

2025 Annual Progress and Services Report



2020 - 2024 Child and Family Service Plan

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

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Glossary of Acronyms

AAICAMA	Association of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance
ABCD	Assuring Better Child Health and Development
ACHY	Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth
ACYF	Administration on Children, Youth, and Families
ADP	Average Daily Population
AI/AN	American Indian/Alaskan Native
APSR	Annual Progress and Services Report
ARCH	Applied Research in Child Welfare
ARD	Administrative Review Division
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
BHA	Behavioral Health Administration
BID	Best Interest Determination
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
BPCT	Best Practice Court Teams
BSW	Bachelor of Social Work
CANS	Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CBA	Credit Builders Alliance
CBCAP	Community Based Child Abuse Prevention
CCR	Colorado Community Response
CCWIS	Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System
CCWSC	The Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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
CFSP	Child and Family Services Plan
CFSR	Child and Family Services Review
CHTC	Colorado Human Trafficking Council
CIP	Court Improvement Program
CMPP	Child Maltreatment Prevention Plan
COCAP	Colorado Child Abuse Prevention
COSHI	Colorado Sexual Health Initiative
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
COYLN	Colorado Youth Leadership Network
CPA	Child Placement Agencies

CPTF	Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
CREA	Community + Research + Education + Awareness = Results
CSU	Colorado State University
CWEL	Child Welfare Education Liaisons
CWELC	Child Welfare Executive Leadership Council
CWPTG	Child Welfare Prevention Task Group
CWTS	Child Welfare Training System
CY	Calendar Year
DANSR	Colorado's Dependency and Neglect System Reform
DCA	Deputy Compact Administrator
DCW	Division of Child Welfare
DIFRC	Denver Indian Family Resource Center
DOH	Division of Housing
DOLA	Department of Local Affairs
DR	Differential Response
DYS	Division of Youth Services
EDI	Equity Diversity and Inclusion
ETP	Emancipation Transition Plans
ETV	Educational Training Vouchers
FFPSA	Family First Prevention Services Act
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FP	Family Preservation
FS	Family Support
FUP	Family Unification Program
FYI	Foster Youth to Independence
GIS	Geographic Information System
HCPF	Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
HIPPY	Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
HRV	High Risk Victim
HT	Human Trafficking
HTTG	Human Trafficking Task Group
HVITF	Home Visiting Investment Task Force
IART	Institutional Assessment Review Team
ICAMA	Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance
ICPC	The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
ILA	Independent Living Arrangements
JCAMP	Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance
JPB	Colorado Juvenile Parole Board
LEAP	Lived Experience Action Panel
LGTBQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning +
LOS	Length of Stay
MAPP	Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting

MCV	Monthly Caseworker Visit
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
MIECHV	Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting
MST	Multi-Systemic Therapy
MSU	Metropolitan State University
MSW	Master of Social Work
NCMEC	National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
NEICE	National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise
NFP	Nurse-Family Partnership
NPP	Nurturing Parenting Program
NSTRC	National SafeCare® Training and Research Center
NTDC	National Training and Development Curriculum
NYTD	National Youth in Transition Database
OCR	Office of the Child's Representative
OCYF	Office of Children, Youth, and Families
OOH	Out-of-Home
ORPC	Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel
OSRI	Onsite Review Instrument
PAT	Parents as Teachers
PFS	Protective Factors Survey
PIP	Program Improvement Plan
PPSS	Post Permanency Services and Supports
PSSF	MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families
QRTP	Qualified Residential Treatment Program
RCHY	Rural Collaborative on Homeless Youth
RDMS	Results-Driven Management System
Re-ED	Re-Education
RFA	Request for Applications
RGAP	Relative Guardianship Assistance Program
ROM	Results Oriented Management
RPG	Regional Partnership Grant
RTS	Roadmap to Success
SA	Sexual Abuse
SANCA	The Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Court Act
SCC	SafeCare® Colorado
SDP	Secured Document Portal
SFY	State Fiscal Year
SILP	Supervised Independent Living Placements
SLE	Supervisor's Learning Exchange
Sub-PAC	Sub-Policy Advisory Committee
SUIT	Southern Ute Indian Tribe
SWRC	Social Work Research Center
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TBRI®	Trust Based Relational Intervention

TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
TVPPRA	Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022
UMUT	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
YARH	Youth at Risk of Homelessness

Introduction

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) is pleased to submit the fifth Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) for the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). This is the final report to document 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, Youth, and Families' (ACYF) most recent program instruction ACYF-CB-PI-24-02¹ related to the 2025 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 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.

Collaboration

This final APSR will continue to highlight major initiatives and projects as reported over the last four years that demonstrate collaborative efforts between agency partners and stakeholders. Collaborators include, but are not limited to:

- The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC)
- The Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)
- Judicial Partners
- Collaboration with Colorado's Native American Tribes
- Collaboration with County Staff/Frontline Workers
- Children, Youth, Families, and People with Lived Experiences.

Prevention Efforts

The Child Welfare Prevention Task Group (CWPTG) continues to meet to coordinate and streamline programs, services, and to develop processes for blending and braiding funding sources. 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

¹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/PI-24-02.pdf>

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 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.

As Colorado continues to expand its prevention strategies, particularly as part of the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) implementation, the three key focus areas² remain:

- Expanding Family First candidacy,
- Expanding the Family First evidence-based services array,
- Scaling existing evidence-based services across the state.

CDHS continues to collaborate with the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), BHA, and counties, to align funding and services to free up flexible dollars to pay for prevention services. County input ensures that any changes continue to support rural and frontier counties and addresses the lack of Medicaid providers in smaller communities.

Alignment with Judicial Partners

CDHS supported the planning and execution of the statewide 2024 Convening on Children, Youth and Families event. The 2024 Convening was centered around leading court improvement efforts, specifically those that are in alignment with the Court Improvement Program’s (CIP) Strategic Plan³, which includes the impact areas of Safety-Based Decision Making, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Best Practices in Child Welfare, and the Best Practice Court Team Infrastructure.

The CIP and CDHS continue to recognize the importance of high-quality legal representation of children/youth and parents involved in child welfare legal proceedings. The CIP has designed its strategic plan to incorporate high quality legal representation into every project by emphasizing its importance in implementing effective systems change.

High Quality Court Hearings

In 2023, the CIP initiated a hearing quality study to evaluate the practices that are currently implemented throughout Colorado. The CIP entered a contract with Data Savvy Consulting to conduct a hearing quality study in 5 judicial districts (10 court locations) representing rural and urban counties. The researchers reviewed approximately 400 hearings spread out over these districts using a Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance (JCAMP) informed observation tool and compiled a state-wide data report and county-level data report for Best Practice Court Teams to utilize at last year’s 2023 Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

² https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uspXDZSYnxEddDtBBZdqPhmAhvgXieCe/view?usp=drive_link

³

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

Workshop that is hosted by CIP. The findings from this evaluation have been used locally as part of cause mapping activities and interventions are being developed based on this data.

The Colorado Judicial Branch 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 Colorado's Dependency and Neglect System Reform (DANSR)⁴ 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 Circle of Parents Expansion intervention. Last 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 local DANSR courts/court teams and the local peer support providers. As this grant is in its final year, the partners have focused on sustainability planning, particularly around relationship sustainability, programmatic/financial sustainability, and sustainability achieved through seeking further evaluation. This has included strengthening the partnerships between community members and the courts, marketing the intervention, and ensuring professionals know about the intervention to then encourage parents to attend. This has also included taking a comprehensive look at what funding mechanisms exist in Colorado that could potentially be used to fund the Circle groups (Medicaid, Core funding, trust fund dollars, etc., have been explored), and lastly, the partners have brainstormed what future evaluation options may be pursued to build evidence for the intervention.

Family Voices

CDHS has created a Family and Community Engagement Plan⁵ that ensures alignment with the CDHS Strategic Plan, the CDHS Equity Action Plan, Governor Polis Executive Orders, and the Family Voice Council Plan for the Future. Through CDHS's Family Voice Council, the Division of Child Welfare's (DCW) Child Welfare Family Advisory Council, and the Reimagining Child Welfare project, CDHS ensures that family voices and engagement remain at the forefront of program and policy changes so that they are informed by and reflective of community and family needs.

Stakeholder Feedback

Over 25,000 stakeholders including state and county staff, interagency partners, service providers, youth advisory boards, current and former youth in foster care, foster parents, Chafee coordinators, Colorado's federally recognized tribes and organizations serving Colorado's American Indian communities were sent the 2025 APSR draft for their review and feedback. A copy of the approved report will be sent to both of Colorado's federally recognized tribes. Two teleconferences were held in May to solicit feedback from internal and external partners.

⁴ https://www.courts.state.co.us/Administration/Custom.cfm?Unit=polprogpra&Page_ID=560

⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1X4SO1hDmYLD5eYaEm4moZz54O9KQP_ck/view

Stakeholders were encouraged to submit their feedback to DCW. This report incorporates the feedback CDHS received from stakeholders and will be publicly available on the CDHS website⁶ by September 30, 2024, or when final approval is received from the Children’s Bureau, along with previous reports.

⁶ <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/child-welfare-publications-and-reports>

Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes

Colorado's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 3 Program Improvement Plan (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 ended in September 2023. Looking ahead towards Round 4 of the CFSR, Colorado monitors qualitative and quantitative data through various means, such as Administrative Review Division (ARD) case reviews, CDHS C-STAT discussions, and regular usage of Results Oriented Management (ROM) reports.

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

In Colorado's CFSR Round 3, the review found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. In 2017, only 75% of reviewed cases indicated that Item 1 was a strength.

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

Goal 1 in Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP included extensive efforts to address performance in Item 1, and Colorado successfully met the statewide measurement goal of 68.3 % for Item 1 in 2023. The PIP progress reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau, contains further details on the targeted efforts that were being made across the state, with particular emphasis on the six PIP counties, to increase the timeliness of investigating reports of maltreatment.

In anticipation for CFSR Round 4, Colorado will be monitoring this measure and incrementally increase the statewide goal to 95%. Please see Colorado's 2025-2029 CFSP for further information on how continuation of efforts will continue in preparing for CFSR Round 4.

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

In Colorado's CFSR Round 3, the review found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. In 2017, 75% of reviewed cases found that Item 2 was a strength, and 62% of reviewed cases indicated that Item 3 was a strength. Data pulled in 2024 for CY 2023 shows that:

- According to ROM, 82.5% of children/youth eligible to re-enter care (within 12 months of discharge from foster care, Jan 2023 - Dec 2023) maintained permanency.
- According to ROM in-home counts, 6896 children/youth entered in-home cases between January 2023 and December 2023. During this same time, 7568 children/youth exited in-

home cases resulting in an exit rate of 0.91. A rate above 1.0 indicates that more people come into in-home counts than exit.

- According to ROM, 96.2% of children/youth involved in in-home cases (January 2023 - December 2023) remained safe (did not have a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect) while the case was open.

Colorado continues to enhance safety practice by prioritizing a consistent assessment and decision-making approach throughout the life of a case supported by the Colorado Family Safety and Risk Assessment tools. A Safety Assessment Workgroup was convened as part of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP, and the workgroup conducted fidelity reviews of safety assessments. While there were no changes that were made to the safety assessment tool, the fidelity review identified improved documentation of formal safety assessments. Additionally, the Supervisor's Learning Exchange (SLE) that originated from Colorado's CFSR 3 PIP implementation, scheduled sessions to provide a platform for supervisors across the state to discuss best practices for supervising safety and risk throughout the life of an assessment or case.

Please see Colorado's 2025-2029 CFSP for further information on how continuation of efforts will continue in preparing for CFSR Round 4.

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

In Colorado's CFSR Round 3, the review found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. In 2017, 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.

- The placement stability rate (moves per 1,000 days in care during a rolling 12-month period) from January 2023 to December 2023 was an average of 3.45 (all children/youth).
- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 12 months who have achieved permanency is 55.1%.
- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 12-23 months who have achieved permanency is 48.9%.
- The percentage of children/youth who entered care in the past 24 months or more who have achieved permanency is 47.2%.
- The percentage of children/youth adopted within 12 months of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) is 48.96%.
- There were 57 youth who emancipated from foster care in 2023.

Targeted efforts to improve this outcome can be found in Goals 3 and 4 of the PIP. 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. A Placement Stability Pilot program began in March 2023. In addition, Goal 3 in the CFSP contains specific activities aiming to improve performance in Items 5 and 6 specifically, to support this outcome. Please see Colorado's 2025-2029 CFSP for further

information on the Placement Stability Pilot program, and additional efforts to prepare for CFSR Round 4.

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

In Colorado's CFSR Round 3, the review found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. In 2017, while 90% of reviewed cases for Item 7 indicated that it was a strength, Items 8, 9, 10 and 11 were not found in substantial conformity. Data pulled in 2024 for CY 2023 from ROM shows that:

- Siblings are placed together 80.6% of the time.
- 51.3% of children/youth are placed with a relative as their initial placement and 53% are placed with a relative at any time across the case span.

Improved father engagement was a targeted goal of the PIP, and significant efforts were made following the PIP implementation period to uncover barriers to father engagement and expand upon strategies statewide. Goal 3 of Colorado's CFSR Round 3 PIP included 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.

Colorado remains focused on increasing the involvement of fathers, reducing the time children spend in out-of-home care, and minimizing the number of children who return to care after being reunited with their families. The state has made significant strides in identifying fathers, establishing consistent and effective father engagement practices, and recognizing the importance of engaging fathers in child welfare. Please see Colorado's 2025-2029 CFSP for further information on how efforts will continue in preparing for CFSR Round 4.

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

In Colorado's CFSR Round 3, the review found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. Data pulled in 2024 for CY 2023 from ROM shows:

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

Please see the *Monthly Caseworker Visits* section of this APSR for further details on how Colorado continues to ensure that monthly caseworker visits fall within state and federal compliance.

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

In Colorado's CFSR Round 3, the review found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. In 2017, 90% of reviewed cases indicated that this was a strength.

House Bill 23-1089⁷ was passed in April 2023, and requires CDHS to organize a workgroup in collaboration with other state agencies, to identify and address issues related to foster youth education, transportation, and stability. The workgroup will provide written recommendations to the Colorado General Assembly before the 2025 regular legislative session. 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.

In Colorado’s CF SR Round 3, the review found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this outcome. In 2017, 92% of reviewed cases indicated item 17 as a strength, and 63% of reviewed cases indicated item 18 as a strength.

DCW County Intermediaries, division staff who are assigned to monitor and support county performance, review counties’ 90-day review data and provide coaching and technical assistance to county administrators. Templates were created to aid county staff in ensuring all required information is captured and documented. These efforts will continue as Colorado looks ahead to CF SR Round 4, and further information is reported in the 2025-2029 CF SP.

Statewide Information System

In Colorado’s CF SR Round 3, the review found that Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

The Trails Team is expecting to fully modernize Assessment functionality at the end of the current State Fiscal Year (June 2024) which will completely modernize all intake processes, leaving only Cases left to modernize. The gradual but consistent modernization of functionality allows caseworkers to navigate in a more fluid system, taking less time to perform critical tasks, and ensuring more accurate and consistent entry of critical information. A minimum viable product of Trails Mod as a complete system is targeted for FFY 2025. Further updates on the progress of Trails Modernization will be reported on in future APSRs.

Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Court Act (SANCA)

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

⁷ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1089>

exchange is fully restored, and all 64 counties that have an open D&N case will have their child welfare case connected in Trails Legacy and Eclipse/ICON program automatically.

Please see the 2025-2029 CFSP for information on SANCA, and how the electronic data exchange between the CDHS and the Colorado Judicial Court System will be used to inform the case progress through the life of the case and ensure safety, permanency, and well-being are met.

Case Review System

In Colorado's CFSR Round 3, the review found that 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 was an area of focus in the PIP.

Quality Assurance System

Colorado's CFSR Round 3 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 Round 3 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 Round 3, 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.

As part of the Pay for Success model, 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 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. The Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab released a report⁸ following an evaluation of this project in Spring 2023.

Fostering Opportunities

In September 2018, Colorado launched “Fostering Opportunities”, funding services in Jefferson County Public Schools to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. As of February 2023, the Fostering Opportunities program has enrolled 137 students in the program. The Colorado Lab conducted a randomized controlled trial of the program⁹, which demonstrated that the program had a significant impact on suspensions and a modest impact on attendance. Compared to the control group, there was a 26% improvement in the rate of students who were currently or formerly in foster care and had access to the Fostering Opportunities program being on track to graduate. This result far exceeded the Pay for Success “highest level of success” goal of achieving a 10% improvement.

Due to the success of the Fostering Opportunities pilot in Jefferson County, state funding to support implementation and ongoing programming specific to Fostering Opportunities has been appropriated by House Bill 22-1374¹⁰ for at least two but no more than five additional school districts.

Agency Responsiveness to Community

In Colorado’s CFSR Round 3, 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.

Please see intervention 2.2.1 for more information on how Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds were used by counties to implement Child Maltreatment Prevention Plan (CMPP) in CBCAP implementation sites.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

In Colorado’s CFSR Round 3, the review found Colorado was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

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.

⁸ https://coloradolab.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/MST_Final_Success_Payment_Report_Revised_030123.pdf

⁹ <https://coloradolab.org/blog-2022-02-22-fostering-opportunities-now-a-proven-practice/>

¹⁰ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1374>

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 was also detailed in Goal 5 of the CF SR Round 3 PIP, and details can be found in the PIP progress reports, submitted separately to the Children's Bureau.

Pressley Ridge

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

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

The DCW Learning and Development Team in partnership with the DCW Provider Services Unit and the Permanency Services Unit requested \$145,920 from Family First transition funds to host two cohorts of Pressley Ridge Train-the-Trainer for County and Child Placement Agencies in Colorado who are interested in implementing treatment or therapeutic foster care or both. The acceptance into the training will be based on the following criteria:

- Counties/CPAs will have to have their implementation project either ready to be submitted or already approved by DCW.
- Programs submitted shall meet all the Standard Procedure as outlined in 7.704 Rules Regulating Treatment Foster Care and 7.703 Rules Regulating Therapeutic Foster Care
 - Counties and CPAs will sign a Memorandum of Understanding to train other providers outside of their county/programs.

State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements

In December 2023, Colorado made the initial steps to join the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) by implementing the NEICE Secured Document Portal (SDP) to better transmit Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) documents between the state of Colorado and the other states who have implemented the NEICE.

In CY 2023, 29 Colorado counties and ten CPAs received 346 ICPC home study packets, or requests to review the capacities of a potential caregiver, from other states. Colorado counties and CPAs received these ICPC requests most frequently from the states of California, Texas, Florida, Arizona and Kansas.

- Number of home studies completed: 208.
- Number of residential ICPCs processed (with parental custody): 216.
- Approved home studies: 173.
- Placements from out-of-state: 112.
- Private Adoption ICPC home study request: 75.
- International Private Adoptions home study requests: 68.

Reasons why home studies were not completed timely remain similar year-over-year:

- Provider Issues - scheduling, lack of cooperation, timeliness delays, moved during home study process, failed to respond (withdrew)
- Lack of Employee Resources
- Missing Information from the Sending State
- Illegal Placement - ICPC packet received after children were already placed
- Foster Certification Process
- Background Checks Delayed - Adam Walsh from other states, Puerto Rico delays
- Death of Adult Applicant - change of adults in home

In CY 2023, 38 Colorado counties sent 616 ICPC home study packets to other states. Colorado counties most frequently sent home study requests to Texas, California, New Mexico, Florida, and Arizona.

- Out-of-State placements: 156.
- Number of residential ICPCs sent: 248.
- Private Adoption ICPC home study requests sent: 20.

The Colorado CDHS ICPC Compact Administrator and ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator continue to provide ICPC training, technical assistance, and support to Colorado counties, CPAs, residential facilities, Medicaid providers and administrators, as well as family members in-state as well as out-of-state guidance in the ICPC processes and services available.

Staffing shortages and turnover continues to be an ongoing challenge. Due to Colorado ICPC staff retiring or changing jobs, data entry errors have been identified as an area for improvement to better track ICPC action steps. Colorado ICPC is working on training guides and data consistency with county staff. ICPC Quarterly meetings also provided ongoing training. Further details on continuing efforts are provided in the 2025-2029 CFSP.

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.

Over \$630,000 has been awarded in scholarships over 2023-2024. The Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium (CCWSC) is currently funding 57 students from all universities, with 24 returning scholars from the 2022-2023 academic year. Out of the 57 students, 10 are BSW scholars and 47 are MSW scholars. There were 30 additional applicants who qualified for the scholarship, but due to lack of funding, scholarships were unable to be awarded. Funding continues to be a barrier to awarding more scholarships, please see the Measures of Progress for Goal 1 for additional details.

As a continuation of efforts, CCWSC met with Metropolitan State University (MSU) Denver MSW and BSW faculty groups to share program information and develop new partnership opportunities. CCWSC also coordinated several opportunities for current scholars to speak to psychology students, social work students and other students interested in future careers in child welfare. CCWSC program leadership from MSU Denver and CDHS met with the Alchemy Strategy group to discuss program goals and enhancements over the next five years. Six strategic imperative areas were developed: Recruitment of Scholars; Sustainability and Growth; Inclusive Leadership; Social Justice; Retention of Professionals; and Data Driven Practice. Visuals were created and shared with the statewide CCWSC committee. These will help inform strategic imperative workgroups that will focus on operationalizing these areas of focus.

The research and evaluation workgroup continued to meet and discuss program needs focused on the alumni study and new data-driven practice strategic imperative. The alumni study final report and recommendation was released and is now available on the CCWSC website¹¹. Key findings include:

- 41% of survey respondents reported they were currently working at a Colorado child welfare agency (county, state, or other).

¹¹ <https://www.msudenver.edu/ccwsc/research-evaluation/>

- CCWSC alumni stay longer in child welfare work after receiving their stipend/scholarship: respondents reported working in Colorado child welfare for an average of 4.8 years after graduating.
- Survey respondents reported a strong sense of their fit and self-efficacy with child welfare work, especially regarding their commitment to the well-being of children and families, that they are motivated to find solutions when challenged in a case, and that their backgrounds make them a good fit.
- Themes around what brought alumni into child welfare work indicated that most alumni felt a connection through their lived experience, values, and passion/compassion for this work.

DCW will continue efforts to increase the number of IV-E education stipends awarded each year beyond the scope of this CFSP as a child welfare workforce recruitment strategy. Additional information will be provided in the 2025-2029 CFSP.

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.

Nine scholarships were awarded to students who were already working in, or interested in working in Custer, Logan, Teller, Dolores, Garfield, and Fremont counties. Each participating university continues to hold several program information sessions to recruit potential scholars. Program coordinators also met individually with interested students to discuss program options and individual considerations. See Intervention 1.1.1 for further details on CCWSC's continuation of efforts to recruit scholars.

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.

DCW continues to utilize Supervisor Learning Exchanges (SLE) statewide for supervisors to participate in a mutual exchange of ideas, strategies, and processes, by utilizing data to improve outcomes. DCW and the Child Welfare Training System (CWTS) also continue to convene and facilitate discussions on recruitment and retention studies, research and evaluation findings, and strategies to engage counties in efforts to recruit and retain the workforce.

In September 2023, DCW created Caseworker Learning Exchanges as part of efforts to provide support for caseworkers, in particular retaining caseworkers. The Caseworker Learning Exchanges were developed as a result of a focus group discussion with county directors who identified a need for caseworkers to learn from each other and connect. Each week, a topic is chosen and caseworkers can participate by preparing questions or identifying areas of practice

improvements, so that they can share best practices between other caseworkers in different counties.

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.

The CWTS provides the following learning opportunities:

- **Beat the Odds: Community of Learners:** This online, Zoom-based, interactive learning experience consists of a series of 24 one-hour training and discussion sessions designed to mitigate the impact of secondary traumatic stress among child protective staff by increasing job satisfaction, resilience, optimism, self-care, and social support, and decreasing staff attrition, stress reactivity, and burnout.
- **Leadership Coaching:** Individual coaching may involve enhancing the coachee's ability to demonstrate the following overarching leadership competencies:
 - Leading in context: building a culture of collaboration
 - Leading people: workforce development
 - Leading for results: accountability
 - Leading change: goal setting
- **Team Coaching:** Team coaching may involve enhancing the coaches' ability to demonstrate the following overarching leadership competencies:
 - Leading in context: building a culture of collaboration
 - Leading people: workforce development
 - Leading for results: accountability
 - Leading change: goal setting
- **Protecting Professional Resiliency:** In this class, caseworkers learn to:
 - Recognize your unique signs of stress and professional burnout,
 - Develop and personalize a list of tools and resources to have on hand to deal with challenging situations,
 - Understand the role of the "emergency roadside repair kit" in protecting your professional resiliency, and
 - Have the ability to use the "emergency roadside repair kit" to protect your professional resiliency.
- **Nurturing Professionals in a Challenging Environment:** In this course, supervisors and managers learn to:
 - Understand the unique aspects of solution-focused thinking and be able to differentiate this model from problem-focused models,
 - Understand how to staff a case using a solution-focused framework,
 - Understand the key factors needed in building a resilient workforce, and
 - Be able to identify three tools to use immediately with workers.

Measures of Progress for Goal 1

1. By 2024, improve caseworker retention rate by decreasing caseworker turnover from a baseline of 26% in 2019 to 24% by 2024.

There were 1394 caseworkers across the state at the beginning of 2023. By the end of 2023, 290 caseworkers had left, which resulted in a caseworker turnover rate of 20.8%. This has shown a decrease in caseworker turnover rate, and DCW has exceeded the caseworker retention rate goal. DCW, in partnership with CWTS, continues to emphasize worker retention efforts. Please see Intervention 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 above.

2. By 2024, increase the number of IV-E stipends awarded each year from 57 (State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2018-2019) to 80.

DCW and the CCWSC has awarded 57 IV-E stipends in the 2023-2024 academic year. The biggest challenge to county partners and current scholars continues to be staffing changes and turnover occurring at county human services departments. This may lead to changes in internship supervisors for the scholars, which further exacerbates the child welfare learning curve for new professionals and the children and families they work with. This also puts an additional strain on the existing workforce, with higher caseloads, and a lack of time to provide consistent BSW and MSW supervision required of the internship program. Funding also remains a barrier to increasing the number of stipends awarded. CCWSC leadership will continue meeting with leadership from the CWTS to discuss partnership opportunities as well as unique opportunities to support workforce recruitment efforts.

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.

Throughout the year 2023, the Child Welfare Training System in partnership with the Training Steering Committee, launched a new Casework Supervisor's academy, after a thorough CQI process showed that the existing training needed to be updated to include updating state statutes and Federal policy on practice. A committee has been commissioned to review the current caseworker competences, the state Volume VII training requirement to determine if a new approach to train the workforce is needed. Work on this is set to begin January 2024.

Since 2022, CWTS has been conducting surveys on workforce satisfaction and resilience. In October 2023, as a result of the survey, a new learning experience, Building a Resilient Team, It Starts With You, was created. This course supports learners in recognizing the unique signs of

stress and professional burnout, develop and personalize a list of tools and resources to have on hand to deal with challenging situations, recognize the value of a positive mindset in approaching their daily work with families and colleagues, and develop an ongoing support system of peers to act as sounding boards and accountability partners after the course.

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.

The 2018-2023 cohort of CBCAP implementation sites ended its grant cycle this fiscal year. Over five years, each site received \$250,000 to implement a part of their Child Maltreatment Prevention Plan (CMPP). These plans are created and updated using the [Colorado Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action](#) and its corresponding [Toolkit](#). All implementation sites also integrate and reinforce the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) through their work, whether it be systems-level change or direct services.

CDEC provided financial support through the CBCAP funding for experienced facilitators and county staff to manage logistics, conduct a parent and community survey in partnership with the Butler Institute at the University of Denver, and use the CMP Framework for Action Toolkit to create a community-wide CMP Plan. Four facilitators were trained, and seven communities gathered data from families and compiled a local community profile which together illuminated community protective factors and expanded understanding of community risk factors. Those communities will have an established plan allowing them to apply to receive implementation dollars for their identified goals in FFY 2024.

There is a more concerted effort across partners to use information from community-level plans to inform state-level priorities and investment in prevention services and initiatives.

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 Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) clearinghouse and how they are funded in Colorado.

Nine programs are included in Colorado's Family First Prevention Plan. Five of those programs have been rated as "Well-Supported" on the Clearinghouse, and the remaining four programs have rigorous evaluations in place. Upfront funding varies for each program, and by communities in some cases. Colorado will continue to monitor funding details as the prevention infrastructure continues to expand across the state.

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 feedback from communities and facilitators from the 2023-2024 planning cohort, as well as input from diverse cross-sector partners, will be used to revise and update the Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework and toolkit. The goal is to create a user-friendly resource for communities that promotes strategic thinking across systems, inspires partners to take action to build a stronger prevention continuum, and influences resource investments. At the same time, the Framework is meant to create shared language and a common child maltreatment prevention platform for state-level partners.

The 2023 Child Fatality Prevention System (CFPS) Legislative Report¹² states that preventing child maltreatment will also prevent deaths caused by maltreatment. As Colorado updates its Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework, it will emphasize the role that communities play in preventing child abuse and neglect, and the research-informed strategies that will, in turn, help prevent child fatalities caused by maltreatment.

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

Colorado House Bills 21-1248¹³ and 22-1295¹⁴ expanded the membership of the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention (COCAP) Trust Fund Board from nine members to nineteen members. Board members now include four representatives from county leadership, three community members with lived experience, two subject matter experts, two legislators, and a representative each from the DCW, CDPHE, Colorado Department of Education (CDE), HCPF, Department of Local Affairs; CDEC; the BHA; and the Child Protection Ombudsman. There are no plans to expand the Board further.

Intervention 2.4.3: Expand public access to services and resources.

