

## State Court Improvement Program 2023 Annual Self-Assessment Report

This self-assessment is intended as an opportunity for Court Improvement Programs (CIPs) to review progress on CIP projects, joint program planning and improvement efforts with the child welfare agency, and the ability to integrate (Continuous Quality Improvement) CQI successfully into practice. The self-assessment process is designed to help shape and inform ongoing strategic planning and should include meaningful discussion with the multi-disciplinary task force and candid reflection of key CIP staff. The self-assessment is primarily focused on assessing efforts undertaken to date while the strategic plan maps out efforts going forward. Questions are designed to solicit candid responses that help CIPs apply CQI and identify support that may be helpful.

**I. CQI Analyses of Required Projects** *It is ok to cut and paste responses from last year, updating according to where you currently are in the process, and, if you do so, highlight text to show anything that is new. Complete the descriptions for CQI stages you have progressed through or are in. Though some upcoming stages will be inapplicable, consider whether your team may have preliminary thoughts that are relevant to those questions. Please also indicate if you need assistance from your federal or Capacity Building partners in a particular phase.*

### **Joint Project with the Child Welfare Agency:**

**Provide a concise description of the joint project selected in your jurisdiction.**

CIP collaborated with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) on two projects: A. Adoption Call to Action and B. Kinship Navigator.

**A. Adoption Call to Action** is a collaboration between CIP, DCF, the Juvenile Court, Children and Family Law (CAFL), and two community adoption agencies: The Cambridge Family and Children's Services, and the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) with the goal of increasing timely adoptions.

**Identify the specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcomes this project is intended to address.** The committee meets regularly to identify and reduce barriers to timely permanency with the goal of increasing adoptions, especially of teens and children who are non-white and to improve timely permanency for children by identifying and eliminating barriers to adoption.

If this effort is linked to any agency measures, e. g., CFSR measures, please note those.

This effort is linked to CFSR data:

- a. measures for permanency
- b. CFSR Item 4: Placement stability
- c. CFSR Item 5: Timely and appropriate permanency
- d. CFSR Item 6: Achieving permanency goal
- e. CFSR Item 35. Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive homes.

**Approximate date that the project began:** The project began in July 2019 when CIP staff identified key stakeholders to participate in the Adoption Call to Action Conference in Washington, D.C.

**Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?** Implementation

**How was the need for the project identified?** The committee analyzed data from DCF, the courts and the CFSR federal report. These reports indicated serious delays in reaching permanency, in particular adoption for children in care more than 12 months. DCF data revealed that the rates of adoption within 24 months of home removal had declined between 2015 and 2019. Juvenile Court data indicated that adoption finalizations had decreased to 664 in FY17. By FY18, the number of children adopted increased to 826 and after initiation of the DCF program to track cases weekly, by FY19, the number grew to 962. As the project progressed the attorneys and social workers expressed a need for a tool to educate potential caregivers on the different rights and responsibilities of guardianship compared to adoption. **Current AFCARS data on adoption indicates that of children exiting foster care in FY21 17% were adopted, compared to FY22 which showed an increase to 20.2%. Identifying initiatives to improve the adoption of older youth, especially non-white youth, is a priority, as the data indicates the percentage of children exiting foster care when they turned 18 (emancipation) increased from 14% in FY21 to 15.6% in FY22. The data indicates the importance of continuing work to improve the number and timeliness of adoptions.**

**What is the theory of change?** By identifying and reducing barriers to adoption through the development and implementation of collaborative interventions, the time to permanency would decrease and the number of adoptions and guardianships would increase.

**Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)**

**The Committee continues bimonthly meetings to review adoption/guardianship data, identify barriers and discuss innovations to address barriers. The Committee continues to support innovative initiatives undertaken by DCF to improve the timeliness of adoptions. Some initiatives supported by the Committee include:**

1. Using virtual trainings for recruiting and training adoptive parents, **pre-adoptive parents**, and adoption social workers from FY20 to FY23.
2. Alternative adoption venues used during pandemic. **Supporting/Funding in-person National Adoption Day.**
3. Creating substantive and procedural materials on guardianship and adoption. **Materials continue to be published and distributed in FY23.**
4. DCF innovative interventions **continue into FY23.**
5. CIP sponsored adoption training **continue in FY23.**

### **What has been done to implement the projects?**

#### **If your solution/intervention includes training, please provide a title and brief description of any training(s).**

1. CIP sponsored trainings for pre-adoptive and adoptive families to support their parenting challenges, stabilizing the placements, reducing time to permanency and court involvement.
  - a. Trust-based Relational Intervention Training, an evidence based therapeutic model that trains caregivers to provide effective support and treatment for the most vulnerable children and youth, was funded by CIP in FY 20 and FY21. 45 pre-adoptive and adoptive parents participated in each of the four-session training. **A support group developed following the training and continues to meet in FY23.**
  - b. **Trans Racial Adoption Workshops in FY23 focused on developing the core competencies required for transracial parenting, which included cultural competencies and multi-cultural planning. The goal of the workshops was to support stable placements and equitable outcomes for non-white adoptions. 156 families participated. The training supports the committee's goal of increasing adoptions of non-White children.**
2. The committee supported creative adoption venues and a virtual National Adoption Day, hosted by the Governor and adoptive families. **In November 2022, on National Adoption Day, the Court Improvement Program, in collaboration with the Juvenile Court, MARE and DCF, sponsored in-person adoption celebrations in six counties. Over 90 adoptions were finalized on National Adoption Day. From July 1, 2022, through May 31, 2023, 890 adoptions were finalized, and 584 guardianships were completed.**
3. Materials were created explaining rights and supports for kin caregivers and the distinctions between rights and responsibilities in adoption and guardianship for children in foster care. The materials were translated into several languages, printed, placed on the

CIP website, and continue to be reprinted and distributed in FY 23. Family Resource Centers have requested and received additional copies.

4. DCF continues, with CIP support, to develop innovative projects to decrease the time to permanency and increase timely adoptions. Projects expanded to all DCF in FY22. Initiatives included: A 6-week case review which focuses on the safety issues that led to removal of the child, identifying additional services to support reunification and developing concurrent permanency plans. Additionally, DCF conducts weekly reviews of cases where children have been freed for adoptions to identify and remove barriers. In FY23 DCF has expanded initiatives to include developing a permanency tool for managers to supervise staff; hiring a permanency manager; hiring 3-5 permanency specialists; holding permanency round tables; and hiring a manager of adoption, kinship, and search. DCF introduced a new Family Resource Policy at the end of February 2023 which provides guidance on resource support, licensing, and training. DCF also has created a separate Kinship Support worker for each region who can arrange emergency placements with kin. Currently, DCF is updating the DCF Permanency Planning Policy to include revisions on the Initial Review that focus on increased participation of parents. The Adoption Call to Action committee discusses and supports these initiatives.

5. Over ten years ago, a CIP Working Group comprised of principal representatives from the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics (RVRS), Juvenile Court, and Probate and Family Court, proposed a data exchange pilot to improve birth certificate information exchange by creating a computer driven exchange system. The pilot was a CIP-initiative to identify fathers earlier in the case planning process. CIP is pleased to report that the goal of that CIP Data Committee has finally been reached as DCF is now receiving birth certificates electronically to speed up accuracy and efficiency of court proceedings.

