

Shifting the Paradigm from Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting by Building Community Pathways

Meeting the Needs of Families: Providing Concrete & Economic Supports and Other Services

Early Childhood Planning Council

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Chief Safety, Prevention and Early Intervention Branch



Presentation

- Why This Matters
- Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting
- Building Community Pathways

Why This Matters: Perspective

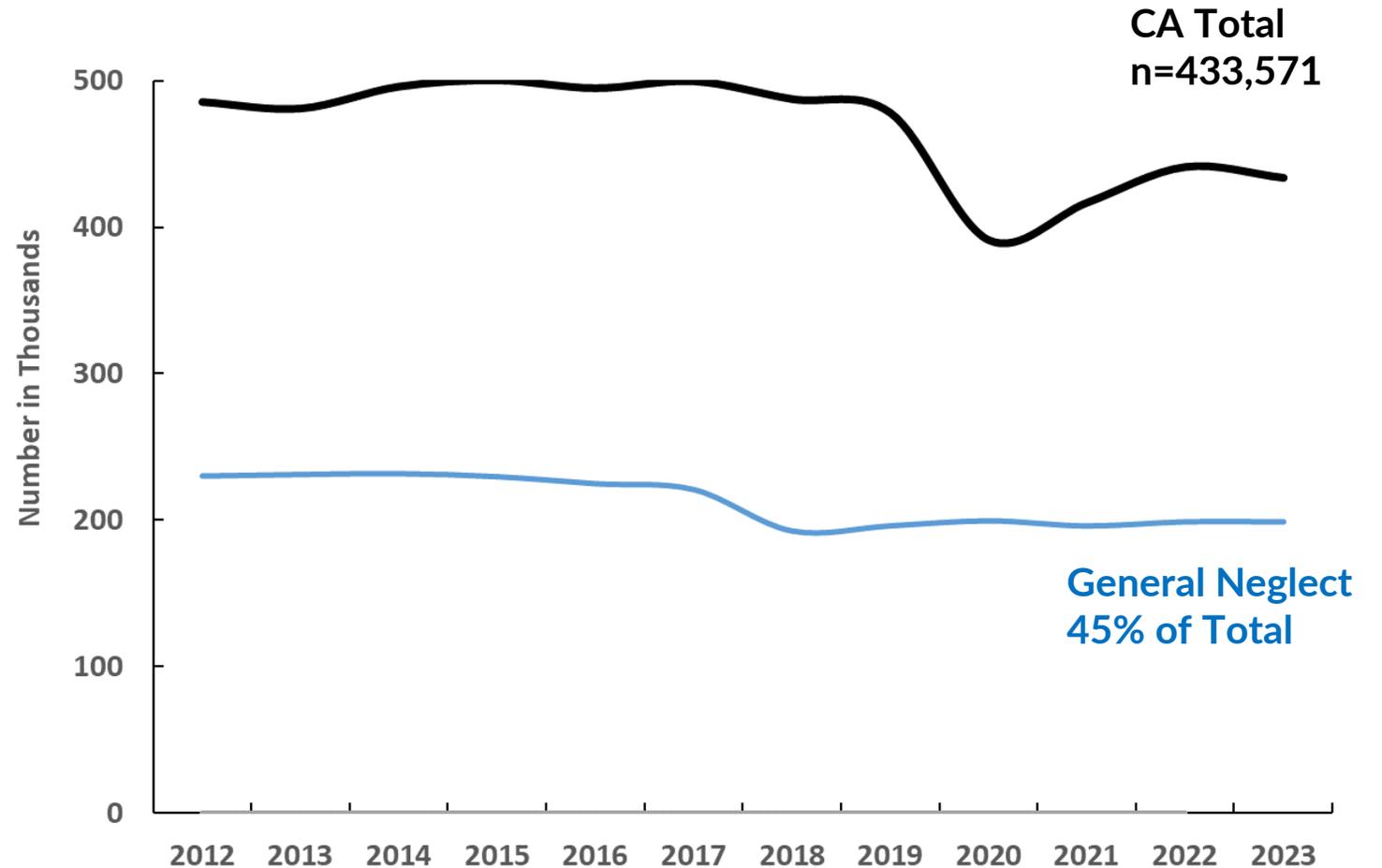
“My daughter was born medically fragile. I had no support from my family. I didn’t know where to go for help. I didn’t know how to ask for help because I didn’t know what I needed. The domestic violence in our home got worse because of the stress of being parents of a child with significant needs. When the police called CPS, I had no idea that my child could be removed because I was a victim of domestic violence. How could they take her away? I believe my experience—and my daughter’s life—would have been different if we had support, if someone had explained the “failure to protect” laws. Even though my daughter was in foster care for less than a year, she continues to suffer from the experience.”

