



Modernizing Your Child Welfare System

Placing children and families at the center of system design

Child welfare agencies face many challenges in their mission of delivering life-changing services for vulnerable children and families. The complexity of that mission has increased over the years, and agencies are eager to adopt new technology and approaches to best meet constituents' needs. The federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has recognized the necessity and potential for new information systems, publishing the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) Final Rule and the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First), which encourage the use of advanced technologies and new approaches to achieve positive outcomes for children and families.

*In this Q&A, **Sean Kasten**, national Child Welfare Practice Lead at CSG Government Solutions, offers suggestions for implementing a modernized system that incorporates the CCWIS Final Rule and achieves Family First objectives.*



How do children and families benefit from a modernized child welfare system?

Better technology better serves the people who rely on it. As legacy systems struggle to meet the growing needs of child welfare programs, modernization offers high-value opportunities for capabilities like mobile technology, or for agencies to securely collect and use important data.

Using the principles of human-centered design, states can implement systems that provide caseworkers with superior tools to make informed decisions for children and meet Family First goals, including better data sharing capabilities and interfaces with the IT systems of other agencies. New technology can also make it easier for children and families to get the services they need.

How have the CCWIS Final Rule and Family First impacted modernization planning?

Both support a strategic approach to system planning to make sure the business needs of child welfare agencies are met.

The Final Rule requires bi-directional data exchange and standards for program integrity. This will help agencies plan for, design and develop a human-centered system that decreases duplication, increases sharing, and improves reliability and protection of data.

Family First requires agencies to submit a Family First Prevention Plan to ACF. Here, agencies will document a strategy for a more evidence-based and data-driven service delivery approach that helps the state assess whether children should enter the child welfare program and what services are needed to sustain and preserve family units, when appropriate.

To capitalize on these opportunities, agencies should first develop a thoughtful, strategic approach for modernizing their IT systems to ensure they meet the changing demands of child welfare programs today. Additionally, a modernization plan that complies with CCWIS and Family First enables states to take advantage of leading technology capabilities and secure up to 50% federal funding for the system modernization.

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What are three key recommendations for states to ensure CCWIS modernization projects support the goals of Family First?

From my experience working with CSG clients on child welfare system modernizations, the Family First plan provides a framework for practice improvement. Technology plays a key role in achieving this. My recommendations include:

- 1/ Establish a strong foundation.** Replacing your existing child welfare system is a complex undertaking that requires commitment at the top of the agency. Lay the groundwork with a thorough plan that will gain executive and stakeholder support.
- 2/ Ensure the child welfare practice drives the technology.** Connect your CCWIS and Family First efforts by engaging experienced caseworkers and other agency experts to make sure their business needs and priorities are driving improved outcomes through technology modernization.
- 3/ Emphasize organizational change management.** Engage leaders who have the skills and experience to drive adoption of the technology. Define a communication framework that incorporates tailored messages using a variety of methods to ensure stakeholders are informed, prepared and bought in.

About CSG Government Solutions



Engaging the right planning partner can support the execution of your child welfare agency's vision. CSG is a leading public sector consulting firm focused on helping government agencies modernize critical program enterprises. Founded in 1997, CSG has established itself as a trusted advisor to more than 200 government agencies. Our people know the current market of child welfare technologies and help states implement solutions that meet federal requirements, support field workers, and improve services. Named one of America's Best Management Consulting Firms six years in a row by Forbes, we work with our clients to achieve their goals. Call or email Sean to discuss how CSG can help with your next system implementation at (414) 617-7862 or skasten@csgdelivers.com.

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