



Family First Prevention Services Family Well-Being Plan Implementation Brief

A Collaborative Framework for Family First Prevention Services in California:

California communities have a long-standing tradition of delivering grassroots, community-based services and supports that strengthen families and promote well-being. Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) implementation in California provides access to federal funding to sustain and expand these efforts as long as specific requirements are met including development of an “individual prevention plan” for every child receiving Title IV-E funded prevention services¹. **The individual prevention plan, per federal requirements, must include: 1) the start date; 2) documentation of eligibility; and 3) the services being provided.** In California, this is referred to as the Family Well-Being Plan (FWBP). While there is no standard FWBP template, the approach varies based on how families access services. **For those served through the FFPS Community Pathway, providers may use existing planning formats that capture the information needed for Title IV-E claiming, while the Title IV-E Pathway requires agency staff to complete specific FWBP components in CWS-CARES².**

This brief offers best practice recommendations for using a FWBP framework in prevention planning (including guidance on collecting data for reporting) while recognizing that local communities will develop prevention planning processes that meet federal requirements while reflecting their unique strengths and needs.

In addition to supporting Title IV-E claiming, the FWBP framework serves as a planning tool to assist families, service providers, Tribes, and public agencies working together to identify strengths, address needs, and coordinate prevention services that support child safety, family stability, and long-term well-being.

This brief provides an overview of the FWBP framework, including its purpose and requirements, guiding principles, key elements, and considerations for implementation across California’s prevention system. As implementation progresses, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) will continue to assess the need for additional guidance related to specific pathways, data elements, and CWS-CARES system requirements. This document will be updated as needed to include additional guidance.

1. Overview: What This Is and Why It Matters

This FWBP Implementation Brief offers guidance to support Title IV-E agencies³, including Tribes with a California Title IV-E agreement and community-based providers in the development and operationalization of effective, prevention-focused, and voluntary FWBP⁴ procedures within California’s FFPS Program. The FWBP framework serves as a consistent approach to providing a shared and structured process that allows Title IV-E agencies, Tribes, and community providers to align prevention efforts with federal Title IV-E requirements.

¹ Section 471 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 671) defines the minimum components required to be documented in the “individual prevention plan”, including the start date of the plan, documentation of eligibility, and the service being provided.

² CWS-CARES and CARES refer to the Child Welfare Services California Automated Response and Engagement System, the new software system being developed for the State of California to comply with Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) requirements. Version 1 will be released in October 2026.

³ Throughout this brief, the phrase “Title IV-E agency” is used broadly to refer to Tribes with a California Title IV-E agreement, county child welfare agencies and county probation departments. When there are specific differences in requirements among these entities, they are identified explicitly.

⁴ The phrase “Family Well-Being Plan” and the acronym FWBP refer to California’s approach to the federal requirement of establishing an individual prevention plan under FFPSA. The FWBP is required for claiming Title IV-E funding for delivery of prevention services. This name was adopted to reflect a trauma-informed prevention planning process with families, agencies, Tribes, and providers to support provision of prevention services. Tribes and counties may have developed other names for this plan.

By creating and maintaining a FWBP with families, communities establish the requirements needed to claim federal funding, enabling the expansion and sustainability of evidence-based prevention services, strengthening the FFPS Community Pathway, and increasing access to family-centered supports.

The FWBP supports:

The FWBP is:

- A collaborative plan developed with families and Tribes when there is a reason to know the child is an Indian child, to identify goals, services, resources, and concrete supports
- A tool to coordinate voluntary Title IV-E funded prevention services
- One of the tools available to document required FFPS data for federal and state reporting

The FWBP is NOT:

- An investigation or determination of fault
- A court-ordered or compliance-driven case plan
- A trigger for child welfare or probation involvement

- Coordination of prevention services
- Clear documentation of family strengths and goals
- Alignment between families and service providers
- Support for Title IV-E funded evidence-based prevention services funded through FFPSA
- Collaboration among Tribes, public agencies and community partners

This guidance offers direction to assist with planning and meaningful engagement with families; however, it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. In many communities, strong and effective community-based family-serving systems are already in place. The FFPS Program and associated FWBP framework will build upon and enhance those existing community-based services by strengthening capacity and increasing the availability of evidence-based family strengthening supports. In communities where service networks are still developing, the FFPS Program and FWBP process may contribute to building and aligning a comprehensive service array. Communities are encouraged to adapt this guidance to reflect their unique needs, culture, climate, linguistic and community context. Depending on the selected pathway and service plan option, consultation with county counsel may also be appropriate.

2. Guiding Principles

When used as a case management and/or planning tool, development and implementation of a FWBP is grounded in the following principles:

Family Partnership

Families are active partners in developing and shaping the FWBP. The FWBP is family-centered and strengths-based inclusive of family perspectives, goals, voice and choice.

Voluntary Engagement

Participation in prevention services is voluntary. Families may accept, decline, pause or discontinue services at any time without penalty or automatic escalation of child welfare or probation involvement.

Cultural Responsiveness

Prevention services should reflect the cultural identities, traditions and lived experiences of families and communities while recognizing trauma, honoring culture and diverse languages, and respecting Tribal sovereignty.

Tribal Collaboration

When there is reason to know that a child is an Indian child, Tribal collaboration is essential. The FWBP should be developed in partnership with Tribes consistent with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC) Section 224.2 requirements⁵.

