Child and Family Services Division Annual Progress and Services Report

June 2026



DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES

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STATEMENT OF INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE AND INTRODUCTION

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Child and Family Services Division (CFSD), in accordance with the 2026 Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) program instructions and its definition of "critical updates," Montana incorporates by reference the information and data contained in its prior year APSR (2025) as if fully set forth herein. Accordingly, this submission provides only critical updates from the prior year APSR, consistent with the reporting requirements of 45 C.F.R. §1357.16.

SYSTEM PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

Between January and May 2026, CFSD conducted internal case reviews across three regions to supplement the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 4 assessment completed in August 2025 for the other three regions in Montana. Findings from these internal reviews aligned with the federal results, confirming consistent practice statewide. Investigation timeliness showed gradual improvement; however, fully accurate tracking remains constrained by limitations in the current case management data system. These issues are expected to be addressed with the implementation of the new Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) system, Partner Engagement and Kid's Safety (PEAKS), in 2027. The Montana 2025 CFSR Round 4 Final Report is now published on the CFSD Website.

COLLABORATION – CRITICAL UPDATE (APPLICABLE TO PAGE 9 OF THE 2025 APSR)

Regional Advisory Council (RAC) meetings have been discontinued as part of an effort to streamline coordination with community partners. Regional leadership now engages through existing community councils, reducing meeting overlap and improving efficiency for partners who were attending multiple, similar meetings.

SAFETY – CRITICAL UPDATES (APPLICABLE TO PAGES 16-26 OF THE 2025 APSR)

Recurrence of maltreatment and maltreatment in care remain above federal standards. Use of Family Support Teams (FSTs) continues to vary across regions; CFSD intends to reinstate consistent, statewide implementation of FSTs beginning in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2027 . Caseworker visitation remains a system strength, particularly in state-managed cases. While some progress has been made in the timeliness of investigations, challenges with documentation and data reliability will persist until the transition to the PEAKS system.

Safety Outcome 1

- CFSR Rating: Area Needing Improvement (ANI).
- Recurrence of maltreatment remains above the national standard (12.4%).
- Maltreatment in care at 13.42 per 1,000 days.
- Timely investigation completions improved to 66.2%.

Safety Outcome 2

- Continued work on American Indian disparity reduction.
- FST usage is inconsistent; statewide reinstatement planned SFY27.
- Caseworker visits meet goals for state-managed cases.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN (CFSP) APPLICABLE GOALS (APPLICABLE TO PAGES 167-169 OF THE 2025 APSR)

Goal 1: Engage families to effectively assess/manage safety concerns and prevent removals when possible.

Objective 1: Improve statewide timeliness of investigations into accepted reports, from initiation of the report-to-report closure.

- **Measure 1:** Timely Initial Contact on Reports, broken down by priority.
  - Target: 95% statewide by the end of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2029 (September 30, 2029). This measure will be considered met when the statewide total intakes reach 95%, regardless of achievement on individual priorities.
  - Progress: Since implementing the Fidelity Review Tool, SFY26 results have remained largely consistent with those reported for SFY25. CFSD has identified inconsistencies in the report data due to multiple issues affecting how information is entered and extracted from the current system. These issues are not expected to be resolved until after the new CCWIS system goes live in SFY28.
- **Measure 2:** Timely Completion of Investigations.
  - Target: 85% statewide by the end of SFY29.
  - Progress: Timely completions of investigations rating in SFY25 was 59.3%, and 66.2% om SFY26, a 7% increase.

Objective 2: Utilize FSTs at the onset of cases to identify initial services to promote more timely engagement of services, prevent removals, and facilitate earlier return of children to parents when possible.

- **Measure 1:** Compare case outcomes when utilizing Family Support Teams.
  - Progress: In February 2026, CFSD's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) bureau assessed each region's FST performance and found that several regions had dissolved their FST meeting coordinator roles to focus on other prevention and support practices. As noted in the CFSR Round 4 Final Report, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) referenced multiple positive impacts of FSTs during case reviews in regions where they were implemented. Based on these findings, the CFSD Management Team (M-Team) has reaffirmed its commitment to restoring statewide implementation of FST meetings beginning in SFY27. A performance target for SFY28 will be established at the end of SFY27. Progress on these efforts will be reported in future APSRs and during the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

Objective 3: Engage families in reassessment of safety on an ongoing basis through both formal and informal assessments.

