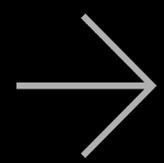




CHILD PROTECTION
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IGNITE THE CHANGE
STRATEGY ENGAGEMENT INNOVATION



Evaluation of Colorado Family Safety and Risk Assessment Tools (HB 24-1046)

Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman

ICF International

Ignite the Change Advisors, LLC

06/02/2025



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of COLORADO



Stephanie Villafuerte
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Project Background

- **Colorado's Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee (2023)**
 - Mandate: Conduct a holistic review of the state's child welfare system; identify systemic challenges and propose meaningful reforms to better support children and families
 - Comprised of 11 legislators; brought together system leaders and partners, experts, and lived experience during 5 public sessions
 - Culminated in 10 bill drafts; endorsed 5 key bills to the 2024 legislative session



Project Background

- **House Bill 24-1046, "Child Welfare System Tools"**
 - Mandatory reports to include evidence of domestic or intimate partner violence in the child's home
 - Standardized screening protocol for county departments, including specific questions about domestic or intimate partner violence
 - Statewide child abuse hotline to notify callers that calls are recorded, ensuring transparency and awareness
 - Third-party evaluator to audit Colorado's Family Safety and Risk Assessment tools
- **Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman is required to contract with the third-party evaluator**



CPO Procurement Process

- Request for Proposals (RFP) resulted in three vendor applications
- Assembled an evaluation team with diverse representation across key stakeholder groups:
 - CDHS/Division of Child Welfare (DCW)
 - County Department of Human Services
 - Office of the Child’s Representative (OCR)
 - Office of the Respondent Parents’ Counsel (ORPC)
 - Parent with lived experience in Colorado’s child welfare system
- Proposals scored independently based on predefined criteria using a standardized rubric
- Alignment meeting resulted in consensus among the evaluation team regarding the top scoring proposal/vendor



CPO's Role

- **Oversight:** Ensure the audit addresses the critical dimensions outlined in state statute
- **Access to Information:** Assist the third-party vendor in gaining appropriate access to necessary data, case files, documents, and assessment tools
- **Colorado Context:** Assist the evaluator in understanding and navigating the Colorado child welfare landscape
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensure the audit process is adequately staffed and managed
- **Final Report:** Submit the completed audit report by March 1, 2026



ICF Team



Anne Graham
Project Manager and
Child Welfare Specialist



Kate Stephenson
Lead Evaluator



Anna Gross
Research and Review
Specialist



Maddy Langan
Lived Expert Engagement
and Review Specialist

House Bill 24-1046: ICF's Role

(2) (a) (I) A third party evaluator will conduct an audit on:

A) Colorado Family Safety Assessment

B) Colorado Family Risk Assessment

b) In conducting an audit of the Colorado Family Risk Assessment, the third-party evaluator, at a minimum shall:

