

State Court Improvement Program 2025 Annual Self-Assessment Report

This self-assessment is intended as an opportunity for Court Improvement Programs (CIPs) to review progress on CIP projects, joint program planning and improvement efforts with the child welfare agency, and the ability to integrate (Continuous Quality Improvement) CQI successfully into practice. The self-assessment process is designed to help shape and inform ongoing strategic planning and should include meaningful discussion with the multi-disciplinary task force and others as needed and candid reflection of key CIP staff. The self-assessment is primarily focused on assessing efforts undertaken to date while the strategic plan maps out efforts going forward. Questions are designed to solicit candid responses that help CIPs apply CQI and identify support that may be helpful.

I. CQI Analyses of Required Projects

It is ok to cut and paste responses from last year, updating according to where you currently are in the process, and, if you do so, highlight text to show anything that is new. Complete the descriptions for CQI stages you have progressed through or are in. Though some upcoming stages will be inapplicable, consider whether your team may have preliminary thoughts that are relevant to those questions. Please also indicate if you need assistance from your federal or Capacity Building partners in a particular phase.

Joint Project with the Child Welfare Agency:

Project title: North Dakota Dual Status Youth Initiative

Provide a concise description of the joint project selected in your jurisdiction.

The ND Dual Status Youth Initiative originated in consultation with the Robert F. Kennedy Foundation and is supported by the ND Juvenile Court, ND Department of Human Services Children and Family Services, ND DOCR Division of Juvenile Services, and the ND Juvenile State Advisory Group. The Initiative works collaboratively to improve the outcomes for dually identified youth – those youth who touch both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in North Dakota. These youth tend to experience the poorest outcomes within and following involvement with our systems. Concern about these outcomes led to the launch of the North Dakota Dual Status Youth Initiative.

to 1) prevent youth in the child welfare system from formally penetrating the juvenile justice system; 2) prevent out of home placements; 3) more effectively serve youth that touch both systems; and 4) use research and best practice to inform changes in both systems to better serve youth and families.

Identify the specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome(s) this project is intended to address. If this effort is linked to any agency measures, e.g. CFSR measures, please note those.

The dual status youth project specifically targets the safety and well-being of North Dakota's dually identified youth. This collaborative effort seeks to 1) prevent youth in the child welfare system from formally penetrating the juvenile justice system; 2) prevent out of home placements; 3) more effectively serve youth that touch both systems; and 4) use research and best practice to inform changes in both systems to better serve youth and families.

Approximate date that the project began: March 30-31, 2016

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work? Evaluation/assessment

(Phase I) On March 30-31, 2016, Josh Weber and Mark Ferrante conducted a series of meetings with key stakeholders from across North Dakota to learn more about the state's juvenile justice system with the specific goal of identifying and targeting policies and practices which could help reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for the state's youth. Justice Center staff met with legislators, judges, probation staff, court personnel, prosecutors, defense counsel, Department of Juvenile Services, child welfare, and IT staff to ask a series of questions to discern better what is working well, areas for improvement and next steps for addressing both system challenges and opportunities.

On October 19, 2016, the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center Children's Action Corps provided information on a model to address working with youth and families considered dual status, having had contact with both the juvenile justice and child welfare system. This day-long meeting was attended by leaders of the North Dakota child welfare system, courts, and corrections. An agreement was reached to pursue funding for a multi-system collaborative to develop the model in North Dakota. Funding was obtained from ND Department of Human Services, ND State Courts, ND Division of Juvenile Services, and the ND Juvenile Justice State Advisory Group.

In early 2017, ND representatives from the ND Supreme Court, ND Department of Human Services, ND Division of Juvenile Services, ND Juvenile Justice State Advisory Group, and others from the private and nonprofit sector gathered together using the RFK framework and technical

assistance. The framework and technical assistance guided them through a four-phase process. The process included mobilization and advocacy, study and analysis, action strategies, and implementation. From the mobilization and advocacy phase, the Dual Status Youth Initiative was created.

During the study and analysis action strategy phase, data was collected by both the courts and child welfare to achieve a better understanding of youth and families in North Dakota who fit the DSY criteria. Data was collected on each child, including age, gender, race, and reason for charge and removal. Surveys were sent to workers in the field to understand resources and practices that were currently available and utilized. The DSY teams reviewed the data, along with survey results. Areas in need of improvement were identified as well as available resources.

How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)

(Phase I) On March 30-31, 2016, Josh Weber and Mark Ferrante conducted a series of meetings with key stakeholders from across North Dakota to learn more about the state's juvenile justice system with the specific goal of identifying and targeting policies and practices which could help reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for the state's youth. Justice Center staff met with legislators, judges, probation staff, court personnel, prosecutors, defense counsel, Department of Juvenile Services, child welfare, and IT staff to ask a series of questions to discern better what is working well, areas for improvement and next steps for addressing both system challenges and opportunities.

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and removal. Surveys were sent to workers in the field to understand resources and practices that were currently available and utilized. The DSY teams reviewed the data, along with survey results. Areas in need of improvement were identified as well as available resources.

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II).

The North Dakota juvenile courts and child welfare will share data related to dually identified youth, provide information at critical assessment points to help inform decision making processes, develop joint plans with the families and professionals, and will share research and best practice models so that ND can inform changes in both systems in order to better serve youth and families. If successful, this model will prevent youth in the child welfare system from formally penetrating the juvenile justice system and reduce out-of-home placement.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)

Following the previously described planning process and using best practice research on dual status programs, the courts and child welfare decided to implement a protocol to ensure reliable, early identification of dual status youth; develop a multi-agency agreement or Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) to facilitate necessary data and information sharing; standardize cross-system practices (including, where appropriate, Family Centered Engagement (FCE) Processes) to assess, plan and manage multi-system cases and improve training and workforce development of child welfare and juvenile justice practitioners, as well as collaborate with field partners such as behavioral health professionals, school personnel, law enforcement and school resource officers.

The Dual Status Youth Initiative Resources and Practice Subcommittee worked to standardize cross-system practices and protocols (including, where appropriate, Family Centered Engagement (FCE) Processes) to assess, plan and manage multi-system cases. The subcommittee collaborated and formalized a protocol that operationalized dual status processes and procedures. The finalized protocol addresses and describes the action steps following the identification of a dual status youth. (Please see the attached DSY protocol).

If your solution/intervention includes training, please provide a title and brief description of any training(s).

Dual Status Youth Initiative Protocol and Practice Guide Overview – The training reviews the updated Dual Status Youth Initiative Protocol and Practice Guide and Liaison process. Information provided includes an overview of a DSY protocol quick sheet, a flow chart, and training resources for child welfare workers, CHINS specialists and juvenile court officers to assist them with walking through the DSY best practices timelines.

What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)

In late 2018, the ND Dual Status Youth Initiative moved to the implementation phase. An Implementation Committee was formed to carry out the work of policies and protocol, provide training and create an evaluation plan. The project was incorporated into the CIP grant to carry out the newly identified work, data collection, and evaluation required to implement the Initiative. A Dual Status Youth coordinator position was created to help support the initiative.