The Home Visiting Investment Task Force (HVITF) was approved by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission on April 23, 2020 to develop a strategy to scale a continuum of home visiting services in Colorado and guide the release of the future funding solicitations from the CDEC, including federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funding. The strategy will support planning for state budget requests, the solicitation of new federal funding opportunities, and alignment with philanthropic funding for home visiting. The HVITF, is a 35 member body that includes representatives from Child Welfare among a variety of other state and local partners. Collectively, it has a goal of increasing the availability of voluntary home visiting services by 20% in diverse communities across the state. Colorado currently invests in nine

¹² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HnRis14uWWybCAGXeEoJBGU1mgsN4xEt/view>

¹³ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1248>

¹⁴ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1295>

evidence-based early childhood home visiting models that support family strengthening and/or child maltreatment prevention.

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, as reported in the 2021 APSR.

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.

Colorado continues to meet and exceed the goal for decreasing the child maltreatment rate for children zero to five. In 2023, the child maltreatment rate was 9.2 per 1,000 children. DCW continues to strive for further lowering the child maltreatment rate by participating in ongoing collaborative efforts with the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF), the CFPS, and the Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT). The multidisciplinary CFRT Steering Committee continues to identify gaps and provide recommendations across agencies for consideration, streamlining processes and improving cross-system communications.

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 increased to 3.29 in 2022. Please see the previous Measure of Progress for how Colorado continues to work on 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. As discussed in the prior years' APSR, after further discussions with the CDEC, this measure of progress is being updated to ensure Colorado counties will be supported in the development of child abuse prevention plans, and all implementation sites will have CMP plans, to better reflect the status of this measure.

The current focus is on using CMP plans, and identifying trends across plans, to inform broader state-level investments and strategies to expand access to prevention services and support. This approach is highlighted in the COCAP Trust Fund Board's prevention investment strategy.

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.

Statewide implementation of DR, an approach that aims to maximize family engagement and whole-family assessments, has increased to 89% of counties statewide, with 56 counties fully implemented, seven counties in progress, and only one county who has not yet opted in.

Colorado DR Implementation Status Map

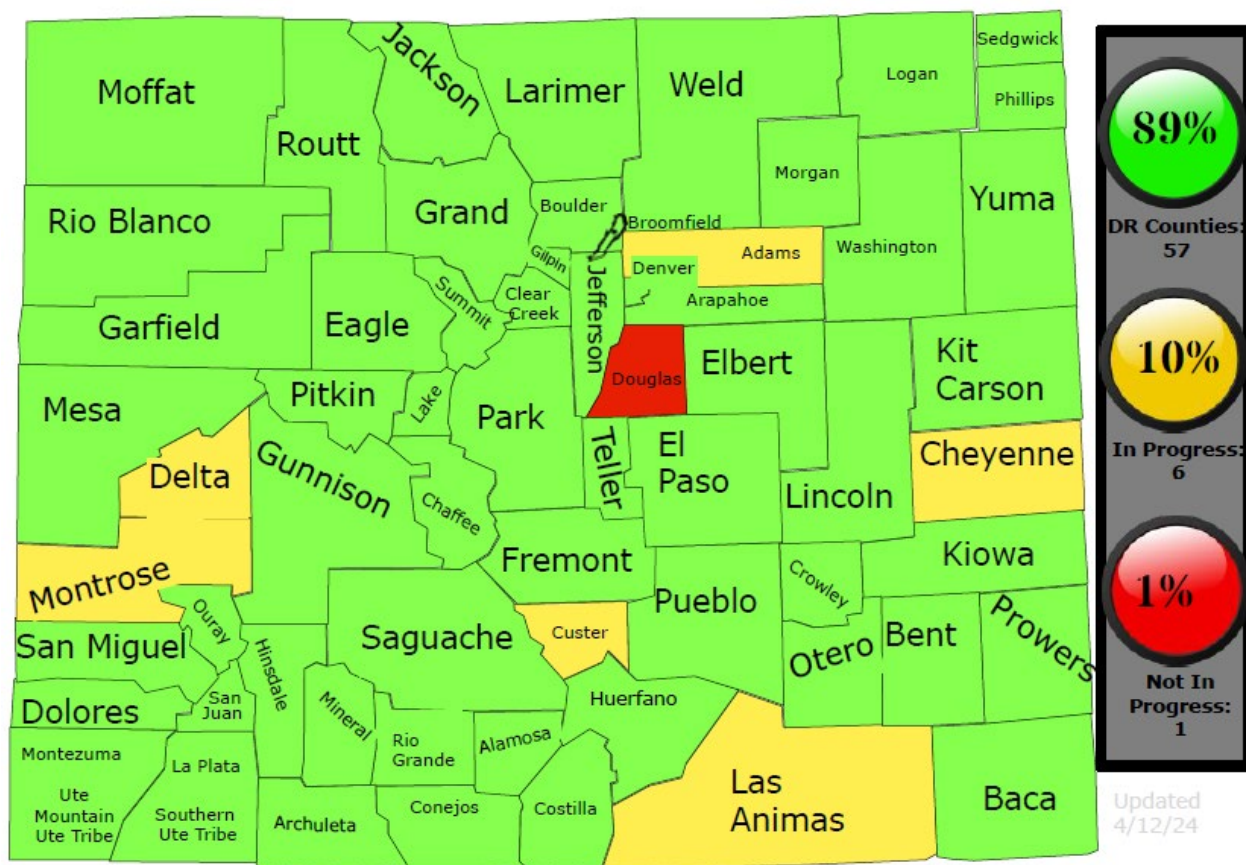


Figure 1: Map of Colorado's DR Implementation Status

DCW's DR specialist has continued periodic outreach to the remaining sole non-DR county. Current and in-progress counties are encouraged to reach out as technical assistance or training needs arise. Each county that participates in DR implementation has a county-specific implementation plan which includes follow up for any newly emerging practice questions.

DCW continues to provide technical assistance to counties and will prioritize completing implementation for the six counties in progress. Each county has been able to voice their preferences for in-person or virtual training and to incorporate and support different learning styles. Efforts will continue toward increasing flexibility, while maintaining the fidelity of the DR Model.

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

DCW has partnered with counties across the state to help design a statistical report in ROM that will aid counties in identifying cases with overdue family engagement meetings and identifying trends in data, including participation rates of key participants, and performance by caseworker/unit/section. The draft report has been created and remains pending development in ROM. DCW continues to work with county partners to develop a quality assurance process for family engagement meetings. See intervention 3.3.4 for more information on the quality assurance process for family engagement meetings.

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.

In 2023, 51.3% of children/youth were placed with a relative as their initial placement. See “Kinship Navigator Funding” in the *MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)* (title IV-B, subpart 2) section of this APSR.

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

DCW continues to conduct 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. As reported in prior APSRs, county departments who used the kinship assessment template¹⁵ or other county-specific tools, had more consistency in completion rates and quality of kinship assessments completed. The form is publicly available for any counties to use, and DCW continues to promote usage of this form to ensure consistent practice statewide, and conducts training and/or technical assistance opportunities on an ad-hoc basis for counties.

¹⁵ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AgkxoOY8-FktSyly61kw6de2-IZYfmP8/edit>

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

Intervention 3.3.1: Coordinate with CIP and Best Practice Court Teams (BPCTs) to develop processes to improve the timeliness of permanency hearings.

CDHS partnered with CIP to obtain court data related to timeliness and permanency. Please see the SANCA updates in the Statewide Information System section of the 2025-2029 CFSP for further details.

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

To comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), the DCW has taken various measures to monitor and increase compliance. DCW's ICWA Specialist holds regular office hours available for all counties and community partners to provide a space with the opportunity to discuss all areas of ICWA. There has been an increase in the number of participants that show up for these ICWA office hours which has increased the opportunity to have further conversations with counties regarding their individual practice with ICWA cases and what support might be needed. The hope in working individually with counties regarding their ICWA practices is to build a coalition of strong subject matter experts across Colorado.

Currently, Colorado does not receive data from Judicial partners informing which American Indian/Alaska Native Families are involved in the Judicial Court System via a Dependency and Neglect (D&N) court case. CDHS is currently reviewing the possibility to request additional court information from judicial partners via the Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Act (SANCA). The purpose of this request is to help better inform the Colorado Child Welfare practice by monitoring active efforts to achieve permanency, Tribal involvement/partnership, and strengthening family engagement of American Indian/Alaska Native families. CDHS' Indian Child Welfare Act Specialist continues to host monthly office hours which allows county and community partners opportunities to meet in a space to discuss outreach efforts to Tribes, community resources available to families, training opportunities, and all other areas of ICWA. CDHS' ICWA Specialist has begun meeting individually with counties to discuss any needs, strengths, and areas for improvement as it pertains to their Child Welfare Practice in ICWA cases.

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

The Kinship Care Rule Rewrite Group continues to meet monthly to work on proposed rule language in alignment with recent legislation. The workgroup has completed the proposed language review, and the rule-making process will be presented at Child Welfare Sub-PAC in August 2024. The revised rules are anticipated to be effective January 2025.

The placement stability pilot concluded in October 2023. Due to capacity constraints, two counties did not remain in the pilot through its conclusion. After the pilot's conclusion, the workgroup reconvened to discuss the pilot and next steps. The discussion focused primarily on two

overarching themes, using the pilot tools with intentionality and broader systemic considerations (including communication gaps within the department that may have led to or contributed to disruptions). An informational memo (IM-CW-2024-0016)¹⁶ was shared with county departments and child placement agencies to provide additional information on lessons learned and considerations for moving forward, as well as making the pilot tools accessible.

The Permanency Services unit at DCW, and Communications have been working with RaiseAChild to implement a pilot with a proposed region. The purpose is to assist with recruitment of foster and adoptive parents who can serve children/youth who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning + (LGBTQ+) as well as children/youth with high mental and/or behavioral health acuity needs. RaiseAChild staff worked with CDHS to engage two counties and two child placement agencies to participate in the pilot. A regional approach was addressed with El Paso County, Pueblo County, Hope and Home, and Kids Crossing. RaiseAChild had several meetings with the participants while they developed a common PPT and information sheet for participants in the monthly orientation/information session that began in April 2024. All four participating agencies facilitated the orientation/information event. A digital and marketing campaign was initiated in March to promote the orientation/information event. RaiseAChild supported the agencies by following up with foster and adoptive parents that wanted to be referred to the agency of choice, and they maintain contact with these individuals while the agency begins the certification process. RaiseAChild also followed up with participants that didn't attend and encouraged them to register for another monthly session. The ongoing support is completed by Family Advocates from RaiseAChild. The pilot is being implemented to determine if there is an impact on the number of individuals that continue through the certification process with the extra support. Further details will be reported in future APSRs.

The Colorado's General Assembly passed Senate Bill 24-008¹⁷ in May 2024, which was also supported by the General Assembly's Interim Committee on Child Welfare. This bill is intended to provide financial assistance and service support to non-certified kinship homes and to authorize the Department to modify rules specific to kinship foster care. It strongly encourages the use of provisional certificates for kinship foster care. Further information on this bill will be reported in future APSRs.

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.

DCW will partner with facilitation leads across the state to develop a quality assurance process for family engagement meetings. This process was designed to provide feedback to counties on the quality of their family engagement meetings from experienced facilitators across the state. Participating county facilitators will receive training hours for reviewing frameworks or observing meetings and providing feedback.

¹⁶ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n7ISpSh0NnUtlvQxXejtUfyt7dmxf1y1/view>

¹⁷ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb24-008>

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 out-of-home (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 continues to decrease from 2.98 in CY 2022 to 2.94 in CY 2023. This measure remains closely tracked in C-STAT, and DCW's permanency specialists review 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.

DCW also reviews youth who have been residing in a residential setting for more than a year, to identify supports that are needed to assist counties in finding an appropriate family or family-like permanency option within their community. These reviews are conducted on a bimonthly/quarterly basis with county participation. The review includes a multidisciplinary discussion to review the casework and services the child or youth has received towards their permanency goals.

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 1.08% in CY 2023. Please see "Permanency Outcome 1" in the Update to the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes section, and the Permanency section in Updates on Service Description for detailed information on how Colorado is ensuring permanency for children/youth.

Colorado continues to examine the factors that impact reentry. Over the last five years, Colorado has made significant efforts to reduce the number of youth entering care, therefore, the youth who do require out of home placements have complex, multi-systemic needs that require targeted interventions over a longer period of time. In 2020, CDHS did a deep dive into reentry concerns, and the top two reasons for reentry were substance abuse and child's behavior. These are topics that are continuously addressed, while working with other systemic partners including BHA and HCPF.

As kinship placements are increasing, DCW is also exploring the impact of kinship certifications on placement data entry. Similar data entry issues are also reported with the Foster Youth in Transition program, with foster youth who voluntarily continue to receive child welfare services up until their twenty-first birthday. The scope and impact of these data entry issues are yet to be determined, however, program managers are conducting manual reviews of the data to identify trends that can be addressed with the counties.

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 2023, the rate of initial placement with relatives (of those entering care) is 51.3%. The increase in initial placement with relatives can be attributed to the Colorado Kinconnected Kinship Navigator Program. For more information, 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.
CDHS continues to promote recruitment processes and communications in alignment with the Family First philosophy that foster parents are supports for families. See Measure of Progress #6 for further details on communication strategies.
6. Develop a communication plan with internal and external stakeholders regarding messaging about the redesign in foster care recruitment processes.
CDHS has continued to employ a variety of strategies in communication efforts for foster care recruitment through the years.

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. Website analytics indicating interest in the Colorado Heart Gallery has remained consistent since 2019. In CY 2023, the Colorado Heart Gallery website was viewed over 64,000 times by visitors who explored more than 278,480 pages and watched 9,007 videos. Additionally, child-specific videos on the Raise the Future website and county websites were viewed 3,734 times.

In CY 2023, 45 youth were photographed and 28 videos were produced for the Colorado Heart Gallery. Additionally, the adoptions of seven children and youth who had been in the Colorado Heart Gallery were finalized, an additional youth of color was placed with a family who had taken guardianship or permanent custody. Additionally, 16 children and youth were placed in a pre-adoptive family, and lastly, an additional seven children were matched with a pre-adoptive family.

Social media and digital advertising continue to be a key awareness tactic for Colorado. In CY 2023, general foster care posts on the Colorado Foster Care Facebook page received over 8,078 unique visitors and had an average monthly page reach of 55,819 and posts on the Colorado Heart Gallery Facebook page received more than 15,000 unique visitors and had an average monthly reach of 11,591.

Similarly, digital campaigns increased impressions by 91% and increased attributed website traffic by 157% year over year. This strategy increased awareness of the need for foster parents in Colorado, especially in the highest-need areas and communities, combined with a targeted campaign for specific audiences is the most effective tool for driving both consideration (website visits) and clicks to the 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.

Since 2018, CDHS has incorporated storytelling into digital advertising campaigns to educate the public about becoming a foster or adoptive parent. Foster care campaigns continue to incorporate short stories, featuring Colorado foster parents from a variety of communities, sharing their different perspectives about their foster parenting. CDHS and select counties have identified LGBTQ+ individuals as important audiences for foster parent recruitment. The digital ads ran from October 2022 to June 2023, and the campaign reached 26,599,106 impressions and 5,735,712 completed video views, which resulted in 199,190 website visits and 1,967 clicks to view the form.

