youth boards and councils face challenges to meet and collaborate. DCW uses the COYLN as a source to invite youth to provide feedback/input via youth panels, subject matter reviews and focus groups. Opportunities for gathering this data have been slowed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In September 2021, the COYLN hosted its second Youth Awareness Week⁴², which was formerly hosted by Pueblo county. The event expanded to include other youth-serving organizations (i.e. Youth organizations such as Youth MOVE, The Denver Indian Family Resource Center and DYS). The purpose of Youth Awareness Week is to emphasize positive youth voices, celebrate the influence youth have in the state and local communities, and recognize and inspire the various organizations and advocates and help guide Colorado's youth towards positive life choices and stability. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the events were hosted on virtual platforms. The sessions provided youth with tools to advocate for themselves and connect with other former foster care youth. In addition to a virtual event, activities occurred in multiple locations (Denver, Fort Collins and Pueblo) and included a mental health youth panel, chalk art projects, professional training and community service projects. The youth concluded the week with stronger connections across youth boards and improved communication skills.

Coordination of Services

CDHS continues to partner with the stakeholders reported in previous APSRs in coordinating Chafee services across the state. The below details key highlights of efforts that have been made in 2021, and planned activities in 2022 to be updated in further APSRs.

CDHS continues to collaborate with the Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth (ACHY) and the Rural Collaborative on Homeless Youth (RCHY) on housing. ACHY is a legislatively created strategic planning and action body that advises DOLA's Office of Homeless Youth Services and oversees implementation of the Colorado Homeless Youth Action Plan. The RCHY is a collaborative of state agencies, county departments and community providers that is focused on improving the delivery of services and supports to youth in rural communities who have little or no connection to stable housing and family situations. This work has continued through this reporting period with monthly meetings starting in July 2020 through the writing of this report. CDHS participates as a governor-appointed member of the Colorado Human Trafficking Council to develop recommendations for improving Colorado's response to

⁴² <https://co4kids.org/blog/mark-your-calendars-youth-awareness-week-starts-sept-7th>

all forms of human trafficking. Please see “Human Trafficking” in the *Additional Services Information* section of this APSR for more details.

Improving educational outcomes for youth and young adults served by the Chafee program continues to be a priority for the program. In June 2021, CDHS hosted the 23rd Annual Celebration of Educational Excellence (CEEX)⁴³ in the Front Range, and the 6th Annual Celebration of Educational Excellence on the Western Slope. Due to COVID-19, these events were held virtually, which increased the statewide accessibility of the events. The 2022 Celebrations will be focused on improving the virtual format for the event and increasing community engagement. The front-range CEEX is scheduled for June 2022.

CDHS and CDE continue to hold regional meetings with county and school district partners to provide training and technical assistance as local agencies implement school stability protections of the Fostering Connections Act, the Every Student Succeeds Act and Colorado law. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the regional trainings and meetings were primarily held in person. CDHS and CDE continued to provide continuing education and technical assistance throughout 2020 through remote platforms and had similar, if not more, participation than previous years. Due to remote learning, many counties and districts indicated students were able to remain in their schools of origin eliminating the barriers imposed by transportation gaps.

CDHS’ efforts to improve educational outcomes for youth and these efforts specific to postsecondary education, are documented in the following Education and Training Vouchers section. CDHS has continued to maintain a staff position at the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE). The Education Coach position attends Chafee quarterly meetings and collaborates with Chafee professionals to provide training for former and current foster youth. The education coach is also working towards convening a multidisciplinary group of professionals who will host an event to highlight the findings from a report from the Colorado Action Lab focused on former foster youth and post-secondary attainment⁴⁴. The education coach position also serves on an executive leadership team for a regional association for diversity, equity, and inclusion officers, to ensure advocacy for all professionals and students.

CDHS and the Chafee program host counties have integrated policies and practices to support and affirm the sexual orientation and gender identities of youth served by the program. CDHS requires Chafee program counties to address how the program will support the cultural and linguistic needs of youth with varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and gender identities in the annual plans.