Along with representatives from child welfare, the CIP coordinator has worked to identify and operationalize a data matching process to identify a dual status youth. Client data from both the juvenile court case management system (CMS) and the ND Department of Human Services case management system FRAME was compared to identify youth in the DSYI target population. Newly encountered youth from one system that matches client activity in the other system through data matching processes were generated for future tracking on the DSY Initiative identification list. The Law, Policy, and Information Subcommittee created an information and data sharing MOU between ND Courts and the ND Department of Human Services in order to allow for the identification of the DSY. The MOU was signed by both the department and courts in 2018, allowing for communication between juvenile court offices and social services/CPS workers.

In February 2019, the ND CIP hired a coordinator to oversee and assist in implementing the protocol. Twice weekly, the DSY coordinator notifies the child welfare case manager and juvenile court officer of target youth on their caseload. Per the protocol, the child welfare worker and court officer are to share information about the youth to discuss current and historical delinquent and unruly referrals, types of abuse, probation case plans, status of caseworker assessment, current and ongoing concerns regarding the youth's behavior, parental cooperation, safety issues and services that are being provided through the county or courts. Once information is shared, the court officer and caseworker are to coordinate and hold a Family Centered Engagement (FCE) meeting. The FCE is held to aid in making critical decisions such as the removal of children from their homes and to achieve the least restrictive safest and most appropriate comprehensive plans for youth and families. The overall goal of this process is to stop further penetration into the juvenile justice system, to reduce the number of children in foster care, increase the number of children remaining safely in their homes and for children that are removed, increase the number of youth placed with relatives.

The Law, Policy and Information Subcommittee generated a DSY hard card for judicial officers to utilize as a resource and tool when making inquiries during court file review and proceedings. Judicial officers play a critical role in ensuring the dual status youth protocol and best practices are being used and followed correctly. Hearings involving dual status youth are opportunities for the judicial officer to highlight and explore the factors research shows are essential in effective case planning. In May, 2019 the hard card was printed and disseminated by CIP and provided to all judicial officers, child welfare workers, juvenile court officers, and parent and agency attorneys. A "Live at Lunch" online presentation was

presented by the CIP coordinator and a judicial referee to judicial officers to educate the court on the DSY process and hard card resource. On June 1, 2019 a Dual Status Youth “Flag” was created in the court case management system Odyssey to alert judicial officers of a DSY case.

Since implementing the protocol the Executive Committee continues to meet quarterly to oversee implementation and sustainability. Data is collected and submitted to a contracted evaluator and regular reports are generated to monitor progress of the protocol. The DSY coordinator has created a resource tool on the ND Court website to aid in information sharing and to provide access to DSY training and education resources.

A one-year evaluation of the Initiative’s programmatic outcomes were reported in July, 2020. The evaluation stated that the DSYI successfully reduced penetration of dual status youth from going deeper into the juvenile justice and social services systems. More specifically, compared to baseline data from 2015, North Dakota dual status youth are less likely to be placed in foster care, more likely to have their cases diverted, and less likely to be in the custody of juvenile corrections or the social service system. Though the analysis shows some promising outcomes, there were challenges and obstacles that were reported as well.

In September 2020, the North Dakota Court Improvement Program (CIP) implemented and convened a dual status workgroup of various stakeholders to address the evaluation challenges and recommendations. Since meeting, the workgroup has further explained the theory by which the initiative’s activities are intended to benefit the dual status population, defined “deeper involvement” for the field, published a more clear and concise list of reasons for holding and not holding required meetings, and updated the protocol and practice guide for the field. The new practice was implemented in March 1st, 2021 and training on the new protocol and practice guide was provided to human service zone and juvenile court staff in February.

The CIP coordinator and juvenile court collaborated with administration of Children and Family Services to create a flowchart, hard card and training on the Family Centered Engagement (FCE) prevention model and processes for DSY. The training was provided to human service zone workers and juvenile court staff on May 25th and June 2nd, 2022. A FAQ resource was developed as a result of the training. CIP will continue to work with CFS to update the FAQ’s about the DSYI.

In response to Children in Need of Services (CHINS, formerly Unruly youth in the juvenile justice system) referrals transitioning to the Human Service Zones in August of 2022, the North Dakota Court Improvement Program (CIP) updated the Dual Status Practice Guide to explain further the theory by which the initiative’s activities are intended to benefit the dual status population and published an updated list of parameters for holding and not holding required meetings. The intended goal of these changes is to ensure best practice is followed and that an FCE is held when it is the youth’s first time being identified as dual status. Training on the new protocol and practice guide was provided to the CHINS specialist team and juvenile court staff during their annual training in September 2022. The CIP also created many resources to guide the new Liaison process including

a DSY protocol quick sheet, a flow chart, PowerPoint and training resource for child welfare workers to assist them with walking through the DSY best practices timelines. Regional trainings between the CHINS specialists, juvenile court staff and Zone staff occur ongoing on an as needed basis.

In order to achieve the best possible oversight of the newly implemented protocol and coordination of dual status youth cases, each juvenile court unit designated a Dual Status Youth Liaison to represent their prospective areas. The CHINS specialists also serve as Liaisons who are responsible for communication with their perspective Zones. Research has shown that this approach improves communication across agencies, facilitates cross-training and improves the experience for youth and families. Roles and responsibilities of the DSYI Liaison include serving as a point of contact for dual status youth notifications, developing a clear understanding of the DSYI practice and protocol, helping to clarify policies and practice for the staff, attending any trainings and be a local champion for DSYI, participating in monthly workgroup meetings, and responsibilities when working with dual status youth. Meetings continue to be held on a monthly basis with the DSY Liaisons. The protocol and practice guide has been updated to reflect best practice and feedback from human service zones, CHINS specialists and juvenile court staff. The update to the email notification process was built to provide more timely notifications. This will enhance child welfare and juvenile court to serve DSY families timelier and within perimeters and requirements of the protocol.

In September of 2023, the CIP Coordinator attended a training of the CHINS Liaisons to present data, go over DSY protocol compliance and to receive feedback on the collaborative work with the human service zones. Feedback from the liaisons noted that in some areas of the state compliance to the protocol and response communication from the zone workers was lacking. A survey was provided to the liaisons to discern which zones were having recurring issues. Results from the feedback and survey were reviewed. Throughout 2023 and 2024 the CIP Coordinator reached out to the zone directors in the areas that were in noncompliance and met one on one with their teams to come up with an individualized approach to improve compliance in their perspective counties. The CIP coordinator then hosted and trained, either in person or Zoom, the human services zone staff on the protocol and best practice. The CHINS liaisons and juvenile court officers who work with the specific zones were also invited to the meetings to maintain consistency in the message and to support collaborative efforts.

Over the past year the CIP Coordinator has worked with the DSY Liaisons to update the human service zone policy regarding the DSY protocol. A hard card/DSY Liaison Guide was also created to assist stakeholders in understanding the process and roles that the liaisons serve within the protocol. Both updates will be brought to various stakeholder groups to disseminate the updated information.