A new digital ad campaign was launched in December 2023 through January 2024 specifically targeted towards Black and Latino communities as well as the general public. Display ads on this campaign received 826,855 impressions. Direct traffic increased by 33.42% during this time compared to the previous period (November 6th - December 17th 2023). Two hundred and thirty seven people completed an inquiry form on CO4Kids.org during this period.

Print and publication banner ads ran April to June 2023. This campaign included advertisements in Out Front Magazine to target the LGBTQ+ community and Urban Spectrum magazine to outreach to the Black community.

The use of photos and stories from current foster and adoptive families is a key element of the recruitment communication strategy. CDHS produced five new family videos in 2023 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 and commitment to foster care, dedication to supporting biological families, and unique story. These five videos received a total of 184,754 views of three seconds or longer from both paid and organic reach.

In March of 2023, a third season of [CO4Kids Live: The Arena](#), a Facebook Live series to discuss emerging issues related to foster care was launched. Leveraging a partnership with Foster Source, three additional episodes aired in March through June of 2023. The third season's episodes focused on therapeutic foster care and discussions with experts about mental health and caring for youth who identify as LGBTQ+. With a modest pre-event and post-show promotion, the three episodes received 255,730 impressions, 21,973 video views of 15 seconds or longer, and 1,207 completed video views. Episode 8, ["What is Therapeutic Foster Care?"](#) aired in March. Episode 9, ["What Foster Parents Need to Know About Mental Health "](#) aired on May 5 during Mental Health Awareness Month.

Episode 10, "[Caring for LGBTQ+ Youth in Foster Care](#)" aired during Pride Month in June. All of these videos had a total of 297 views on Facebook and YouTube.

Community outreach remains an integral part of Colorado's recruitment and retention plan. During CY 2023, CDHS hosted foster care recruitment booths at large in-person community events including the Denver March Powwow, Cinco de Mayo, the Juneteenth Music Festival, Denver PrideFest, and the Pueblo Chile Festival and engaged with diverse communities to raise awareness about the need for foster families. CREA Results (Community + Research + Education + Awareness = Results), a subcontractor of CDHS's marketing agency, joined 43 Latino community events for CO4Kids campaign, providing information about fostering children/youth in Colorado in English and Spanish. Efforts around targeted recruitment of Spanish-speaking and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families were intensified. New tools, such as storytelling videos featuring current foster families sharing their experiences, were employed to dispel misconceptions.

Finally, appreciation is a key element to Colorado's recruitment and retention strategy. CDHS hosted annual celebration events during National Foster Care Month in May to recognize families for their contribution to the community. In May 2024, CDHS held an event at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science to acknowledge five foster families from across the state for their outstanding dedication to supporting children and youth involved in the child welfare system. The families were celebrated with personalized plaques of recognition and a highlight video reel featuring each family. The families and their guests received free admission to the museum before and after the luncheon, and CDHS covered accommodations and travel expenses for out-of-town honorees. Family videos are shared online at CO4Kids.org and Facebook, and are also made available to counties and CPAs. All nominating counties and child placement agencies also received family banners that feature the family they nominated. Three of the families were featured in media outlets in their air including coverage of the event from CBS4. In June 2023, CDHS sponsored the National Reunification Month Event at the Denver Zoo, in partnership with the Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel (ORPC) and OCR. This event brought together reunified families and professionals, and featured the stories of a caseworker and three families who have reunified with their children after a dependency and neglect case. Four families from across the state were honored for National Adoption Month in November 2023 with gift certificates and plaques, and were interviewed by local media outlets as well.

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.

The implementation of House Bill 21-1094¹⁸ has significantly increased access to Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILP), which was formerly known as the ILA. Additionally, the passage of House Bill 22-1038¹⁹ requires that client-directed counsel for youth appointed for children or youth 12 years of age or older provide specialized client-directed legal representation. Since the Foster Youth in Transition program was implemented (as of 2/1/2024), 74% of all youth in that program were placed in SILP's. For more information on House Bill 21-1094 and the Foster Youth in Transition (FYiT) program, please see the *John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (the Chafee Program) (section 477 of the Act)* section of this APSR.

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

DCW continues to participate in the Facility Schools Workgroup. The Colorado legislature passed Senate Bill 23-219²⁰ in 2023 which adopted a baseline funding model for facility schools and required the Workgroup to monitor the implementation of changes to the facility school system that the previous Workgroup recommended. Representatives from DCW, HCPF, the Division of Youth Services (DYS), CDE, Special Education Directors, school districts, licensed facility school providers, parents, and county departments of human/social services are participating in the workgroup.

DCW continues to partner with the 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 House Bill 18-1306²¹.

In 2022, House Bill 22-1374²², the Foster Care Success Act was passed. The bill introduced a mandatory training component for child welfare workers and supervisors as well as Child Welfare

¹⁸ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1094>

¹⁹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1038>

²⁰ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb23-219>

²¹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb18-1306>

²² <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1374>

Education Liaisons (CWEL's) at the school districts. This requirement was added to Title 22 for both school and department of human service staff C.R.S. 22.32.138 (1.5)(a)(II)(B).

CDE and DCW worked together to create the "Educational Rights for Students in Foster Care" training. This training is mandated to be completed every two years after taking the initial course. It launched in June 2023 on the Child Welfare Training System. In September 2023, CDE and DCW co-presented about the new mandate at their Back to School training for all CWEL's in the district. In 2023, DCW released OM-CW-2023-0016²³ informing county staff of the new mandated training stating that the deadline to complete the training is June 30, 2024. DCW, CDE, and the CWTS site are tracking all completed training.

This bill also added mandatory data sharing between CDHS, DCW and CDE. Efforts to create a data-sharing agreement is underway.

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.

House Bill 21-1094²⁴ 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 Request for Applications (RFA) process for SFY 2024 has been completed, and vendors will cover sixteen counties in the state that are not currently covered by the Chafee program. The advisory board and CDHS will continue to work on the application and funding process to prepare for the next round of funding beginning in SFY 2025 and work to ensure services are available for eligible youth throughout the state of Colorado.

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.

See Measure of Progress 1 for completion rate of RTS plans for all eligible youth. Mandatory reviews are conducted to ensure RTS plans are in place for all youth involved with FYIT. 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. In 2023, DCW started offering in person technical assistance that includes the RTS and the importance it plays in youth being prepared to transition to adulthood.

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

As part of the implementation of House Bill 21-1094, judicial review of the ETP is required in FYIT cases prior to discharge, as well as in dependency and neglect cases, and has been codified in 19-7-310(1), 19-7-313(1)(a), and 19-3-705(4)(a); C.R.S. A [bench card](#) was developed for

²³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1e5ejilyRY6Xb2CEaklqBX6dHRx0M8sMA/view>

²⁴ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1094>

magistrates and judges who are supervising and providing judicial review for these cases. The judicial requirement for review of these plans have ensured that ETPs were completed prior to the youth existing care, and that they meet all statutory and regulatory requirements. Colorado will begin to include ETPs completed early as part of the completion compliance measure.

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

Youth Awareness Week (September 1-15) had youth led, youth engagement activities/learning opportunities. In addition, youth participated as part of a panel for a Town Hall targeting professionals. The youth engagement committee was co-facilitated by youth. Turnover proved to be a challenge as those who were in this role changed. The Colorado Youth Leadership Network (COYLN) met in January 2024 to begin planning for the 2024 Youth Awareness Week.

During Youth Awareness Week, youth participate in youth engagement and professional development workgroups, and as panelists during a youth-moderated town hall. DCW is planning the fourth Youth Awareness Week in September 2024, and has ensured that youth are involved in youth engagement workgroups, including planning for another statewide town hall panel. CWTS has also created a family voice initiative to consult with families and youth during training development. DCW is working to fill a vacant position in the Training Steering Committee with a youth or family voice.

Measures of Progress for Goal 4

1. By 2024, 90% of all youth in OOH care and age 14 and older will have a RTS completed in Trails. These counts will not include youth in DYS.
In CY 2023, 84.53% of youth in OOH care and age 14 or older had a RTS completed in Trails. DCW continues to work with counties on the importance of the completion of the Roadmap to Success and the role it plays within a youth's preparedness for a successful transition to adulthood as well as playing a key role in the engagement of the youth. DCW has resumed the provision of in person technical assistance, and the youth services unit has integrated this into every technical assistance delivery.
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 percentage of youth whose last placement was a residential facility, foster care, or runaway. These counts will not include youth in DYS.
In CY 2023, 22.8% of youth emancipated from OOH care whose last placement was an ILA. With the implementation of FYiT, the report that this is pulling from is not reflective of the transitions through the FYiT program. DCW is continuing with efforts to refine the data so that it accurately reflects the percentage of emancipating youth from OOH care whose last placement was an ILA.

Additionally, DCW is regularly providing technical assistance to county agencies to ensure that there is consistent and accurate offering of an ILA to each eligible youth. DCW has

issued operational memorandums to clarify the housing first expectation for the FYiT program. These efforts support the continuous expansive use of an ILA to ensure safe, stable, and affordable housing for youth as needed.

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 2023, 40% of youth emancipating from OOH care and the FYiT program had timely transition plans completed during the 90 days prior to emancipation. The Foster Youth in Transition program requires that courts review the Emancipation Transition Plan with all youth who are transitioning from foster care to adulthood after they reach the age of 18, but only includes youth who are involved through the Dependency and Neglect courts. This continues to be a topic in technical assistance provided to counties and is included as a topic within all older youth training sessions including “A Future of Their Own: Essentials for Engaging Youth”, “On Their Own But Not Alone: Supporting Youth Transitioning to Adulthood”, and “Introduction to Foster Youth in Transition Program”. Because the measure lags the youth’s time in care, efforts to improve this measure have been focused on training and technical assistance. For the purposes of technical assistance, DCW has identified specific areas of focus including, but not limited to, ensuring that individual system users are aware of how to enter information accurately, reminding counties of the requirements for timely and accurate ETP completion, as well as the importance of continuous active youth engagement. In addition, DCW will remind counties of documentation requirements for the ETP within the case record, and support the provision of copies to the youth every time, as well as to the court for transition hearings when a youth is emancipating from a traditional foster care case.

DCW continues to make efforts to connect counties and youth to wider programming and resources such as the new Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood State Grant Program, Chafee, and Medicaid for Former Foster Youth. DCW recognizes the need for stability and sustainability of housing that must be explored through the active engagement with youth to complete a RTS and eventually ETP prior to the youth exiting foster care.

4. Increase the five-year high school graduation rate for youth in OOH care from 29.6% (SFY 2017-2018) to 40%. These counts will not include youth in DYS.

The five-year high school graduation rate for youth in OOH care for SFY 2022-2023 is 35.9%, and the five-year high school completion rate for youth in OOH care was 43%. Both the graduation rate and the completion rate decreased from the prior year. However, the cohort size for SFY 2021-2022 is 739 students whereas the cohort size for SFY 2022-2023 is 607 students which may account for the decrease. In addition, the four-year high school graduation rate increased for youth in OOH care for SFY 2022-2023, which in turn decreased the cohort size for the five-year graduation rate.

House Bill 23-1089²⁵ was passed in April 2023, and required CDHS to organize a workgroup in collaboration with other state agencies, to identify and address issues related to foster youth education, transportation, and stability. The workgroup will provide written recommendations to the general assembly before the 2025 regular legislative session. On September 6, 2023, the first workgroup was held. Members included representatives from the CDE, county departments of human and social services, representatives from the special education directors, and other appropriate school district representatives. Each meeting has time allotted for public comment. Throughout the meetings the group has decided to focus on the following six barriers: Best Interest Determination (BID) Meetings, School Stability in relation to professionals involved, Transportation, Educational Disciplinary Practices, Special Education, and Facility Schools.

²⁵ https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2023a_1089_signed.pdf

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 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. The team has created a form for new referrals and has opened to the entire division for to address these referrals. The team is also working on adapting the original training to meet the needs of new county intermediaries and other DCW staff who need training. DCW will be working on training for DCW leadership and expand referrals to include counties on performance action plans.

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.

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 DCW to enhance policies and practice expectations designed to improve outcomes for children and families.

The ARD currently conducts reviews of the following populations:

Administrative/Periodic Reviews

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

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

- 45 CFR 1357.15 (u)²⁸, which requires a quality assurance system that regularly assesses the quality of services provided under the CFSP, and
- Section 475 (5) of the Social Security Act²⁹, which requires the case review system to assure:
 - Each child has a case plan designed to achieve placement in a safe setting and it is the least restrictive and most appropriate setting available in close proximity to the parents' home, and meets the best interest and needs of the child,
 - Further assure:
 - The safety of the child,
 - The continuing necessity for and appropriateness of placement,
 - Extent of compliance with the case plan,
 - Extent of progress made toward alleviating/mitigating the causes necessitating placement in foster care,
 - Opportunities for the child/youth to engage in age and/or developmentally appropriate activities,
 - Procedural safeguards are applied specific to permanency hearings, filing petitions for the TPR, changes in placements, removal of the child from the home, etc.,
 - Health and education records are in the case file, and any identified services required for the health or education of the child are being provided,
 - When a child has been in care for 15 of the 22 past months, a petition for TPR has been filed, or a compelling reason exists for not filing,
 - Appropriate independent living and transition plans and services are in place for older youth,
 - Credit reporting checks are conducted for older youth, and,
 - The status of each child is reviewed no less frequently than once every six months.
- Section 475 (6) of the Social Security Act³⁰, which defines an "administrative review" as a review that is open to the participation of the parents of the child, and is conducted by an individual not responsible for the case management or delivery of services to the child or parents.

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

- In place in the jurisdictions within the State where services included in the CFSP are provided.
 - The ARD conducts administrative, qualitative, case reviews of children and youth placed into foster care in all 64 of Colorado's counties. Additionally, the ARD conducts these reviews for youth placed into the Department's custody with the DYS.
- Able to evaluate the adequacy and quality of services provided under the CFSP.
 - The ARD's instrument has a series of questions designed to review the adequacy of the services included in the case plan, as well as those that are being provided to each child/youth and their family, specific to their permanency goal(s).

- Able to identify strengths and needs of the service delivery system it evaluates.
 - The ARD's instrument is designed with a response set that allows for the identification of both case specific and systemic strengths and barriers to meeting the needs of Colorado's children/youth and families. Specifically, the response set items identified as within a county departments' direct influence (e.g., making a referral for mental health services) as well as those that are broader, systemic issues (e.g., families not receiving mental health services due to Medicaid issues).
- Providing reports to agency administration on the quality of services evaluated and areas of needed improvement.
 - The ARD's case review instrument, implemented within Trails, allows for the creation and dissemination of routine aggregate reports (e.g., quarterly performance reports), as well as more advanced, ad-hoc analysis. Because the case review instrument exists within the CCWIS system, it allows for advanced statistical analysis of specific case practice factors that may be related to a child/youth's safety, permanency, and well-being.
- Evaluating measures implemented to address identified problems.
 - The ARD's case review instrument consists of questions that have remained stable over time, as well as ad-hoc questions. For areas of case practice where expectations do not experience frequent change, these stable questions allow for trend analysis sensitive to how other systems-level changes impact practice in these areas. Ad-hoc questions are often added to the instrument when new practice expectations are implemented. This creates an immediate feedback loop that informs early implementation efforts and allows for any necessary adjustments to be made in a more responsive and timely manner.