CDHS continues its work on best practices for working with LGBTQ+ youth through an internal work group that meets regularly. This work group continues to update and disseminate resources and best practices for the Division. DCW will be publishing a

⁴³ <https://co4kids.org/blog/events/2021-celebration-educational-excellence>

⁴⁴ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f88SVo4l7776zBo1sMk7E0tq9OY6DOdP/view?usp=sharing>

Colorado Best Practice Guide for serving LGBTQ+ youth in child welfare called *Seen, Safe, and Respected: Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ+ Children and Youth in Colorado's Child Welfare System*. Through feedback from a nonbinary consultant, youth focus groups, and Colorado LGBTQ+ experts, DCW has worked to expand and strengthen the guide to include both introductory level information applicable to all youth service providers, as well as specific recommendation for navigation through the child welfare system. This guide is currently in the final stages of development, and more information will be provided in future APSRs.

Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Voucher Program

In July 2019, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development announced the “Foster Youth to Independence” (FYI) Voucher Program. The FYI program provides eligible young adults with a housing voucher to assist in the prevention of homelessness among young adults with foster care histories. To receive a voucher, the child welfare agency must ensure the provision of supportive services for the duration of the voucher. While FYI operates in most states at the community level, it is important that state child welfare agencies support and facilitate conversations to assist in implementation of this initiative.

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

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

Private and Public Sector Involvement in Helping Youth in Foster Care Achieve Independence

Counties submit plans each year with information on how the county program collaborates with public and private organizations in helping youth achieve independence. Many of the examples can be seen in prior sections. The annual plan also has the counties identify which agencies they collaborate with in certain areas to provide training and skills to the young people that they are working with. The areas include:

- Legal permanency and lifelong connections

- Wellbeing (physical, mental, and behavioral health, comprehensive sexual health, pregnant and parenting youth)
- Safe and stable housing
- Secondary educational attainment
- Post-secondary educational and training attainment
- Adequate employment
- Financial stability

Many of the programs will continue to coordinate with local banks to provide financial education around credit scores and instructions on how to open a banking account. Other programs work closely with local employers to create an apprenticeship program where the company can hire the young person at the end of the training period. Many of the programs work closely with their local department of health to provide comprehensive sexual health education.

DCW has an ongoing contract with the Credit Builders Alliance (CBA). They provide presentations and technical assistance to caseworkers and other casework staff to help with the requirements surrounding running credit reports for eligible youth. The Chafee coordinator has been brought into the conversations to expand the services that are being provided to the county departments. For FFY 2021 two sessions were provided to Chafee youth on the topics of understanding credit, improving it, and addressing errors. For FFY 2022, a course for Chafee workers and child welfare staff was created and made available after the Chafee quarterly meeting in January 2022. The presentation was focused on how professionals can help guide youth through the process of applying for, managing, and paying off financial aid. Participants recommended creating a separate training to provide the information directly to the youth. DCW and CBA have begun planning on how to implement this training once during the remainder of FFY 2022 and evaluate it for FFY 2023.

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

Colorado's ETV Program has been administered by Foster Care to Success since the academic year 2003-2004. To facilitate outreach and support, Foster Care to Success also connects youth with county Chafee programs and community or school-based resources. County Chafee programs receive notification every October and February of all youth receiving ETV support who attend schools in their county to maintain connections and ensure every student in the program is getting the support and services they need.

CDHS has also integrated collaborations with CDHE to supplement the work being done by Foster Care to Success and assist ETV students with additional wraparound services. The following table includes the number of youth who were served through Colorado's ETV program.

Annual Reporting of ETV's awarded	Total ETV's Awarded	New ETV Recipients
2016-17 School Year (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017)	138	66
2017-18 School Year (July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018)	103	40
2018-19 School Year (July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019)	103	34
2019-20 School Year (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020)	114	45
2020-21 School Year (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021)	115	45
Estimate - 2021-22 School Year (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022)	120	50

Table 6: Number of ETVs awarded

Chafee Training

Supportive services are voluntary for the youth and may be provided by other agencies on behalf of the child welfare agency. Voucher assistance is provided for 36 months. CDHS notes that funding under the Chafee program may not be available to support the services to be provided due to Chafee program eligibility and age of the youth; however, child welfare agencies have developed partnerships with housing providers, foundations, and other community resources to secure the services needed to ensure youth are successful in obtaining and maintaining the voucher for the 36 months.