⁵ Per [WIC 224.2](#), the Title IV-E agency will conduct inquiry, notification, assessment, and case planning in coordination with a Tribe if a child is identified as a member of, or potentially a member of, a Tribe.

Prevention-focused and Collaborative

Services and supports reduce stressors, remove barriers, and strengthen protective factors. Families, their natural supports, providers, Tribes, and other system partners should coordinate services and supports together.

Community Partnership

Prevention services may be delivered through a broad network of trusted partners, including community-based organizations, family resource centers, schools, health care providers, Tribal organizations, and other culturally responsive providers.

Privacy and Respect

Family information should be collected and shared only as necessary to support services, meet legal requirements, and protect privacy.

Prevention services funded through FFPS are designed to support families in ways that are **culturally responsive, strengths-based, and protective of family integrity and privacy**, promoting both immediate stability and long-term well-being.

Participation in the FWBP and prevention services is voluntary for families. Families may choose whether to participate in services and may pause or discontinue services at any time. Service providers are *mandated reporters*, and any threats to a child's safety must be addressed as required by state law. Discontinuing participation is not a reason for a child maltreatment report, but communities may choose to respond with outreach to support re-engagement with services.

3. Access to Prevention Services

A FWBP may be used as a tool in the FFPS Community Pathway (and is a requirement in the Title IV-E Pathway) to gather the federally required data to claim Title IV-E reimbursement (refer to Table 1 for required data elements). The data described in Table 1 is a required component for Title IV-E reimbursement to document the delivery of prevention services, regardless of whether a family is enrolled in services via the Title IV-E agency or through the FFPS Community Pathway⁶. While requirements may differ, voluntary participation and family-centered practice apply across both pathways.

California's prevention system is designed to provide families with **multiple ways to access services through trusted partners in their communities**, while also supporting prevention services delivered through public agencies when families are interacting with child welfare, probation, or Tribal systems. Image 1: Pathways to a Family Well-Being Plan below provides examples of how the FWBP can be utilized to engage with families through FFPS prevention services.

Image 1: Pathways to a Family Well-Being Plan

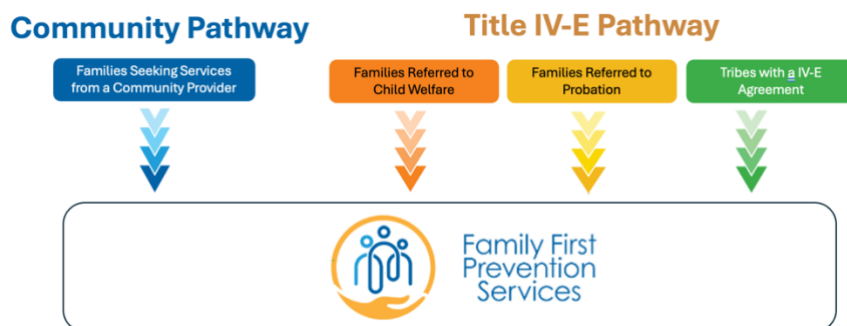


Image Description: The linked image describes the pathways for a family to access FFPS Title IV-E prevention services via the (from left to right) 1. FFPS Community Pathway – families seeking prevention services from a community provider; 2. FFPS Title IV-E Pathway – families referred to child welfare or probation OR connected with a Tribe with a Title IV-E Agreement).

⁶ For more information on candidacy for FFPS and pathways, refer to the [FFPS Candidacy and Service Pathway Brief](#)

The Family Well-Being Plan may be used within two general FFPS pathways to prevention services within the FFPS Program:

Pathway 1: Title IV-E Agency Service Plans

Prevention services may be provided through child welfare, probation, or Tribal agencies when a child is identified as being at risk of entering foster care absent the provision of prevention services. Development of a Family Well-Being Plan with the data outlined in Table 1 is required but may be combined with an existing agency service plan when delivered to the family⁷ to support documentation and coordination of prevention services consistent with federal requirements.

Pathway 2: FFPS Community Pathway

Prevention services may also be accessed through a broad network of **community-based and culturally responsive providers**, reflecting California’s commitment to a “no wrong door” approach. Families may seek through self-referral or be referred to services through trusted community partners, which may include:

- Community-based organizations
- Family Resource Centers
- Schools and early childhood programs
- Health care providers
- Tribal organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Peer support programs
- Other community partners

In this pathway, families may connect with prevention services through the places where they already seek help and support.

Together, these pathways support California’s goal, under the FFPS Program, of **expanding access to prevention services across both public systems and community settings**, ensuring families can receive support early and through the partners best positioned to meet their needs.

4. What the Family Well-Being Plan Includes

When used as a case management and/or planning tool, the FWBP provides a framework for identifying the family’s strengths, goals, needs, and chosen supports and services for family well-being. The FWBP may include elements that support coordinated service delivery and ongoing review of family goals.

Elements that may be included in the plan include:

- Family strengths and protective factors
- Family goals and priorities
- Identified needs and areas for support
- Prevention services being provided
- Roles of service providers supporting the family
- Safety considerations identified during planning
- Timeframes for reviewing progress and updating the plan

⁷ For Title IV-E Child Welfare Agencies offering a Title IV-E Combined Service Plan, CWS-CARES requires completion of FWBP screens in addition to traditional case plan documentation. While separate data entry is required, a combined document may be produced for sharing with families. Prevention services remain voluntary even when linked to the traditional case plan.

- Consent and Family Rights

The FWBP is intended to support **coordination of services**, not to create duplicative case management or administrative requirements. When possible, counties, Tribes, and service providers should integrate FWBP elements into existing service delivery processes to reduce duplication and support meaningful engagement with families.