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

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

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

Foster Home Certification Reviews

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

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

Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) Reviews

As part of Family First implementation, the responsibility for reviewing the ongoing necessity and appropriateness of QRTP placements was added to the ARD. These reviews started during CY 2021. The QRTP Placement Review instrument is in the Trails system, so data from the reviews is stored directly in Colorado’s CCWIS. Within child welfare, the courts will always conduct the first QRTP review. Subsequent reviews, contingent on the request and desire of the case participants, can then be conducted by the ARD. For DYS, the ARD conducts all QRTP reviews. In Colorado, review of the ongoing appropriateness of QRTP placements occurs every 90 days.

Institutional Abuse Screen-Out Reviews

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

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

Hotline Reviews

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

Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT)

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

CFSR Round 3 Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

The ARD was responsible for the completion of the measurement methodology for Colorado's Round 3 CFSR PIP. The CFSR PIP reviews were concluded in September 2023, with Colorado successfully meeting all of the state's performance measurement goals that were measured on the OSRI. This included conducting 65 reviews across six counties and the DYS every six months. While the ARD used the federal OSRI as a measurement tool throughout the duration of Colorado's PIP, due to the lack of generalizability of the findings, it is not used as part of Colorado's routine CQI/Quality Assurance system. However, information from the other qualitative case review processes, administrative/quantitative data, and stakeholder feedback groups are used to provide more in-depth and generalizable information as to Colorado's statewide performance across the CFSR Items.

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

Use of Qualitative Case Review Data

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

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

Child Welfare Quality Assurance Updates

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

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

However, remote/virtual reviews also limit the ability to review crucial documentation in the hard copy file, which is needed to conduct a thorough review of the case record. This includes health and educational records of children, service provider reports, signed court orders, ICWA notification, and other documentation. To balance the benefits of the remote/review process with the need to verify specific documentation, the ARD implemented a hybrid review model in November 2022. In the hybrid review model, reviews alternate between in-county reviews and remote/virtual reviews, beginning with an in-county initial case review upon the child's first six months in out-of-home placement. Approximately 70% of administrative reviews are held in-county and approximately 30% of administrative reviews are held remotely/virtually.

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

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

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

Screen Out Reviews

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

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. Colorado’s CCWIS system requires the county department to identify whether a child/youth that was removed had previously been adopted. However, an additional field capturing inter-country adoptions is not mandatory and as a result, CDHS does not have accurate data on children/youth who were adopted through the intercountry adoption process. 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.

In 2022, CDHS implemented a data system to track records for adoptions completed through the county departments of social services, as well as closed child placement agencies. This new system will ensure more timely research and access to adoption records for those allowed to receive them under state statute. As of writing this report, CDHS has two contracted staff digitizing paper adoption records back to the year 1890 to be included in this database and hopes to have all private and international adoption records digitized by the end of fiscal year 2023-2024. Please see the 2025-2029 CFSP for further information.

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 21 of Colorado's highest-risk counties: Adams, Alamosa, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Denver, Dolores, El Paso, Fremont, Huerfano, Las Animas, Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose, Morgan, Otero, Prowers, Pueblo, Saguache, and Teller. These counties were selected based on a 2021 state solicitation process and Colorado MIECHV's 2020 needs assessment, identifying "at-risk communities" by the following indicators:

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

Colorado MIECHV provides a continuum of home visiting programs with the goal of ensuring that all vulnerable families can find a program that fits their needs and eligibility. Programs include Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), and Parents as Teachers (PAT). Together, they serve families from the prenatal stage to kindergarten entry. The programs are administered by 16 local implementing agencies, and the

following table provides information about the geographic distribution of the programs and their approximate caseloads.

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

Table 1: Number of counties where MIECHV programs are available and have funded caseloads in FFY 2022-2023

*Includes caseload funding from the American Rescue Plan Act

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

HealthySteps

The Home Visiting for School Readiness line in the Colorado Budget currently supports the implementation of HealthySteps, an evidence-based program housed in pediatric offices. It pairs a HealthySteps Specialist with families who request it during their well-child visits in the first three years of their child's life. The program is voluntary but all families in a practice have access to a professional with expertise in child development and early childhood mental health, in addition to the pediatrician. Families have access to a range of supports which include routine screenings, brief behavioral consultation over a few visits, or ongoing team-based well-child visits depending on the family's needs. This state funding supports the program in eight clinics, including three at Children's Hospital Colorado. The program has demonstrated an increase in a caregiver's activities to build early literacy skills. Mothers who have participated in HealthySteps are 22% more likely than those who have not participated in the intervention to show picture books to their infants every day. National research found that for every \$1 invested in HealthySteps, an estimated \$2.63 in savings is realized by state Medicaid agencies each year. The CDEC contracts with Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) as the state intermediary for HealthySteps. As the state intermediary, ABCD provides training and technical assistance to HealthySteps providers, data collection, continuous quality improvement, and monitor model fidelity.

Colorado Nurse Home Visitor Program

The Colorado Nurse Home Visitor Program, NFP, provides state funding for home visiting services to first-time, low-income parents in all 64 counties in Colorado. NFP is a relationship-based program that partners highly trained professional nurses with vulnerable first-time mothers and their babies. It is an evidence-based voluntary program that shows significant improvement in the health and lives of families experiencing overlapping and concentrated barriers. Eligibility requirements include voluntary participation, being a first-time mother, living below 200% of the federal poverty level at intake, and enrollment in the program no later than 30 days post-partum. Mothers who enroll in the program receive one-on-one home visits with a nurse home visitor

throughout pregnancy until the child's second birthday. The NFP program is currently administered by 22 agencies across the state, including public health departments, community health centers, community nursing agencies, and hospital systems. This program is managed by a four-part team that includes the CDEC, the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus College of Nursing, the NFP National Service Office, and Invest in Kids. This team, known as the Colorado NFP Coordination Team, meets quarterly to review implementation data from all 22 sites, monitor program improvement plans, and discuss trends.

In SFY 2023, the Nurse Home Visitor Program served approximately 3,545 families, and in SFY 2024, the program is expected to serve a similar number of families. NFP always serves more than the funded caseload because the clients do not stay the same throughout the year as they graduate or leave the program and new clients are enrolled. NFP's funding cycle is based on the state fiscal year; therefore, NFP data reflects the period of July 1st through June 30th of each year.

SafeCare® Colorado (SCC)

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

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

Eligible families include:

- Families with children ages five and under.
- Families that reside in one of the 40 counties or a tribal nation currently being served.
- Families who meet certain high-risk eligibility criteria.
- Families with non-court-involved child welfare cases.

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

The SCC program is funded and managed through the CDEC and is currently implemented by the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect (the Kempe Center). The program is supported by the National SafeCare® Training and Research Center (NSTRC) at Georgia State University. NSTRC, in collaboration with the Kempe Center and CDEC, oversees the implementation and fidelity of this manualized, structured home visiting program. SCC is evaluated by the Social Work Research Center (SWRC) at Colorado State University (CSU).

The SFY 2023 appropriation for SCC programming is \$5,218,189. Sites are selected through competitive procurement solicitations. The most recent five-year grant cycle started July 1, 2021. In SFY 2023, 14 sites provided SCC programming to residents of 40 Colorado counties. SCC providers provided 10,745 visits, to 876 participants, and completed 1,199 topics.

SafeCare Colorado Service Areas by County (FY 2022)

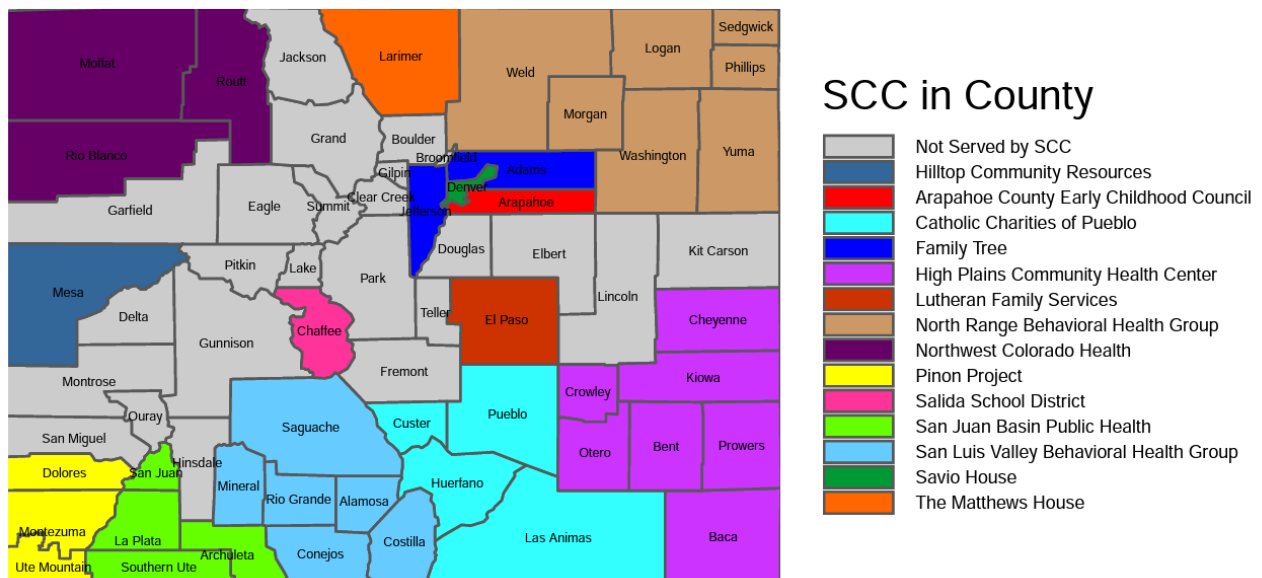


Figure 2: SafeCare Colorado Service Areas by County

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

The PSSF program in Colorado is managed through the CDEC. The funding enables local community agencies and County Departments of Social/Human Services to provide services to families that focus on the following objectives:

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

- Support preservation efforts for families in crisis who have children at risk for maltreatment or re-abuse.

PSSF aims to serve families through four service areas: family support, family preservation, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services. PSSF grants are currently awarded through five-year contracts, and grantees have completed the third year of the five years. Services within each program have not changed apart from shifting slightly to address staff vacancies and capacity challenges in programs.

Colorado PSSF sites include local government agencies, private non-profit or not-for-profit community-based organizations, or tribal nations, with a focus on child safety, permanency, or child well-being.

There are 22 PSSF contracted sites, and those sites serve 35 counties across Colorado. Sites include rural, frontier, and urban communities. The dispersed locations of PSSF sites allow for widespread access to PSSF services. The Family Strengthening Unit within the CDEC has family support programs that cover most of Colorado.

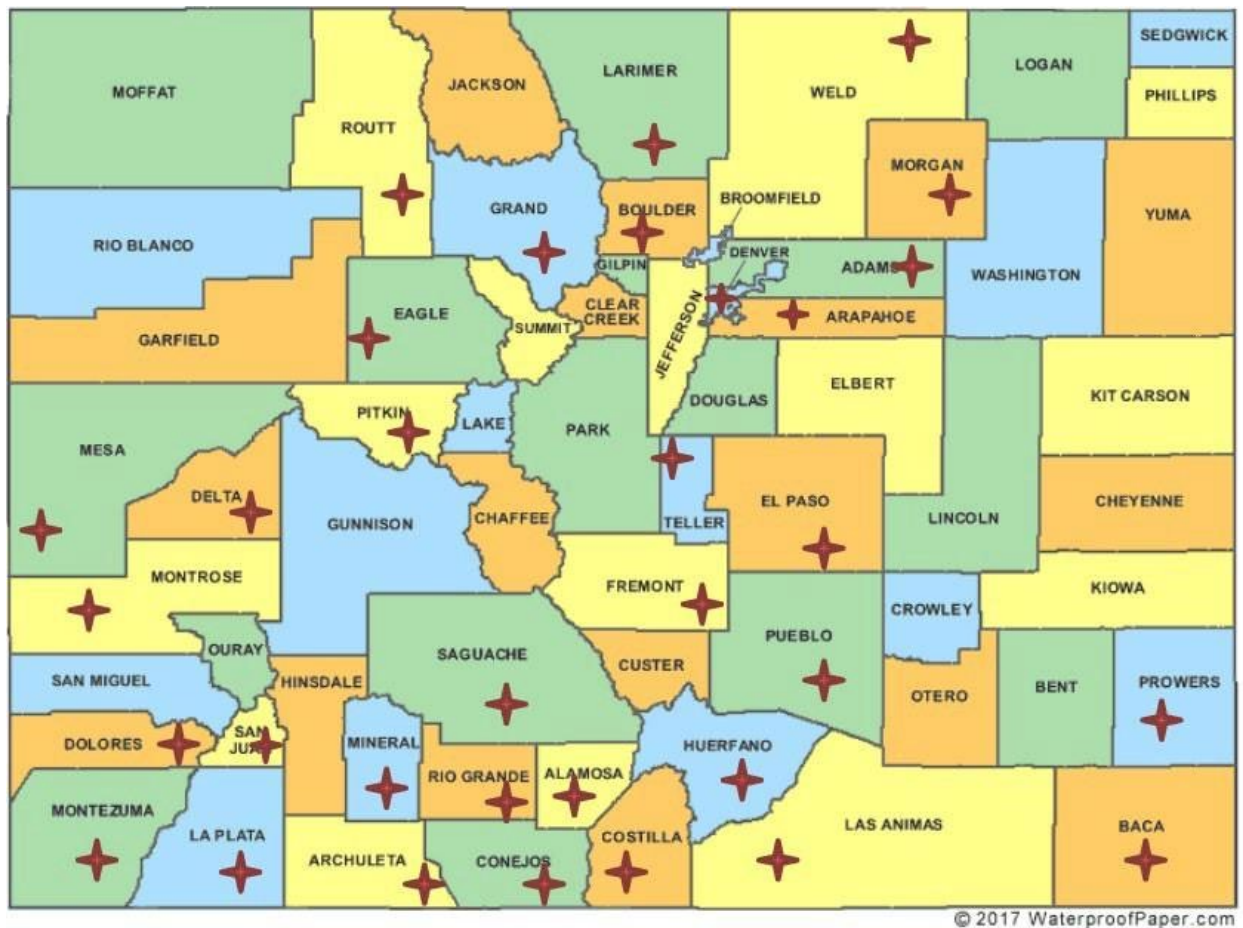


Figure 3: PSSF Counties Served through 5-year contracts

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

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

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

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

Service Priority	Model(s) Allowed	Service Population/Category: (service areas: FS-Family Support, FP-Family Preservation, R-Reunification, A- Adoption)
Intensive Family Case Management	<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	Must identify the model to be used. Family Team Conferencing; Family Group Decision Making; Permanency Teaming, etc.	FP, R, A
Incredible Years Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent Group 2. Dinosaur School 	FS, FP, R,A
Parenting Education Models	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nurturing Parents/teen module 2. Parents as Teachers 3. Child First 	FS, FP, R, A
Fatherhood Programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adoption Navigator 2. PSSF Adoption/Post Permanency/Kinship Guidelines 3. Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) 4. National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) 	FP, R, A
Kinship Navigation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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
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Table 2: PSSF Service Priorities