The NYTD training through CWTS also includes training on the Chafee and ETV programs including the history of the program, eligibility standards, modernization changes, and what the Colorado program looks like. This training was created to provide a basic understanding of Chafee and ETV for caseworkers, casework supervisors, new Chafee workers, and other interested parties that have access to the training system.

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

Please see the *Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes* section of this APSR.

Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes

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. There are two federally recognized Tribes with land bases in Colorado. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) is located primarily in La Plata County and includes 1,488 enrolled members as of June 2021. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT) is located primarily in Montezuma County with another community in White Mesa, Utah and includes 2,060 enrolled members as of June 2021. The 2020 Census Bureau reports that 74,129 people who identify as solely AI/AN live in Colorado. The 2010 Census Bureau also shows there are 207,787 people in Colorado who identify as AI/AN in combination with one or more races. These population numbers have increased nearly 50% since the 2010 Census, and Census estimates anticipate an upward trend to continue.

Community outreach is an integral part of Colorado's recruitment strategy. In March of 2022, CDHS sponsored a foster care informational booth at the Denver March Pow Wow. Staff from CDHS, county departments of human/social services, child placement agencies and other nonprofit partners volunteered for the booth in an effort to share information about becoming a foster parent. The annual Pow Wow attracts thousands of participants and an estimated 95 American Indian Tribes.

In February 2021, CDHS held a virtual Tribal Consultation with SUIT. Attendance included the full 7-member Tribal Council, CDHS leadership, La Plata County Human Services, and SUIT Tribal Staff from behavioral health, social services, and education. Funding was reviewed for the Child Welfare Tribal Contract, Core Services, Domestic Violence, PSSF, the State Opioid Response, as well as various block grant funding sources.

The 2021 Consultation also discussed the following topics:

- Emergency Support Function #6⁴⁵
- Family First Prevention Services Act: Informing Tribes of the ability for a direct Title IV-E agreement. Additionally, CDHS had asked if Tribes wanted to see specific programs included on Colorado's five-year Prevention Plan.
- CDHS provided a brief on the status of legislation House Bill 21-1151⁴⁶, which allowed federally-recognized Tribes to certify their own foster homes.
- Chafee services: Tribes had more interest in supporting youth who aged out of care. SUIT was connected with La Plata County's Chafee program for resources and services.
- Discussion about the renewal of the Tribal Child Welfare Contract.

⁴⁵ <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/our-partners/colorado-emergency-support-function-esf-6#:text=The%20Colorado%20Department%20of%20Human,assistance%2C%20housing%20and%20human%20services>

⁴⁶ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1151>

- Domestic Violence: The Domestic Violence Program initiated a process for \$5,000 annual flexible funding available for domestic violence-related needs.

CDHS was unsuccessful in securing a Tribal Consultation with UMUT in 2021 and is currently in the process of sending requests for 2022 Tribal Consultation dates with UMUT.

COVID-19 has significantly impacted communication and consultation, and lack of reliable broadband access on Tribal Nations (including SUIT and UMUT) also contributed to unsuccessful engagement in 2021. CDHS remains committed to regular contact and engagement with UMUT and SUIT.