- **Measure 1:** CFSD will increase the frequency of monthly visits with children in foster care.
  - Target for all cases: 86% by the end of FFY28. This target is to improve state-managed cases to 95%.
  - Target for state-managed foster care cases: 95% by the end of FFY28. The target for all cases may be adjusted in future years based on collaboration with Tribal partners and their feedback.
  - Progress: Initial and ongoing training have been expanded to better support caseworkers in understanding visitation requirements. During the CFSR Round 4, the frequency and quality of caseworker visits were found to be sufficient in 88% of reviewed cases.

- **Measure 2:** CFSD will create a mechanism for evaluating the frequency of visits with parents on open cases. In SFY26, CFSD will establish a baseline, identify barriers, and set a target.
    - Progress: CFSD created and implemented the reporting mechanism in SFY25. However, data-reporting challenges remain, including ensuring consistent data entry across the state. The M-Team is currently reviewing and discussing the report to determine next steps. During SFY27, CFSD will pull frequency-of-visits data from the case management system to conduct an analytical review, establish a baseline, identify trends and barriers, set a target, and define goals for the remainder of the CFSP period (SFY27–29).
- **Measure 3:** CFSD will create a Family Case Plan (FCP) to support formal ongoing assessment of risk and safety. The FCP will be used at least 60 days after case opening, every 6 months thereafter, and at case closure. SFY26 CFSD will establish a baseline, identify barriers, and set a target.
    - Progress: FCPs are evaluated using data entered into the case management system, Child Adult Protective System (CAPS). CFSD is continuing to address data-reporting challenges, including the need for consistent data entry across the state. During SFY27, CFSD will extract data from CAPS to conduct an analytical review, establish a baseline, identify trends and barriers, set a target, and define goals for the remainder of the CFSP period (SFY25–29).

Objective 4: Identify and address barriers to increasing in-home cases.

- **Measure 1: Identify** and address barriers to increasing in-home cases.
    - Progress: Prevention Plans – CFSD continues to utilize In-Home (IH) Prevention Plans; however, the number of plans has decreased significantly from SFY25 (484) to SFY26 (300). In response, the CFSD M-Team has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening statewide prevention efforts. During SFY27, CFSD will extract data from the case management system to conduct an analytical review, establish a baseline, identify trends and barriers, set a target, and define goals for the remainder of the CFSP period (SFY25–29).

PERMANENCY – CRITICAL UPDATES (APPLICABLE TO PAGES 26-39 OF THE 2025 APSR)

PERMANENCY OUTCOMES REMAIN MIXED, WITH SLIGHT INCREASES IN THE TIME REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE REUNIFICATION, GUARDIANSHIP, AND ADOPTION. RE-ENTRY RATES ALSO REMAIN ABOVE THE NATIONAL STANDARD. ALTHOUGH CFSD CONTINUES TO PRIORITIZE KIN-FIRST PLACEMENT PRACTICES, INITIAL PLACEMENTS WITH RELATIVES HAVE DECLINED SINCE 2020, RESULTING IN INCREASED RELIANCE ON NON-KIN PLACEMENTS.

Permanency Outcome 1

- Median time to permanency: Reunification 8 months; Guardianship 22; Adoption 32.
- Re-entry rates remain above national standards.

Permanency Outcome 2

- Initial placements with relatives approx. 50%.
- Focus remains on kin-first strategies.

FOSTER INSIGHTS

More than half of non-kin placements were identified as adverse placements, defined as placements outside a child's home community or without familial or cultural connection. Foster Insights recommends increasing early kin-finding efforts, strengthening non-kin caregiver supports, and implementing region-specific recruitment strategies to reduce adverse placements.

CFSP APPLICABLE GOAL (APPLICABLE TO PAGE 171 OF THE 2025 APSR)

Goal 2: Improve Timelines to Permanency and Reduce the rate of re-entries to foster care.
Objective 1: Enhance Concurrent Planning through Internal processes and Engagement with Stakeholders.

