



## **Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) Considerations for Confidentiality & Family Engagement<sup>1</sup> within the Context of the FFPS Community Pathway**

### **Overview: What This Is and Why It Matters**

California’s Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) Program is designed to support families early, before challenges grow into crises, by connecting them to voluntary, community-based services that strengthen well-being and stability. At the center of this work is the Family Well-Being Plan (FWBP), a collaborative and family-driven process that helps identify goals, build on strengths, and coordinate supports that matter most to each family. Through the FFPS Community Pathway, families can access services through trusted community providers in familiar settings, reflecting a commitment to culturally responsive, relationship-based care and a “no wrong door” approach to support.

Equally important is how this work is introduced and experienced by families. Clear communication about voluntary participation, privacy, and the purpose of information sharing is essential to building trust and supporting meaningful engagement. In the Community Pathway, family information is protected through de-identification and strict limits on what is collected and shared, ensuring services remain supportive rather than intrusive. This document outlines key considerations and sample approaches to help providers and partners communicate these concepts in ways that are transparent, respectful, and centered on family choice and dignity.

### **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)

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from the **Family First Prevention Services Family Well-Being Plan Implementation Brief**  
Considerations for Confidentiality & Family Engagement | Version 1.0 | 03.31.26

- 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.**

## 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

## **Summary**

This document outlines key considerations for communicating confidentiality, data use, and family engagement within the Title IV-E Pathway and the FFPS Community Pathway, emphasizing transparency, voluntary participation, and trust. It provides guidance and sample language to help providers clearly explain how family information is protected and how the Family Well-Being Plan supports family-centered, prevention-focused services.