I. Identify tools and resources to ensure the assessment is carried out consistently

II. Identify gaps and solutions to enable caseworkers to complete the assessment in real time while in the field

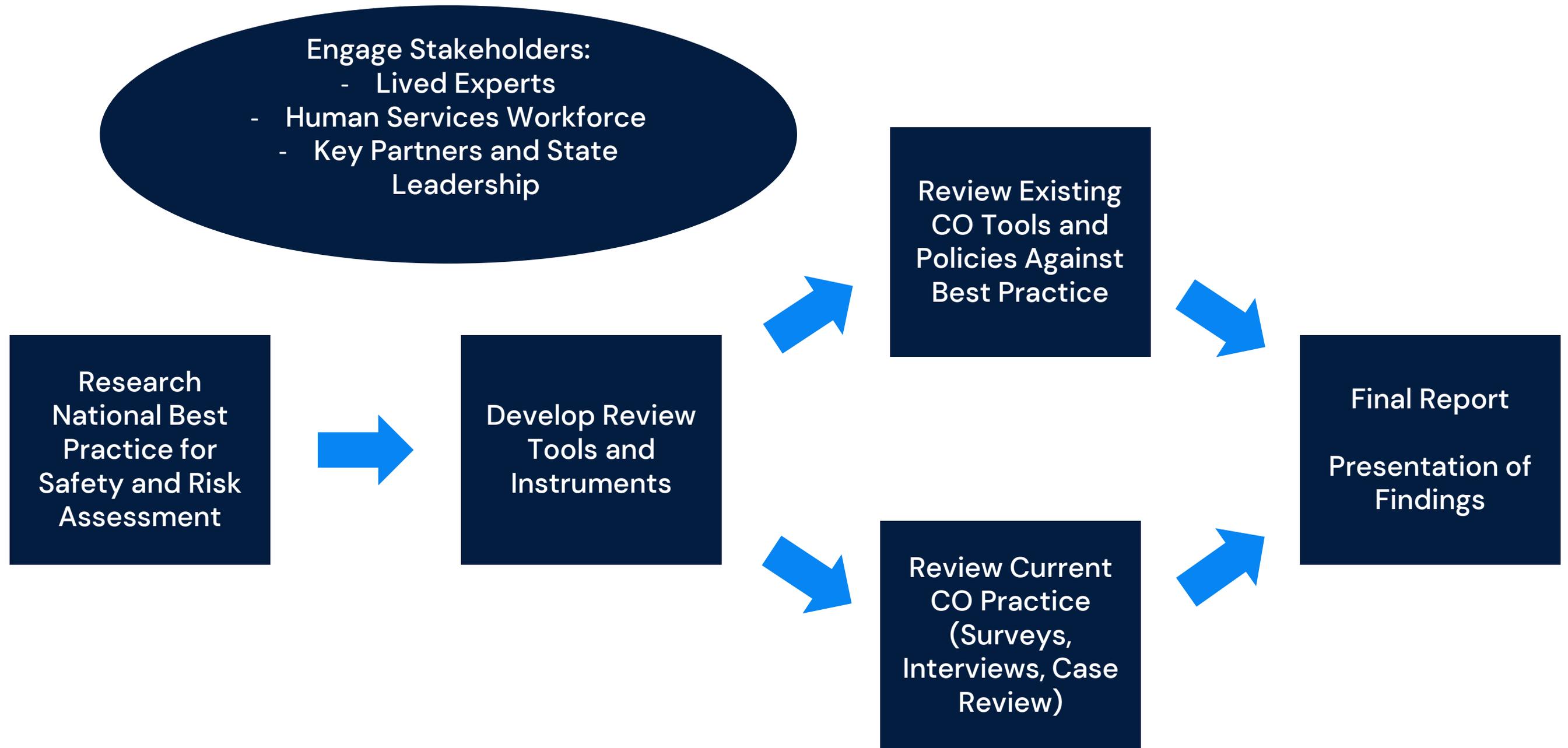
III. Examine the impacts of geography when using the assessment

IV. Examine the impacts of race and ethnicity when using the assessment and how they impact communities that are over-represented in the child welfare system

House Bill 24-1046: ICF's Role

- V. Evaluate and recommend best practices for sharing the assessment with families, legal professionals, and the judicial branch
 - VI. Evaluate and recommend best practices for training on the assessment
 - VII. Examine the assessment for domestic violence or intimate partner violence recommended best practices
- c) In conducting an audit of the Colorado Family Safety Assessment, the third party, at a minimum shall:
- I. Examine the issues set forth in subsections (2)(b)(I) to (2)(b)(VII) of this section
 - II. Study the inter-rater reliability of the Colorado Family Safety Assessment
 - III. Study the required documentation for the planning and removal of the child from the child's primary caregiver

Overall Approach



Timeline Overview

	Engaging Stakeholders	Protocol Development & Collection of CO documents	Research on Best Practices	Primary Data Collection & Analysis	Final Report & Presentations
Summer 2025	X	X	X		
Fall 2025	X		X	X	
Winter 2025/2026	X			X	X

Engaging Stakeholders

Engagement of local stakeholders is critical to ensuring that findings are valid, reliable and representative.