- **Measure 1:** CFSD will engage with stakeholders to identify external barriers and address them.
  - Progress: Due to the workload associated with the CFSR Round 4 and PIP development, the CFSD CQI Bureau shifted the timeline for reviewing the quantitative feedback from the Statewide Assessment and MCIP surveys from SFY26 to SFY27
- **Measure 2:** CFSD will continue the use of Permanency Planning Team (PPT) meetings, as detailed in CFSD's procedures throughout the life of the case for all kids in out-of-home care. This is currently difficult to measure, as all PPTs are tracked outside of CAPS.
  - Progress: During SFY26, the CFSD CQI Bureau conducted an analytical review of PPT. In SFY27, CFSD will use these findings to establish a baseline, identify trends and barriers, set targets, and define goals for the remainder of the CFSP period (SFY25–29).
- **Measure 3:** CFSD will continue the process of Resource Family Specialist Supervisors reviewing all kids in care for 12 months or more, to ensure concurrent planning is occurring and help identify permanency options for youth who do not have them.
  - Progress: CFSD continues to see improved outcomes in family cases following the implementation of this practice and the use of Family Case Plans.
- **Measure 4:** CFSD will reduce the re-entry rate to foster care.
  - Progress: As indicated in the February Statewide Date Indicators, Montana continues to have higher reentry rates than the national performance standard, and this will continue to be addressed through the PIP.

Objective 2: Facilitate timely permanency by filing Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) at 15/22 months when exceptions to filing TPR do not exist.

- **Measure 1:** CFSD will collect quantitative data on the timeliness of TPR filings, frequency of exceptions existing, and frequency of not filing due to reasons related to attorneys and judges.
  - Progress: Reports have been developed and are in use; however, due to the preparation required for CFSR Round 4, CFSD needs to adjust the timeline for this goal. During SFY27, CFSD will train applicable staff on how to use the report to ensure consistent application and will identify baseline data and set targets for future measurement.

WELL-BEING – CRITICAL UPDATES (APPLICABLE TO PAGES 39-55 OF THE 2025 APSR)

CFSD continues to exceed expectations for the frequency and quality of caseworker visits in state-managed cases. When tribal cases are included, statewide compliance decreases due to

variations in tribal documentation systems. CFSD maintains active partnerships with Tribal Social Services to improve shared reporting and data clarity.

Well-Being Outcome 1

- Visit compliance for state-managed cases consistently above 87%.
- Combined state + tribal cases remain lower due to tribal data context.

Well-Being Outcomes 2 & 3

- No significant updates for Outcome 2.
- Outcome 3: Need clearer guidance on prescription drug monitoring and evaluation follow-up.

SYSTEMIC FACTORS - CRITICAL UPDATES (APPLICABLE TO PAGES 55-212 OF THE 2025 APSR)

Key systemic improvements include preparations for the PEAKS CCWIS launch, strengthened fiscal oversight, enhanced supervisory coaching, and streamlined training structures. Several statewide practice models have also been updated to align with CFSR Round 4 findings.

Statewide Information System - CCWIS/PEAKS Critical Updates (*applicable to page 55 of the 2025 APSR)*

- PEAKS CCWIS development is ongoing; statewide training was launched via a statewide Roadshow for all CFSD staff.
- PEAKS remains on schedule to go live during the summer of 2027.

CFSP APPLICABLE GOAL (APPLICABLE TO PAGE 175 OF THE 2025 APSR)

Goal 3: Enhance CQI in Practice through improved data quality, training, and a robust CQI Plan.
Objective 1: Improve CFSD's availability of data and data quality.

- **Measure 1:** CFSD will develop a new CCWIS system.
  - Progress: During SFY26, the CFSD CCWIS project team engaged in discovery and refinement to turn Accenture's out-of-the-box solution, ACIS, into Montana's CCWIS solution, PEAKS (Partner Engagement and Kids' Safety System). CFSD, in partnership with our legacy vendor and Accenture, has been working on data cleanup efforts to reduce duplicates, improve data accuracy, and prepare the legacy data for a successful conversion. CFSD has continued through SFY26 to engage Tribal Social Services Directors and staff in the development and implementation of PEAKS.
- **Measure 2:** CFSD will provide training to staff on the importance of data entry and how to correctly enter it, resulting in a year-over-year decrease in total Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) errors.
  - Progress: Over the past several months, CFSD has engaged staff statewide by providing updates on the CCWIS system and by offering virtual and in-person training through its PEAKS Roadshow.
- **Measure 3:** Utilize Data Verification Tool with use of the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) to evaluate accuracy of data entered and information available, consistent with systemic factors 19 and 20. This is a new tool that will be implemented using the OSRI.
  - Progress: The CQI bureau was trained on the verification tool and applied it in 29 of the 42 cases reviewed in Regions 1, 4, and 6. The data showed the following: 93% of cases had no missing information related to sex, date of birth, race/ethnicity, placement history, or permanency goals; active engagement with the mother in developing the FCP