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

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

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

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

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

In FFY 2023, Colorado PSSF programs served 1397 individuals in 1204 families. 1753 services were delivered in total, and the PSSF service areas breakdown is as follows:

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

Table 3: PSSF Service Area Breakdown

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

Table 4: PSSF Service Priority Breakdown

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

Agency	Service Provided	# of Services	# of unique families	Service Target Area
Safe Families For Children	Crisis Respite Care and one time tangible needs	132 separate instances of respite care for families	28 (not unique, not tracked)	50% Family Support; 50% Family Preservation
Lutheran Family Services	Crisis Respite	9067 hours of respite care provided	151	Mostly Family Preservation, but some in all four service areas
Denver Indian Family Resource Center (DIFRC)	Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP)	90 separate instances of services.	10 Adults in NPP; 80 Adults for general family support services	Mostly Family Reunification; some Family Preservation

Table 5: Agencies using other data systems to track PSSF services provided to families

Community Based Services

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

Service Area Targeted Populations

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

Training and Conferences

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

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

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

- CQI
- Family Engagement
- Motivational Interviewing
- Economic Well Being
- Salesforce data system

- TBRI®
- Nurturing Fathers
- Nurturing Parenting
- Reflective Supervision
- Responding to solicitation

Kinship Navigator Funding

Colorado Kinnected was submitted to the Prevention Services Clearinghouse for review and rating in Spring 2022. Kinnected was rated as promising in Winter 2022 and was approved for Title IV-E reimbursement in Spring 2023. With a sustainable outcome six months post placement closure, Kinnected was submitted for a re-review for a potentially higher rating of “supported” in Winter 2023, and was rated as “supported” in March 2024. A statewide implementation kick-off event was held in September 2023, with more than 20 counties in attendance. Currently, there are four counties fully implementing Kinnected, with several other counties anticipating implementation in 2024.

The Kinnected model is a three-pronged approach, combining family search and engagement, family engagement meetings and kinship supports. This is a relationship-based model and focuses on identifying the family’s natural support network. If the family does not have an identified support network, the goal is to assist them in building one. The kinship navigator meets with the kinship caregiver monthly for the first ninety days and moves to quarterly contact, or more frequently if the family requests it. The kinship navigator completes a needs assessment with the kinship family. Based on the results of the needs assessment, they may assist with benefits navigation, hard goods assistance, attendance at meetings, etc. Additional methods for providing information about supports and services available include a one-page resource sheet, the Colorado Kinship Connection website and Facebook.

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 ages²⁶. 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.

Colorado’s Use of the Monthly Caseworker Visit (MCV) Grant

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

In FFY 2023, grant funding opportunities through MCV to increase the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children and youth in OOH care and to promote workforce retention were not utilized by counties. Several counties reached out for information about the grant process but no completed applications were received. Turnover remains high across the state of Colorado and

²⁶ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_ty9U5p6Pz9L_HY50bvFhb6vVj2lXq3P/view

counties continue to struggle with hiring. There was an increase in requests for secondary trauma services to county casework staff and we were able to award funding to a new provider in this arena. MCV funds are blended and braided with other funding sources to ensure services are delivered to county partners as effectively as possible. The following table highlights several organizations that had received MCV Grant funds for FFY 2023:

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

Table 6: MCV awards and expenditures

Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments

The ACYF's Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments program awards eligible states or other Title IV-E agencies with incentive funds, which are used to improve performance in finding permanent homes for children and youth in foster care. Colorado was awarded \$281,500 in FFY 2021, \$1,214,500 in FFY 2022, and \$703,000 in FFY 2023. These funds are used according to the plan outlined in the CFSP which includes post-permanency services and permanency recruitment activities. In addition to incentive funding money, Colorado earned \$937,965 in FFY 2021, \$1,000,755 in FFY 2022, and \$1,147,491 in FFY 2023 through adoption savings. For SFY 2023-2024 the Colorado legislature authorized \$1,564,378 of spending authority for adoption savings. CDHS used the Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive and Adoption Savings funds to contract with Resultant to create an automated Adoption Assistance Negotiation Worksheet, spending \$11,565. The worksheet was created to ensure that all families and eligible children and youth have equal access to consistent information, guidance, and practices and to ensure that the needs of

each child or youth receive consistent consideration, regardless of the county that is administering adoption assistance benefits. This worksheet is required to be used with adoptive families in all adoption assistance negotiations and renegotiations and in correlation with the adoption assistance agreement. The worksheet is also being used by some county departments for negotiation of the Relative Guardianship Assistance Agreement, but it is not required.

Post Permanency Services and Supports (PPSS)

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

Below are examples of specific activities that were completed through FFY 2023:

- Trauma-informed/evidence-informed Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) training for families and professionals.
 - 58 TBRI® classes were provided
 - 521 instances of attendance at a TBRI® class (*If one individual attended 4 classes, they were counted 4 times). It contains duplicated counts
 - As Raise the Future came out of the pandemic during this reporting period, they began offering more in-person classes than in the previous year. They found a blend of preferences with some wanting virtual and others wanting live options. They anticipate maintaining some level of virtual support while also providing in-person classes in the regions where the demand is present.
- In-home coaching to assist TBRI®-trained families in successfully implementing the parenting model was offered in all rural counties once TBRI® training was completed by families. 512.75 hours of coaching were provided to 49 unduplicated families. The individualized coaching has been well received by families.
- Regional implementation and connection groups provided ongoing support, learning opportunities, and natural points of connection for families.
 - Raise the Future provided 3 groups in October 2022, that served 26 adults and 28 children and youth (unduplicated).
 - This prong of service was impacted by funding limitations and was not available following the initial month of the reporting period.
- 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.
 - This prong of service was impacted by funding limitations and was not available during this reporting period.

Per information from Raise the Future, of the families that completed surveys related to the effectiveness of services, 100% reported experiencing positive change in their homes. They continue to see the needs of families growing and work to support them in the ways that they are able. Throughout this reporting period, they reported the needs of adolescents increased, and thereby their caregivers.

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 2024 according to the plan outlined in the CFSP, but again with a special focus on increasing permanency and post-permanency support.

Expenditures do and may include:

- Provision of post-permanency supports and services statewide; and
- Training to county child welfare staff regarding how to provide post-permanency support for families in their jurisdictions, what existing resources are available statewide and within their jurisdictions and how to support the development of post-permanency programs in their local communities. DCW staff continues to provide information about PPSS to counties. Counties are encouraged to provide information about PPSS for families that are achieving permanency through adoption, guardianship, and other forms of legal permanency (legal custody and reunification)
- DCW began a one-year contract with an independent contractor on July 1, 2023, to assist with adoption assistance reviews and private adoption applications to ensure timeliness and quality of oversight amongst adoption practice. The maximum allotment is \$18,000.
- DCW also contracted with an independent contractor to complete training for the Adoption Assistance Negotiation Worksheet. There were nine in-person training sessions offered, as well as three virtual training sessions. The training was also recorded and is available via the Child Welfare Training system or the CDHS Adoption page. The total expenditure was \$9,997.90.
- DCW also contracted with an independent contractor to assist in transforming adoption forms and foster care forms into fillable documents, as well as translating them to Spanish. This allowed county departments and families to have easier access to current forms. The total expenditure was \$14,000.

Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)

CDHS continues to have a membership with ICAMA and serves on the Association of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (AAICAMA) board. 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 state funds.

Voice for Adoption

CDHS continues to have a membership with the Voice for Adoptions organization and serves on their board. This organization is a bipartisan task force that provides accurate information on national adoption issues, common problems facing children/youth who are awaiting adoption, and advocacy for policies that support adoption. Voice for Adoption costs \$1,500 annually and is paid through 2023. This item is funded through state funds.

Additional Services Information

Child Protective Services

Differential Response

Please see Intervention 3.1.1 in the *Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes* section of this APSR.

Safety and Risk Assessments

In 2023, Colorado continued to ensure the supplemental documents created for use with the Safety and Risk Assessment Tools were available and being accessed and utilized throughout the state. These supplemental documents were created in response to feedback gathered from supervisors and caseworkers regarding the Safety and Risk Assessment tools as part of Colorado's Program Improvement Plan, which was completed in fall 2023. Colorado provided technical assistance and practice guidance to individual counties as well as targeted county-specific training regarding the Safety and Risk Assessment Tools and supplemental documents that are available to assist caseworkers and supervisors.

In 2023, there were additional formal safety and risk learning opportunities including an ECHO training series available for supervisors and caseworkers throughout Colorado and were widely attended with good participation and positive feedback. These 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 and will continue to be offered in 2024.

Institutional Assessment

Colorado promulgated institutional referral and assessment administrative rule revisions in January 2024.

The revisions included a newly created definition for institutional medical neglect and further clarified the population included in institutional abuse and neglect assessments as well as the jurisdiction required to complete the assessment. The need for revisions were brought forth by a medical service provider for out-of-home placements.

Colorado continues to explore responsive collaborations with stakeholders when developing potential revisions to practice requirements. By being responsive Colorado will positively impact the ability for children, youth and young adults to access higher levels of services for individuals experiencing out of home care.

Human Trafficking

DCW's Human Trafficking (HT) and Sexual Abuse (SA) Specialist has continued to participate in the Colorado Human Trafficking Council's Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Working Group as part

of the Division of Criminal Justice-Colorado Department of Public Safety Improving Outcomes Grant, Connecting Colorado: Building Effective Anti-Trafficking Systems. This grant is housed under the Colorado Human Trafficking Council and is inclusive of working group members with diverse roles and expertise, with the goal of developing a tool kit for use across the state to promote collaborative efforts in the form of a MDT to address Human Trafficking. The grant holders have also established and hired survivor consultants to collaborate and provide perspective on the toolkit as it is developed. As a participant in the workgroup, DCW's HT and SA Specialist has and will continue to provide the Child welfare perspective to these discussions and toolkit, and support in the collaborative efforts in addressing human trafficking in the state. This work group is anticipating piloting the toolkit for existing MDTs starting in the calendar year 2024, engaging in CQI for the toolkit, with the ultimate goal of rolling it out to newly forming MDTs across the state.

In 2023 the Colorado Child Welfare Sub-Policy Advisory Committee authorized the reformation of a time limited work group, the Human Trafficking Task Group, during 2023. This group is inclusive of stakeholders from county departments of human or social services, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), ARD, Colorado Department of Criminal Justice, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), as well as additional areas of the CDHS. Historically, the Human Trafficking Task Group (HTTG) has been the designated group tasked to engage with stakeholders, and make recommendations regarding the child welfare response to human trafficking in Colorado. The group's current goals are to review the Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022 (TVPPRA), explore its implications for child welfare, and ensure Colorado's rules are in alignment with Federal law. This group began meeting during 2023, and anticipated putting forth recommendations related to rule and practice during 2024. A product from the CHTC's MDT Toolkit work group was an updated High Risk Victim (HRV) tool, which the HTTG will also be reviewing and considering for adopting into practice as the universally used human trafficking screen for all counties of human services and that is used by the DYS.

CDHS continues to monitor state and federal child welfare requirements related to human trafficking, including completion of the HRV identification tool and reporting to law enforcement partners as is legislatively required. Additionally, ongoing monitoring related to the National Advisory Committee's Report on the Sex Trafficking of Youth and Children recommendations specific to Child Welfare and collaboration with stakeholders in those recommendations.

CDHS and the CWTS does currently offer a web-based training for Child Welfare staff on human trafficking. CDHS and the HT and SA Specialist is working to continue building connections for increased and enhanced training for staff across the state in partnership with inhouse experts, as well as valued community partners with expertise in human trafficking across Colorado. The HT and SA Specialist has also partnered with the Provider Services Unit who has an in-process project building out a professional staff academy, specifically to consult and provide training on human trafficking to individuals. This project is underway in 2024.

Plans of Safe Care and Substance Exposed Newborns

Please see the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) report, located in Appendix A.

Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Grants

The CDHS continues to use Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Fund grants to support the state's Family First implementation efforts, and to increase the ability to serve in-home open child welfare cases in adherence to the candidacy definition in Colorado's Family First Prevention Plan, approved by the ACYF. These funds have been used in the form of county/regional grants and directly by the state to accomplish these goals and are critical to building and expanding the capacity of the state's services array and placement continuum. CDHS continues to work with a diverse member group that reviews the funding proposals guided by the priority funding categories adopted for Family First transition funds. As CDHS integrates more family voices into our implementation work across policies and programs, these efforts apply to the transition funds group membership as well.

With the approval of Colorado's Family First Prevention Plan, Colorado will continue to expand and stand up the approved evidence-based prevention services statewide. The following three priority funding categories for Family First transition funds remain the same including:

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 include high-quality QRTPs as well as sufficient options for lower levels of family-based care.

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 Family First implementation.

The fourth round of RFA closed on March 3, 2023, and focused on priority funding area 1. There were 7 applications and six were funded for a total of \$648,471.92:

- Colorado Coalition for the Homeless - \$48,318.00
- Griffith Centers - \$45,964.00
- Jefferson County Public Health - \$136,114.00
- JusticeWorks Colorado, LLC - \$214,275.92

- Savio House - \$102,612.00
- University of Colorado Denver - \$101,188.00.

The characteristics for families and children served by the awardees of Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Fund grants have aligned with Family First eligibility. Families and children served either qualify for in-home prevention services or licensed residential care. For in-home prevention services, the characteristics of children served relate to their risk level and need for substance use treatment and/or mental health services. For caregivers, characteristics relate to their risk level, as well as their need for parenting skills education, substance use treatment, mental health services, and/or support navigating community-based supports to enhance their ability to ensure the safety, well-being, and permanency of their child/youth. For children in need of licensed residential care (i.e. out-of-home placement), characteristics relate to their risk level, as well as the acuity level of their behavioral health needs.

The most recent RFA round five closed on February 27, 2024, and focuses on all three priority funding areas. 19 applications were received, and at the time of writing this APSR, are in the process of being reviewed.

The transition funds have also been used to purchase a new web domain which will better support the Family First website content and make it easier to update as needed. This website revision project included the services of a graphic designer who assisted with reviewing, consolidating, and improving ease of access to Family First information for the public. The new website will include improved navigation features and a dynamic residential bed tracker.

As RFA round five has not concluded at the time of writing this APSR, further details on the RFA round five will be reported in future APSRs.

Family First Transition Act Funding Certainty Grants

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

John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (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 2023, 41 counties and tribes had access to the Chafee program services and in FFY 2024, the same 41 counties were served through Chafee funding. In addition, 16 additional counties will be covered by four organizations that applied for the Colorado Foster Youth to Successful Transition to Adulthood state grant program (State Grant Program).