CDHS's County and Tribal Liaison focused on increasing the education and understanding of Tribal Sovereignty internally through a series of Tribal Sovereignty trainings. These trainings were an outcome of a request made by UMUT to increase the understanding of a government-to-government relationship, as well as the importance of Tribal Sovereignty and how it can be incorporated into CDHS operations. In 2021, the training was delivered to the following offices/agencies within CDHS:

- The Domestic Violence Program
- The Food and Energy Division
- The Office of Adult, Aging, and Disability Services
- The Office of Early Childhood
- The CDHS Executive Leadership Team
- The Division of Child Welfare (in process of scheduling)

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

In the past, SafeCare® Colorado was available to both Tribes through the Montezuma County Public Health Department, which operated as a SafeCare® site from January, 2014, until July, 2018. On July 31, 2018, San Juan Basin Public Health became a SafeCare® site, and currently serves the counties of La Plata, San Juan, Archuleta, and the Southern Ute Tribe. In October 2017, UMUT became a SafeCare® site and hired their own tribal home visitor to serve UMUT families in February 2017. However, the UMUT SafeCare® Coordinator position became vacant in August 2019, and has not been filled as of the writing of this APSR due to pandemic restrictions and challenges with internet access. Once the tribal home visitor position is filled and capacity has

grown, it is anticipated that Southern Ute will be able to utilize services at this site. Currently, UMUT families are able to access SafeCare® services at The Pinon Project.

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

The Chafee Program

CDHS staff continued to work with the tribes to ensure they have access to supports and services through the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood. Chafee services are provided through the La Plata county Chafee program to both Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute tribal youth.

Both tribes are consulted on the programs to be carried out under the Chafee program through multiple ways. The first is through the option of applying for their own Chafee funding when the annual plan is disseminated by DCW. The tribes have yet to choose to host their own program and DCW has been told that they do not have the capacity to provide this service. Each year the La Plata county Chafee program coordinates with both tribes to ensure that their youth can be covered by the program. Tribal youth have access to the same services and funding that other counties that partner with host county programs have. Both tribes were invited to participate in the Chafee Modernization Task group that was discussed earlier in the document (see Intervention 4.1.3 in the *Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes* section of this APSR). The SUIT had a representative who participated in the planning and ensuring that tribal youth's service needs were considered in the proceedings.

To ensure that both tribes are aware of the benefits available to their youth, both tribes are included in an informational memorandum that contains the planning package for the annual Chafee plan and can apply for program funds. La Plata county staff maintain contact with both tribes regarding the Chafee program supports and services and ensure that all eligible youth that are seeking services can be served by the program. The annual plan that La Plata county submits each year documents their ongoing collaboration with both tribes.

As a requirement of accepting Chafee funds, the state is responsible for outreaching and coordinating with the tribes in its state. The opportunity to apply annually for the Chafee program is sent out to all the county directors including directors of the Tribal department of human services. As of the writing of this APSR, the tribes have chosen not to apply for funding.

The Chafee program is always discussed within the tribal consultation and the additional funding and eligibility criteria that states were provided through Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act was discussed on February 8, 2021. SUIT indicated an interest in Chafee services during Tribal Consultation with

CDHS. SUIT showed a particular interest in looking into services for young people aging out of the foster care system. State and County Chafee teams will be working with SUIT to support the needs of the Tribe. A member of the council was identified to have continuing conversations with the Tribal liaison through CDHS, DCW staff, and representatives of the La Plata county DHS to problem solve how to best support tribal youth aging out of foster care. An initial meeting was scheduled through CDHS staff to discuss goals in pushing forward with the collaboration and there was a follow-up meeting with La Plata county staff to discuss ongoing collaboration and engagement of the tribes.

Currently eligible tribal youth are served through a MOU with the La Plata county Chafee program. CDHS will continue to regularly consult the tribes to see if they have the capacity to take on the program themselves but until then the existing relationship with La Plata county is enabling their youth to be served by the program. CDHS staff connected SUIT DHS Director with the La Plata county Chafee program to ensure ongoing collaboration. The DCW Indian Child Welfare Specialist met with both UMUT and SUIT during the week of April 15, 2019 to see if they would like to pursue their own program and they reported that they did not have the staffing capacity to take on the program and will continue to collaborate with the La Plata county Chafee program.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

ICWA requires efforts to place AI/AN children within their own families, tribes, or other tribes whenever possible. In Colorado, there is currently a lack of available Indian foster homes, and efforts are being made to address this. House Bill 21-1151⁴⁷ was introduced in March 2021 to update statute allowing federally recognized tribes to voluntarily contract with county departments of human/social services to place children in county custody in tribally certified homes (if there is availability). With these legislative changes, the goal is to keep AI/AN children with their families, in their communities and connected to their culture.