As delineated in Table 1 below, data fields available in CWS-CARES to support FWBP development may be required for Title IV-E claiming or included as optional fields reflecting best practice. Data fields may also be completed by multiple entities for the same family depending on the pathway. The following data is required to be reported within CWS-CARES to meet federal compliance for Title IV-E reimbursement.

For the Title IV-E Pathway, these data fields are **required** to be embedded within the FWBP.

For the FFPS Community Pathway, these data fields **may** be included within the FWBP but are **not required** to be included within a specific stand-alone document. They may be embedded into other processes and practices to meet federal reporting requirements.

Table 1: CWS-CARES Data Fields

✓ Required for Title IV-E claiming <small>This data is required to be entered into CWS-CARES Version 1</small>		★ Recommended
IV-E Pathway <small>The data fields listed below include fields entered by the Title IV-E agency and visible to the community provider via the Provider Portal (participant information, goals) and fields entered by the community provider and visible to the IV-E agency (Ongoing and Final Reporting Data). This IS required to be in the Family Well-Being Plan.</small>	FFPS Community Pathway <small>Required data that community provider enters into CWS-CARES Provider Portal with child’s unique identifier. This is NOT required to be in the Family Well-Being Plan and may be documented elsewhere.</small>	Best Practice <small>These fields will be available in CWS-CARES <u>only</u> for the Title IV-E pathway. They are recommended but not required.</small>
Child, Parent/Guardian, and Other Household Member Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full Name ▪ Date of Birth ▪ Relationship ▪ Sex (child information only) ▪ Race/Ethnicity (child information only) Goals (for each goal identified) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identified goal ▪ Strength ▪ Description of the change the family would like to see and how they will know that change occurred ▪ Roles of each family member ▪ Goal End Date Ongoing and Final Reporting Data* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supportive Service (by type and name) ▪ Service Start Date ▪ FWBP Start Date ▪ Service Provided to ▪ Service Provided by ▪ Service End Date ▪ Was the EBP Completed? ▪ Total IV-E Cost of Service per Month ▪ Number of Units Provided ▪ Assessment of Child’s Risk & Safety ▪ Foster Care Information ▪ Closure Reason (Final Reporting only) 	Child, Parent/Guardian, and Other Household Member Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Date of Birth ▪ Sex ▪ Race/Ethnicity Ongoing and Final Reporting Data* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supportive Service (by type and name) ▪ Service Start Date ▪ FWBP Start Date ▪ Service Provided to ▪ Service Provided by ▪ Service End Date ▪ Was the EBP Completed? ▪ Total IV-E Cost of Service that Month ▪ Number of Units Provided ▪ Assessment of Child’s Risk & Safety ▪ Foster Care Information ▪ Closure Reason (Final Reporting only) ▪ Plan Renewal / Re-Determination Information (Final Reporting Only) 	Family Strengths & Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social Support ▪ Nurturing & Attachment ▪ Concrete Supports ▪ Knowledge of Parenting ▪ Resiliency ▪ Children’s Social and Emotional Competence Social Determinants of Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Stability ▪ Education ▪ Social & Community Context ▪ Healthcare Access & Quality ▪ Neighborhood and Built Environment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan Renewal / Re-Determination Information (Final Reporting Only) 		
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For more detailed tools, templates, and data reporting fields access the [Prevention Reporting Fields document](#). This document provides two visual reference tools designed to support Title IV-E Agency staff and community providers in understanding the federal and state reporting requirements under the FFPS Program. These visuals clarify the distinctions between Title IV-E and FFPS Community Pathway reporting, outline responsibilities for data entry into CWS-CARES, and highlight the differences between initial, ongoing, and final reporting expectations.

5. Roles and Collaboration

Prevention services may involve multiple providers working with a family. Local partners will establish processes for coordinating services, monitoring safety considerations, and updating the FWBP when services change or are extended.

Successful implementation of the FWBP depends on collaboration among multiple partners, including:

- Families
- Community-based organizations
- County child welfare agencies
- Probation departments
- Tribal partners
- Health and behavioral health providers
- Schools and early childhood providers
- Faith-based entities
- Family Resource Centers
- Other child- and family-serving organizations

Local **Comprehensive Prevention Planning (CPP) teams** play an important role in supporting cross-system collaboration and helping communities determine how prevention services and planning processes work together locally.

CPP teams may help establish local guidance regarding:

- Coordination among multiple service providers
- Processes for developing, updating, and/or extending Family Well-Being Plans
- Integration with existing service plans and assessments
- Engagement with Tribals and community organizations
- Safety and risk monitoring processes and expectations

Clear roles, coordination, and collaboration support consistency and reduce duplication.

6. Best Practices for Family Engagement in the Family Well-Being Plan

Effective family engagement is foundational to family outcomes and their active participation in FFPS. Best practice is a collaborative, family-led planning process grounded in a strength-based, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approach. Engaging families in a partnership from the initial contact through the development and completion of their FWBP is crucial to their successful achievement of the goals they have established. Developing plans in partnership with the family and building on existing strengths, supports, and

protective factors within the family and their network demonstrate respect for the family as leaders in making decisions about their participation in services. Families are active decision-makers in identifying priorities, setting goals, and selecting services, with parent and youth voice central to all aspects of planning. Plans should reflect each family's structure, culture, values, language, and preferences.