How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V). *Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, what do the data show, and how did you use these data to modify or expand the project?*

The progress of the dual status project is monitored through a data sharing agreement between our court and child welfare systems and databases. Data from both systems is received in a data sharing warehouse where children are matched through a common identifier. Data on each youth is input in E-Supervision and collected by the DSY coordinator. ND CIP contracted with an independent evaluator of Greacen Associates to conduct an evaluation of the initiative, to monitor outcomes and ensure fidelity of the initiative's protocol. The independent evaluator receives data on a quarterly basis and submits findings to the CIP. Findings are also submitted to child welfare and juvenile court officers and are reviewed during Court Improvement Stakeholder meetings on a quarterly basis. Quarterly data is also presented and reviewed during various ND stakeholder meetings. The first round of data was presented to the juvenile court officers and feedback was documented and utilized to create a "Frequently Asked Questions" resource for the field. Findings from the one year evaluation of the initiative (see attached) have been presented to North Dakota's Juvenile Justice Commission, Children's Cabinet, and agency leadership as they work to identify areas for policy and practice development such as addressing disparities and disproportionality of dual status youth- specifically the Native American population by developing more racial responsive approaches along with changing statute to decriminalize unruly behavior.

In an effort to evaluate and monitor the progress of the MDT and FCE meetings, a survey was created and is given to parents and custodians to record feedback on their thoughts of the meetings. Survey results are also provided to the evaluator for review. Throughout the year the CIP coordinator and DSY coordinator attended and observed a random sample of meetings. A meeting observation tool was created and used to collect information pertaining the involvement of youth and parents during FCE/MDTs. Compliance to the protocol and meeting attendance is monitored through data captured in the juvenile court case management system.

The initiative has now collected 142 feedback questionnaires from parents/guardians/family members of DSY youth who participated in MDT/FCEs. Parents/guardians were asked to indicate their agreement with a series of statements on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score. For the twelve month period in which survey data was collected, the average score on each item ranges from 4.3 to 4.7. The lowest score was for complete explanation of the process. Encouragingly, the highest scores are for being treated with respect, having point of view taken seriously and for willingness to recommend the process to other parents.

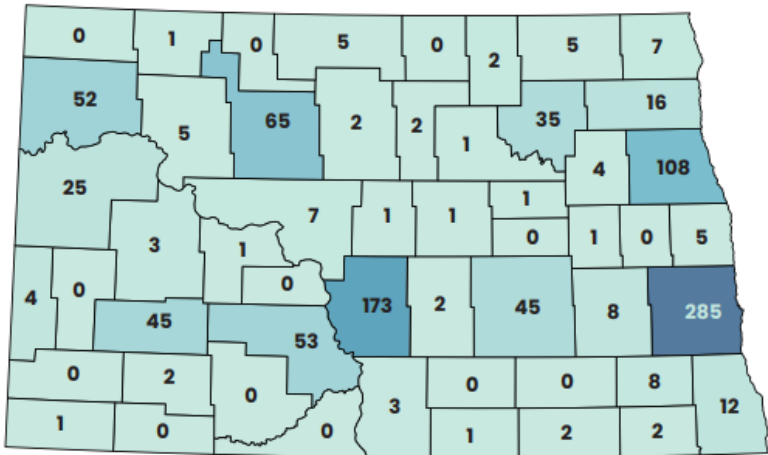
Along with data collection, the independent evaluator and members of the CIP have traveled to various regions of the state to discuss the protocol and data collection. In July, the CIP and DSY coordinator and evaluator will be traveling to eight regions of the state to discuss with child welfare and juvenile court stakeholders their thoughts, concerns and feedback regarding protocol implementation and understanding of the initiative. Region specific data was shared with counties to aid the discussion and identify areas of success, need and concern. A survey was sent to all involved DSY stakeholders including judges, case workers and juvenile court officers, to collect feedback on how they feel the initiative is going and

also to capture the additional time and resources the new protocol is utilizing ND CIP continues to meet with stakeholders to receive feedback on the protocol.

The Court Improvement Program has completed its contract and evaluation with an independent evaluator of Greacen Associates. Since completion of the evaluation, the CIP has decided to continue to coordinate and facilitate a dual status data workgroup to clarify data indicators and measures of change that serve as indicators of success. A data gathering process will be redesigned and identified duals status data indicators will be collected from child welfare and juvenile court databases. Quarterly dual status data reports will be presented to the CIP stakeholders at their quarterly taskforce meetings.

The CIP data analyst continues to pull and monitor number of dual status cases on a quarterly and annual basis. Numbers are reported and broken out by gender, age group, race and reason for primary juvenile court or child welfare referral. An ongoing evaluation of compliance to the protocol continues as CIP tracks and reports on FCE meeting compliance for newly identified dual status youth. Data is brought to the CIP Taskforce meetings, juvenile court directors, and Zone directors to review, and discuss any areas of concern.

In 2024, there were 1,001 dual status youth identified by the Initiative. The map below shows where the dual status youth were identified:



One resource used to improve outcomes for dual status youth is the Family Centered Engagement meeting (FCE). The Village Family Service Center provides the FCE. The meeting consists of a facilitated team process that includes participation from parents, extended family, children, service providers, child welfare staff, and juvenile court staff to make critical decisions regarding the safety and well-being of the child to achieve the safest and least restrictive outcomes that are in the best interest of the dual status youth. In 2024, one hundred seventy FCE meetings, along with additional follow-up meetings, were provided to dual status families. Of the surveys received from families who participated in an FCE meeting, 97% reported they felt they had an opportunity to list and share information, and 79% reported they felt the FCE meeting process was a positive experience.

When tracking meeting compliance, it was found that there was a significant amount of DSY cases where a required FCE meeting was not occurring. The CIP coordinator and data analyst reported the results of the findings to the juvenile court directors and Zone directors who oversee the DSY Liaisons. Region specific data was discussed and the listening/feedback sessions informed CIP on struggles the field was having. Some issues noted were lack of return communication from agencies, lack of understanding of the protocol, parental refusal and issues with collaboration between juvenile court and zone staff. The ND CIP continues to monitor the number of meetings that occur each month and reports the information to the Zones, CHINS specialists and juvenile court. Regional meetings are held with stakeholders upon the Liaison's request and are tailored to address areas needing improvement.

The CIP has used the recent data and feedback to address barriers and modify the protocol and data matching process. Modifications to the protocol include updating the automated email notification system that alerts zone and juvenile court partners of a DSY on their caseload to improve timeliness of notification and referring to and holding FCE meetings. The update to the email notification process was built to improve quicker communication between child welfare and juvenile court to best serve DSY families timelier and within perimeters and requirements of the protocol.

The 67th legislature approved funds to replace the legacy database of the juvenile court. The replacement team chose a product by Tyler Technologies to serve as the new case management and supervision system. In 2022/2023, the CIP coordinator and data analyst worked with the North Dakota IT department of the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure the transition to the new case management system would continue to accurately identify, match, and notify the field of the dual status youth population on their caseload. The data analyst and IT team successfully transitioned to the new data matching parameters and dual status report. The Dual Status flags in the new supervision system will assist in alerting juvenile court officers when they have a DSY on their caseload. The new system will also allow for more detailed and accurate data so CIP may effectively track the recidivism and outcomes of DSY in the near future. The CIP Coordinator met with and trained the DSY Liaisons on how to access the new DSY report and created resources for the field, including a step by step access guide for the CHINS and juvenile court workers.

Ongoing meetings and troubleshooting occur within the DHHS and court IT departments to remedy any data matching concerns and parameters that arise throughout the biweekly data pull. The CIP anticipates this will continue until the DHHS acquires their new case management system OCEANS.

Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort? No

What assistance or support would be helpful from the Center for Legal and Judicial Innovation and Advancement (CLJIA)¹ or the Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?

None at this time.