*How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V). Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, what do the data show, and how did you use these data to modify or expand the project? Please note if you are using any JCAMP measures in this effort.<sup>1</sup>*

**How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? Phase V.** The Adoption Committee continues to look at the data: number of adoptions, guardianships, and their timeliness. Despite limitations imposed by the pandemic, the committee continues to meet to improve the number of adoptions especially of teens and non-white children. CIP surveyed the committee in early 2022 and found that the meetings stimulated all members to be more creative and collaborative in working together toward the goals of the committee. In FFY23 the Committee continues to review the data; learn what the members' organizations are working on to improve time to permanency and support efforts to increase the timeliness of adoptions. CIP's strategic plan has been modified to incorporate DCF's initiative to collect

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/courts/reform/jcamp/>

and distribute data on time to permanency by court. CIP will compare data to determine if there is improvement in the time to permanency and adoption finalizations.

**What does the data show?** Court data indicates that much work needs to be done to achieve timely permanency and to increase timely, stable adoptions:

Permanency data shows that Massachusetts remains above the national average in reaching permanency for those children/youth in care the first 12 months following their removal. For those in care 12-23 months who reached permanency, Massachusetts has made modest improvements: going from 39.6% in 2019 to 49.2% in 2023. However, in 2023 50.8% of children were in care for 25 months or more. Of those exiting from care in FY22, the percentage exiting for adoption increased from 13.4% in FY18 to 20.2% in FY22. In Massachusetts a child is emancipated only on turning 18. It is disappointing to see that of the 4,098 children exiting care in FY22, 641 exited through emancipation, an increase from 13.5% of all exiting care in FY19 to 15.1% of all exiting care in FY22. Court data on timeliness of adoptions indicates that adoptions have been completed within 24 months in 10.7% of cases. Data indicates that initial permanency hearings are not regularly held within twelve months of the child's/youth's removal or within six months following a termination of parental rights finding. Data from Juvenile Court, requested by DCF, indicates that initial permanency hearings are being scheduled within 14 months in 83% of cases and held within 14 months in 63% of cases. Following termination of parental rights or surrenders for adoption, the permanency hearing by Juvenile Court Rule is to be held every six months. The permanency hearing was scheduled within 6 months in 39.3% of cases.

**Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?** The pandemic and the closing of courts impacted all court operations through FY21, as well as adoption recruitment and matches. By the middle of FY22, courts were opening, and addressing the backlog of termination cases became a priority. Some court events are still held virtually which takes more time. As a result, there has been a delay in termination of parental rights cases and adoptions. In FY22 there was a goal of over 1,000 adoptions, but due to the pandemic, 740 were finalized by May 31, 2022. The collaborative will continue to examine data from CFSR, DCF and Juvenile Court to measure progress and to identify areas needing more focus. An additional challenge post-pandemic is the attrition of so many DCF staff and attorneys as well as attorneys who represent children and parents. Courts are still dealing with backlogs which resulted from the pandemic. Also, there is a shortage of court transcribers which delays the appeal process. According to the March 2023 Pathways Report from the Juvenile Court, "The Administrative Office will continue to work with the Trial Court's Office of Transcription Services to reduce appellate delays in the production of transcripts as well as in providing transcripts to expedite judicial findings." DCF has made substantial investments in improving timely permanency outcomes for children/youth by focusing on permanency initiatives described above.

**What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or the Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?** National webinars on this topic, especially as pertain to encouraging adoption of youth, are helpful. Identifying effective models of recruiting non-white families would be helpful.

**Provide a concise description of the joint project selected in your jurisdiction:**

**B. The Kinship Navigator Program**, a program sponsored by DCF, works collaboratively with CIP and the Grandparent's Commission to develop, and expand the Kinship Navigator Program. This pilot project is designed to help stabilize placements with kin caregivers, especially those seeking guardianship in Probate and Family Court, by providing information on court process and referrals to needed services.

**Identify the specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome(s) this project is intended to address. If this effort is linked to any agency measures, e. g. CFSR measures, please note those.** The collaboration is intended to provide safety, stability, and permanency to children and to offer support to kin.

**Approximate date that the project began:** CIP began collaborating with Kinship Navigator in September 2020, following the Department of Children and Families receiving a Kinship Navigator grant from the Children's Bureau.

**Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?** Implementation

**How was need for this project identified? (Phase I)**

CIP and DCF analyzed a 2019 study which indicated approximately 10,000 children in Massachusetts lived with their grandparents. CIP met with the Grandparents' Commission caregiver focus groups to determine what supports were needed to stabilize placements. Based on the University of Massachusetts study (2022) the demand for kinship support and care continues.

**What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II)**

Developing a Kinship Navigator Program will support, stabilize, and increase kinship placements. Developing tools to assist kin guardians will expediate the guardianship court process. The program will reduce court time in Probate and Family Court and decrease the number of Care and Protection cases filed in Juvenile Court, reducing the need for foster care placements.

**Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? Yes. If yes, what is it? (Phase III)**

1. Develop pilot Kinship Navigator Programs.
2. **Expand Kinship Navigator Program beyond pilot sites.**
3. **Increase funding to provide additional staff to meet the need. Currently there are five staff members.**
4. Develop and distribute guides for relative caregivers: The Custody Guide for Child Caregivers will help potential guardians understand how to complete the legal process for obtaining guardianship.
5. Continue data collection and analysis.

**If your solution/intervention includes training, please provide a title and brief description of any training(s).**

1. CIP provided Task Force Training on the importance of kinship care, the Kinship Navigator Program, the supports, and services the Grandparent's Commission provides, advocacy work, and training from "partners" with lived experience.
2. CIP Training Committee planned and presented a statewide virtual training on kinship care for attorneys, social workers, and court personnel, including legal training on obtaining kinship placements for children and youth
3. CIP supported the Grandparent's Commission conference for kinship caregivers by drafting, printing, and distributing the Kinship Caregiver Custody Guide and the Benefit Tip Sheet to over 250 kin caregiver attendees on June 6, 2023.
4. CIP supports the development and expansion of the Kinship Navigator program and assists and trains the Director who often has challenging legal questions.
5. CIP supported the development of two training videos on the Kinship Navigator Program: one for caregivers and one for DCF staff.

**What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)**

1. DCF received a federal grant to establish a Kinship Navigator program to support relative caregivers. CIP was invited to participate in this project. CIP staff meets at least once a month with the director of the Kinship Navigator Program and the director of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission to develop court process operations and review progress in implementing Kinship Navigator programs especially in four pilot counties, Barnstable, Bristol, Essex, and **Worcester.**
2. **The program was expanded to Suffolk County in January 2023. The program is expanding to Norfolk County in the summer of 2023. The staff of the Kinship Navigator Program was expanded to include a bi-lingual social worker. DCF is applying for continued funding and additional staff.**
3. The legal guide CIP staff developed for kinship caregivers, Guide for Relative Caregivers, printed in three languages in spring of 2021 and again in 2022, continues to be distributed statewide through the courts, DCF and the Family Resource Centers. The Guides are all also available on the mass.gov and the Court Improvement Program websites. **1,000 additional copies of the Guide and Benefit Tip Sheet in Spanish were printed and distributed in FFY 23.**