Use of the Protective Factors Framework

The [Protective Factors Framework](#) is a recommended best practice for prevention-focused planning. When the Title IV-E agency is responsible for plan development, the FWBP is structured around the five protective factors. Use of the Protective Factors framework is strongly encouraged within the FFPS Community Pathway to promote consistency across counties, reinforce a strengths-based approach, and support alignment across prevention partners. Centering protective factors helps normalize services, emphasize resilience, and promote shared responsibility for child and family well-being.

Introducing FFPS and the FWBP to Families

How FFPS prevention services are introduced to families is a critical engagement point and can significantly influence trust, participation, and sustained involvement.

In the **Title IV-E Pathway** (inclusive of Combined Service Plan and IV-E Prevention-Only Plan), it is especially important to clearly distinguish prevention services from investigative or court-ordered activities. Using clear, consistent, and plain language to explain the purpose of the FWBP, the voluntary nature of prevention services (and how they intersect with court-ordered services), and the protections in place to safeguard family privacy and confidentiality can help families understand the process. Framing prevention services as supportive and family-driven efforts designed to strengthen stability and well-being, rather than as compliance requirements or corrective actions will help families engage in the services.

When introducing the prevention plan within a Title IV-E Pathway, agency staff may enhance engagement by communicating that:

- The purpose of the FWBP is to identify strengths, needs, and goals to **help stabilize and support the family and prevent further system involvement** whenever possible.
- Prevention **services are designed to be supportive and family-centered**, even when there is existing child welfare or probation involvement.
- Participation in prevention services is **voluntary**; families may ask questions about what is required versus what is optional.
- Prevention services are separate from investigative activities and are not intended to gather new allegations or expand system involvement.
- Participation in **prevention services alone should not cause, increase, or escalate child welfare or probation involvement** beyond what is already required by law or court order.
- The agency will clearly explain what information will be collected, how it will be used, how it will be stored, and who will have access to it.
- Family **information will be handled in accordance with confidentiality laws and agency policy**, including any applicable data protections and privacy safeguards.
- Families will be informed of their rights, including the right to ask questions, request clarification, and participate meaningfully in planning decisions that affect them.

In the **FFPS Community Pathway**, using clear, consistent, and plain language to explain the voluntary nature of participation in Title IV-E funded services and the FWBP framework will help families understand the process. Emphasizing the protections in place to safeguard family privacy and confidentiality while still being transparent about information sharing will help families make an informed decision about participation. When explaining how Title IV-E funded prevention services fit within and differ from other services provided within the community, it is important to position prevention services as proactive and supportive, not investigative or corrective.

When introducing prevention services, community providers may enhance participation by communicating that:

- Participation is **voluntary**, and families may accept, decline, pause, or stop services at any time without penalty.
- Services are **supportive and preventive**, not investigative, and are based on family-identified goals and priorities.
- Participation will **not cause, increase, or influence child welfare or probation involvement**, and does not affect future system involvement.
- In the FFPS Community Pathway, the Title IV-E agency's role is limited to **approve candidacy for prevention services, authorize payment for services and ensure compliance with community providers in submitting the required data for federal reporting**. Their role is not to conduct assessments or investigations, or provide oversight.
- Family information is **protected through de-identification**, using a unique identifier in place of personal identifying information.
- A **firewall** exists to prevent child welfare staff from accessing sensitive family information.

Regardless of pathway, it is important to address with families that having a FWBP and receiving Title IV-E funded services means that information will be documented. This includes discussing:

- What information will be documented
- Who may have access to it
- How long it is retained
- The family's right to ask questions, request clarification, or withdraw from prevention services
- Information collected, how it will be stored, and how it will be used (**explained in advance**).

Strengths-Based, Trauma-Informed, and Culturally Responsive Engagement

While engagement and assessment are ongoing activities not limited to the FWBP process, a strengths-based approach is key as it shifts the focus from deficits to the qualities, relationships, and supports that already exist within the family. By identifying and building upon these strengths, planning activities will support families in recognizing their own capacity to achieve goals and overcome challenges. This approach fosters mutual respect, shared accountability, and meaningful partnership.

Trauma-informed practice recognizes the impact of trauma and historical inequities and responds by creating safe, supportive, and culturally responsive environments. It emphasizes trust, transparency, empowerment, and collaboration to avoid re-traumatization and promote healing and resilience.

Best practices for engagement in the FWBP process include:

- Acknowledging the impact of trauma, historical inequities, and systemic bias and recognizing that the planning process may bring previous experiences to the surface
- Using cultural humility, reflective practice, and ongoing learning
- Partnering with culturally specific organizations and Tribal communities
- Providing language access, interpretation, and accessible materials
- Addressing the cultural, linguistic, and legal needs of migrant families in the planning process
- Using strengths-based language that reflects hope and capability as you develop the FWBP
- Identifying and building on existing supports, networks, and protective factors throughout the planning process
- Using Motivational Interviewing and other engagement-focused practices to support authentic connection to the planning process
- Centering family voice and choice, allowing families to lead goal-setting and planning

- Increasing access through flexible scheduling, multiple service locations, virtual options, and practical supports

Sustaining Family Engagement Over Time

Sustained engagement is essential to achieving positive family outcomes. Best practice includes ongoing attention to relationship-building and flexibility throughout service delivery. Conducting regular check-ins with families, revisiting goals, and adjusting services as family needs and priorities evolve will help families maintain engagement throughout their involvement with the identified intervention. Ongoing engagement practices include confirming continued voluntary participation, incorporating family feedback, celebrating progress, and supporting smooth transitions when services change or conclude.