Quality Legal Representation Project:

Project title: North Dakota Pre-Petition Legal Representation Pilot

Provide a concise description of the hearing quality project selected in your jurisdiction.

The North Dakota Court Improvement Program (CIP) will collaborate with Legal Services of North Dakota and Children and Family Services to develop and implement a model pre-petition legal representation program for the Burleigh County and Three Rivers Zone for families with children at risk of being placed in foster care. The pre-petition work aims to prevent removals based on poverty and combat the disproportionality of American Indian children in the child welfare system.

Approximate date that the project began:

January, 2020

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?

Implementation

How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)

During the fiscal year 2021, ND CIP contracted and worked with the American Bar Association's Center for Children and the Law (ABA). When meeting with a small workgroup/implementation team, the ABA provided technical assistance and expertise to discuss available resources,

¹ Formerly the Capacity Building Center for Courts

cultivate stakeholder buy-in, and review county and statewide data to determine which county to pilot the pre-petition model in. Disproportionality data and number of American Indian children in foster care were also reviewed to delineate where to pilot the model. Stakeholder feedback from county social services and legal services identified a need for a multidisciplinary team model to assist families and prevent children from entering foster care.

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II)

The North Dakota CIP, Legal Services, and Children and Family Services will create a pre-petition multidisciplinary legal representation model representing families in the Burleigh County Human Service Zone so that North Dakota can maintain at least 80% children in their home with family so that the disproportionality rate of American Indian children entering foster care decreases by 25%.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)

The North Dakota Court Improvement Program (CIP) will collaborate with Legal Services of North Dakota and Children and Family Services to develop and implement a model pre-petition legal representation program for the Burleigh County and Three Rivers Zone for families with children at risk of being placed in foster care. The pre-petition work aims to prevent removals based on poverty and combat the disproportionality of American Indian children in the child welfare system.

To help build rapport with clients and meet their many needs, the pre-petition model will be supported by a multidisciplinary legal team consisting of an attorney, social worker/ICWA Family Preservationist (IFP), and/or parent advocate to assist in advocacy and support for parents. As part of the model, a referral process will be developed in coordination and collaboration with the new Child Protection Services (CPS) centralized intake process. In addition, ongoing consultation between the legal team and child welfare regarding safety decision making and safety planning will occur throughout the life of the case.

As part of the work and focus of work related to disproportionality, the CIP and Children and Family services will also coordinate with the legal services pre-removal multidisciplinary team to explore the use of the North Dakota's ICWA Partnership Grant's IFP model. Utilizing the IFP will support work with American Indian families to assist in reducing the rate of American Indian children entering foster care in the Burleigh County Zone.

If your solution/intervention includes training, please provide a title and brief description of any training(s).

What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)

In preparation for implementation of the project, CIP met with Mimi Laver of the American Bar Association along with the strategic planning group on a bimonthly basis to plan and strategize next steps. CIP is working with Legal Services of North Dakota to develop a contract around data sharing and funds and is working to update the Legal Services application and referral form to reflect family law and housing referral guidance for the Burleigh County Human Service Zone. The ND CIP plans to access state, federal and philanthropic funding to support the pre-petition legal representation model. In December 2023, CIP was awarded \$10,000.00 from the North Dakota Bar Association Foundation Board.

Legal Services of ND has agreed to contract with the CIP to utilize their existing attorneys and social worker as part of the multidisciplinary team model. The social worker who will be part of the team will be trained over the summer and CIP will support for the attorney and social worker to attend the NACC Annual conference.

In September 2021, the Pre-petition Legal Services team began taking referrals from the Burleigh County Human Service Zone. To prepare the field for utilization of the pre-petition model, the CIP coordinator provided a training session on August 5th to review the purpose of the initiative along with referral process and requirements. A one page quick sheet was also provided to the field staff as a resource for the referral process. Please see below:

Pre-Petition Legal Representation - Burleigh Human Service Zone

Overview – Pre-petition Legal Representation: Pre-petition legal representation is a form of preventative advocacy that aims to keep the family together, keep children in the home, and prevent the need for foster care. Research has shown that by providing legal advocacy for parents and families in the early stages of a child welfare case a child can be maintained in the home preventing removal from ever happening. The North Dakota Court Improvement Program, Legal Services, Children and Family Services, and the North Dakota ICWA Partnership grant has collaborated to create a pre-petition legal representation model to assist in representing families in the Burleigh County Human Service Zone for families at risk of being placed in shelter care. The goal of the model is to maintain children in their home and decrease the disproportionality rate of American Indian children entering foster care.

Making a Referral to Legal Service's Pre-Petition Legal Representation Team:

If a caseworker has identified a family with child welfare concerns rooted in poverty, is unable to resolve those concerns, and the situation could result in removal of the child/children, then a referral to the Legal Services Pre-Petition multidisciplinary team to assist in addressing these needs is crucial. Examples of situations in which a child welfare worker would refer a family include:

Housing	Family Law	Public Benefits
Pending/Unlawful evictions	Private guardianship filings	Assistance with applications
Housing voucher terminations	Domestic Violence	Emergency funding applications
Substandard housing issues	Child Support	Welfare denials
Lease issues/Negotiation of a lease	Custody/Divorce	

Process for Referral and Follow up: To make a referral to the Legal Services pre-petition legal representation team you will need to fill out both the referral cover sheet and Pre-Petition Legal Services application information sheet. Both forms should be completed by the case worker and client and emailed to the team. Due to confidentiality, communication between the referring party and the legal service team will only occur if a release on information is obtained from the client.

Upon the closing of a case with Legal Services, a courtesy follow up closing form will be sent from Legal Services to the referring party briefly identifying the referring issue and whether the legal issue was resolved. Any other further detail regarding the legal case will only be provided to the referring party if a release of information was obtained by the client.



If a caseworker has identified a family with legal issues is unable to resolve those concerns, and the situation could result in removal of the child/children, then a referral to the Legal Services Pre-Petition multidisciplinary team to assist in addressing these needs is crucial. Examples of situations in which a child welfare worker would refer a family include housing, family law and public benefit concerns.

To make a referral to the Legal Services pre-petition legal representation team Zone workers fill out both a referral cover sheet and Pre-Petition Legal Services application information sheet. Both forms are completed by the case worker and client and emailed to the team. Due to confidentiality, communication between the referring party and the legal service team will only occur if a release on information is obtained from the client.

Upon the closing of a case with Legal Services, a courtesy follow up closing form will be sent from Legal Services to the referring party briefly identifying the referring issue and whether the legal issue was resolved. Any other further detail regarding the legal case will only be provided to the referring party if a release of information was obtained by the client.

Through discussion and analysis of pre-petition referral case data indicators and outcomes, it was found that the number of referrals to the program was declining. CIP held multiple meetings with Burleigh Human Service Zone to discuss with field staff as to why they were not making the appropriate referrals. Feedback from the Zone was provided and it was found that staff felt there were many referrals/families being declined by the pre-petition program due multiple factors including staff turnover, lack of understanding of the types of cases that can be referred, and cases being turned away due to conflict within Legal Services.