4. Data collection and analysis: Kinship Navigator worked with Mathematica to identify data points needed for evaluation. DCF then contracted with Salesforce so that data could be collected to help analyze the program's success. CIP reviews and analyzes the data to inform program improvement.
5. The director and the president of the board of the Grandparents' Commission, and two grandparents with lived experience made presentations to the CIP Child Welfare Task Force on March 9, 2023.
6. The CIP custody guides were distributed at the Kinship Conference with 250 attending in person in June 2023.
7. A statewide training for 150 attorneys and social workers on kinship resources and legal procedures for obtaining kinship placements was held virtually in June 2023.
8. Since October 2021 Kinship Navigator Program has connected approximately 400 kinship caregivers to community resources and services. Currently Kinship Navigator Program is averaging 50 referrals a month.
9. The Director of the Grandparents' Commission, the Probate and Family Court Administrative Office, and CIP provided consultation and technical assistance to the pilot program and its expansion.
10. CIP and Kinship Navigator Program discussed with Probate and Family Court expanding to an additional site in Norfolk County where the registrar may provide a room for the program. The program is expanding to Norfolk County in July 2023.
11. Kinship Navigator Program received strong support for further expansion in the October 2022 report by the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School entitled, Grandparent and Kinship Families; A Journey of access to Services and Supports. The report recommended: "Leverage the current strengths of federal initiatives and programs such as the Kinship Navigator Program to provide referral, and follow-up services to grandparents and other relatives raising children to link them to needed benefits and services and create federal programs that directly subsidize families outside of the child welfare system such as subsidized guardianship program or housing opportunities and expand the Kinship Navigator pilot program with the court system."

**How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V).** *Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, what do the data show, and how did you use these data to modify or expand the project? Please note if you are using any JCAMP measures in this effort.*

CIP will continue monitoring referrals. Thus far, most referrals have come from the Probate and Family Courts and from the Department of Children and Families. Salesforce data provides detailed information on the needs of families and service referrals. Families primarily need public assistance, referrals to support groups and legal assistance.

**Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?**

The pandemic delayed implementation of Kinship Navigator. Courts were closed to the public, hearings were virtual, court staff were overwhelmed with additional workload and were unable to provide needed assistance in implementing the Kinship Caregiver referral system. However, expansion to Worcester County, Suffolk County and Norfolk County's Probate and Family Courts and outreach to the Family



Resource Centers has resulted in increased referrals to the Kinship Navigator Program. The Kinship Navigator Program needs continued funding to expand their staff and their supports and services throughout Massachusetts.

**What assistance or support would be helpful from the Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC) or the Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?**

Continued funding of the program is essential. CIP is working on court/agency collaboration and is learning from CBCC and Children's Bureau webinars on Kinship Navigator.

**Hearing Quality Project:**

**Provide a concise description of the hearing quality project selected in your jurisdiction.** CIP supports efforts designed to improve permanency for children by ensuring quality court hearings through: supporting extensive training required for child welfare attorney certification; implementation and expansion of Pathways, a statewide differential case management system; training on child safety criteria and reasonable efforts; development, printing and distribution of a court process guide for caregivers in Probate and Family Court; and publication and distribution of permanency, education and safety bench cards. **Development, implementation, and expansion of Family Drug Courts in FY2023. This project is in the development stage.**

**Approximate date that the project began:** The Quality Hearing Projects have had different start dates. In December 2018, court data revealed delays in initial hearings due to a shortage of child welfare attorneys in western and central Massachusetts. In the Spring of 2019, the Juvenile Court convened a stakeholder conference to announce implementation of Pathways, a differentiated case management system. Planning for in-person child safety trainings for attorneys, social workers and judges began in FY20, but was delayed and converted into virtual training in FY21 because of the pandemic. When the pandemic ended in-person trainings, CIP supported staff to transition to develop and implement virtual trainings. Kinship Navigator program initially reached out to CIP in September 2020 for assistance in providing court process information for kin caregivers. In 2021-22 Juvenile Court judges began using permanency, safety, and education bench cards to facilitate discussions on child well-being in court hearings.

**Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?**

Implementation

**How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)**

- 1. DATA on the timely appointment of attorneys:** Four years ago, data on timely appointment of attorneys indicated there were insufficient attorneys in Central and Western Massachusetts to hold every temporary custody hearing within 72 hours of the child's removal as required by law. CIP staff interviewed approximately 40 lawyers and 5 judges in Western Massachusetts to determine factors leading to the shortage.

CIP continues to review data on the timely appointment of attorneys. Despite efforts by the Juvenile Court, the Children and Family Law Division of the Committee for Public Counsel Services and CIP, Hampden County has not improved in timely appointment of attorneys for children and parents. From 2021 to 2023, attorneys appointed within 3 days declined from 71.2% to 40.2%. This compares to the statewide appointment within 3 days going from 92.1 % in 2021 to 84.6% in 2023. The need to increase the child welfare legal pool, especially in Western Massachusetts remains a priority.

2. **Reviewing Federal AFCARS data:** Federal AFCARS data indicates that Massachusetts is in the bottom third of the nation on achieving permanency for children who are in care for more than twelve months. State data indicates that the court is unable to comply with their permanency timeliness standards on many cases. Court hearings are often delayed, especially during the pandemic.
3. **Reviewing and analyzing timeliness data** from the DCF 2021 Annual Report, indicated that median time in months to permanency through reunification for those in care less than 12 months had increased during the pandemic from 7.1 months in FY20 to 8.1 months in FY21. **In FY 22, according to the DCF 2022 Annual Report, this increased to 8.9 months.** Median time for completing adoptions increased from 37.1 mos. in FY20 to 42.9 mos. in FY21. **With the pandemic lessening its grip on court activity, in FY22 the median time to permanency through adoption decreased to 42.1 months.** Improving court process should improve the timeliness of permanency.
4. **Qualitative data from kinship caregivers** revealed a lack of information about the process for obtaining a guardianship in Probate and Family Court, especially during the pandemic when filing was done through new virtual court service centers and the virtual registry.

**What is the theory of change for the project?** **By improving timeliness and substance of court hearings the time to permanency will improve, families will be more engaged in the court process and there will be better outcomes for families.**

**Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? YES**

**If yes, what is it?**

1. Expanding the child welfare legal pool in Western Massachusetts.
2. Improving court hearings will decrease the time to permanency.
3. Fully implementing the Pathways model will improve the timeliness and quality of court hearings.
4. Judges, social workers, and lawyers utilizing the safety, permanency and education bench cards will provide a framework for substantive hearings.
5. Expanding the legal communities' understanding of safety considerations before removals.
6. Effective use of reasonable efforts should lead to a decrease in time to permanency.
7. **Implementing and expanding family drug courts will provide needed services and supports to parents with substance use disorders. This should lead to timely reunification and permanency. The CIP Manager is on the Family Drug Court Advisory Committee.**