ICF will engage stakeholders to:

- Contextualize audit findings
- Provide local, representative perspective (e.g., geography, race, ethnicity, workforce experience)
- Infuse lived expertise
- Compliment ICF national expertise

Engagement Method

Two Ongoing Workgroups (monthly meetings)

- Lived Experience Workgroup
- Human Services Workgroup (i.e., caseworkers, supervisors)

Targeted Interviews/Discussions

- County Managers, Directors, State Leadership, and Key Partners

Expected Contributions

- Provide input for protocol and process development
- Share experiences as part of primary data collection discussions
- Provide context and input as results are finalized

Workgroup Recruitment Process

- Formal invitation and interest form sent to potential membership
- Considerations for workgroup members:
 - Type of lived experience (e.g., current or former foster youth, parent with lived experience, kinship provider, or other)
 - Type of workforce experience (e.g., caseworker, supervisor, manager, director)
 - Familiarity with the Colorado Family Risk and Safety Assessment
 - Race and ethnicity representation
 - Regional representation
 - Availability to participate
- Lived expert members will be compensated for their time
- Selected individuals engage directly with ICF for orientation
- First workgroup meetings in June

Human Services Workgroup

- 64 County Human Services Directors via Colorado Human Services Directors Association (CHSDA)

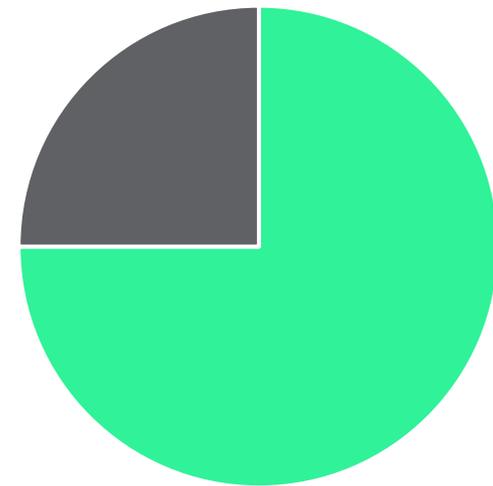
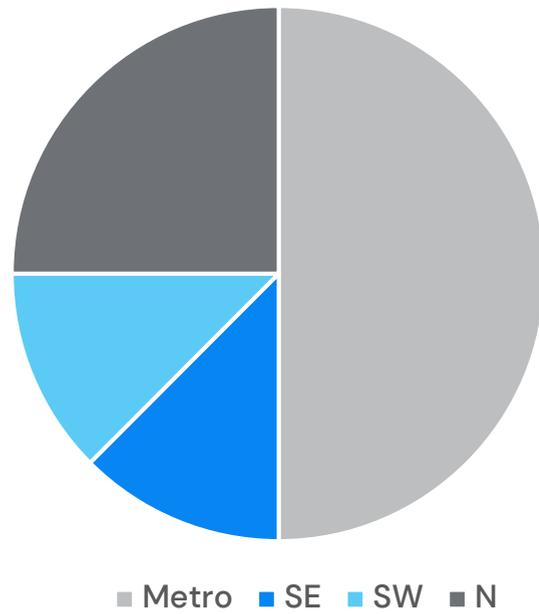
Lived Experts Workgroup

- CDHS Family Voice Council
- CDHS Division of Child Welfare (DCW) Family Advisory Council
- Colorado Office of the Child's Representative (OCR), Lived Experts Action Panel (LEAP)
- Colorado Office of the Respondent Parents' Counsel (ORPC), Parent Advocate Program
- Illuminate Colorado Family Advisory Board
- Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families
- Foster Alumni Mentors
- Denver Parent Advocates Lending Support (DPALS)
- Foster Source