Due to a low number of referrals coming from the pilot Zone, the strategic planning group decided to expand the model to serve the Three Rivers Human Service Zone. The CIP coordinator and pre-petition legal representation team from Legal Services of ND met with and trained the Three Rivers CPS, in-home and foster care case workers and supervisors on the benefits of and how to make a referral to the pre-petition legal representation model. Ongoing trainings and conversation continue with both Zones, Legal Services, Children and Family Services and CIP to troubleshoot issues relating to making appropriate referrals. In 2023 the CIP coordinator and strategic planning group decided that an expansion to other agencies to make referrals was a necessary step to increase referral numbers. The CHINS specialists were informed that while working with a youth they can also refer the family to the pre-petition model.

Since the rule change in 2024 related to more federal funding being available for civil legal representation the Children and Family Services decided to leverage IV-E funds to obtain federal matching funds for costs related to a child who is a candidate for foster care, as well as other civil legal proceedings as necessary to carry out the requirements in the title IV-E foster care plan. The CFS division of the DHHS has since taken on oversight and expansion of the pre-petition model and plans to do so moving forward. The CIP will support the efforts providing technical assistance as necessary and will continue to invite members of the pre-petition team to the CIP taskforce quarterly meetings to discuss data and programmatic details if necessary.

How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V). *Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, what do the data show, and how did you use these data to modify or expand the project?*

Support and technical assistance will be provided to the multidisciplinary legal team by the North Dakota Court Improvement Program and taskforce. The CIP will utilize its training grant funds to provide specialized child welfare training to the attorney, social worker and IFP. Training will

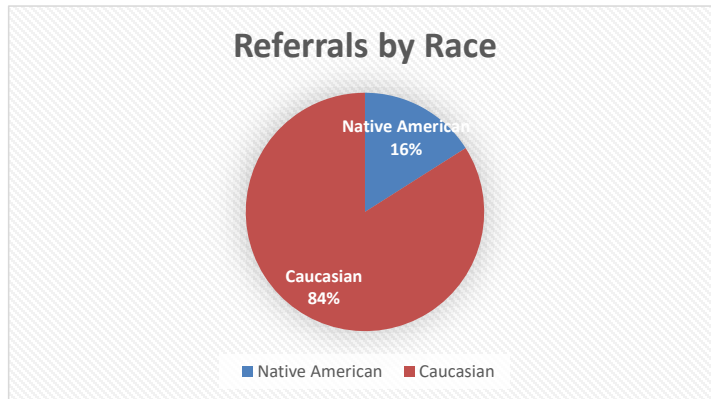
include the national Association of Counsel for Children’s Red Book training course, the Capacity Building Center for Court’s Safety Guide training, and training on the Indian Child Welfare Act. The CIP will leverage support and technical assistance from Mimi Laver of the American Bar Association to assist with program development and best practice guidance. The CIP Coordinator will also collaborate with Children and Family Services to provide support and assistance to the child welfare field pertaining to the referral process and project.

In consultation with the Capacity Building Center for Court’s Quality Legal Representation workgroup CIP has developed data indicators and outcome measures to assist in capturing whether or not the project is preventing removals and reducing the rate of removal for American Indian families in the child welfare system. Data points include the type of referral, race, and whether or not a child was removed from care after legal services were provided. The CIP will assist the legal team with data collection, which will then be analyzed and reported by the CIP’s full-time data analyst. All data will be reported to the CIP Taskforce, Children and Family Services, Burleigh and Three Rivers Human Service Zone and other North Dakota stakeholder groups. Below is the referral data for 2024:

2024 Reason for Referral

Referral Reason	Number of Referrals
Custody	9
Guardianship	6
Paternity/Custody	2
Housing	3
Domestic Violence/Divorce	1
Divorce with Custody	3
Family Law	1
Total	25

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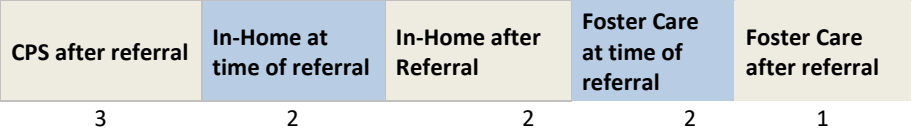
Of the 25 referrals in 2024, some were deemed ineligible due to conflict cases or lack of response from family once the referral was processed. See the LSND reason for case closure below:

Reason Closed	Number of cases
Conflict	5
Counsel and Advice	5
Extensive Services	3
Limited Services	1
No Contact from Client	2
No Legal Issue	1
Out of Service Area	1
Resolved	1
Pending	6
Total	25

After recent data review, it has been determined that of the 25 referrals in 2024, 10 were successfully processed by the program and 6 remain pending. Below is a list of referral types for which the families were successfully served:

Custody
Divorce with Custody
Domestic Violence
Guardianship
Housing

Of the 10 families, 70% of those served by the pre-petition program remained in the home and successfully remain together to date. Below is a chart to include child welfare involvement at the time of referral and the number of child welfare incidents after a referral to the program:



Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?

Since the implementation of the project there have been some noted issues regarding the number and quality of referrals received from the Human Service Zone. Through talking with the agency, it appears there was a lack of understanding as to what type of referrals are to be made to the legal team. To address this, the CIP hosted a follow-up informational meeting and listening session with the Zone in the fall of 2023. The CIP took the feedback and suggestions from the referring agencies to the strategic planning workgroup.

Another issue that has caused delays in implementing the model to fidelity is that of having to decline referred families due to conflict of interest within the Legal Services agency. The CIP made efforts to contract with an outside attorney to take on conflict cases as they arise. This also caused a delay as the attorney who was going to contract declined recently and CIP does not have sufficient funds to hire an additional attorney.

What assistance or support would be helpful from the CLJIA or the Children’s Bureau to help move the project forward?

None

Hearing Quality Project:

Project title: Enhancing Hearing Quality in Child Welfare: A Practical Guide for Judges

Provide a concise description of the quality legal representation project selected in your jurisdiction.

This project aims to improve the quality and consistency of judicial hearings in child welfare cases by developing a comprehensive Judge's Guide.

The guide will serve as a practical, evidence-informed tool to support judges in conducting child welfare hearings that are thorough, child-centered, legally sound, and aligned with best practices in trauma-informed care, family engagement, and procedural fairness.

Judicial oversight plays a critical role in ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children involved in the child welfare system. However, the quality of court hearings varies significantly across jurisdictions, often impacting the outcomes for children and families. National research and stakeholder feedback have identified the need for clearer guidance and more consistent practices to support judges in making timely, informed, and equitable decisions.

The Judge's Guide will address these needs by consolidating best practices, relevant statutes, and recommendations into an accessible, user-friendly resource. The guide will also include hearing scripts for each CHIPS/TPR and Guardianship hearing type along with include safety questions to be asked during shelter care hearings.

By equipping judges with a practical, accessible guide tailored to the complexities of child welfare cases, this project will strengthen judicial decision-making, promote more equitable outcomes for children and families, and support systemic improvements in child welfare court practices.

Approximate date that the project began: 8/2025

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work? ***Develop/select solution***

How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I) Feedback from stakeholders during CIP taskforce meeting. Survey responses indicating the need for a better guide was also considered.