7. Confidentiality, Data Use, and Privacy

Throughout all family interactions (assessment, planning, and service delivery), it is important to communicate with the family about what information will be held in confidence and what information will be documented in CWS-CARES. The CWS-CARES Provider Portal firewall protects a child and parent/caregiver’s identity by using a unique identifier instead of personally identifying information (PII) when data is shared for federal reporting. The firewall ensures that while providers and counties can coordinate services and meet federal reporting requirements, individual identity is protected in CWS-CARES by using a system-generated unique identifier, regardless of how the family is referred to the FFPS Community Pathway.

For families served through a Title IV-E agency (in the Title IV-E Pathway), including the Prevention-Only Plan, confidentiality and privacy protections operate within the existing child welfare, probation, or Tribal case management framework. While these pathways do not include the CWS-CARES Provider Portal firewall, family information is still protected through statutory confidentiality rules, limited data collection, user access limitations, and clear boundaries on how information may be used.

Protecting family privacy is fundamental to the FWBP.

What information is collected:

- Limited information required for eligibility, service coordination, and reporting (see Table 1: CWS-CARES Data Fields above)
- Services provided and progress toward goals

How information is protected:

- PII is replaced with unique identifiers
- Firewalls prevent Title IV-E agency staff from accessing PII for families receiving services in the FFPS Community Pathway
- Data are reported in de-identified or aggregate form

What is not shared:

- Names, addresses, or other personally identifying information
- Clinical notes or sensitive provider documentation

It is a best practice for agencies and providers to use standardized, plain-language scripts to normalize prevention services and clearly distinguish prevention services being delivered as part of FFPS FWBP from traditional child welfare interactions, while allowing flexibility to reflect family culture, language, and communication preferences.

Unlike the FFPS Community Pathway, families served through a Title IV-E agency do not receive services behind a system firewall that separates prevention data from child welfare or probation systems. Instead, confidentiality is maintained through **existing statutory protections, role-based access, and limits on data use**, rather than de-identification. While the mechanisms differ, the underlying goal is the same across pathways: **to protect family privacy, limit unnecessary data sharing, and ensure prevention services remain supportive and voluntary.**

8. Data, Reporting, and Continuous Quality Improvement

California’s approach to data, reporting, and continuous quality improvement (CQI) under FFPS is grounded in the principle that **data collection supports program accountability and learning—not surveillance**. Data is used to strengthen practice, demonstrate impact, and ensure responsible stewardship of public funds, while respecting family voice, confidentiality, and cultural responsiveness.

Purposeful Data Collection - Required FFPS data elements are collected **as part of routine planning and service delivery**, rather than through duplicative or stand-alone reporting processes. The FWBP framework serves as a key mechanism for capturing required information—such as family-identified goals, selected prevention services, service start and end dates, and participant eligibility—within a family-driven planning process. When implemented with fidelity, the FWBP aligns practice-based documentation with federal and state reporting requirements.

Shared Reporting Responsibilities - Reporting responsibilities vary by **pathway, role, and system partner**.

- **Title IV-E agencies** are responsible for ensuring required data are documented, reported, and submitted to support federal claiming and compliance.
- **Service providers and community partners** contribute practice-level data through service documentation and participation in coordinated planning and review processes.
- **System Partners** play a central role in aligning data systems, clarifying roles, and supporting cross-system coordination to ensure data are accurate, timely, and complete.

Clear agreements, guidance, and communication across partners are essential to avoid duplication, reduce administrative burden, and maintain data quality.

Data for Learning and Improvement - Beyond compliance and claiming, FFPS data support **CQI, program monitoring, and evaluation**⁸. Counties and providers are encouraged to use data to:

- Understand whether prevention services are meeting family-identified needs
- Identify disparities in access, engagement, or outcomes
- Strengthen service delivery and system coordination over time

By integrating data collection into family-centered practice and using information to inform improvement, California advances a prevention system that is transparent, accountable, and responsive—while keeping families at the center of decision-making.

9. Implementation Guidance for Communities: Bridging Policy to Practice

FWBPs may include evidence-based, promising, or trauma-informed practices aligned with FFPS requirements and family goals. Communities have flexibility in selecting services; however, any evidence-based practices (EBPs) must be chosen from those identified in the approved Comprehensive Prevention Plan (see Appendix E: Summary of CA Evidence-based Practices). All selected practices should be implemented with fidelity and adapted to ensure cultural relevance. Implementation considerations include:

- Aligning existing planning tools with FFPS requirements
- Training staff on engagement, documentation, and confidentiality
- Using consistent, non-stigmatizing messaging
- Avoiding duplication by integrating plans when appropriate

Successful implementation of the FWBP framework under the FFPS requires communities to intentionally bridge federal and state policy requirements with existing local practice. Communities are not expected to build

⁸ For more information about California’s approach to CQI in the FFPS Program, refer to the [FFPS CQI Plan](#).

entirely new systems; rather, effective implementation emphasizes alignment, coordination, and thoughtful adaptation of current case planning and service delivery processes.