As part of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP activities, DCW's ICWA specialist met with PIP counties to present county-specific data on ICWA, and discussed process improvement strategies and solutions. Further details on the PIP activity can be found in the PIP progress reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

For details on how DCW is working to improve ICWA compliance in Dependency and Neglect cases, please see 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.

⁴⁷ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1151>

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)

Please see Appendix C for the 2022 CAPTA Annual Report, Appendix D for the Substance Exposed Newborns Collaborative Responses Quarterly Report, Appendix E for the IART Annual Report, Appendix F for the Children's Justice Act Application Report and Three-Year Assessment, and Appendix A for the 2020 Child Maltreatment Fatality Annual Report.

Updates to Targeted Plans

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

Colorado has continued to practice targeted and general recruitment as an effort to meet the needs of the children and youth in care. With Colorado's county-administered and state-supervised structure, successful, diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive parents occurs at the local level. In 2021, sixty-four counties and thirty-three licensed child placement agencies were required to submit a 2020-2021 diligent recruitment plan outlining regions with the highest removal, characteristics of waiting children and youth, recruitment efforts for families of color and LGBTQ+ populations, and analysis of statewide recruitment and retention efforts. All plans were submitted and analyzed by the DCW Foster Care and Recruitment and Retention Specialists. Colorado counties and CPAs were directed to analyze their regional data to identify: systemic gaps; efforts for diverse recruitment; and, the effectiveness of retention efforts, and submit the Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan based upon the analysis. Based on data and anecdotal evidence from service providers the following was gathered:

Themes

- Male children and youth have a higher probability of receiving service compared to their female or other identified gender counterpart.
- Youth who are 11 years or older have a higher probability of remaining in the child welfare system.
- Youth ages 15 years or older struggle in achieving permanency and are impacted by culture/race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+, separation from siblings due to size, traumatic experiences, significant placement moves, mental health diagnosis, delinquency, and running away behaviors. Quantitative data show that this age group has a higher risk of having an IDD diagnosis and exit child welfare through emancipation when compared to younger counterparts.
- Non-certified kinship, certified kinship, and foster homes are the most common placement types utilized in Colorado.
- CPAs are actively establishing treatment foster and therapeutic foster homes to meet the specific needs of Colorado's harder-to-place children and youth, keeping them out of residential type treatment facilities including QRTPs.

Strengths

- 100% of the Colorado counties submitted Diligent Recruitment Plans early or on time.
- 100% of counties were in compliance with the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) and met all of the 8 ACYF requirements.
- 100% of CPA's were in compliance with MEPA and met all 7 ACYF requirements (CPAs are exempt from the 9th which is child-specific recruitment)

- Counties and CPAs identified recruitment strategies that support educational stability, and identified specific targeted recruitment goals for LGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, People Of Color (BIPOC), and other specific populations.
- 100% of counties continue to have information about the need for foster families on their public-facing websites and social media accounts.
- Counties and CPAs continued to partner with the community in recruitment efforts through virtual platforms due to Covid.
- In 2021, Colorado had a decrease of 100 children and youth waiting to achieve permanency through the Adoption Call to Action project.

Strategies & Upcoming Training

- The Diligent Recruitment Plans are being updated to support coordination between counties, agencies, and community organizations to improve overall practice.
- Technical assistance training related to recruitment and retention will continue to be offered virtually in 2022.
- Ongoing training specific to targeted recruitment, geo-mapping, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and recruitment of foster/adoptive parents for teens will be offered as needed virtually in 2022.
- The Adoption Call to Action will continue throughout 2022. The Recruitment and Retention Program has a goal to decrease the number of legally freed children and youth that are awaiting permanency by reaching out to the Colorado counties with the greatest number of children and youth awaiting permanency.
- Recruitment and Retention Quarterly Meetings are scheduled virtually to increase the skills, knowledge, and provide supplemental training to recruiters. Professionals use this time to identify training needs, collaborate, and share placement resources that can benefit practice.