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II) Child welfare court hearings often lack consistency, meaningful engagement with families, adherence to legal standards (including ICWA and ASFA), and trauma-informed approaches. This contributes to disparities in outcomes and

undermines procedural justice. The creation of a judge's guide will ensure provide consistency so that North Dakota's child welfare court system consistently delivers fair, equitable, and trauma-informed hearings that support child and family well-being and legal permanency.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)

Project Objectives:

1. **Develop a standardized guide** for judges that outlines the essential elements of high-quality child welfare hearings.
2. **Incorporate evidence-based practices** that enhance child and family engagement, ensure procedural justice, and reduce system disparities.
3. **Include checklists, prompts, and model questions** tailored to each stage of the child welfare case process (e.g., shelter, adjudication, disposition, review, and permanency hearings).
4. **Support judicial education and training** by aligning with existing curricula and providing tools for courtroom self-assessment and reflection.
5. **Promote consistent application** of state and federal legal standards, including the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), and trauma-informed practices.

Key Deliverables:

- Judge's Guide for Child Welfare Hearings (digital and print versions)
- Bench cards and hearing-specific checklists
- Training slide deck and facilitator's guide
- Pilot implementation toolkit for selected jurisdictions
- Evaluation plan to assess guide usage and impact

Target Audience:

- Dependency court judges and referees
- Judicial officers and court staff
- Lay Guardian Ad Litem
- Court improvement program (CIP) administrators

If your solution/intervention includes training, please provide a title and brief description of any training(s).

What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV) The guide is being created therefore has not been implemented.

How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V). *Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, what do the data show, and how did you use these data to modify or expand the project?* Some ways that may be used to monitor the progress of the project include:

Surveys and Questionnaires

- Judges, court staff, attorneys, and caseworkers.
- Topics: Awareness, ease of use, perceived usefulness, training quality.

b. Interviews / Focus Groups

- Deepen understanding of how and why judges use the guide.
- Identify barriers or facilitators to use.

c. Court Observation

- Monitor live or recorded hearings to assess guide application.
- Evaluate use of best practices the guide promotes.

d. Document Review

- Compare court orders and case files pre- and post-implementation.
- Look for consistency with guide recommendations.

e. Case Outcome Data

- Use administrative data to track:
 - Time to permanency
 - Placement changes
 - Re-entry into care

Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort? No

What assistance or support would be helpful from the CLJIA or the Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?

II. Projects, Activities, and Training. For questions 1-13, provide a *concise* description of work completed or underway to date in FY 2025 (October 2024+) in the topical subcategories below where applicable.

1. Training Overall

Did you have any significant training efforts not related to a particular project (those are now integrated under 2 to 14 below)? If yes, please describe. Yes - The CIP is planning and working to provide a Youth Experiential Learning Lab to a multiciliary group of stakeholders who work in the child welfare system during out judicial symposium in May, 2026. The Youth Experiential Learning Labs (YExLS) is an attempt to help bridge that gap. Developed by professionals who have worked in youth serving systems for decades in collaboration with youth with lived experience of those same systems and further refined through the participation and feedback of judges, social workers, teachers, probation officers, and more, YExLS seeks to help participants get a better sense of what it is like to be youth navigating public systems while also pursuing their own dreams, following their own interests, and surviving their own traumas.

YExLS is gamified but is not a game. During a two-hour session, participants spend roughly half the time navigating the room, pursuing the interests and goals of their assigned character. Each participant's experience in the simulation is unique. Like life, participants may find their way made easier or more complicated by their decisions or by chance.

The second half of is where we process, where we figure out what just happened, and where we start to game plan specific, real world solutions that we can take back with us to the real world.

While some YExLS consist only of those core components, others are built into all-day or multi-day lab sessions, designed to translate insight into impact. They may include:

- Organizational strategic planning
- Community priority setting and work planning
- Intensive substantive trainings on related topics, such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), building community based therapeutic supports, substantive civil legal rights, and more.

On average, how many training events do you hold per year? 4-6

What is your best prediction for the number of attorneys, judges, or other legal system community members that will participate in training annually? 50-100

The Family First Prevention Services Act amended the Social Security Act adding an eligibility criterion for the training of judges and attorneys on the congregate care provisions of the Act. See the highlighted portion below.

(1) IN GENERAL.— In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this section, a highest State court ... *shall provide for the training of judges, attorneys, and other legal personnel in child welfare cases on Federal child welfare policies and payment limitations with respect to children in foster care who are placed in settings that are not a foster family home...*—

Have you been involved in planning with the agency on implementing Family First? ☒ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please describe how the CIP has been involved.

Have you developed/been developing your Family First judicial training plan? ☒ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please describe what you have done.

Throughout the planning phases of Family First, the ND CIP has been invited by the agency to attend multiple monthly stakeholder meetings. During the meetings the court can provide feedback and thoughts on various FFPSA topics. The CIP coordinator attending meetings regarding the foster care candidacy process and was invited to attend all meetings on FFPSA services and programs. The agency also reached out to discuss and engage the court in Q RTP changes and requirements. The juvenile court worked with the ND Juvenile Policy Board to create a structure to perform reviews of Qualified Residential Treatment Placements as required by Families First. The Board reviewed the language in Families First legislation regarding reviews by the court or its' designee and decided to pursue a legislative change. The change in legislation gives authority to the juvenile court director in each unit to review these placements. The ND Legislators approved the change during the 2019 legislative session. The Board then drafted a court rule to outline the procedure to be utilized for Q RTP reviews. The CIP program has been working with CFS to keep them informed on the review process and coordinate all pieces of this review with the agency. The screening tool for the reviews was selected by CFS.

On Aug. 17, 2020, North Dakota became the seventh state in the country to receive approval of its Family First Prevention Services Act: Title IV-E Prevention Services Plan ND from the federal Children's Bureau. This plan gives our state access to federal Title IV-E funding for approved evidence-based prevention services proven to strengthen and stabilize children and families so children can stay in their family home safely. Services include both mental/behavioral health and substance abuse treatment and recovery support services as well as in-home parent skill-based programs. <https://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/iv-e-prevention.html>
 Today children who are eligible as “foster care candidates” and providers providing “evidenced based preventions services” are entered/tracked/receiving reimbursement via the portal.

To date CIP and juvenile court often brainstorm solutions and discuss needs, if needed, directly with CFS related to QRTP assessments. The latest update includes additional space on the universal application form to ensure the QRTP approval/assessment can be uploaded into the court case management system, Odyssey specific to various juvenile court file numbers.

2. **Data Projects.** Data projects include any work with administrative data sets (e.g. AFCARS, CCWIS), data dashboards, data reports, fostering court improvement data, case management systems, and data sharing efforts.
 Do you have a data project/activity? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Data matching, identification and sharing of Dual Status Youth with child welfare and juvenile court.	Agency Data Sharing Efforts	Implementation
Ongoing development of data reports within the court case management system to track timeliness to permanency and subsequent permanency hearings.	Data dashboards	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Data sharing with Children and Family Services on time to termination of parental rights	Fostering Court Improvement data projects	Evaluation/Assessment
Data sharing with Children and Family Services on dual status youth protocol compliance	Agency Data Sharing Efforts	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Data sharing with the ICWA Partnership Grant to track ICWA compliance factors	Other	Identifying/Assessing Needs

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
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(a) Do you have data reports that you consistently view? ☒ Yes ☐ No

(b) How are these reports used to support your work?