- *Local Customization and Flexibility* – While FFPS establishes federal and state requirements, communities retain flexibility to customize FWBP tools and processes to reflect local system structures, community partnerships, and family needs. Communities may adapt FWBP templates, guidance, and workflows to fit their existing service delivery processes and prevention pathways, provided that required FFPS elements, such as eligibility determination, service linkage, progress tracking, and outcome documentation, are clearly documented. This flexibility allows counties to integrate FWBP into existing prevention and family support models rather than creating parallel systems.
- *Building on Existing Systems and Aligning with Title IV-E Prevention Requirements* – Communities can strengthen capacity for Title IV-E prevention services by assessing and leveraging existing case planning, service delivery, and documentation processes across systems (e.g., child welfare, behavioral health, public health, probation, and community providers). By identifying where current tools and workflows already meet IV-E requirements, and where gaps exist, communities can make targeted adjustments (such as updating templates or assessment tools) to support compliant data collection and reporting. Early cross-system collaboration helps ensure alignment, reduce duplication, and integrate IV-E requirements into local practice in a way that minimizes disruption and administrative burden for families, staff, and providers.
- *Coordination Across Systems* – Effective FFPS implementation depends on strong coordination across systems. Counties should identify clear roles and responsibilities for Title IV-E agencies, system partners, Tribes, and community-based providers involved in prevention services. Shared planning, consistent communication, and aligned expectations help ensure that FWBP functions as a coordinated family-centered planning process rather than a child-welfare-only requirement. Cross-system alignment also supports shared outcomes related to child safety, permanency, and family well-being.
- *Avoiding Duplication of Case Planning* – Intentionally designing FWBP processes to avoid duplicating existing case plans will support collaboration and alignment. Where families already have plans developed through other systems, the FWBP should complement and align with those plans, rather than replacing them. This may include cross-referencing existing plans, incorporating shared goals and services, or using a single plan that meets multiple system requirements. Reducing duplication supports meaningful family engagement and improves workforce efficiency.
- *Training and Ongoing Support* – Once systems and tools are aligned, it is important for Title IV-E agencies and community providers to deliver training tailored to their specific EBPs, FWBP templates, workflows, and local implementation approach. Training should focus on integrating FWBP steps, documentation requirements, and family engagement practices into daily work. [FFPS Training All County Letters](#) (ACLs), are an excellent resource outlining core training expectations for FWBP implementation. CalAcademies will provide training as identified in the applicable ACLs, with communities supplementing as needed to address local practice and system coordination.

Summary

California’s prevention system is expanding new opportunities to strengthen families and prevent unnecessary foster care placements through services supported by the Family First Prevention Services Act. The FWBP serves as a collaborative planning tool that helps families, providers, and partners coordinate these prevention services in ways that promote voluntary engagement, cultural responsiveness, and child and family well-being.

CDSS will continue to collaborate with stakeholders to:

- Gather feedback from implementation partners
- Identify promising practices
- Address challenges and barriers
- Determine where additional guidance may be helpful

Future guidance may include more detailed information related to pathways, data elements, CWS-CARES integration, and other operational considerations as the prevention system continues to develop.

In summary, this brief outlines the integration of the FFPS FWBP framework into existing Title IV-E agencies, Tribes, and community-based organizations to expand prevention services and practices and clarifies key distinctions between available pathways to support thoughtful implementation. While it provides direction for planning and family engagement, it is not intended to prescribe a uniform approach. If the required data elements are collected, the FWBP framework may be adapted to meet local, state and federal policy, practice and funding requirements. When working to combine FWBP elements with traditional case plan documents, counties may wish to consult with county counsel. Communities are expected to adapt this guidance to their local context, including community needs, culture, and climate. Ultimately, implementation should align with the cultural, linguistic, and geographic characteristics of the families served while meeting applicable Title IV-E requirements.

Feedback and Questions

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on this brief. Please take a few moments to complete the [Family Well-Being Plan Implementation Brief Feedback Survey](#) to share your input and suggestions. Your feedback will help inform future resources and ensure they are clear, effective, and supportive of FFPS Program implementation.

Questions?

For additional questions regarding FFPS Program policy and requirements, please contact the CDSS FFPS Team at ffpsapreventionservices@dss.ca.gov.

Appendices

Appendix A: Click on the links below to access sample FWBP templates

- [San Diego](#)
- [Santa Clara](#)
- [Yurok](#)

Appendix B: Sample Family-Facing Scripts by FWBP Pathway and Service Plan

Below are high-level family-facing content counties and providers can use as scripts to adapt for when introducing the FWBP with families based on the service plan pathway. These examples are designed to normalize prevention services and clearly explain voluntary participation, confidentiality, and why limited data are collected. NOTE: these are just examples to use depending on your county's chosen pathway and service plan option. Use and/or adapt as needed to align culturally, linguistically, geographically with families in your communities.

1. Title IV-E Pathway: IV-E Agency Combined Service Plan (*Open child welfare case with voluntary prevention services*)

“I want to explain how the Family Well-Being Plan works for you. You do have an open case with our agency, and some parts of your case are required.

The Family Well-Being Plan is different. It focuses on voluntary prevention services—support that's meant to help with things like stress, parenting, or stability before problems get bigger.

You get to decide whether you want to participate, what goals matter to you, and which services you want to try. The plan doesn't add new requirements or change your legal case.

We'll write down your goals, the services you choose, and what's needed to pay for those services. That information is protected by confidentiality rules and is used to coordinate support—not to investigate you or penalize you.

You are the expert on your family. This plan should sound like *you*, not like paperwork. If something isn't helpful, or if you want to stop services, we can talk about that at any time.”

2. Title IV-E Pathway: IV-E Agency Prevention-Only Service Plan (*No open child welfare, probation case; services provided by the IV-E agency*)

“You don't have an open child welfare case. Our agency is involved only because we're helping provide prevention services, since there isn't a community provider available right now.