occurred in 55% of cases, and in 45% of cases with the father; FCPs met required federal provisions in 83% of cases; and 64% of children were placed in the least restrictive, family-like setting. During SFY27, the CQI Bureau will establish a baseline and set targets based on these findings.

Objective 2: Expand CQI practice throughout CFSD.

- **Measure 1:** CFSD will update their CQI Plan, train CQI plan and structure, and continue to improve effectiveness and efficiencies through the CQI Plan, Study, Do, Act process.
    - Progress: The CQI Bureau will work with the Training Bureau to ensure that training on the CQI plan structure—and its application for both new and ongoing staff—is implemented in SFY27.

Case Review System Critical Updates (*applicable to page 57 of the 2025 APSR*)

The new reporting process has enhanced CFSD's ability to track periodic review timeliness. CFSD will conduct a comprehensive data analysis in SFY27.

Quality Assurance System Critical Updates (*applicable to page 73 of the 2025 APSR*)

The Fiscal Bureau underwent a reorganization to enhance consistency and alignment across state operations.

Staff and Provider Training Critical Updates (*applicable to page 79 of the 2025 APSR*)

- A Virtual Reality Module 3 launched in March 2026.
- Technical assistance was engaged to help CFSD develop a comprehensive Post-Permanency Support Services program.
- Training Plan Revision (pg. 11) - Following revisions developed in partnership with the University of Montana, the Pre-Montana Child Abuse and Neglect (MCAN) curriculum now includes comprehensive content on child and youth development, trauma, behavioral and mental health, substance use, cultural humility, tribal collaboration, disability awareness, poverty, professional practice, communication, documentation, and sustainability in child welfare.

Service Array Critical Updates (applicable to page 103 of the 2025 APSR)

- Title IV-B programs served over 900 families/1000 children with Family Support and/or Family Preservation services, and 724 families/800 children with Reunification services.
- The Post-Permanency Support Services supported 127 families to include 144 youth.
- Chafee/Education and Training Voucher (ETV) mentorship program expanded to include 483 youth referred and 41 ETVs awarded in FFY25.

Tribal Coordination Critical Updates (*applicable to page 210 of the 2025 APSR*)

Seven IV-E Tribal Agreements are active through 2031; six Tribes updated Non-IV-E Agreements effective July 2026.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Critical Updates (*applicable to page 212 of the 2025 APSR*)

CFSD has no significant updates to report for the following subsection from the SFY25 APSR Section 7: CAPTA State Plan Requirements and Updates. Quarterly minutes from the Montana Citizen Review Panel (State Advisory Council), as well as demographic information for Child Protection Specialists, CI staff, and Supervisors/Managers—including years of service, education requirements, and gender—are available upon request. The following table includes the CAPTA Grant Expenditures and projection figures typically reported in this section.

Table 1: CAPTA Grant State Fiscal Years Expenditures and Projections

CAPTA Expenditures	Grant Plan Expenses in SFY25	Grant Plan Projected Expenses for SFY26
Supervisory Training and Development	$19,951	$12,000
Non-Supervisor Training and Development	$115,000	$170,396
Print Materials	$2,345	$2,500
Citizen Review Meetings/State Advisory Council (SAC)	$20,242	$16,000
University of Montana Supervisor Training/Leadership Academy	$130,957	$115,560
Montana Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect (PCAN) Conference	$34,952	$63,428
Tribal/Cultural Awareness Support Programming and Materials	$0	$5,000
Estimated Indirect Costs	$7,725	$8,170
TOTAL	$331,172	$393,054

CONCLUSION

- Montana remains committed to strengthening safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families through data modernization, targeted practice reforms, and enhanced partnerships with Tribes and community stakeholders. Progress in 2026 reflects steady system refinement, focused improvements in practice areas identified during the federal review, and continued development of the PEAKS system, which will support higher-quality data and case management statewide.