In FFY 2023, 779 youth were served through the Chafee program which is slightly down from the 833 that were served in FFY 2022. The expanded eligibility through the waivers of Division X have expired, which reflects in the number of youths served decreasing, 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. Like 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.

At the end of every fiscal year Chafee Programs complete an annual Chafee report where they report youth served, successes of the program and room for growth. This is also an opportunity for agencies to request feedback from youth. Several youths from a Chafee program shared a need for better understanding around LGBTQ+ definitions and topics, specifically around sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. As a result, a group was created for youth to discuss these topics in an open and safe manner.

Some Chafee programs support and run their own Youth Advisory Boards. The young people that serve on this board have been able to participate in training professionals in the child welfare field. There are also youth who report to community members around gaps in services and resources in their community.

Following the implementation of the State Grant Program through the recommendations of the Advisory Board, DCW has reconvened a work group to update the funding methodology to ensure funding is provided to youth in an equitable manner and to find out how the Chafee funding

methodology interacts with the State Grant Program funding methodology. Quality assurance meetings will continue annually.

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. House Bill 21-1094 was signed into law in June 2021 and created two programs. FYIT codified reentry for eligible youth as defined by Section 19-7-304, C.R.S., and reimagines what extended foster care looks like in Colorado. As of February 2023, 355 youth have opted into FYIT, and 112 youth have reentered care. Of the total youth involved with FYIT, 258 were living in developmentally appropriate supervised independent living arrangements and only six were in a congregate care setting. This reflects the voluntary nature of the program and the attempt to provide more natural and developmentally appropriate services created by the FYIT program.

House Bill 21-1094 also established the Foster Youth Successful Transition To Adulthood Grant Program to further support youth in having a successful transition to adulthood and created an advisory board to support the program. House Bill 21-1094 runs on a State Fiscal Year (July 1 through June 30). This bill ensures that all eligible youth throughout Colorado are served. This process prioritizes existing Chafee-run programs while encouraging communities that did not have Chafee programs to collaborate with their local Department of Human Services to create the programming. CDHS has contracted with four non-profit organizations to serve an additional 16 counties through the state grant program.

The Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program²⁷ was signed into law on June 5, 2023. The bill provides CDHS access to up to 100 state housing vouchers to assist youth in their transition to adulthood and is administered through Chafee and Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood State Grant Programs. The case management agencies provide age and developmentally appropriate supports to youth ages 18 up until their 26th birthday that are eligible for the program. The bill provides funding for the provision of case management services for youth who are eligible for the state voucher program as well as youth receiving Family Unification Program (FUP) or Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers. CDHS and the Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing are in the process of implementing this new program.

As part of the annual plan template, CDHS continues to ask 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 LGBTQ+ 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.

DCW continues to collaborate with agencies such as the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative (COSHI), to provide inclusive training and education to both staff and young people. "Setting the Foundation: LGBTQ+ Competency Training for Child Welfare Professionals" continues to be offered as part of the All Children-All Families program and it equips child welfare professionals

²⁷ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb23-082>

with a comprehensive foundation of knowledge on LGBTQ+ individuals and their experiences in the child welfare system. Chafee programs have also evaluated any documentation that young people need to fill out to ensure language inclusivity.

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 (RTS), 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 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. Counties are informed of changes that may impact their young people, such as notifying that the Foster Care Medicaid needs to be renewed yearly and providing resources to ensure this is done correctly.

In January 2023, eligibility for Former Foster Care Medicaid was expanded to include youth who would otherwise be eligible but had been in care under the jurisdiction of another state. DCW and HCPF worked together during 2022 to ensure that there is a process in place for those newly eligible youth to access Medicaid benefits. HCPF issued guidance to counties who issue those benefits via HCPF OM 23-010²⁸ on January 1, 2023. DCW in coordination with HCPF also sent out a follow-up informational memorandum IM-CW-2024-0012²⁹ to provide additional clarification on the new requirements for Former Foster Care Youth access to Medicaid services.

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 through September 2024. There will be an additional one year follow up period before data analysis will begin. Further information will be reported in future APSRs.

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

²⁸ <https://hcpf.colorado.gov/sites/hcpf/files/HCPF%20OM%2023-010%20Out%20of%20State%20Former%20Foster%20Care%20Youth%20Guidance.pdf>

²⁹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-lkWUXKBiunWzS03ASEhlxXcNFTIPzyc/view>

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. Cohort 5, (17 year olds) completed on September 30th and both Group A and B are in full compliance with federal requirements.

The NYTD Review dates have now been established, and the kickoff date was January 23, 2024. The official onsite visit from the Administration of Children and Families will be from June 24th-28th, 2024. 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 has recruited three youth allies from OCR's Lived Experience Action Panel (LEAP)³⁰ to assist with the federal NYTD Review and to assist with developing the new future NYTD Platform. In addition, CDHS also recruited a County Chafee partner to assist with the NYTD Review. CDHS continues to engage staff and stakeholders about the NYTD Review, and 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 released yet, so the results from the changes cannot be evaluated yet in this APSR. DCW streamlined a new incentive payment process for youth participants called BHN Rewards (Rybbon). Youth participants are able to select E-gift cards from Amazon, Target, Walmart and King Soopers after survey completion.

The Colorado Youth Leadership Network (COYLN)

The 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. DCW uses the COYLN as a source to invite youth to provide feedback/input via youth panels, subject matter reviews and focus groups.

In September of 2023, the COYLN hosted the Colorado Youth Awareness Week. The event expanded to include other youth-serving organizations (Weld County Chafee Program and the Prowers County Department of Human Services). 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. This year's activities were primarily held in-person and the reading of the Governor's Proclamation took place at the Pueblo Department of Human Services. For five days there was a daily theme highlighting youth or youth activities- Monday - Creative Expressions Day, Tuesday- Youth Career and Education Day, Wednesday- Youth Leadership Day, Thursday- Youth Community Service Day and Friday -Youth Self Care Day.

³⁰ <https://coloradochildrep.org/about/leap/>

There were several positive outcomes from the Colorado Youth Awareness Week:

- Over 25 Client Managers trained on Chafee and other youth services.
- Over 30 teachers and 12 youth trained on the Educational Bill / ETV.
- Youth informed at the DYS on Chafee Services.
- Youth informed at the DYS Services on video and photography as a career option.
- Youth trained at DYS on career options in entertainment industry as a career option.
- The Colorado Youth Leadership Network Youth Advisory Boards and Councils had the opportunity to interact and share interest.
- The CDHS Town Hall had over 50 participants for youth and family presentation.
- Community Service Project completed at the DYS - Lookout Mountain campus.
- Community Service Project completed at the DYS - Mountview campus.
- Governor's Proclamation written and presented.
- Podcast- 14 podcast episodes produced and 7 released.

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 2022 and planned activities in 2023 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 the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) 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 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 2022, CDHS partnered more closely with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE). This agency has recently contracted to provide Educational Training Vouchers (ETVs) and they oversee Senate Bill 22-008³¹ which provides tuition assistance as well as higher academic supports to former foster youth.

³¹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb22-008>

For the past 26 years, CDHS hosted the Celebration of Educational Excellence (CEEX). This event was created to partner with other organizations and community partners to recognize young people involved in foster care or youth services who have graduated from high school, received a GED, or obtained a college degree. CDHS and CDHE will co-host the 2024 CEEX in June. The event hosts a resource fair prior to the ceremony where graduates can get information on schools, scholarship opportunities and agencies in their community that they may be interested in engaging with. Feedback is solicited from participants at the end of CEEX events.

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. As discussed in previous APSRs, CDHS has continued to maintain a staff position at the CDHE.

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 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.

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.

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. Programs also 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.

The Colorado Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood grant program is a state-funded independent living program that operates in parallel to the Chafee program. This program

provides additional funding to counties who operate Chafee programs and provides full program funding for counties who are unable to meet the match and administrative requirements of Chafee. To receive the additional funding, counties must submit a plan to DCW, and include how they will be culturally responsive or ensure that non-profit contractors engage youth in a culturally responsive manner. CDHS contracts directly with 4 community agencies to provide Chafee-like services to the following counties Fremont, Custer, Gunnison, Hinsdale, San Miguel, Ouray, Mineral, Rio Grande, Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Saguache, Otero, Bent, Prowers, and Baca. Additionally, other counties operating Chafee programs contract with non-profit vendors to operate those programs in partnership with the counties, which include Larimer, Arapahoe, Douglas, Delta, Montrose, and Morgan.

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

Senate Bill 22-008³² was signed into law by the Governor on May 26, 2022. The program covers the full cost of attendance for former foster youth of Colorado that are eligible, and mandates that youth who are eligible for ETV must apply to ETV funding prior to accessing the funds appropriated from Senate Bill 22-008, to ensure that the state can continue to fully spend the ETV grant from the ACYF. Since the administration of Senate Bill 22-008 is under the purview of CDHE, an interagency agreement is in place between CDHS and CDHE for CDHE to administer the ETV program. CDHE administers both programs and ensures funding is braided in a way to fully fund the cost of attendance for all eligible youth along with ensuring the use of ETV funds. CDHS and CDHE have collaborated since FFY 2023 and will continue to make both programs a success for students and ensure that professionals who support the students are aware of these two programs.

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.

Annual Reporting of ETV's awarded	Total ETV's Awarded	New ETV Recipients	Total Eligible ETV Applicants
2016-17 School Year (July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017)	138	66	n/a

³² <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb22-008>

2017-18 School Year (July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018)	103	40	n/a
2018-19 School Year (July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019)	103	34	n/a
2019-20 School Year (July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020)	114	45	n/a
2020-21 School Year (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021)	115	45	n/a
2021-22 School Year (July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022)	104	28	n/a
2022-23 School Year (July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023)	84	45	n/a
Estimate-2023-24 School Year (July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024)	125	78	177

Table 7: 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 U.S. Census Bureau announced the beginning of data collection for the 2022 economic census. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT) is located primarily in Montezuma County with another community in White Mesa, Utah and includes 2,060 enrolled members as of June 2021. The 2020 Census Bureau reports that 74,129 people who identify as solely American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) live in Colorado. The 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.

CDHS held an in-person formal consultation with the SUIT in October 2023. Attendance included:

- Kevin Neimond, CDHS, Chief Policy & Communications Officer
- Yolanda Webb, CDHS, Office of Adult, Aging & Disability Services
- Minna Castillo, CDHS, Community Partnerships
- Shelley Banker, CDHS, Office of Economic Security
- Phillip Gover, CDHS, Tribal Affairs Specialist
- Chairman Melvin J. Baker
- Treasurer Marvin Pinnecoose
- Councilwoman Linda K. Baker
- Councilwoman Dr. Stacey Oberly
- SUIT Tribal Services Director Shannon Eastwood.
- Kathryn Redhorse, Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs Director

Child Welfare topics discussed at the October 2023 consultation included:

- Implementation support from Colorado's Implementation Science Unit on the Healing Village Project, to identify behavioral health program models and supporting evidence building for program models.
- Reviewing youth aging out of the child welfare system
- Cultural competencies and create a sovereignty training in partnership with SUIT
- Exploring opportunities for respite care and/or leave for foster parents to take care of children in foster care
- Tony Grampsas Youth Services grant
- Creating a SUIT-CDHS workgroup.

There are weekly standing meetings with monthly in person meetings from the Tribal Affairs Specialist to Ute Mountain Ute lands. On several occasions CDHS representatives from Adult Protective Services, Colorado Implementation Science Unit, and Family First Programs have made in person visits with the Tribal Affairs Specialist to meet with Ute Mountain Ute Social

Services and Senior Citizens Program. The ICWA Specialist also has made several in person visits to both SUIT and UMUT lands.

CDHS's Tribal Affairs Specialist made efforts to meet with UMUT council on October 26, 2023, however due to miscommunication the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council was not available for that date. Since that time the Tribal Affairs Specialist requested to appear for a UMUT council scoping meeting on November 7, 2023. At the meeting UMUT council affirmed they would like to have a consultation with CDHS. The current stance is a request for a date for an online meeting in February has been made and acknowledged by email. The Ute Mountain Ute Chairman's Executive Assistant responded that either herself or Executive Officer John Trocheck will get back to CDHS with a date for February. As of 2/28/2024 a firm date and time have not been set. The current plan is to hold an in-person consultation for early August.

The SUIT continues to use Core funding to provide Multi-Systemic Therapy to families involved in child welfare. This is an intensive family therapy model and an evidence-based home-based intervention to reduce removals of children and return removed children home faster and with better long-term outcomes. Core funds and the services they provide are evaluated yearly and have been shown to improve outcomes for children year over year.

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 the UMUT after completion via email.

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 continuing to be made to address this. House Bill 21-1151 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. There has been discussion with both Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Indian Tribes about their interests in certifying their own foster homes but at the time of writing this APSR, neither Tribe has begun to move forward with this.

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.

Efforts DCW is currently working on to improve compliance in dependency and neglect cases include implementing a more thorough auditing process of ICWA cases. For more 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.

Senate Bill 23-211 was passed in 2023, adopting federal regulations concerning ICWA as state law, so that Colorado continues to ensure that Indian children are protected in cases of guardianship and adoption.

The Chafee Program

CDHS staff continued to work with the tribes to ensure they have access to support 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 Chafee Program Coordinator is scheduled to meet with the Directors of Child Welfare of both the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes in March (12 and 19) of 2024 to discuss the application process for Chafee, Colorado Foster Youth Successful State Grant Program, and the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher program and how the funds can be utilized to support eligible tribal youth along with the reporting requirements of the programs. 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 and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs are 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 in October 2022. The SUII indicated an interest in Chafee services during Tribal Consultation with CDHS. The SUII 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 the SUII 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 memorandum of understanding 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.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)

Please see Appendix A for the 2023 CAPTA Annual Report, Appendix B for the Institutional Assessment Review Team (IART) Annual Report, Appendix C for the Children's Justice Act FY 2024 Annual Report and Three-Year Assessment, and Appendix D for the 2022 Child Maltreatment Fatality Annual Report.

For information on how supplemental funding under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were used, please see the CAPTA Annual Report in Appendix A.

Updates to Targeted Plans

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

County diligent recruitment plans, which are submitted to CDHS, was expanded to a two-year duration and will expire in June 2024. This has provided agencies with time to explore, test, and refine their strategy based on local needs. The collaborative efforts between the state, counties, and licensed CPAs center on targeted and general recruitment strategies to address the diverse needs of the children/youth in out-of-home care. The individual county Diligent Recruitment Plans include non-discrimination policies, non-discriminatory fee structures, and strategies for data collection. Information is collected regarding pre-service and ongoing training for foster care and adoptive parents that enhance capacity building and support of foster, kinship foster, and adoptive families to increase their skill sets, knowledge and understanding of diversity. The plan also addresses the length of time to complete certification. Counties and CPAs identified areas for improving the recruitment of LGBTQ+ affirming families, BIPOC families, and those supporting children/youth with disabilities, or significant behavioral/mental health needs. The strategies to improve recruitment and retention varied in scope and breadth.