Tracking dual status youth data and time to termination of parental rights helps us to consistently identify needs of improvement so we may address identified areas of concern in a timely manner. Using these reports leads to quicker time to permanency and better outcomes for the dual status youth in our state.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
☒ Yes ☐ No	Zone Staff/Child Welfare/Juvenile Court/Dual Status Youth Liaisons	50	Webinar	Improve compliance with DSY identification so that data may be more accurate.	☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☒ N/A

3. Legal Representation. Legal representation projects include any efforts you have made to improve the quality of legal representation for parents, children and youth, the agency, or others. List projects here if you have any in addition to the required project.

Do you have (an additional) legal representation project/activity? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Joint planning and collaboration with the department of Children and Family Services and Indigent Defense Counsel to explore the feasibility of accessing Title-IV-E funding for multidisciplinary model of parent representation.	Multi-Disciplinary Representation	Develop Theory of Change
Guardian Ad Litem Workgroup study and recommendations to return to post-disposition monitoring of child welfare cases.	Other	Selecting Solution
Support/testimony for guardian ad Litem budget increase during legislative session to support implementation of workgroup recommendations to improve the program.	Other	Other
Development/Discussion of onboarding process for state's and defense attorneys who are hired to work child welfare cases.	Agency/Parent Representation	Identifying/Assessing Needs

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
☐ Yes ☒ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

- 4. Hearing Quality.** Hearing quality projects include any efforts you have made to improve the quality of child welfare hearings, including court observation/assessment projects, process improvements, specialty/pilot court projects, projects related to court orders or title IV-E determinations, mediation, or appeals. List projects here if you have any in addition to the required project.

Do you have (an additional) hearing quality project/activity? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Collaboration with the division of Children and Family Services to develop policy guidance for state's attorneys on what information the Zone can share with the Guardian Ad Litem. Update to court orders to better explain the case records GALs have access to.	Process Improvements	Selecting Solution
Update of Juvenile Court Judges Guide and scripts.	Courts Orders/Title IV-E	Selecting Solution

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
☐ Yes ☒ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

5. Improving Timeliness of Hearings or Permanency Outcomes. Timeliness and permanency projects include any activities or projects meant to improve the timeliness of case processing or achievement of timely permanency. This could include general timeliness, focus on continuances or appeals, working on improvement in specific outcomes such as around reunification, guardianship, adoption or a focus on APPLA and older youth.

Do you have a timeliness or permanency project/activity? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Other	Choose an item.
Improving time to termination of parental rights. Working with Zones, attorneys and judges to improve timely filing of TPR and CHIPS petitions.	Continuances/Delays	Selecting Solution
Improve timeliness to Guardian Ad Litem appointment in child welfare cases prior to permanency hearings.	Continuances/Delays	Implementation

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do?</i> S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
☐ Yes ☐ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

6. Engagement & Participation of Parties. Engagement and participation of parties includes any efforts centered around youth, parent, foster family or caregiver, or relative engagement, limited English proficiency, or other efforts to increase presence and engagement at the hearing. Do you have an engagement or participation of parties project/activity? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do?</i> S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
☐ Yes ☐ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

7. Well-Being. Well-being projects include any efforts related to improving the well-being of children and youth. Projects could focus on education, early childhood development, health, trauma, social network support, cultural connections, or other well-being related topics. Do you have any projects/activities focused on well-being? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
☐ Yes ☒ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

8. ICWA/Tribal collaboration. These projects could include any efforts to enhance state and tribal collaboration, state and tribal court agreements, data collection and analysis including of Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on ICWA or tribal collaboration? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Partners of the ND ICWA Partnership Grant	Tribal Collaboration	Selecting Solution
Data collection and analysis of ICWA compliance	Data collection/assessment	Develop Theory of Change
Collaboration with ICWA Family Preservationist (IFP) model	Tribal Collaboration	Implementation

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
☐ Yes ☒ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

9. Preventing Sex Trafficking. These projects could include work around domestic child sex trafficking, a focus on runaway youth, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement these sections of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on preventing sex trafficking/runaways? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
☐ Yes ☐ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

10. Normalcy/Reasonable and Prudent Parent. These projects could include any work around normalcy or the reasonable and prudent parent standard or practices, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement these sections of the Preventing Sex and Strengthening Families Act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on normalcy/reasonable prudent parenting? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do?</i> S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
☐ Yes ☐ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

11. Prevention. Prevention projects include work around preventing child maltreatment including primary prevention (preventing maltreatment from occurring in the first place), secondary, and tertiary prevention.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on prevention? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Information and collaboration of court and child welfare to engage with Dual Status Youth and families to participate in Family Centered Engagement meetings. Facilitated team process to reduce number of children in foster care and increasing number of children remaining in their homes.	Secondary or tertiary prevention	Evaluation/Assessment
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do?</i> S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
☐ Yes ☐ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

12. Safety. Safety projects are those that focus on decision-making around safety including decision-making practices in substantiation, removal, family time/visitation, and decisions about safety in out of home placements.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on safety? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
Collaborating with child welfare and the courts to implement the “Four questions, seven judges” model which addresses safety risk at shelter care hearing. Adding the four questions to judge’s scripts.	Removal/Return	Identifying/Assessing Needs
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?	Who was the target audience?	How many persons attended?	What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)	What were the intended training outcomes?	What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
☐ Yes ☒ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

Continuity Planning. Continuity planning includes prevention and recovery planning for threats such as public health crises, natural disasters, or cyber-attacks. Please describe efforts around technology support for remote hearings or legal representation, developing guidance or protocols, coordinating with other agencies, or otherwise ensuring approaches are in place to ensure needed services are able to continue through any major disruptions.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on continuity planning? ☐ Yes ☒ No

13.

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do?</i> S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
☐ Yes ☒ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

14. Other. Please list any projects you have that do not fit in any of the categories above.
Do you have any other projects/activities? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Project Title and Description	Project Sub-category	CQI Stage (if applicable)
		Choose an item.
		Choose an item.
		Choose an item.

<i>Did you hold or develop a training related to this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do?</i> S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
☐ Yes ☐ No					☐ S ☐ L ☐ B ☐ O ☐ N/A

15. Other Notable Activities. Are there any other activities the CIP has been engaged in not included above that you believe would be important to share with partners including those in the state, partner tribes, the Children’s Bureau, or the Center for Legal and Judicial Innovation and Advancement?

16. Materials. From any of the work described above, do you have any documents or other materials that feel would be helpful to share with the national CIP community? For example, research, innovative approaches, compelling outcome data, etc. Please link here or note and include in your submission. If these relate to your three required projects, please indicate that here.

III. CIP Collaboration in Child Welfare Planning and Improvement Efforts

1. Please describe how the CIP was involved with the state's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)/Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) due June 30, 2025.

Does the CFSP include any of the following:

- ☒ the CIP/Agency Joint Project
- ☐ the Hearing Quality Project
- ☒ the Legal Representation Project
- ☐ other judicial strategies
- ☐ other attorney strategies

If yes, please describe.

2. Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in the most recent/upcoming title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review in your state.

Between December 2023 and February 2024, the ND CIP Coordinator and a designated juvenile court director participated in Title IV-E "preview" conference calls to explain the court system and the processes by which compliance is met through foster care court orders. The CIP coordinator and juvenile court directors assisted by answering questions related to court and legal processes, QRTP reviews and IV-E training that occur within the court system. During the onsite review in April 2024, CFS has also had representatives from juvenile court and CIP available to answer any court order related questions that arose during the review.

