

# A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD

## Louisiana DCFS CFSR Round 4 Program Improvement Plan

Submitted under CFSR Technical Bulletin #14 PIP Pilot

|                           |                                                             |                      |                                                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Submitting agency:</b> | Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) | <b>Submitted to:</b> | Children's Bureau, Region 6 (Cory McCarrell, RPM) |
| <b>Basis:</b>             | CFSR Round 4 Final Report (April 14, 2026)                  | <b>PIP due:</b>      | On or before July 13, 2026 (90 days of receipt)   |

### 1. Opt-In Affirmation

Louisiana elects to participate in the AH4EC Program Improvement Plan pilot under Children's Bureau Technical Bulletin #14.

Louisiana currently serves approximately 4,328 children in foster care and has 2,073 certified foster and kinship homes, resulting in a foster home-to-child ratio of approximately 0.48. While Louisiana has improved workforce stability, strengthened child safety practices, and increased accountability throughout the child welfare system, the state continues to face challenges related to foster home availability, placement stability, congregate care utilization, and timely permanency. The AH4EC initiative provides an opportunity to address these interconnected challenges through a unified strategy focused on ensuring every child has a safe, stable, family-based home.

Louisiana further affirms its intent to participate in the AH4EC Innovation Challenge and commits to achieving and sustaining a minimum 1:1 foster home-to-child ratio by September 30, 2027.

### 2. Strategies and Action Steps

| Strategy                                                         | Key action steps                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Lead measure (monthly)                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Safely Preserve Families</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Implement a differentiated response system, Right Response, to intervene on all reports of maltreatment, moving referrals to community based care and family preservation services to the front of the system.</li><li>Refresh the Child Welfare Assessment and Decision-Making (CWADM) model for substance use, domestic violence, mental health, drug affected newborns, and victims age 0-3.</li><li>Establish Community Pathways Network to provide prevention, preservation, stabilization, reunification, and post permanency supports.</li></ul> | Percent of children who remain safely at home following intervention.                 |
| <b>2. Ensure Every Child has a Family-based Placement</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expand family finding and kinship engagement beginning at intake and continuing throughout case progression.</li><li>Implement Court to Certification, Classroom to Kinship, and HomeReady initiatives to increase family-based placement options.</li><li>Remove non-safety barriers to foster and kinship certification.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Percent of children initially placed with relatives, kin, or family-based caregivers. |
| <b>3. Improve Placement Stability and Reduce Congregate Care</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Implement statewide matching practices that align children's needs with caregiver strengths.</li><li>Reduce reliance on congregate care through family finding, kinship engagement, specialized foster home development, and placement stabilization efforts.</li><li>Monitor placement disruptions and adverse placement experiences to guide continuous quality.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                            | Placement disruptions per 1,000 foster care days.                                     |

| Strategy                                         | Key action steps                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Lead measure (monthly)                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4. Accelerate Permanency</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct structured permanency progression reviews and strengthen concurrent planning.</li> <li>• Partner with the Louisiana Court Improvement Program to reduce barriers to permanency.</li> <li>• Expand adoption recruitment and post-permanency supports.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                           | Percent of children achieving permanency within 12 months. |
| <b>5. Expand Family-based Placement Capacity</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand recruitment of foster, kinship, and fictive kin caregivers, with emphasis on teens, sibling groups, and children with complex needs.</li> <li>• Strengthen retention through peer mentoring, respite, crisis support, and caregiver engagement.</li> <li>• Engage faith communities, former foster parents, and community partners to increase family-based placement capacity.</li> </ul> | Net gain in family-based placement capacity.               |

### 3. Measurement Plan

Louisiana will report monthly through the Children's Bureau AH4EC Data Tool and use state administrative data to monitor progress throughout the Innovation Challenge period.

| Core measure                                   | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Baseline | Target         | Cadence |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------|---------|
| <b>1:1 licensed foster home-to-child ratio</b> | Numerator: licensed foster homes with active licenses, plus non-licensed homes with a child placed, on the last day of the month.<br>Denominator: children under age 18 in foster care on the last day of the month, excluding juvenile-justice placements. | 0.48     | 1.0 or greater | Monthly |

#### Chaser (wraparound) measures

| Domain     | Chaser Measure                                                                                                             |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Permanency | Percent of children achieving permanency within 12 months.<br>Percent of children placed with relatives or kin caregivers. |
| Well-Being | Percent of children served in family-based settings rather than congregate care.                                           |
| Safety     | Percent of children safely preserved with their families following intervention.                                           |
| Stability  | Placement disruptions per 1,000 foster care days.                                                                          |
| Capacity   | Family-based capacity sufficient to achieve and sustain a 1:1 foster home to child ratio.                                  |

### 4. Theory of Change

Historically, child welfare systems have measured success by managing children after they enter foster care. Louisiana's AH4EC strategy shifts the focus upstream by preventing unnecessary entries into foster care, strengthening families, expanding kinship and foster home capacity, reducing congregate care, improving placement stability, and accelerating permanency.

The result is not simply more foster homes, but fewer children requiring foster care and better outcomes for children and families. Key drivers include Right Response, Community Pathways Network, kinship engagement, certification reform, placement stability efforts, permanency acceleration, and resource family recruitment and retention.

Progress toward the 1:1 ratio will be reviewed monthly by the AH4EC Steering Committee and reported through the Children's Bureau AH4EC Data Tool.

### 5. Governance, Reporting, and Safety Priority

- Governance: A DCFS steering committee chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Child Welfare will oversee implementation.
- Reporting: Louisiana will submit monthly performance data and quarterly implementation updates through the AH4EC framework.

- Safety first: Child safety remains Louisiana’s highest priority, and all AH4EC activities will be implemented in a manner that protects children while reducing unnecessary entry to foster care.
- Workforce Support: Louisiana will maintain workforce stabilization efforts, including vacancy reduction, supervisor-to-staff ratio improvements, and workforce well-being initiatives, to support successful implementation.

## 5. Attestation

Louisiana certifies that this PIP adheres to Technical Bulletin #14 and addresses a framework to achieve a 1:1 licensed foster home-to-child ratio.

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| /s/ _____<br><b>Rebecca Harris</b><br>Secretary, Louisiana DCFS<br>Date: <u>06/23/2026</u>   7:47 PM CDT | /s/ _____<br><b>Connie Guillory</b><br>Assistant Secretary, Division of Child Welfare<br>Date: <u>06/23/2026</u>   5:37 PM CDT |
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