## What has been done to implement the Project?

1. Improve the quality of court hearings by: supporting trainings for lawyers and social workers; provide excellent legal representation for parents and children immediately following the children's removal; incorporating a statewide differential case management system to ensure timely permanency; training lawyers, social workers and judges on using objective criteria to assess the safety of children; educating kinship caregivers in the legal guardianship process by developing, printing and distributing a Custody Guide for Child Caregivers; printing and distributing bench cards on permanency, safety and education to support substantive court hearings.
2. CIP has funded a full-time manager of Pathways in the Administrative Office of the Juvenile Court to develop and implement a differentiated case management system designed to improve court hearings and their timeliness to improve permanency for children. One aspect of the work focuses on supporting judges and court participants to meaningfully engage in court hearings. Bench cards with essential questions on permanency, risk/safety and educational stability have been distributed to all judges and are being printed and distributed statewide to attorneys and social workers. **In 2023 CIP distributed bench cards to lawyers representing DCF and parents and children.** The Pathways manager reports that using the bench cards as a framework for discussion, has facilitated clearer expectations, parties are better prepared, and there is more effective use of court time. The Child Welfare Data Analyst developed dashboards on timeliness which allow judges and clerks to identify barriers to timeliness in each jurisdiction. Additionally, the Juvenile Court offered judicial training on safety and utilized the safety bench cards to frame court discussions.
3. CIP organized and funded a four-part state-wide virtual training on the ABA Child Safety Guide to incorporate objective, safety decision making as part of all court proceedings. About three hundred practitioners participated including attorneys and social workers. CIP purchased the Child Safety Guide for all judges in the Commonwealth and for the CAFL attorneys.
4. CIP developed and printed a Custody Guide for Child Caregivers to assist caregivers in understanding the court hearing process for obtaining a guardianship. It explains how to file a petition for guardianship and participate in hearings remotely by accessing the Court Service Center or the Virtual Registry. A handy two-page chart explains the legal, financial, and other differences between going through Juvenile Court and Probate and Family Court. The Guide and the chart are published in three languages, are being re-printed, distributed statewide and are available for caregivers on the CIP website. **Reprinting and distribution of the Custody Guide and two-page Tip Sheet continued in 2022-23.**
5. To reach the general goal of improving hearing quality and the timeliness of hearings, CIP purchased compact disk DVD ram drives, voice recorders, and scanners for DCF to reduce delays with case updates and discovery. CIP purchased laptops, software and scanners for the Probate and Family Courts which were used in 2021 to allow judges to hear child welfare cases remotely during the pandemic. **In 2023 CIP purchased voice recorders for DCF and scanners which support timely recording of the case process in FamilyNet, provide timely discovery and reduce time to case resolution.**

**How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project?** CIP continues to analyze the time to permanency and to monitor the dashboard on attorney time to first appointment to gauge improvement on timely appointments, especially in Western and Central Massachusetts. In addition, CIP will continue to work with WNE School of Law to expand their child welfare fellowship program, measuring the increase in the number of fellows. The Department of Research and Planning developed dashboards which provide CIP with data on the timeliness of permanency hearings as well as time to reunification, adoption, and guardianship. Improving timeliness measures will indicate success of the Pathways model. CIP monitors distribution of the Custody Guide for Child Caregivers in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. CIP will measure the distribution of the bench cards. CIP has analyzed permanency data from AFCARS, DCF data and court data. Time to permanency exceeds national and state standards and needs improvement.

**Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?** Court closings and virtual court hearings have impacted the quality of court hearings. Many cases were continued due to court closings. Virtual hearings take longer to complete than in-person hearings. The pandemic has impacted the parent's ability to complete their action plans and the Department's ability to make reasonable efforts. This causes trials to be continued, and time to permanency to be delayed. **Courts are now open, and most hearings are in person. Some virtual hearings continue, which delays the process. Backlogs are beginning to be resolved.**

**What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or the Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?** Developing and implementing evaluation tools for all projects.

## **QUALITY LEGAL REPRESENTATION PROJECT**

**Provide a concise description of the quality legal representation project in your jurisdiction.** Through interdisciplinary, collaborative trainings CIP works to support efforts to provide excellent legal counsel to all children and indigent parents upon the filing of a care and protection petition. The **COVID Supplemental Funds** supported the Family Preservation Project (pre-petition) to prevent children from entering foster care by disentangling poverty from neglect and providing legal and service supports. **CIP works with stakeholders on expanding multi-disciplinary representation and pre-petition work.**

**Approximate date when projects began:** CIP historically has supported robust legal training for child welfare attorneys. The Family Preservation Program located in the Community Legal Aid Office in Springfield, MA, was funded by CIP (with COVID Supplemental Funds) in December 2021.

**Stage of Project:** Implementation

**How was the need identified?** Massachusetts law requires that all children and indigent parents in Care and Protection cases and Probate and Family Court guardianships of minor cases be appointed legal counsel. CAFL has certification and training requirements. Attorneys who provide representation must be trained for initial certification and continue to keep updated through ongoing training. **Data demonstrates there is an insufficient supply of child welfare attorneys to meet the demand, especially in Western, Massachusetts. CIP analyzed DCF and court data which indicated the high number of Care and Protection cases filed in this geographic area and the racial disproportionality of removals.**

**What is the Theory of Change?** Providing ongoing legal training on such issues as procedural and substantive law, engagement of clients, trauma, racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparity, substance use disorder, LGBTQ challenges, DCF policies and procedures is essential to providing quality legal representation. Expanding the child welfare legal pool especially in Western Massachusetts will provide timely appointment of attorneys. Developing, sustaining, and expanding Family Preservation Programs will prevent removals by assisting families with collateral legal issues, while providing needed supports and services

**Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? YES**

**If yes, what is it?** **The focus of the project is to support/provide ongoing trainings for lawyers and social workers to improve client engagement, substantive knowledge, and resource availability. CIP works collaboratively with a diverse group of child welfare stakeholders to develop, fund, and produce virtual multi-disciplinary webinars for child welfare lawyers, social workers, child welfare stakeholders and partners. Developing a multi-disciplinary representation pilot will improve case outcomes and decrease court time. Expanding family preservation programs will stabilize families preventing disruption and the filing of care and protection cases.**

**What has been done to implement the project?**

- 1. CIP has an interdisciplinary training committee that meets monthly to identify training needs, develops, and implements state-wide trainings.** In FY 22 the committee presented a seven-part series on Racial Equity and Inclusion including workshops on: Cultural Humility; Voices of Youth; Theory into Practice; Child Welfare and White Supremacy; Racial Trauma; Revolutionary Change in Child Welfare: An Antiracist Framework; and Implementing Change. Approximately 200 plus lawyers/social workers attended each session. **In FY 23 the committee developed and presented webinars on community support resources, community legal resources and a webinar on Kinship. Approximately 150-200 child welfare stakeholders attended each session.**
- 2. CIP funds three training consultants who develop and implement trainings for lawyer certification and for continuing legal education which promotes quality legal representation.**
- 3. CIP published and distributed a revised training manual for 250 child welfare attorneys.**
- 4. CIP sponsors participants' attendance at national trainings:**
  - 1. NACC conferences: in-person conference - 6 lawyers, NACC virtual conference - 39 attorneys, Race Equity/Inclusion – 33 attorneys.**
  - 2. NITA training: 39 lawyers**