Please see the Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan in Appendix G for the most recent changes.

Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan

The DCW's Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan remains in effect. The goals continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure work is being accomplished and remains relevant. Most of the work on the plan is currently focused on psychotropic medications. First, the Psychotropic Medication Guidelines for Children and Youth in Colorado's Child Welfare System⁴⁸ is currently undergoing review and assessment. This document was originally created by a multidisciplinary group of stakeholders and subject matter experts in 2013 with a revision in 2017. The current revision is projected to be completed in 2022. Second, the CWTS made modifications in the Caseworker Fundamentals training to assure safe prescribing of psychotropic medications for children/youth in care. Lastly, work continues on developing

⁴⁸ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ela6aMSKFzvAR8hj2l8174rEmjmxXep7/view>

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 as a result of inappropriate diagnoses.

CDHS has created an automated system within the CCWIS system regarding completing developmental screening for all children under the age of five. This automatically refers all children under the age of five who are the victims of abuse or neglect to the local community centerboards for a developmental screening.

CDHS began utilizing the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) as a part of the full independent assessment to determine if a youth is eligible for placement in a QRTP. This will be completed by the state Administrative Service Organizations and oversight is provided by OBH. The CANS tool helps prevent inappropriate diagnoses by the nature of the tool itself. The CANS tool is agnostic to etiology or any cause and effect and does not generate a diagnosis. This assessment can be completed prior to placement at a QRTP to ensure the level of mental health treatment needed aligns with the QRTP level of treatment.

CDHS is also working with the HCPF to streamline the process for obtaining Medicaid information for children/youth in county custody. When children/youth are placed in the custody of county child welfare, their treatment, services, or diagnosis could vary by providers. In obtaining these records, multiple diagnoses and duplication of services could be reduced and mitigated.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and national public health emergency, DCW worked to ensure children/youth continue to receive appropriate health care per CDPHE guidelines. Colorado county child welfare departments were also encouraged to partner with their local public health departments, who are under the purview of CDPHE. OCYF also hired a medical director, who worked to support counties by providing expert medical guidance, attending town hall sessions, and ensuring the right resources were available to refer counties to.

No changes are needed to the Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan this year.

Disaster Plan

In CY 2021, Colorado has not been affected by a natural disaster. The Disaster Plan was not utilized for COVID-19, and minor changes have been made to the disaster plan. Please see Appendix H for the updated disaster plan.

Although the Disaster Plan was not utilized for the COVID-19 pandemic, CDHS has been active in ensuring that counties and agencies are supported during the global pandemic.

Colorado's Child Welfare Response to COVID-19

Colorado has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected all 64 counties to date. This includes 1,253,042 cases of COVID-19 and 11,115 deaths among cases attributed to COVID-19 in Colorado as of February 2022. Colorado has taken a number of measures to ensure the safety of all its citizens and safely continue the critical work of child protection throughout this outbreak.

Starting March 2020, Colorado began hosting a statewide virtual conference call with all county human services departments and state leadership across CDHS. These began as twice-weekly meetings, and have since moved to once a week. Additionally, a weekly DCW and county town hall meeting was created, which provides an opportunity for DCW and county partners to communicate about child welfare specific concerns. In 2021, this meeting has moved to twice-monthly and continues to cover child welfare practice issues specific to COVID-19 when needed. One town hall specifically addressed recruitment and retention of county staff, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19.

The state of Colorado continues to be guided by Governor Polis's executive order D 2021-141⁴⁹ signed December 28th, 2021. The executive order ensures continued COVID-19 response and recovery activities, and when needed, response to the changing COVID-19 environment due to variants and stressors. In turn, the Governor's orders helped inform county child welfare practice around service provision, how to conduct visitations, and the return to county offices.