There were targeted recruitment strategies for LGBTQ+ affirming families, the LGBTQ+ community, BIPOC families, and those willing to support children/youth with disabling conditions and significant behavioral needs. Examples included revising agency forms and documents for inclusive language, featuring images of diverse families, and paid advertisement. Counties and CPAs continue to build partnerships with their communities for ongoing targeted recruitment assistance, community engagement, tangible and logistical supports and advertising.

Between August 2023 and February 2024, the Foster Care and Adoptive Recruitment and Retention Specialist met with representatives from 60 of 64 counties and 26 of 32 CPAs with foster care programs to build rapport and relationship, and for the specialist to learn about their programs.

The Quarterly Recruitment and Retention meeting provides county and CPA recruiters with opportunities for skill-building, networking, and sharing of their work and practices. These sessions are facilitated by the DCW Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment and Retention Specialist and supported by the Communications Foster Care and Adoption Specialist. A new 2-year Diligent Recruitment and Retention plan was developed in collaboration with counties and CPAs and is effective June 1, 2024. An operation memo [OM-CW-2024-003](#) was issued on February 5, 2024 with instructions about the plan and process.

In March 2024, the state, two counties, and two CPAs piloted a partnership with RaiseAChild, a non-profit organization that works with other states and organizations to enhance recruitment efforts, particularly with prospective LGBTQ+ affirming families, the LGBTQ+ community, and those willing to serve children/youth with complex needs. RaiseAChild will use extensive advertising across multiple platforms and essentially drive inquiry traffic to support the partnering counties and CPAs, using a regional approach. They will support the four agencies with scheduling information events and scheduled communication following the events with the

applicants through certification.

In SFY 2024, the state continued to improve the Geographic Information System (GIS) application, purchasing licenses from Esri, a geo-mapping software company. The application provides opportunities for counties and CPAs to develop strategic, data-driven recruitment plans, focusing on areas with heightened rates of removal and prioritizing placements closer to children/youth's original communities. The program included five counties (including a three-county foster care program) and two child placement agencies test application improvements. [Tutorials](#) were developed and are available on the CWTS web page in the resources section and supplemented by a more user-friendly manual. The frequency of application usage varied, often related to agency size. Turnover among agency personnel also impacted usage with new staff having to become familiar with the application. Another large county is in the process of implementing GIS before the end of SFY 2024.

Please see the Goal 3 Measures of Progress for further detail on recruitment and retention efforts.

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 System is currently undergoing final review. 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 has engaged multiple small groups of stakeholders, including those with lived expertise, who have each contributed to ensure the current revision speaks to each group's unique needs. The final version is under review and projected to be shared publicly by June 2024. Second, the CWTS Caseworker Fundamentals training continues to include guidance to assure safe prescribing of psychotropic medications for children/youth in care. Lastly, work continues to develop procedures and protocols to ensure that children/youth in foster care are not inappropriately diagnosed with mental illness, other emotional or behavioral disorders, medically fragile conditions, or developmental disabilities, and placed in settings that are not foster family homes due to inappropriate diagnoses.

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 is now 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. These assessments are completed by the state Administrative Service Organizations with oversight provided by BHA. The CANS tool helps prevent inappropriate diagnoses by the nature of the tool itself, is agnostic to etiology or any cause and effect, and does not generate a diagnosis. This

assessment is typically completed prior to placement at a QRTP to ensure the level of mental health treatment needed aligns with the QRTP level of treatment.

CDHS continues to work 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 can vary by providers. In obtaining these records, multiple diagnoses and duplication of services can often be reduced and mitigated. CDHS and HCPF have also collaborated to create a small unit focusing specifically on assisting with navigation of Medicaid access for children and youth in the child welfare system. This should enable youth to maintain critical access to the right level of healthcare at the right time to set them up for more successful treatment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and national public health emergency, DCW worked to ensure children/youth continued to receive appropriate health care per CDPHE and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. The Colorado Office of Children, Youth, and Families' (OCYF) medical director continues to be available to county child welfare departments for consultation as all are settling into a 'new normal' related to COVID-19's ongoing albeit periodic impacts on health and operations.

Finally, DCW was able to work collaboratively with other CDHS partners, county child welfare departments and the clinical provider community to explore and implement a rule change related to clarifying the definition of institutional medical neglect. With this rule change, county child welfare departments can now more clearly determine what constitutes institutional abuse and/or neglect for accuracy in data reporting, screening decisions and making dispositional findings. At the same time, medical and mental health clinicians working in institutional settings are protected from allegations relating to decisions falling directly within the scope of their clinical licenses. This change has reassured the clinical provider community thus protecting that critical workforce and has brought definition clarity to aid child welfare in decision making.

No changes are needed to the Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan this year. Please see the 2025-2029 CFSP for the new Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan.

Disaster Plan

In CY 2023, Colorado was not affected by a natural disaster. Colorado has continued hosting a weekly statewide virtual conference call with all county human services departments and state leadership across CDHS. Additionally, DCW have continued hosting twice-monthly town halls on a variety of diverse topics. Feedback from county departments, community partner agencies, and other stakeholders remain positive about the value of these shared learning opportunities that have been going strong for over three years. Due in part to the nation-wide employee shortages experienced during COVID-19, there continue to be challenges in retention of county staff. In support of county departments regarding their retention efforts, one town hall focused attention on county onboarding of new hires and sharing the successful strategies employed by some counties across the state. While another town hall brought attention to the free secondary trauma

resources available for county Child Welfare workers which when accessed can support additional retention efforts.

DCW has integrated the increase to required frequency of monitoring contact between DCW staff and all counties that was initiated during COVID-19 and has proved beneficial to support of county practice improvement efforts. In addition to returning to more in-person county visits across the state, DCW has maintained the Directors' Digest monthly distribution to ensure county staff have all essential updates in one place. Counties continue to respond positively to in-person visits, and continue to leverage virtual meetings when appropriate. These visits help DCW staff gain insight into how communities across Colorado continue to recover from COVID-19, and what challenges they continue to face.

DCW and county departments continue to discuss the importance of data integrity efforts in our child welfare database system regarding the accuracy of race/ethnicity that represents self-identification.

Training Plan

In achieving alignment between DCW and the counties, the Deputy Director of DCW, the Learning and Development team supervisor, and the program director of CWTS, met with all six Child Welfare Director Regions to gather feedback on the child welfare training system. A subgroup was also convened to discuss and make recommendations for Ethics Training and establishing a Code of Conduct specifically for Colorado Child Welfare workforce. This subgroup was made up of representatives from all 64 counties, members of the Training Steering Committee, the CWTS and the DCW. The goals that were developed as a result of this workgroup were to:

1. Reach an alignment as to what competencies our training system should focus on
2. Redesign a caseworker fundamental Academy that is comprehensive and addresses the newly established competencies.

DCW, in partnership with CWTS, has drafted a new Training Plan for the 2025-2029 CFSP that reflects the training priority areas, goals, and objectives. Please see Appendix E for the 2025-2029 Training Plan.

Statistical and Supporting Information

Information on the Child Protective Services Workforce

Please see Appendix F.

Juvenile Justice Transfers

Between January 1 and December 31, 2023, there were 88 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 2023. 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 2023.

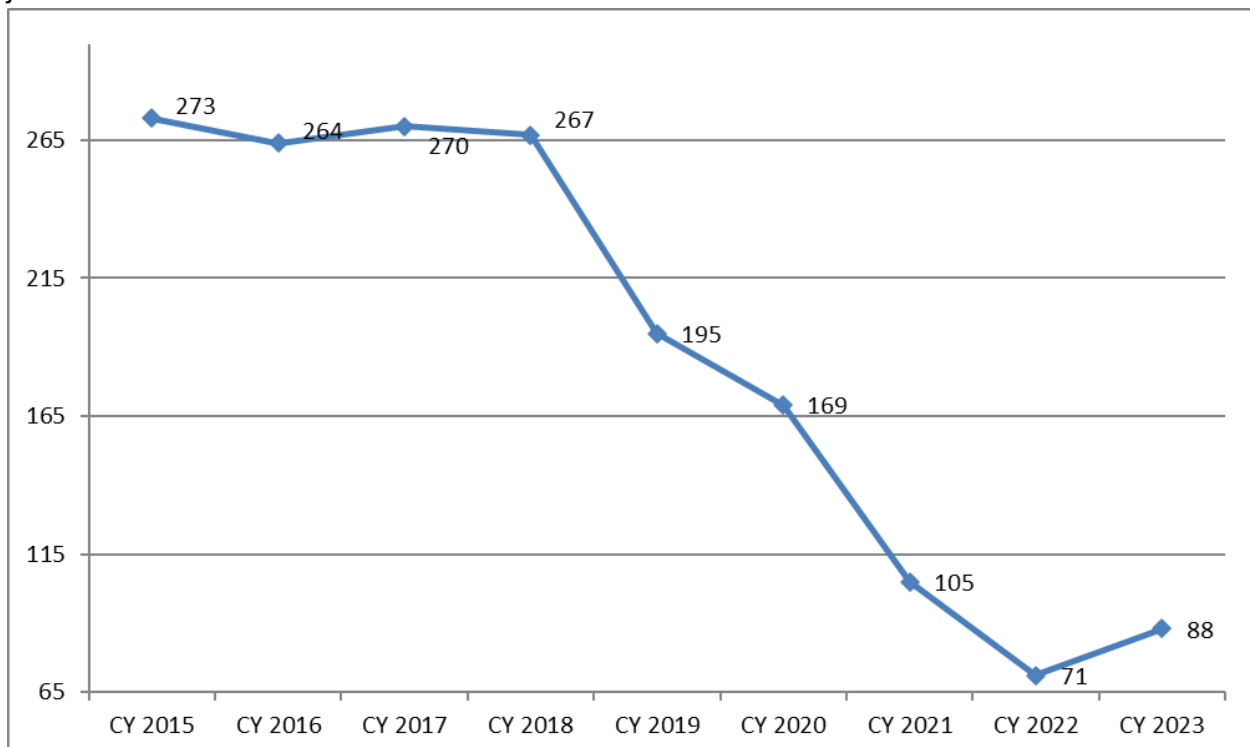


Figure 4: Number of children and youth transferred from CDHS to DYS

Overall, from a larger juvenile justice system perspective, current data indicate a reversal of the population declines witnessed during the pandemic. SFY 2022-2023 (and CY 2023) showed several increases in the juvenile justice population, including those in juvenile arrests (+10%), youth screened for secure detention (+6%), detention admissions (+12%), detention clients served (+13%), detention average daily population or Average Daily Population (ADP) (+13%),

new probation cases (+25%) and delinquency filings (+7%). While the juvenile detention population in Colorado and majority of precursors to detention showed increases, the DYS committed and paroled populations continued to follow a trend of decline, for the most part. The one exception is new commitments to DYS, which increased 11% from SFY 2021-2022 to 2022-2023. A more detailed summary of DYS trends by population type are as follows:

- Detention: 2022-23 was the second full state fiscal year of detention operating under the statewide cap of 215. Overall, the state experienced a second year of increase in detainees, after 15+ years of decline. Areas of increase included clients served, detention screens, detention admissions, and detention ADP (figures cited prior). The only constant was in length of stay (LOS), which remained at the 22.3 day average length of stay for youth in detention, equivalent to the previous year's LOS.
- Commitment: During SFY 2022-2023, the committed population experienced declines in several, but not all, areas. Commitment ADP decreased by 9% to an ADP of 260.0. The number of clients served decreased by 10%, which marked both the 17th consecutive year of decline in unique youth served and ADP. Conversely, the number of newly committed youth increased by nearly 11% (185 new commitments), marking the first year of increased commitments since SFY 2017-2018, which followed four years of substantial decline. Despite a year of increase in this area, youth newly committed to DYS still remain historically low--in fact, the lowest rates observed in nearly 50 years, with SFY 1970-2071 having the previous low of 304 new commitments. Commitment length of service for youth who discharged during SFY 2022-2023 was 18.3 months, a decrease of 1% from SFY 2021-2022 (18.5 months). LOS figures should be interpreted with caution, due to the wide variation of methods employed by other entities. LOS figures are most often not comparable. The DYS length of service calculation is the sum of all residential placement time that a youth experiences over the course of their commitment. This figure does not equate to time spent only in state secure youth centers. LOS is the aggregate of time spent in all program types and levels.
- Parole: For three consecutive state fiscal years, the parole population experienced declines in most areas. During SFY 2022-2023 the number of clients served decreased by 15%, the ADP declined by 4%, and the number of new parole intakes decreased by 10%. The average Length of Service on parole was 6.8 months for youth discharged during SFY 2022-2023, a slight increase from SFY 2021-2022. Overall, parole LOS has remained relatively stable for the past decade, ranging from 6.7 months to 7.3 months. Nearly twenty years ago, the implementation of Senate Bill 03-284 shortened the mandatory parole length (from nine) to six months, effective May 1, 2003. Since the passage of Senate Bill 03-284, parole LOS has continued to slightly exceed the mandatory parole period of six months. For high-risk youth, the Juvenile Parole Board has the statutory authority to extend parole for 90 days if determined to be "within the best interest of the juvenile and the public to do so," or for an additional 15 months if there is a "finding of special circumstances" for youth adjudicated for certain offenses (e.g.: violent offenses, sex offenses, etc.). The Colorado Juvenile Parole Board (JPB) is established as a Type-1 transfer board and requires gubernatorial appointment. The board's creation, membership, and authority are defined in statute (24-1-105 C.R.S. and 19-2-206, C.R.S.).

All rendering of findings during juvenile parole hearings are formed independent of the Executive Director of the Department of Human Services.

- Important Note: Commitment population reductions and Parole population increases witnessed in both SFY 2019-2020 and SFY 2020-2021 were a direct result of the pandemic and actions taken as a result. DYS leaders utilized the authority given through the Governor's Executive Order to release an unprecedented number of youth from residential placement to parole. These actions were taken to slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19, allow for greater social distancing, and safeguard youth and staff.

Education and Training Vouchers

The number of youths 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 2024 will be reported separately and submitted by the December 2024 due date.

Financial Information

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

As noted in the Update on the 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 CDEC information system will resolve these issues. As a result, more reliable data will be available to report on future CFS101 forms.

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

Lastly, CDHS is not currently able to separate out foster care maintenance expenditure estimates between foster family and relative foster care and group/institutional care. The data sharing between Trails and the state's financial information systems complicates attempts to cleanly separate expenditures between the two categories. For this submission, the expenditure estimates for both categories are reported on line seven (a) of the CFS-101, Part II form. The 2024 APSR program instructions request information on the amount of FY 2005 Title IV-B, subpart 1 and non-federal matching funds that Colorado expended for foster care maintenance. In FFY 2005, \$2,890,135 Title IV-B, subpart 1 funds were expended for foster care maintenance and \$630,045 non-federal funds, applied as a state match, were expended for foster care maintenance. Title IV-B, subpart 1 funds were not used for expenses related to childcare and adoption assistance payments. Title IV-E funds are used for those purposes.

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