

Mandatory Reporting Task Force

Alternative Processes and Services

The text below will be discussed during the March 20th meeting of the Mandatory Reporting Task Force, and will be refined into a set of recommendations regarding alternative processes and services. The text below does not represent proposed recommendations.

The task force recommends that all three of these alternative processes and services – decision supporting tools, consultations, and warmlines – be created in the state of Colorado. They overlap and build on one another, and should not exist in a vacuum but instead should all three exist simultaneously.

Decision Supporting Tools

The task force **recommends contracting** with a third party to create a decision supporting tool. This tool will aid mandatory reporters in deciding if a concern they have meets the threshold required to prompt a report of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. The following considerations should be made in developing this decision supporting tool:

- The task force recommends that the decision supporting tool created by the contracted third party similarly includes the following: ease of use and user-friendly interface; direct referrals to and clarifications of state law; use of clear language rather than legal terminology for greater understanding; incorporation of implicit bias considerations; and the provision of resources and links to agencies, services, and/or entities who may help resolve problem if report is not recommended.
- The task force recommends developing an optional method to **document their completion** of the proposed tool. However, members urged this function be optional should a mandatory reporter not wish to have their personally identifying information collected.
- The task force recommends that a **paper version** of this tool also be developed so its use is not dependent on internet access or technology such as smartphones or computers.
- The task force recommends that additional guidance be created to aid mandatory reporters in determining **how and when to ask questions or in other ways engage** with a family to determine responses to tool prompts and ultimately decide whether to report.
- The task force recommends additional guidance be provided to mandatory reporters so, when appropriate, mandatory reporters may have **meaningful engagement** with families to obtain more information.

- The task force recommends additional guidance be provided to mandatory reporters to help them determine when it is appropriate to **gather additional information** before making a report and how to go about doing so.
- The task force recommends that, when developing the decision supporting tool, consideration be given to how it can and will **interact with other tools** already in existence such as Colorado’s safety and risk assessment tools.
- The task force recommends that **training** for the proper completion of this tool be developed and required.
- The task force recommends that special consideration be given in developing resources and tools **specific to sexual abuse**.

Consultations

The task force recommends that the General Assembly enact policies that implement the offering of consultations to aid mandatory reporters in choosing whether a concern meets the threshold requiring a report of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. The following considerations should be made in developing these policies:

- The task force recommends **locating this consultation service** in a central statewide system, rather than in county or institution-specific offices, in order to ensure formal consistency and widespread access.
- The task force recommends that consultation services be **staffed by** child welfare or public health individuals with specialized knowledge regarding abuse and neglect reporting.
- The task force recommends **building on components of Arapahoe** County’s Community Development and Prevention Program, which includes a consultation component for community partners.
- The task force recommends that consultation services be **offered as an optional service** for mandatory reporters, rather than be required before every report is made.

Warmlines

The task force recommends that the General Assembly begin the process of creating a warmline system for families in need of assistance. Preliminary steps to creating such a system would include creating an inventory of services and resources available that can be referred via a warmline system. Building from a network comprised of these inventoried services and resources, a future warmline system will serve to connect families in need of assistance to services and resources when the concerns of a mandatory reporter for a family do not rise to the threshold requiring a report of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. The following considerations should be made in developing these policies:

- In order to eliminate duplication of efforts and to build on resources and services that already exist in the state of Colorado, the task force recommends contracting with a third party to **create an inventory** of existing resources.
 - The third party shall **consult families with lived experience** with the mandatory reporting system. These perspectives should help the third party in compiling its list of resources and considering connection points.
 - Engagement sessions should be aimed at **learning how families connect** with systems (for example, how technology is used).
 - The third party must conduct outreach in **every county**.
 - This outreach should include compiling/understanding **challenges and strengths** of each jurisdiction. The third party should also consider cultural, socio-economic and other social elements of each jurisdiction in gathering information on resources and available services and corresponding gaps.
 - The third party must assess how the list of available resources **remains current**.
 - The third party must contact **United Way/211 and other organizations** doing similar work.
 - The third party must consult with **similar existing networks** (see pages 12-13 [here](#)) in other states to learn about their various processes, implementation, funding structures, and lessons learned.
 - The contracted third party will also present recommendations on how best to build on those inventoried entities to develop a warmline system.