DCW has issued the following memorandums to provide counties with guidance around COVID-19, and vaccine recommendations:

- IM 2021-0025⁵⁰: Pfizer Vaccine 12+ Division of Child Welfare
- IM-CW-2021-0027⁵¹: Face-to-face Contacts with Children, Youth, Parents & Caregivers in Light of COVID-19

DCW has increased the required frequency of monitoring contact between DCW staff and all counties and created additional collaborative opportunities. The intent of this is to ensure prompt responses to counties in the ever-evolving landscape of COVID-19, implement new federal and state guidance, and assist in prompting consistent responses across Colorado. This includes being aware of any program or policy changes a county has made in response to COVID-19, monitoring data changes, creating a statewide intake practice and supervision meeting, and creating a statewide ongoing practice and supervision meeting.

In addition to increased virtual contact to counties, DCW created a Directors Digest monthly distribution to ensure county staff have all essential updates in one place.

⁴⁹ <https://www.colorado.gov/governor/sites/default/files/inline-files/D%202021%20141%20COVID%2019%20Disaster%20Recovery%20EO.pdf>

⁵⁰ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V_Do9lk8zKhhuHIQ1DogAloeXn3V7AfR/view

⁵¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RPJ6pCwGm6jitKFODZdUAFewlfrf2kZ4/view>

Specific to COVID-19, the Digest contained information such as; reminders to notify state staff of COVID-19 positive youth in county custody, links to the memo's described above, information regarding CDHS vaccination requirements and COVID-19 procedures,

DCW has created and implemented policies for COVID-19 testing for staff and youth in congregate care settings. These policies include guidance to the facilities to continue to allow all child protection staff access to the children/youth in placement, and protocols to ensure the facilities can maintain a safe environment for staff and children/youth. To ensure county staff are aware of these requirements, OCYF created the [DYS Dashboard](#) to inform county staff of COVID-19 policies and visitation for youth in 24-7 detention facilities.

DCW continues to provide services that are available to county human service workers who may be experiencing stress or trauma during COVID-19. DCW maintains contracts with two secondary trauma treatment providers for workers and supervisors across the state to access free of charge and without any prior approval.

Training Plan

Please see Appendix I for the updated Training Plan.

Statistical and Supporting Information

Information on the Child Protective Services Workforce

Please see Appendix J for information on the Child Protective Services Workforce.

Juvenile Justice Transfers

Between January 1 and December 31, 2021, there were 111 children/youth in Colorado who had custody transferred from the local county department of human/social services to the state juvenile justice system. This information is documented in Trails, which is used by county child welfare agencies, and the data includes all children/youth being served in an OOH placement by county departments and were subsequently committed to DYS during CY 2021. The data may include delinquent youth who were court-ordered to Title IV-E eligible community placements by a local county, without having a child protection concern. The following figure provides juvenile justice transfer data from CY 2015 to CY 2021.