Workgroup Membership

Lived Experience Workgroup

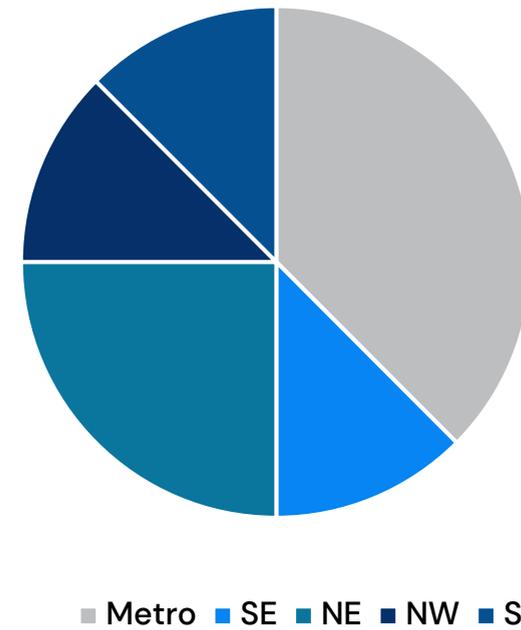
- 8 selected



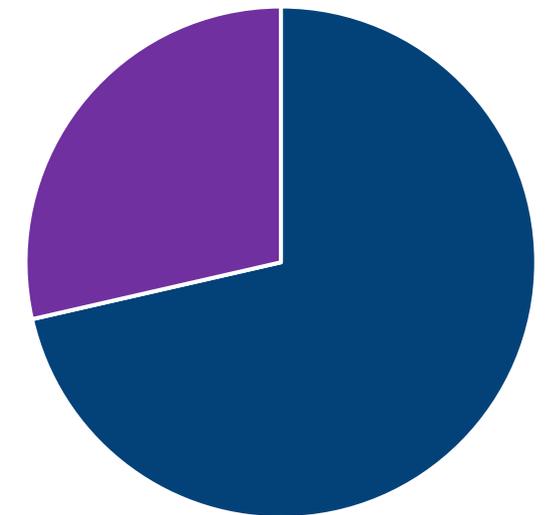
- Parent with Lived Experience
- Former or Current Foster Youth

Human Services Workgroup

- 8 selected (caseworkers and supervisors prioritized), recruitment ongoing



- Metro
- SE
- NE
- NW
- SW



- Caseworker
- Supervisor

Review of Colorado Documents

ICF will review the Colorado Family Risk and Safety Assessment tools as well as formal and informal documents intended to support effective use of these tools. These documents will support understanding of the tools and resources foundational to establishing case practice expectations.

Sampling Approach

ICF will review documents, such as:

- Colorado Family Risk and Safety Assessments
- Policy and protocols
- Training materials
- Practice supports (e.g., desk guides, FAQs)

We invite sharing of documents you feel are critical to understand current CO practice in all regions

Expected Contributions

- Understanding of sufficient infrastructure to support caseworker effectiveness (e.g., training, coaching, etc.)
- Support for consistent use of tools across regions
- Review of CO practice to best practice
- Case review protocol developed
- Inform survey development, interview guides, and workgroup guided discussions

Research National Best Practices

Assess national best practices in implementation of, practice with, and impact of multiple national safety and risk assessment models or tools.

- Review of peer reviewed journals, grey literature and national organizations (e.g., Child Welfare Information Gateway, Kempe Center, Casey Family Programs)

Research Selection Process (Initial Screening and Full-Text Review)

- Review titles, abstracts, and executive summaries to identify and select relevant publications for full review using inclusion criteria.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Key Information and Patterns: Extract data on study design, sample size, assessment tools used, outcomes measured, and/or key findings and identify recurrent patterns and gaps in literature

Comparative and Thematic Analysis: Summarize and compare the effectiveness of best practice models and tools including review of themes related to reliability, validity, cultural appropriateness, and practical application.

Ongoing research on best practices will continue throughout the process as new information is identified

Example Search Terms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Decision Making (SDM) • Signs of Safety • Risk assessment • Safety Organized Practices • Imminent danger assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety assessment • Safety tool • Action for Children’s Safety Assessment Family Evaluation • Solution based casework • Predictive Analytics in Safety & Risk Assessment
Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on child welfare safety and risk assessments • Academic publication, formal program report, white paper, or commentary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published before 2000 • Focus outside of the U.S. • Safety focus not related to child welfare

Case Reviews

ICF will review a limited sample of case records for:

- Consistent application of assessments
- Alignment of observable, documented practice to policies and protocols
- Available objective measures (e.g., timestamps for assessment completion and documentation of case notes)

Sampling Methods

Deidentified case files representative of:

- Various case decisions (e.g., removal, reunification)
- Populations with disproportionately high involvement with child welfare (e.g., race, ethnicity)
- Geography

