



PAT LEARY
ACTING DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • www.cdss.ca.gov



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

April 3, 2019

Via Federal eRulemaking Portal

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families
United States Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20201

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON PROPOSED INFORMATION COLLECTION ACTIVITY:
FEDERAL REGISTER DOCUMENT NO. 2019-00895; PREVENTION
SERVICES DATA COLLECTION

Dear Reports Clearance Officer:

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) submits the following comments for consideration in response to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Federal Register Notice Volume 84, number 23, dated February 4, 2019, regarding prevention services data collection in accordance with Section 471(e)(4)(E) of the Social Security Act, as amended by Public Law 115-123, specifically the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) of 2018.

The CDSS is the single state agency under Title IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (the Act) with statewide oversight for child welfare services and foster care programs implemented by California's 58 counties, and specifically, over the development and implementation of policies, guidance, training, and technical assistance to California counties regarding FFPSA. The CDSS is committed to achieving positive outcomes for children and families while maintaining consistent, timely, and meaningful data regarding the effectiveness of services. To the extent practicable, and in keeping with the requirements of Title IV-B and IV-E of the Act, CDSS supports data collection efforts that provide more efficient, economical, and effective administration of its Title IV-B and IV-E programs.

Authorized under the FFPSA, states and tribes electing to provide a Title IV-E Prevention Program must collect and report the following information on children receiving Title IV-E prevention and family services and programs:

1. The total expenditures for each of the services or programs provided;
2. The duration of the services or programs provided; and

3. If the child was identified in a prevention plan as a candidate for foster care:
 - a. The child's placement status at the beginning, and at the end, of the 12-month period that begins on the date the child was identified as a candidate for foster care in a prevention plan; and
 - b. Whether the child entered foster care during the initial 12-month period and during the subsequent 12-month period.

Per the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, ACF is requesting comments on the following aspects of the proposed information collection:

1. The accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information

The CDSS is concerned that the Annual Burden Estimate, which reflects an average of 31 hours per state/tribe response, does not accurately reflect the significant burden on states and local child welfare agencies to collect and report specific services, duration, and expenditure data for each child. The estimate does not factor in changes to the existing structure of California's Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), enhancements to the design of its successor system, Child Welfare Services-California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS-CARES), nor the training that will be necessary at the county level to ensure the required data is properly entered and collected.

Specifically, while CWS/CMS has the capacity to query some of the proposed data to be collected, CWS/CMS does not track expenditure data for each service or program provided to a client. Collecting and reporting child-specific data and expenditures for each prevention service or program provided would impose a substantial burden upon state and local agencies and require significant changes to CWS/CMS and enhancements to the forthcoming CWS-CARES. The CDSS is concerned that such changes and enhancements would significantly increase state and federal costs associated with these systems, and require a considerable investment of funding, development, training time, and staff time for data entry to successfully implement.

To that end and as ACF moves closer toward promulgating regulations requiring data exchange standards for IV-B and IV-E programs, CDSS requests ACF to consider the potential burden on the states' systems and staff training if required to modify the state's FFPSA data exchange standards to meet the requirements of the forthcoming federal data standards. States may elect to provide these services/programs authorized by FFPSA as early as October 1, 2019, and the proposed regulation on data exchange standards must be issued by February 9,

2020; therefore, ACF must ensure there are pathways to compliance for federal reporting and data exchange that will reduce any administrative burden for states.

2. The quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected

Due to the current structure of CWS/CMS there is a significant likelihood that service level information may suffer from a lack of quality, causing data integrity issues. The current system is not structured to adequately and efficiently capture the service level elements required to be reported. Additionally, CDSS believes that the utility of the information to be collected can mostly be met through aggregate reporting, and that ACF has the flexibility to accept aggregate reports and should do so whenever possible to minimize the burden on states and tribes.

Further, as currently proposed, it is unclear whether the required information states and tribes must report shall include all services or programs provided to children receiving prevention and family services regardless of funding source, or if the required data collection is limited to those services or programs that are specifically provided to a child or family under the Title IV-E Prevention Program. For example, the November 2018 Program Instructions¹ for evidence-based practices only reflect services Medicaid is presently the payor of first resort. The CDSS requests that ACF clarify that the information collected regarding specific services or programs provided, the total expenditures, and their duration is specifically limited to those services or programs provided through the Title IV-E Prevention Program and does not include services or programs provided to a child or family using other available funding sources.

3. Ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology

To support implementation of the Title IV-E Prevention Services Program for states electing to provide them, CDSS requests ACF delay the reporting of child-specific expenditures, given the full range of implementation costs. CDSS further requests that ACF consider flexible and achievable timeframes that provide states and tribes with a sufficient amount of time to implement new data collection activities and report quality data. Lastly, CDSS requests that ACF

¹ ACYF-CB-PI-18-09. November 30, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1809.pdf>.

Reports Clearance Officer
Page Four

accept aggregate data whenever possible, as this minimizes the burden on states and also protects the privacy and confidentiality of children and families.

For further information or questions, you may contact me at (916) 657-2614.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gregory E. Rose", with a stylized flourish at the end.

GREGORY E. ROSE
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division