3. Child Abuse and Neglect Institute Training: 1 Judge
4. Tableau Conference: 2 trial court data experts
5. National Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Conference: 5 social workers and lawyers.
6. NICWA conference: 2 social workers from the Wampanoag Tribe
5. CIP sponsors attendance at statewide trainings:
  1. Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Conference: over 150 attendees
  2. Youth at Risk Conference: 5 attorneys
  3. Children's Trust Conference: 5 social workers and lawyers
6. The CIP funded child welfare data analyst developed dashboards to indicate the timeliness of initial appointments. The dashboard presents appointment data from every county which assists in identifying gaps in legal resources. The dashboard is shared with court personnel and CAFL, the appointing authority, to improve the timelines of appointment of counsel. Data consistently demonstrates a shortage of child welfare lawyers in Western Massachusetts.
7. CIP staff reviews data and discusses with decision makers efforts to improve attorney development in Western MA where there continues to be a shortage. Hampden County continues to have difficulties securing the timely appointment of attorneys for children and parents. From 2021 to 2023, attorneys appointed within 3 days went from 71.2% to 40.2%. This compares to the statewide appointment within 3 days going from 92.1 % in 2021 to 84.6% in 2023.
8. CIP supports expanding the legal pool in Western Massachusetts by developing and funding a fellowship program with Western New England School of Law. Upon the completion of a child welfare curriculum, an internship and graduation, fellows work under the supervision of a child welfare attorney until they pass the bar exam. During that time, they complete course work and receive certification to practice child welfare law. After passing the bar they are prepared to accept child welfare cases. CIP funded three fellows in FY23.
9. CIP continues to encourage DCF and CPCS to work with the legislature to reach an agreement on the drawing down of IV-E funds for expanded legal representation of children and families. In FY23 the Governor vetoed legislation that would have allowed DCF and CAFL to use IV-E funds to pay for legal representation. Another bill has been filed. It is expected that the funds would be used to expand multi-disciplinary representation models, which would lead to the timely resolution of cases, saving court time and providing better outcomes for families. Family Preservation Programs will decrease the number of Care and Protection filings, reducing the need for attorneys and saving court time.
10. The Family Preservation Program, funded by CIP COVID Supplemental Funds, is up and running. There are three staff members: a staff attorney who is also a social worker, a case manager who is a lawyer and a social worker, and a parent partner with lived experience. The legal aid office is available to handle specialized challenges. CLA received 30 referrals and assisted 25 families. Data indicated of those referrals no children were removed from their parents. It is expected that this and other similar programs will lead to better outcomes for families, a reduction in Care and Protection filings and a decrease in demand for Care and Protection attorneys – saving court time. CIP works with a committee to explore more robust development of family preservation programs throughout the state.

**How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V)** *Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, what do the data show, and how did you use these data to modify or expand the project? Please note if you are using any JCAMP measures in this effort.*

Assessment of the Family Preservation Program is essential to its sustainability and expansion. Basic data is being recorded in the Springfield office on number of referrals, ethnicity, service needs, and services provided. CIP is working with a diverse group of stakeholders to explore alternative funding sources. Family Preservation programs are expanding in the legal aid offices around the State. CIP is involved in discussions around this expansion and the need for an evaluation to gain legislative support for expanding and enhancing these programs. *CIP continues discussion with stakeholders on the need to evaluate the Family Preservation Programs. CIP continues to look at the data on the availability of child welfare attorneys, especially in Western Massachusetts and discusses with stakeholders ways to expand the legal pool. Despite gaining a substantial pay increase for attorneys, developing a conflicts office, and expanding the WNE School of Law fellowship program there remains a shortage of child welfare attorneys in Western Massachusetts.*

**Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?** **COVID Supplemental Funding** required CIP to implement the program and spend the funds within the fiscal year. CIP prepared the RFP for bids in the Fall and had the program implemented by December. The groundswell for establishing such a program, especially in Springfield where the need was so great, encouraged CIP to move ahead as quickly as possible. ARPA funding has been utilized to sustain the Family Preservation Program in Springfield and to expand the support to other areas of the State. *Despite CAFL gaining a substantial pay increase for attorneys, developing a conflicts office, and expanding the WNE School of Law fellowship program there remains a shortage of child welfare attorneys. The impact of COVID remains with many attorneys no longer practicing child welfare law.*

**What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or the Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?** Needs include additional funding for family preservation programs, webinars on pre-petition representation, and assistance in drawing down Title IV-E funding. *The same needs continue to exist in FY23.*

*If your solution/intervention includes training, please provide a title and brief description of any training(s).*

*In addition to the training discussion above, the Community Legal Aid Family Preservation Program presented seminars to the CIP Steering Committee, the CIP Task Force and to 150 + partner social workers, lawyers, and service providers on the program.*



**II. Projects, Activities, and Training.** For questions 1-13, provide a *concise* description of work completed or underway to date in FY 2023 (October 2022-June 2023) in the topical subcategories below where applicable.

**1. Training Overall**

Did you have any significant training efforts not related to a particular project (those are now integrated under 2 to 14 below)? If yes, please describe. The Court Improvement Training Committee has sponsored three state-wide virtual trainings this year focused on permanency: one on family supports available in the community; one on legal resources to support children/youth and parents; and one on the importance of kinship placements, emphasizing resources available to support kin caring for children and youth. Approximately 150-200 lawyers, social workers, service providers and educators attended each training.

The Court Improvement Program supports a Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice virtual state-wide training every year. This year Dr. Jerry Milner and David Kelly were the keynote speakers. A member of CIP is on the planning committee and CIP sponsors the attendance of approximately two hundred lawyers and social workers. There are over three hundred in attendance.

On average, how many training events do you hold per year? About 9

What is your best prediction for the number of attorneys, judges, or other legal system stakeholders that will participate in training annually? 1000

The Family First Prevention Services Act amended the Social Security Act adding an eligibility criterion for the training of judges and attorneys on the congregate care provisions of the Act. See the highlighted portion below.

(1)<sup>2</sup> IN GENERAL. — In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this section, a highest State court ... *shall provide for the training of judges, attorneys, and other legal personnel in child welfare cases on Federal child welfare policies and payment limitations with respect to children in foster care who are placed in settings that are not a foster family home...*—

Have you been involved in planning with the agency on implementing Family First? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, please describe how the CIP has been involved. Massachusetts DCF has not implemented Family First. It is still in the planning stage.

Have you developed/been developing your Family First judicial training plan? ☐ Yes ☒ No



If yes, please describe what you have done.

When Massachusetts adopts Family First CIP will collaboratively plan and implement a judicial training for judges, lawyers, and social workers.

2. **Data Projects.** Data projects include any work with JCAMP,<sup>3</sup> administrative data sets (e.g, AFCARS, CCWIS), data dashboards, data reports, fostering court improvement data, case management systems, and data sharing efforts.

Do you have a data project/activity? ☐xx Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Reviewing AFCARS with Task Force and Steering Committee	Use of AFCARS or CCWIS data	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Kinship Navigator referral data / outcome data	Other	Selecting Solution
Adoption/guardianship data	Agency Data Sharing Efforts	Identifying/Assessing Needs

(a) Do you have data reports that you consistently view? ☐ xxYes ☐ No

(b) How are these reports used to support your work?

AFCARS, DCF and Juvenile Court data dashboards are reviewed and used to identify needs and to assess the effectiveness of projects. Based on review the theory of change may be modified. For example, data from the Kinship Navigator Program indicated that initial referrals from the Probate and Family Court were slow to come in. A new theory of change was adopted aimed at increasing referrals. CIP supported new initiatives to expand outreach and referrals: revising the introduction letter; expanding public awareness through outreach to the Family Resource Centers; the development of two information videos: one for caregivers and one for social workers; increasing staffing and expanding beyond the pilot sites to

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/courts/reform/jcamp/>

two other counties. These efforts have led to a significant increase in referrals. Another example: CIP relies on adoption data to generate discussions at our Adoption meetings.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Data analysts	CIP funded a Juvenile Court and a Probate Court analyst to attend the conference	Tableau conference	To improve knowledge. To expand the development of dashboards to improve timeliness outcomes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A


- 3. Legal Representation.** Legal representation projects include any efforts you have made to improve the quality of legal representation for parents, children and youth, the agency, or others. List projects here if you have any in addition to the required project.