Expected Contributions

Examine data related to:

- Case practice documentation compared to practice guidance and policy
- Variance in safety and risk determinations
- Regional or geographical variability
- Use of assessments and documentation of planning and rationale for decisions (e.g., removal)
- Documentation of factors that mitigate risk or child vulnerability (e.g., protective capacities of caregivers related to DV/IPV)

Interviews

ICF will engage State Leadership and Key Partners to include the voices and experience of these essential stakeholders to provide:

- Key perspectives on the tools
- Valuable insight for the review
- Context related to organizational capacity for implementation

Sampling Methods

Up to 6 targeted interviews/discussions with:

- DCW Leadership
- Training representatives from CWTS
- County DHS Directors and Managers
- Colorado Office of the Respondent Parents' Counsel
- Colorado Office of the Child's Representative

Expected Contributions

- Perceptions of supports, barriers, geographic variability, impacts related to race/ethnicity, and consistency compared to policy
- Perspectives on targeted questions in alignment with best practice (e.g., assessment of DV/IPV, training)
- Provide insights into CO context related to the sharing assessment with families, legal professionals, and the judicial branch
- Provide context and input as results are finalized

Survey

To collect additional input, ICF will develop and administer a survey using rating scales and open text items to:

- Gather key insights and perspectives
- Provide flexible opportunities for feedback
- Understand quality and frequency of specific practices in relation to practice guidance and policy expectations

Sampling Approach

Up to 30 survey invitations to provide additional county perspective and representation from:

- Front-line staff
- Managers and Directors
- Other stakeholders as identified in our review

Expected Contributions

Collect perceptions related to:

- Training and supports for consistent use of assessments
- Barriers and suggestions on possible solutions (e.g., completing assessments in real time with families)
- Regional variability
- Disproportionality and disparate outcomes
- Assessment of DV/IPV
- Consistency in decision making
- Alignment with best practice

Discussions with Workgroups

Workgroups will also serve as a primary source of information from caseworkers, supervisors, and lived experts.

Using systematic data collection processes, we will use meetings periodically to support information gathering for each area of analytic focus in the legislation.

Expected Contributions

Discussion guides will be used to implement focus groups in the workgroups and examine topics such as:

- Barriers and suggestions for completing assessments in real-time in the field
- Impacts of race and ethnicity
- Geographical variability in caseworker practice
- Use of assessments for DV/IPV
- Perceptions of tools and resources to support consistency
- Use of assessments to support decision-making
- Feedback on CO practice compared to best practice

Overall Analysis Approach

The analysis will reflect a systematic review and triangulation of targeted data sources through:

- Reviewing Colorado's tools and documents using a rubric and comparing with best practices
- Employing qualitative thematic coding methods to identify assessment strengths, areas for improvement, and lessons learned
- Identifying key overarching themes and highlighting commonalities across all data sources
- Addressing all required elements of HB 24-1046 legislation



Reporting on Results

Final Report (January/February 2026)

- Methods
- Results of best practices research
- Review of CO documents
- Case review findings summary
- Themes from surveys, interviews, and discussions
- Overarching themes and comparison of CO practice with best practice
- Results summarized for each component of HB 24-1046 requirements, including recommendations, as applicable

Sharing Findings with CPO (February 2026)

- Format and structure of final presentations to be determined
- Discussions on preliminary findings could occur in winter of 2025/2026
- Discussion with CPO partners (e.g., judicial partners, youth, agency leaders and staff)
- Presentations will include summary of methods included and high-level findings for each component of HB 24-1046 requirements
- Space for facilitating action steps related to findings

Opportunities to Inform and Support the Work

1) Reach out with Questions!

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Deputy Ombudsman, CPO

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2) Send over documents that support Colorado practice to be included in the review

3) Encourage participation in surveys and interviews

Join ICF and Ignite the Change
for Office Hours!

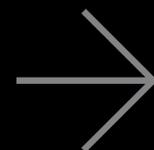
July 9, 2025 – 11:00 AM MT

July 23, 2025 – 11:00 AM MT

August 20, 2025 – 11:00 AM MT

October 3, 2025 – 9:00 AM MT

invites coming soon



Thank you

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