The Family Well-Being Plan is voluntary and is used to document the goals you want to work on and the supports you choose. I want to be really clear about this part; you don't have to do this. You can say yes, say no, take a break, or stop at any time. Nothing bad happens if you decide this isn't right for your family. Choosing to participate, or not, should *not* affect child welfare or probation decisions now or in the future.

We collect only the information needed to set up services and meet funding requirements. Getting these services does not open a child welfare case or create new obligations for you.

Your information is protected and shared only with staff involved in coordinating services. It's not used for investigations or ongoing monitoring.

You are the expert on your family. This plan should sound like *you*, not like paperwork. You can ask questions, change your goals, or stop services at any time.”

3. FFPS Community Pathway Service Plan (*Prevention services delivered by community-based providers*)

“The Family Well-Being Plan is a way for us to support what *you* want for your family. It’s not an investigation; it’s not court-ordered; and it’s not about judging you. This plan is about working together on goals that matter to you, things like parenting support, mental health, substance use support or help with everyday stress.”

The Family Well-Being Plan is a voluntary plan you create with your provider to focus on your goals and the support you want. I want to be clear about this part; you don’t have to do this. You can say yes, say no, take a break, or stop at any time. Nothing bad happens if you decide this isn’t right for your family.

Your privacy matters. We protect your information in a few important ways. When information is shared for funding or reporting, your personal details are removed and de-identified. Your name, address, and private notes stay with your provider.

I also want to explain why we ask questions or write some things down. We collect limited information so services can be paid for and improved, not to watch or track families. This helps make sure programs like this continue to be available for families who want them.”

You’re in control of your participation. You are the expert on your family. This plan should sound like *you*, not like paperwork. You can choose what services you want, ask questions about your information, or stop services at any time without affecting your family.”

Other key points of information to highlight with families, as appropriate within your identified pathway and service plan:

Choice in Participation Is Always Voluntary

Key points families should hear:

- You decide whether to participate
- You choose what goals to work on
- You choose which services to try
- You can stop at any time, without penalty

What This Is Not

The Family Well-Being Plan does not:

- Start a child welfare case
- Increase system involvement
- Determine fault or blame
- Get shared with courts

How Privacy Is Protected

Explain it simply:

- Your name is not shared in state systems
- A number, not your name, is used for reporting
- Child welfare staff cannot see identifying details for families served in the community
- Only limited information needed to provide services and pay for them is collected

Why Some Information is Asked for

- Information is used to:
 - Pay providers
 - Show what services are helping families
 - Improve programs over time
- Information is not used to:
 - Investigate families
 - Make decisions about custody
 - Share personal details

What You Control in the Plan

Families help decide:

- What their goals are
- What support feels helpful
- What to share and what not to share
- When goals change

Ongoing Check-Ins and Changes

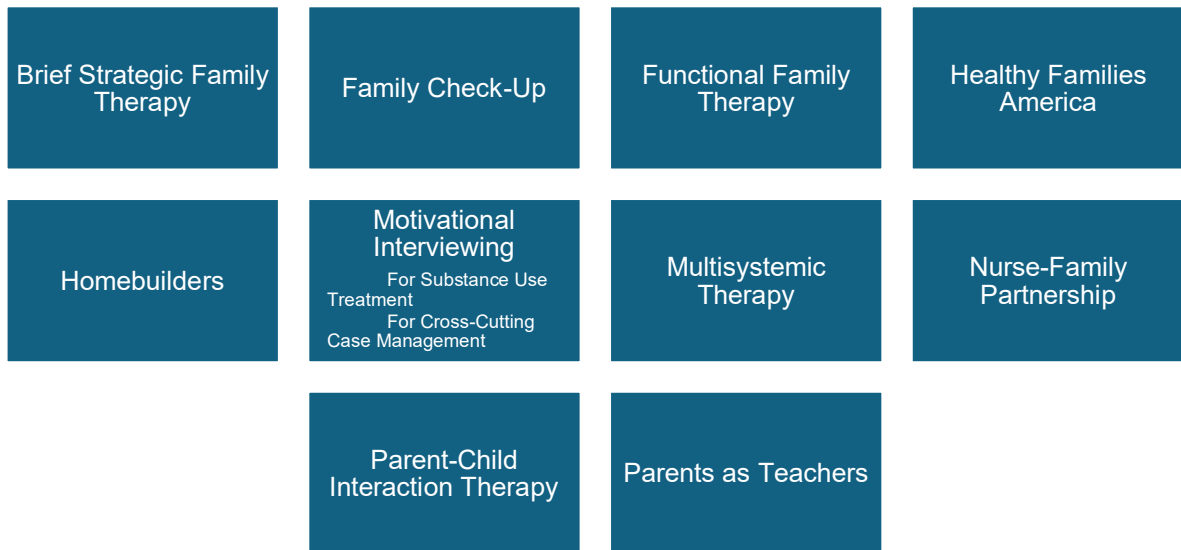
Families can:

- Update goals
- Switch services
- Pause participation
- End services when ready

Appendix C: Summary of CA Evidence-based Practices

The [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#) was established by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to conduct an objective and transparent review of research on programs and services intended to provide enhanced support to children and families and prevent foster care placements. Programs are rated as *well-supported*, *supported*, *promising* or *does not currently meet criteria*; and services are provided in the following focus areas: Mental Health, Substance Use, In-home Parent Skill-based, Kinship Navigator.