Do you have (an additional) legal representation project/activity? x ☐ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Family Stabilization Program	Multi-Disciplinary Representation	Implementation
Improving legal advocacy outside of court	Other	Implementation
Legal training on Kinship/Placements	Other	Implementation

Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?	Who was the target audience?	How many persons attended?	What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)	What were the intended training outcomes?	What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> xYes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Task Force: 3 Task Force mtgs.; attorneys, social workers, educators	25 each 200 each	3 Task Force webinars 2 webinars for atty, social worker, educators	Knowledge of legal resources; knowledge of support resources	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O x <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

- 4. Hearing Quality.** Hearing quality projects include any efforts you have made to improve the quality of child welfare hearings, including court observation/assessment projects, process improvements, specialty/pilot court projects, projects related to court orders or title IV-E determinations, mediation, or appeals. List projects here if you have any in addition to the required project.

Do you have (an additional) hearing quality project/activity? ☐x Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Family Drug Court-just beginning	Specialty/Pilot Courts	Implementation

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?	Who was the target audience?	How many persons attended?	What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)	What were the intended training outcomes?	What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A

**5. Improving Timeliness of Hearings or Permanency Outcomes.** Timeliness and permanency projects include any activities or projects meant to improve the timeliness of case processing or achievement of timely permanency. This could include general timeliness, focus on continuances or appeals, working on improvement in specific outcomes such as around reunification, guardianship, adoption or a focus on APPLA and older youth.

Do you have a timeliness or permanency project/activity? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Pathways Project	Other	Implementation
Adoption Call to Action	Adoption	Implementation
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?	Who was the target audience?	How many persons attended?	What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)	What were the intended training outcomes?	What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**6. Engagement & Participation of Parties.** Engagement and participation of parties includes any efforts centered around youth, parent, foster family or caregiver, or relative engagement, limited English proficiency, or other efforts to increase presence and engagement at the hearing.

Do you have an engagement or participation of parties project/activity? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
4 people with lived experience on Task Force	Other	Implementation
Supported Springfield pre-petition staff	Parent Engagement	Implementation
Sent CAFL staff to multi-disciplinary representation conference focused on parent engagement  Funded client advisory board for CAFL Published court guides in many languages to increase engagement at hearings	Parent Engagement	Develop Theory of Change

Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?	Who was the target audience?	How many persons attended?	What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)	What were the intended training outcomes?	What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A

- 7. Well-Being.** Well-being projects include any efforts related to improving the well-being of children and youth. Projects could focus on education, early childhood development, psychotropic medication, trauma, social network support, cultural connections, or other well-being related topics.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on well-being? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Funded youth advisory board for CAFL	Other	Identifying/Assessing Needs
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**8. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA).** These projects include any efforts related to improving equity in child welfare systems around race, sexual orientation or gender identity, national origin or immigration status, religion, persons with disabilities, geographic or otherwise.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on DEIA? xx ☐ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Diversity Training	Other	Implementation
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> xxYes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Attorneys, Social Workers	150 - 200	Webinars	Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> XN/A

**9. ICWA/Tribal collaboration.** These projects could include any efforts to enhance state and tribal collaboration, state and tribal court agreements, data collection and analysis including of ICWA practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on ICWA or tribal collaboration? x ☐ Yes ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Sent two members of Tribe to NICWA conference	Tribal Collaboration	Implementation
Tribal member active on Task Force	Tribal Collaboration	Implementation
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes x <input type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**10. Preventing Sex Trafficking.** These projects could include work around domestic child sex trafficking, a focus on runaway youth, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement these sections of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on preventing sex trafficking/runaways? ☐ Yes x ☐ No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**11. Normalcy/Reasonable and Prudent Parent.** These projects could include any work around normalcy or the reasonable and prudent parent standard or practices, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement these sections of the Preventing Sex and Strengthening Families Act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on normalcy/reasonable prudent parenting? ☐ Yes ☒ No

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>CQI Stage (if applicable)</b>
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**12. Prevention.** Prevention projects include work around preventing child maltreatment including primary prevention (preventing maltreatment from occurring in the first place), secondary, and tertiary prevention.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on prevention? ☐ xYes ☐ No



<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>CQI Stage (if applicable)</b>
Family Preservation Program	Secondary or tertiary prevention	Evaluation/Assessment
Expansion of family preservation programs	Secondary or tertiary prevention	Implementation
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> xYes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Lawyers, social workers, educators	150	Webinar	Advocacy for expanding programs	<input type="checkbox"/> xS <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**13. Safety.** Safety projects are those that focus on decision-making around safety including decision-making practices in substantiation, removal, family time/visitation, and decisions about safety in out of home placements.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on safety? ☐ Yes ☐ No

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>CQI Stage (if applicable)</b>
Distributed ABA Safety Guide	Other	Implementation
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes x <input type="checkbox"/> no					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**14. Other.** Please list any projects you have that do not fit in any of the categories above.

Do you have any other projects/activities? ☐ Yes ☐ No

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>How would you categorize this project?</b>	<b>CQI Stage (if applicable)</b>

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes x <input type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L x <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**15. Other Notable Activities.** Are there any other activities the CIP has been engaged in not included above that you believe would be important to share with partners including those in the state, partner tribes, the Children’s Bureau, or the Capacity Building Center for Courts?

**16. Materials.** From any of the work described above, do you have any documents or other materials that feel would be helpful to share with the national CIP community? For example, research, innovative approaches, compelling outcome data, etc. Please link here or note and include in your submission.

Attachments: Custody Guide; Pathways report.

### III. CIP Collaboration in Child Welfare Program Planning and Improvement Efforts

**A) Overall Legal System Structures.** This section collects overall information about how legal systems are structured in your state. This information is designed to help partners understand the overall landscape of legal services. This will also be shared with the national CIP community to allow more targeted peer connections and technical assistance. We recognize that some responses may vary across your state, so we have set up items so that you can estimate percentages that would apply to the question at hand. If you completed the survey that was sent out January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and there have been no changes regarding questions 1 to 16 in this section, there is no need to answer these again at this time.

1. What kinds of judicial officers preside over your child welfare cases? (check all that apply)

☒ Judges

☐ Magistrates

☐ Referees

☐ Commissioners

☐ Other:

1. Approximately how many judicial officers oversee child welfare cases in your state? 42

2. What percentage of your courts have a dedicated child welfare docket?

☐ 0%

☐ 1-25%

☐ 26-50%

☐ 51-75%

☐ 75-99%

☒ 100%

Regarding child representation and advocacy in your state:

2. Thinking about the practice in all courts in your state, please estimate what percentage do the following:

What percentage of the courts in your state....	0%	1-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-99%	100%
Appoint an attorney for children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Appoint an attorney guardian ad litem for children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appoint an attorney and a lay advocate for children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do not appoint legal representation/advocates for children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use in-house staffing (e.g., Children's Law Center, Office of Child's Representative, etc.) for child representation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use contract attorneys for child representation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have multi-disciplinary child representation offices or "specialty" offices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have standards of practice for children's attorneys/attorney GALs? ☒ Yes ☐ No

CAFL has performance standards of practice for children's attorneys.