— Shelley Lopez, Parent and Advocate

Why This Matters: General Neglect is the #1 allegation reported

45% of all children with an allegation of maltreatment are related to general neglect, an occurrence that can often be mitigated by community supports. **General neglect** is a “**catch-all**” allegation that is often driven by racism, bias, and the **absence of economic opportunity and resources**. It can also include issues related to domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health.

Children with an Allegation of Maltreatment



Why This Matters: The Data Confirms Overreporting

- **We must address the structural racism embedded in our child and family serving public systems**, based on the data which shows over surveillance at the front end and along the continuum.
- **Significant Racial Disparity: 25%** of white children compared to **50%** of Black and Native children experienced child welfare investigation. Black, Native American, and Latinx families significantly more likely to have reports substantiated and have their children separated from them and placed in foster care.

CDSS is Leveraging the Momentum

- **In 2018 Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), opens the door to family strengthening moving further upstream. CA FFPSA 5 yr plan approved in 2022. 53 Counties Opted in 2 IV-E Tribes**
 - **In 2023 Child Welfare Council's (CWC) Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force**
 - **In 2024 Task Force submitted CWC 14 Recommendations to reform Mandated Reporter policies and practices.**
 - **CDSS The Citizens Review Advisory Panel Report for 2024**
recommendations consistent with reform
 - **CalWorks Linkages 2.0 -- ReStructuring as a prevention strategy**
increasing access and coordination
- 

Mandated to Community Supporting Task Force Strategic Priorities



North Star: Keep children and families together, safe, well, and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive

1

Eliminate the disproportionate surveillance and reporting of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous people, and Latino families and communities, thereby leading to an environment of anti-racism in support of all children and families.

2

Analyze all categories and subcategories of child abuse and neglect under California's mandated reporting law to create more precision about what should and should not be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) to make consistent decisions to respond to families' needs appropriately.

3

Ensure that Mandated Reporting laws, policies, practices, education, and training do not incentivize or encourage inappropriate referrals and separation of families.

4

Ensure that **Mandated Reporters have both access to and training on how families can connect to available resources, services, and supports**; that these supports and how they are delivered are culturally aligned; and that families always retain agency in determining whether and how they utilize these supports.

5

Establish a **long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive investment in Mandated Reporting** reform, and its implementation, to guarantee transformative change and honor the commitments we have made to communities, families, parents, and children.



Keep children well and safe with families together and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive.

14 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **California Child Welfare Council (CWC), through its Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee, shall establish a Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC)**
- **Request the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC), to continuously monitor disparities in the child welfare system by gathering and analyzing research, data**
- **The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) shall ensure the implementation of AB 2085 in all California Counties and Tribes until such time that Recommendation #5 is implemented, and General Neglect is removed as a mandated reporting requirement**
- **In alignment with the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) report, *California's Child Welfare System: Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities*, encourage the LAO to continue analyzing disparities in the Mandated Reporting system to determine if narrowing mandated reporter categories in the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) negatively impacts child safety. T**
- **Support the amendment of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to remove the reporting requirement of *General Neglect* for Mandated Reporters**
- **Support the amendment of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to revise and clarify the definition of *Severe Neglect* to be aligned with the definition of Severe Neglect utilized in the [California Structured Decision Making \(SDM\) Tool](#)**
- **Encourage the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) and Counties, to implement a two-year pilot that provides Mandated Reporters with immunity from liability as identified in [Penal Code Section 1116 \(C\)](#)**
- **Support the amendment of Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to require all Mandated Reporters in California receive standardized training on child abuse and neglect**
- **Require the CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) to develop, with participation of individuals with lived expertise, a standardized curriculum for Mandated Reporters**