California chose the following 10 well-supported EBPs⁹ as defined by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse.



CDSS may support additional prevention services and programs for evaluation in the future, including those which are rated as “supported” or “promising” but lack sufficient evidence to be rated in the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse as “well supported”.

⁹ For more information on California’s identified EBPs for claiming Title IV-E, review appendix A page 51 of CA’s Five-Year State Prevention Plan: Implementing the Title IV-E Prevention Program Established by the Family First Prevention Services Act. CDSS 2023

Appendix D: Data, Reporting, and Continuous Quality Improvement Crosswalk

This table illustrates how the FWBP supports FFPSA data and reporting requirements, advances CQI, and aligns with CDSS FFPS guidance, while minimizing duplication and preserving family-centered practice.

Policy / Requirement Area	Federal or State Expectation	How the FWBP Supports Alignment
FFPSA Eligibility Determination	Identification of a child who is a candidate for foster care and eligible family members	FWBP documents family circumstances, safety concerns, and prevention needs that support FFPSA eligibility determinations.
Family Voice and Goals	FFPSA requires services to be tied to assessed needs and family circumstances	FWBP captures family-identified goals and priorities through collaborative planning, ensuring services align with family-defined needs.
Selection of Prevention Services	Documentation of approved mental health, substance use, and in-home parenting services	FWBP records selected prevention services aligned to assessed needs and FFPSA-eligible service categories.
Service Timing and Duration	Tracking of service start dates, end dates, and duration for IV-E claiming	FWBP integrates service initiation and duration into planning and service delivery documentation.
Service Providers and Settings	Identification of service providers and delivery settings	FWBP documentation supports reporting of provider information required for federal claiming and oversight.
Ongoing Monitoring and Review	FFPSA requires continued monitoring of service effectiveness and eligibility	FWBP review and update processes align with required monitoring and documentation of ongoing eligibility.
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	Use of data to assess service effectiveness and inform system improvement	Aggregated FWBP data support CQI cycles, outcome monitoring, and practice refinement at the county and provider levels.
Equity and Disparity Analysis	State and federal emphasis on equitable access and outcomes	FWBP data can be analyzed to identify disparities in access, engagement, and outcomes across populations.
Alignment with CDSS Prevention Guidance	Family-driven, culturally responsive, prevention-focused practice	FWBP operationalizes CDSS guidance by centering family voice, strengths, and cultural responsiveness in planning.
Minimizing Duplication of Case Planning	CDSS guidance discourages parallel or duplicative planning processes	FWBP is designed to align with existing plans and systems, reducing administrative burden and duplication.
Shared Reporting Responsibilities	Clear roles across IV-E agencies, counties, and providers	FWBP supports coordinated documentation and role clarity across system partners.
Federal IV-E Claiming and Accountability	Accurate documentation to support IV-E prevention claiming	By capturing required data through routine practice, FWBP supports compliant claiming and responsible data stewardship.

Glossary of Terms

CWS-CARES: The Child Welfare Services California Automated Response and Engagement System, the new software system being developed for the State of California to comply with Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) requirements. Version 1 will be released in October 2026.

Candidacy: A federal definition within FFPS that determines whether a child is eligible for Title IV-E–funded prevention services. Approval of candidacy allows IV-E agencies and providers to claim federal funding for the services documented in the FWBP.

FFPS Community Pathway: A community-based service array providing “no wrong door” access to a broad range of trusted community providers where families naturally seek support, and may include schools, health care providers, family resource centers, faith-based organizations, and other local entities. Community Pathways may offer a broad variety of services beyond Title IV-E funded EBP.

Community-Based Provider: A not-for-profit corporation (which may include a faith-based organization), that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and provides services directly to low-income or marginalized populations. **For purposes of this brief, a community-based provider is a partner agency that delivers prevention services, engages families in FWBP development, submits required data (including cost-tracking information), and maintains records according to FFPS requirements.**

Confidentiality: Protections that ensure personal information shared by families is kept private. Within CWS-CARES, confidentiality is upheld through use of unique identifiers and a firewall that prevents IV-E agency staff from accessing personally identifying information for families served.

Concrete Supports: Basic resources and necessities provided to families to reduce immediate stressors and promote stability (e.g., housing stabilization, food, transportation, childcare).

De-Identification: The process of removing personal identifying information and replacing it with a system-generated unique identifier for all data used in federal and state reporting.

Family Maintenance Case Plan: An existing child welfare case plan for families who have an open case with the child welfare agency (court or non-court) and have custody of their children. When a FWBP is added, prevention services remain voluntary even if integrated within an existing case plan.

Family Strengths: Qualities, relationships, skills, cultural practices, and resources that support family resilience, stability, and well-being.

Family Well-Being Plan (FWBP): A strengths-based, voluntary, family-driven plan developed collaboratively with families, Tribes, and community partners to identify goals, needs, services, and supports that promote safety, stability, and long-term well-being.

Firewall (CWS-CARES): A system protection within CWS-CARES that prevents child welfare or probation staff from seeing personal information about families served in the FFPS Community Pathway. Only de-identified data are shared with IV-E agencies.

IV-E Agency: A county child welfare agency, probation department, or Tribe with a California IV-E Agreement.

IV-E Pathway: The prevention pathway in which a family receives voluntary prevention services via a service plan developed and monitored by a IV-E agency (child welfare, probation, or Tribe with a California IV-E agreement).