1. If yes, can you provide a link? \_\_\_\_\_ Attached: Performance Standards of Practice

2. Where does the funding for child legal representation primarily come from in your state? \_\_\_state funding\_\_\_

3. Regarding how children's attorneys are compensated in your state jurisdiction: (It's okay to estimate your answer.)

What percentage of children's attorneys in your state are compensated...	0%	1-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-99%	100%
at an hourly rate, with no cap per case.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
at an hourly rate, with a per case cap.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

as a salary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
at a flat rate per case	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
at a per hearing rate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Regarding any lay advocacy your jurisdiction provides to children or youth: (It's okay to estimate your answer.):

What percentage of courts in your state have...	0%	1-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-99%	100%
peer advocates for children or youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Court Appointed Special Advocates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
non-attorney guardians ad litem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Regarding child welfare agency representation in your state:

5. How is your agency's legal representation organized in your jurisdiction?

- ☒ state department of human services (i.e., "agency") staff  
☐ county department of human services (i.e., "agency") staff  
☐ non-department of human services (i.e., "agency") state or county office (e.g. prosecutor's/district attorney's office)  
☐ Other\_\_\_\_\_

6. How are agency attorneys compensated in your jurisdiction?

- ☒ salary  
☐ hourly rate  
☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you have standards of practice (e.g., attorney competencies, workload standards, policy of practice, etc.) for agency attorneys? ☐ No ☒ Yes

Performance standards for DCF attorneys are currently being developed.

a. If yes, can you provide a link? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Who does the agency attorney represent; that is, who is the client?

☒ the child welfare agency

☐ the “people” of the state

☐ the state itself

☐ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Regarding parent representation and advocacy in your state:

9. Do you have standards of practice for parents’ attorneys? ☒ Yes ☐ No

a. If yes, can you provide a link? \_\_\_\_\_

Refer to attached document

**10. What percentage of your courts have the following parent representation structure?**

What percentage of the courts in your state...	0%	1-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-99%	100%
Use in-house staffing (e.g., Family Defense Center, Office of Respondent Parent's Counsel, etc.) for parent representation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use contract attorneys for parent representation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have multi-disciplinary parent representation offices or "specialty" offices	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**11. How are parents' attorneys compensated in your jurisdiction? (It's okay to estimate your answer.)**

What percentage of parents' attorneys in your state are compensated...	0%	1-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-99%	100%
at an hourly rate, with no cap per case.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
at an hourly rate, with a per case cap.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
as a salary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
at a flat rate per case	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
at a per hearing rate	x <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**12. Does your state utilize Title IV-E funding to help pay for representation?**

Representation type	Yes, in a single jurisdiction	Yes, in multiple jurisdictions	Yes, statewide	No
Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	xx <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	xx <input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	xx <input type="checkbox"/>

- a. If yes, what are the administrative structures for accessing these IV-E funds?

All DCF attorneys' salaries are paid out of state funds, a portion of which come from IV-E reimbursements. All IV-E reimbursements go into the Massachusetts general fund.

Please describe how the CIP was involved with the state's CFSP due June 30, 2023.

DCF is currently operating under the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan submitted to ACF on June 30, 2019. Chief Legal Counsel of DCF, a member of the CIP Steering Committee, provided the CIP and DCF write-up for the CFSP. The joint activities and goals were summarized based on meetings with the CIP.

The "new" 2025-2029 CFSP is due on June 30, 2024. CIP will collaborate in developing/writing the joint goals and objectives for CIP and DCF.

Does the CFSP include any of the following:

- ☒ the CIP/Agency Joint Project
- ☐ the Hearing Quality Project
- ☐ the Legal Representation Project
- ☐ other judicial strategies
- ☐ other attorney strategies

If yes, please describe.

13. Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in the most recent/upcoming title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review in your state. Not involved.

14. Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in preparing and completing round 4 of the CFSR and PIP.

In the winter of 2022, CIP representatives began monthly meetings with DCF and federal CFSR consultants to begin preparation for the CFSR Round 4. In June of 2022, Cristine Kiesel presented to the CIP Task Force on the importance of stakeholder (now called "partner") involvement and explained the CFSR process. In September 2022, CIP representatives were part of a bi-weekly stakeholder engagement group convened to work on the CFSR. CIP staff worked with six different groups focused on several items in the CFSR. We wrote,



reviewed, and edited a variety of sections of the state led assessment and continued to meet regularly with DCF staff and others. CIP identified a diverse group of partners to participate in CB led focus groups. CIP staff participated in a focus group. CIP will be involved in supporting DCF in developing the PIP. Ruben Ferriera presents an update at all Task Force meetings on the CFSR process. The CFSR process is discussed at all CIP committee meetings: Steering Committee, Adoption Call to Action Committee and Training Committee. CIP plans to work with DCF on the creation and implementation of the PIP.

B) Only states that will be participating in round 4 of the CFSR and PIP in your state this reporting year are required to complete the remaining questions in this section B. However, working to organize meaningful engagement of a broad array of legal and judicial stakeholders and to support collaboration with other system partners is useful for other major CIP projects as well, so others may wish to consider these with your teams. See the PI at page 9 for further explanation.

**1. Regarding engaging the legal and judicial stakeholders with a broad representation of perspectives in CFSR/PIP processes:**

i) What barriers do you foresee in engaging stakeholders at an appropriate breadth and depth?

Geography and meeting times may have been a barrier to participation. However there has been unprecedented cooperation between agencies in engaging “partners” in the process. Virtual meetings and flexible meeting times have provided expansive access and broad and diverse representation.

ii) What do you believe will facilitate engaging stakeholders at an appropriate breadth and depth?

Initiating stakeholder partner groups early on; having frequent meetings; holding focus groups at flexible times; and having virtual meetings.

**2. Are there other leadership structures for legal and judicial stakeholders and how can those facilitate the processes around the CFSR/PIP?**

DCF, CPCS and the Juvenile Court have been actively engaged in the process. DCF presents updates to the CIP Task Force which is comprised of some judicial and legal stakeholders.

**3. How will legal stakeholder involvement in the CFSR/PIP be managed?**

DCF, with the assistance of CIP, reached out to the Children and Family Law division of the Committee for Public Counsel Services requesting they organize a focus group of attorneys during the state assessment process in 2022-23. The group was facilitated by DCF’s General Counsel, Cristina Tedstone. Judges and lawyers were identified and participated in the CB focus groups in the April 2023. CIP

participated in a focus group in April 2023. DCF, with assistance from CIP, will continue to engage lawyers and judicial stakeholders in the PIP process.