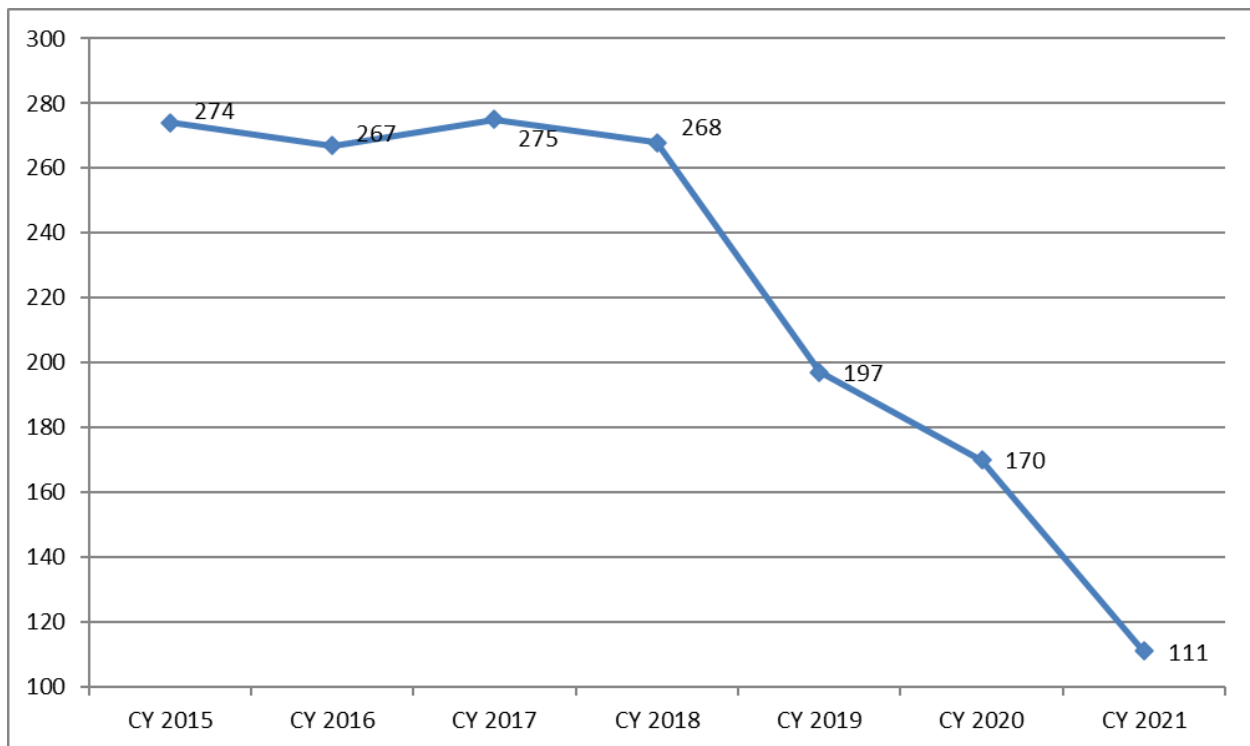


Figure 3: Number of children and youth transferred from CDHS to DYS

DYS has experienced, and continues to experience, declines in all populations served. Although a definitive causal relationship between potential factors and the reduction has not been established, possible factors may include:

- The COVID-19 pandemic, which saw fewer juvenile arrests, leading to fewer juvenile filings and subsequently, fewer adjudications.
- Emphasis on rehabilitation and treatment, rather than corrections.
- Research and literature supporting residential stability.
- Greater use of evidence-based practices (targeted treatment, keeping youth in natural environments, keeping low-risk youth out of the system, increased use on actuarial risk assessments, and less reliance on professional judgements).
- Greater support for community-based programs, rather than residential; de-institutionalization.
- Expansion of diversion and prevention programs.
- Decriminalization of certain drug offenses, and mental health-related behavior.
- Juvenile Justice system changes:
 - Raising the age of delinquency requirements
 - Changes to detention eligibility
 - Shortening juvenile parole sentences
 - Reduced detention caps.

Education and Training Vouchers

The number of youth who received ETV awards is located in the *John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (the Chafee Program)* section of this APSR.

Inter-Country Adoptions

See “Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries” in the *Updates to Service Description* section of this APSR.

Monthly Caseworker Visit Data

Monthly caseworker visit data for FFY 2022 will be reported separately and submitted by the December 2022 due date.

Financial Information

Colorado's CFS-101, Parts I, II, and III are submitted with this report as separate files. CDHS included on the forms 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 Service Descriptions 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 OEC information system will resolve these issues. As a result, more reliable data will be available to report on future CFS-101 forms.

The requested amount for FFY 2023 in Part I and Part II of the CFS-101 is \$4,705,888. 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 six of the CFS-101, Part III form which covers FFY 2020 grants. FFY 2020 state and local share expenditures for the purpose of Title IV-B, subpart 2, amount to approximately \$1,265,191.78.

Lastly, CDHS is not able to separate out foster care maintenance expenditure estimates between foster family and relative foster care and group/institutional care at this time. 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 2022 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 CCR.