Keep children well and safe with families together and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Encourage the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (M RAC) to require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to incorporate an assessment of the capacity of community supports and services that are available and accessible to Mandated Reporters to meet local needs of families RAC), to develop a Mandated Reporter web page specific to Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting**
- **Consistent with the [PEI Community Pathway Recommendations](#), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) shall be required to ensure Counties' Comprehensive Prevention Plans (CPP) incorporate information and education specific to Mandated Reporters regarding the implementation of and access to Community Pathways and/or community resources available to support families in their communities**
- **Require the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) to ensure recommendations from the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force and any subsequent policy reforms related to Mandated Reporting are enacted and efforts necessary to ensure continued transformation of the Mandated Reporting system are advanced**
- **Ensure the creation and implementation of a statewide narrative change initiative** that acknowledges the harm committed by mandated reporting and the child welfare system, especially to Black/African American and Native American/Indigenous families

Building Community Pathways

Community pathways provide children, parents, kin and tribes culturally relevant, local prevention services without direct involvement with Child Protective Services (CPS).

- FFPSA opened the door to State funding (\$198M SBG) to build capacity and expands the prevention conversation with **public/private partnerships, other state and federal funds can be leveraged**
- Building community pathways is **one important tool** in system transformation



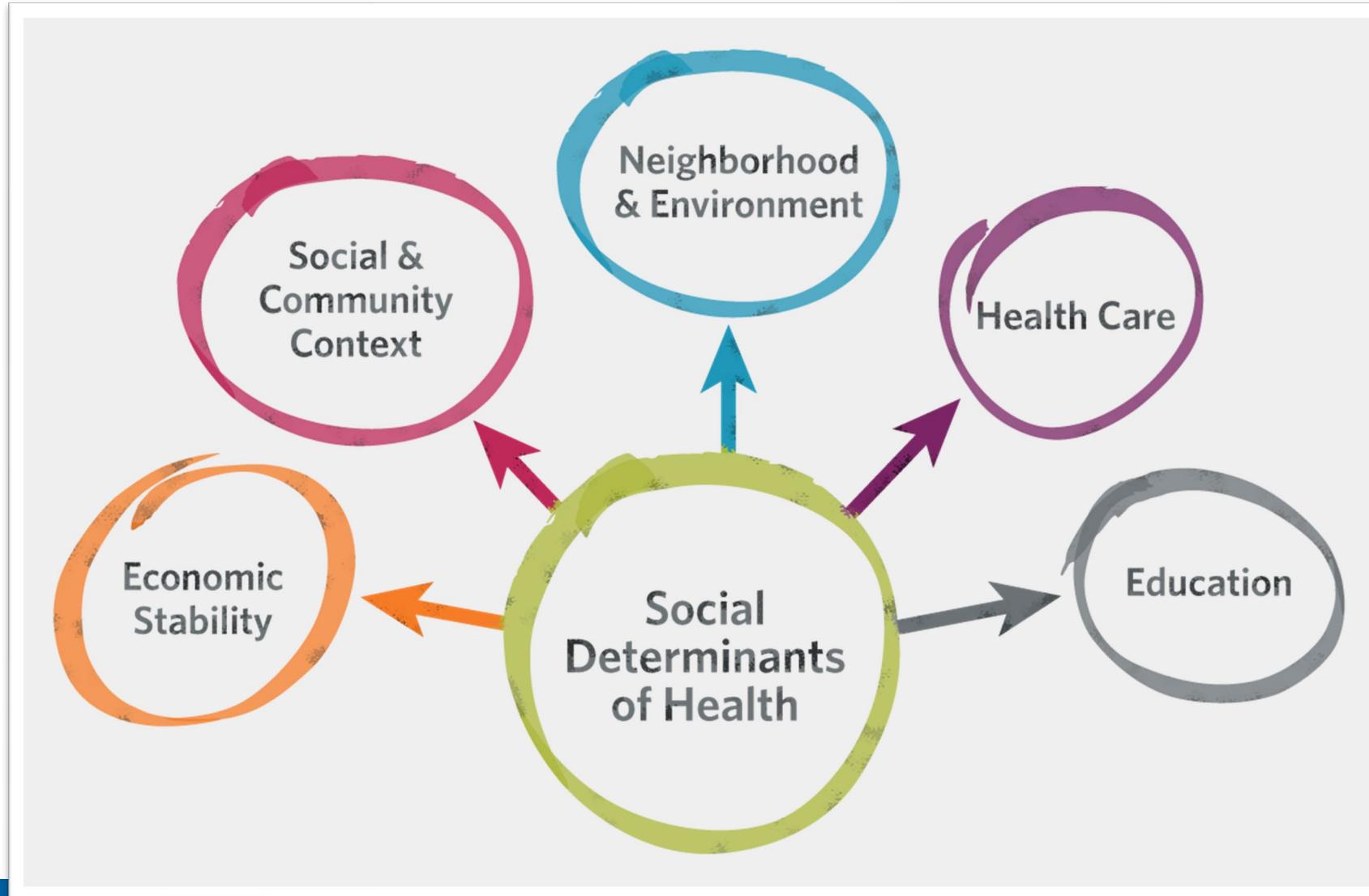
Building Community Pathways

A Community Pathway for Prevention

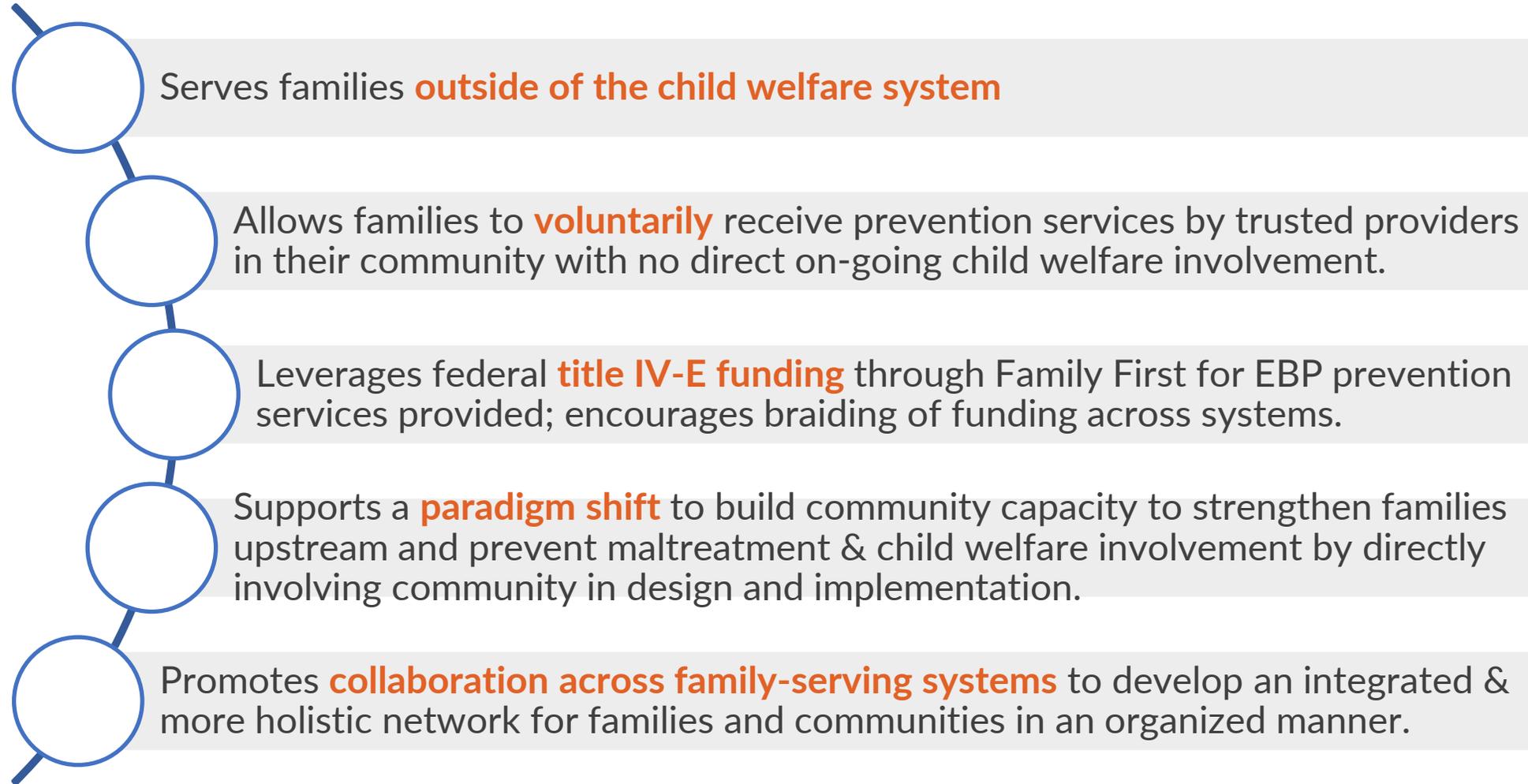


- Families often voluntarily seek support from public and private community agencies:
 - **faith-based organizations, schools, Family Resource Centers, afterschool programs, child care centers, other organizations, etc.**
- Engaging and strengthening connections between these organizations and local service providers that understand the **needs of the community** and provide direct services is key to realizing the ultimate vision for upstream prevention.
 - **Is there a role for Early Childhood Programs as referral to services and/or as providers?**

Build a Network of Services



Benefits of Community Pathways



Operationalizing a Community Pathway

A “community pathway” is any avenue that families can use to access a continuum of services, including Title IV-E funded Family First prevention services **outside of the traditional child welfare** service delivery context.

In CA, who provides service delivery & case management in a community pathway?

Options include but are not limited to:

Contracted and non-contracted community-based agencies
(e.g. family resource centers)

Specific evidence-based prevention service providers
(e.g. home visitors)

Non-child welfare public agency partners
(e.g. Departments of homelessness, behavioral health, public assistance, etc.)

Implementation Examples of Cross Sector Opportunities

In California, 33 Counties and 2 Tribes are implementing Community Pathways in their Comprehensive Prevention Plans.

Examples of some of the work underway include:

- **Integration of Home Visitation into Early Childhood Education**
- **Direct linkage to Childcare Referral Services from initial contact**
- Implementation of **Plans of Safe Care** in local hospitals
- Expansion of identified **EBPs** in preparation for claiming Title IV-E
- Development of dedicated **Information and Referral Lines**
- Establishing network of **Family Resource Centers** to serve as Hubs
- **Community-defined Projects** created by residents

Moving forward..

- CWC Vote on MRCS recommendations @ September meeting in 2024
- CDSS continue to build capacity with counties that implementing community pathway.(partner with state agencies, lived experts, communities, and others) for sustainable Community Pathways
- FFPS Implementation targeted for October 2026 still lots to do ..

Resources

[ACL 22-23](#)

[Approved Comprehensive Prevention Plans for California Counties](#)

[CalTrin Comprehensive Prevention Planning Resources page](#)

[CPP Implementation Guide: Plan Development Phase](#)

CalTrin Learning Series:

- [Comprehensive Prevention Plan Learning Series](#): The learning series is intended to assist counties in preparing for implementation of their unique Comprehensive Prevention Plan (CPP). The series maps directly to the nine Readiness domains for California's Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) Program and addresses requirements outlined in [All County Letter \(ACL\) 22-23](#) and [AB153](#).
- [Child, Family, and Community Well-Being Learning Series](#): The Learning Series is a dynamic and interactive opportunity for Counties to learn from subject matter experts, from one another, from tribal partners, as well as from parents and youth with lived experience to transform and implement innovative prevention-oriented service systems.
- SEND QUESTIONS ABOUT FFPSA TO: ffpsapreventionservices@dss.ca.gov