4. What court, judicial, or attorney data could be integrated into the CFSR/PIP process? **Mass Courts data**

5. How might participation vary in stages of the process? **Early on DCF invited a diverse group of child welfare stakeholders, including partners with lived experience, to form a Stakeholder Engagement Committee. During the state-wide assessment the group met bi-weekly to discuss challenges and to work on the state-wide assessment. DCF, with the assistance of CIP, the Stakeholder Engagement Committee, CAFL, the Juvenile Court, the CIP Task Force and others identified persons to be part of focus groups to address questions the CB had on the state assessment. Flexibility in scheduling supported access to diverse groups. When the CB provides their report/assessment work on the PIP will begin. The structures are in place to have deep and diverse participation in the PIP process.**

6. What feedback loops will be needed to keep stakeholders informed?

**Frequent meetings with the Children's Bureau followed by frequent Stakeholder (Partner) Engagement meetings. CFSR process discussed at all CIP meetings: Steering Committee, Task Force meetings, Adoption Call to Action meetings, etc.**

7. What supports do you need from the Children's Bureau or Capacity Building Centers for participating in the CFSR/PIP? **Continued work with the CB consultants to support the work.**

### C) Collaboration with the Child Welfare Agency in General

1. What strategies or processes are in place in your state that you feel are particularly effective in supporting joint child welfare program planning and improvement?

**Developing diverse committees which support child welfare initiatives has been effective: CIP Steering Committee, CIP Task Force, CFSR Engagement Committee, CIP Training Committee, Adoption Call to Action Committee. These committees are composed of a group of diverse stakeholders. Holding virtual meetings has improved committee diversity and improved participation.**

2. What barriers exist in your state that make effective joint child welfare program planning and improvement challenging? **The independence of the judicial and executive branches can lead to a lack of collaboration.**

3. Regarding collaboration on training with the child welfare agency:

a. Regarding training needs across the child welfare system, what is your process to work with the agency to consider how to maximize the impact of complementary resources and ensure there is no undue duplication of efforts? **The CIP Training Committee is**

comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders, including a representative from the child welfare agency. CIP training materials are developed and vetted through the child welfare agency.

b. Does the state child welfare agency currently offer professional partner training to judges, attorneys, and court personnel as part of its Title IV-E Training Plan? **No**

If yes, please provide a brief description of what is provided and how.

If no, have you met with child welfare agency leadership to discuss and explore utilizing professional partner training for judges, attorneys, and court personnel? **Yes. CIP has a diverse training committee including a representative from the child welfare agency. The trainings the committee develops, and implements is available to judges, attorneys, court personnel and other child welfare stakeholders.**

#### IV. CQI Current Capacity Assessment

1. Has your ability to integrate CQI into practice changed this year? If yes, what do you attribute the change to?

**The CFSR process (particularly working on the state assessment) improved our understanding of how to use data to identify areas that need improvement and to develop or modify a theory of change. For example, CIP, working with the Kinship Navigator Program and utilizing CQI, analyzed the case referral data and recognized that the intervention that was developed was not providing enough referrals. The intervention was modified with promising results.**

2. Which of the following CBCC Events/Services have you/your staff engaged in this past year?

- ☐ Attorney Academy
- ☐ Judicial Academy
- ☒ x CIPShare 2.0
- ☐ CQI Consult (*Topic:*\_\_\_\_\_)
- ☐ xCQI Workshop
- ☐ Constituency Group - JCAMP
- ☒ x Constituency Group - Data/Evaluation
- ☒ x Constituency Group - Family First Prevention Services Act
- ☒ x Constituency Group - Hearing Quality

- ☒ x Constituency Group - ICWA
- ☒ x Constituency Group - Legal Representation
- ☒ x Constituency Group - New Directors
- ☒ x Constituency Group - Race Equity
- ☐ Constituency Group - Regional CIP Calls haven't occurred this year
- ☐ Constituency Group - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ☒ x CIP All Call – *What % of All Calls does your CIP participate in? 100%*

**3. Do you have any of the following resources to help you integrate CQI into practice?**

- ☐ CIP staff with data expertise
  - ☐ CIP staff with evaluation expertise
  - ☐ CIP staff with CQI expertise
  - ☐ University partnership
  - ☒ x Statewide court case management system
  - ☐ Contracts with external individuals or organizations to assist with CQI efforts
  - ☒ x Other resources: **rely on the Trial Court's Department of Research and Planning to help with data questions/analysis.**
- 

**a. Do you record your child welfare court hearings?** ☒ x Yes ☐ No

If yes, are they ☒ x audio ☐ video

**b. Can you remotely access your court case management system? *For example, Odyssey systems often allow remote access to case files. CIP does not have access to the court case management system.***

☐ Yes ☒ x No

**c. What court case management software does your state use? Odyssey. If multiple, please indicate the most common:**

**d. Have you employed any new technology or applications to strengthen your work? **Court Dashboards****

**e. Do any of these systems include an electronic filing system? No**

4. Please describe any continuity planning the CIP has led or has been involved in if not noted above. Continuity planning includes prevention and recovery planning for threats such as public health crises, natural disasters, or cyber-attacks. This may include, for example, technology support for remote hearings or legal representation, developing guidance, coordinating with other agencies, or otherwise ensuring back-up approaches are in place to ensure needed services are able to continue. CIP underwent a state audit this year. Policies and procedures were updated. The Auditor's Office had no recommendations to improve the operation of CIP. The Court Improvement Program participates in "active shooter" training at the Supreme Judicial Court. The Court Improvement Program operates on a VPN court network to protect our work.
5. Considering the phases of change management and how you integrate these into practice, are there phases of the process (e.g., Phase I-need assessment, Phase II-theory of change) that you struggle with integrating more than others? Assessment.
6. Is there a topic or practice area that you would find useful from the Capacity Building Center for Courts? Be as specific as possible (e.g., data analysis, how to evaluate trainings, more information on research about quality legal representation, how to facilitate group meetings, etc.) Evaluations, Facilitating group meetings, data analysis.

## DEFINITIONS

### Definitions of Evidence

**Evidence-based practice** – evidence-based practices are practice that have been empirically tested in a rigorous way (involving random assignment to groups), have demonstrated effectiveness related to specific outcomes, have been replicated in practice at least one, and have findings published in peer reviewed journal articles.

**Empirically-supported-** less rigorous than evidence-based practices are empirically supported practices. To be empirically supported, a program must have been evaluated in some way and have demonstrated some relationship to a positive outcome. This may not meet the rigor of evidence-base, but still has some support for effectiveness.

**Best-practices** – best practices are often those widely accepted as good practice. They may or may not have empirical support as to effectiveness, but are often derived from teams of experts.

### Definitions for CQI Phases

**Identifying and Assessing Needs** – This phase is the earliest phase in the process, where you are identifying a need to be addressed. The assessing needs phase includes identifying the need, determining if there is available data demonstrating that this a problem, forming teams to address the issue.

**Develop theory of change**—This phase focuses on the theorizing the causes of a problem. In this phase you would identify what you think might be causing the problem and develop a “theory of change”. The theory of change is essentially how you think your activities (or intervention) will improve outcomes.

**Develop/select solution**—This phase includes developing or selecting a solution. In this phase, you might be exploring potential best-practices or evidence-based practices that you may want to implement as a solution to the identified need. You might also be developing a specific training, program, or practice that you want to implement.

**Implementation** – the implementation phase of work is when an intervention is being piloted or tested. This includes adapting programs or practices to meet your needs, and developing implementation supports.

**Evaluation/assessment** – the evaluation and assessment phase includes any efforts to collect data about the fidelity (process measures: was it implemented as planned?) or effectiveness (outcome measures: is the intervention making a difference?) of the project. The evaluation assessment phase also includes post-evaluation efforts to apply findings, such as making changes to the program/practice and using the data to inform next steps.

## **Paperwork Reduction Act**

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-0307 and it expires 02/28/2026. The estimated time to complete the Self-Assessment is 40 hours