A) Only states that will be participating in round 4 of the CFSR and PIP in your state this reporting year are required to complete the questions in this section. However, working to organize meaningful engagement of a broad array of the legal and judicial community and to support collaboration with other system partners is useful for other major CIP projects as well, so others may wish to consider these with your teams. See the PI section II(a)(iii) for further explanation.

On December 8th, 2023 the ND CIP hosted a call to inform stakeholders on the importance of judicial and attorney engagement in the CFSR process. The Children's Bureau, Chief Justice, state court administration, CIP coordinator, CFS director, Indigent Defense and State's Attorney Association all attended the meeting. In January 2024 the CIP Coordinator attended the biannual State's Attorney conference to present on the importance of engagement in the CFSR process. Legal and judicial integration in the Round 4 CFSR was discussed. In March, 2024 the Chief Justice sent an email encouraging judicial officers to respond the Statewide Assessment Survey.

CIP and CFS continue to partner in reviewing data and completing the Statewide Assessment Instrument (SWI). CIP data is critical to understanding how certain systemic factors function in the state and lending insight into the discussion on the state's performance related to the timely achievement of permanency. Reviewing Statewide Data Indicators will be an aspect of these discussions. The state's CQI Implementation Team established a Data Analytics Team. The CIP Research Analyst participates in these efforts on a quarterly basis. CIP assisted the state in obtaining the necessary stakeholder feedback for the SWI. The CIP Coordinator is a trained case reviewer. During R3 CFSR, the CIP Coordinator served as a case reviewer when the state needed stakeholders to participate during the Onsite Case Review and the PIP Baseline Case Review processes.

The CIP Coordinator participated in the Round 4 CFSR reviewer training in September, 2024 and was a case reviewer for Round Four Onsite Review in October 2024. The CIP coordinator also attended and listened in on the court related stakeholder interviewer meetings in November of 2024 and then again participated in a second case review in February 2025. Throughout the last year the court has had a representative sit on the Statewide CQI Council and the CIP Coordinator attend meetings of the state's data analytics workgroup. Most recently the CIP coordinator has attended the Statewide CQI Council meetings assisted in the creation of a survey for our stakeholders which as provided during the state's townhall which discussed the outcomes of each systemic factor.

CIP is committed to partnering with CFS to develop and monitor PIP-related activities. For example, CIP partners will participate in identifying the PIP Measurement Sites, and participation of the child welfare agencies and courts will be integral to the process. The ND CIP Coordinator will continue to collaborate with Children and Family Services Administration team to support and encourage participation of judicial and court partners in PIP development process. While some details of how CIP will be involved in preparing and

completing Round 4 of the CFSR and PIP remain undefined and are a work in progress, CIP commits to active participation in this critical function.

1. Regarding engaging the legal and judicial community with a broad array of perspectives in CFSR/PIP processes:

i) What barriers do you foresee in engaging the community at an appropriate breadth and depth?

Foreseeable barriers in engaging legal and judicial stakeholders include time constraints and capacity of judicial officers and attorneys with a full calendar and docket, especially those that practice in the larger communities.

ii) What do you believe will facilitate engaging the community at an appropriate breadth and depth?

ND CIP believes that establishing a small core group/subcommittee under the umbrella of the CIP Taskforce to specifically focus on meaningful participation and feedback for the CFSR/PIP will assist with balancing breadth and depth of engagement. Additional approaches the CIP will consider include using shared virtual spaces, utilizing legal and judicial data, keeping legal communities informed throughout the process via the CIP Taskforce and workgroup, disseminating publications to support efforts, and assisting in the facilitation of surveys and focus groups.

2. Are there other leadership structures for the legal and judicial community and how can those facilitate the processes around the CFSR/PIP?

North Dakota Indigent Defense Commission and the ND States Attorney Association.

3. How will legal and judicial community involvement in the CFSR/PIP be managed? e.g. CIP is the lead, via the Multi-Disciplinary Task force, a sub-committee established by the child welfare agency, etc. The CIP Coordinator will be the lead point of contact for the courts and will work with the Children and Family Services Stakeholder Lead. CIP will participate in meetings of the child welfare agency (State CQI Council and Data Analytics workgroup) planning group and will facilitate a workgroup of judicial partners under the umbrella of the CIP Taskforce.

4. What court, judicial, or attorney data could be integrated into the CFSR/PIP process?

Data to be integrated during the process may include: CHIPS, TPR, Guardianship, Dual Status and ICWA case filing data. Data on timelines to permanency hearings, termination of parental rights, and continuance hearing reports may also be integrated. Utilizing data

on parent representation, tribal intervention, disproportionality, timeliness of petition filing, GAL reports and appointment may also be integrated.

5. How might participation vary in stages of the process?

Participation may vary depending on court calendar, available resources and time.

6. What feedback loops will be needed to keep the participants informed?

CIP will keep stakeholders informed by providing information to stakeholders on a quarterly basis during the CIP Taskforce. Stakeholders on the Taskforce will inform others from their perspective agencies of the CFSR/PIP updates. Other avenues to inform stakeholders of the process can include discussion during ND Juvenile Court Director's Meetings, Juvenile Policy Board Meetings, and communication to stakeholders during GAL workgroup meetings, state's attorney and indigent defense biannual trainings. The CIP Coordinator will work with the Children and Family Services Stakeholder Lead on the creation of an email notification process to assist in regular updates as well.

7. What supports do you need from the Children's Bureau or the Centers for Innovation and Advancement for participating in the CFSR/PIP?

B) Collaboration with the Child Welfare Agency in General

1. What strategies or processes are in place in your state that you feel are particularly effective in supporting joint child welfare program planning and improvement? The Juvenile Policy Board of the Supreme Court has added child welfare language to their Rule allowing for child welfare stakeholders to be invited to quarterly board meetings along with inclusion of child welfare topics on their agenda. Prior to the rule change, it was only delinquent and unruly issues that were discussed. Another process in place that assists in supporting joint child welfare program planning and improvement is the invitation of Children and Family Services to attend quarterly CIP Taskforce meetings. Inclusion of courts in annual Onsite Case Reviews (OCRs) along with our inclusion of agency participation in the Dual Status Youth Initiative has bolstered the support for joint child welfare program planning and improvement.

The North Dakota Children's Cabinet also supports joint child welfare program planning as it was created by 2019 Senate Bill No. 2313 to assess, guide and coordinate care for children across North Dakota branches of government and tribal nations. The 12-member cabinet

members include legislators and representatives from various state agencies, the Governor's Office, the North Dakota Supreme Court, and tribal nations. Other members appointed by the governor include parents, private service providers, and other community partners. Under oversight of the Children's Cabinet the Juvenile Justice Commission, a sixteen-member workgroup, gathers information, receives reports, and makes recommendations regarding effective interventions, resources, and services for children. The commission included two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the House Majority Leader, two members of the Senate appointed by the Senate Majority Leader, one member of the House of Representatives appointed by the House Minority Leader, and one member of the Senate appointed by the Senate Minority Leader.

During the 2024/2025 legislative session, Senate Bill 2176 was created to enact a new section to chapter 54-07 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the children's cabinet and designated working groups; to repeal section 50-06-43.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the children's cabinet; and to provide for a legislative management report. The Children's Cabinet is created to assess, guide and coordinate the care for children and families across the state's branches of government and the tribal nations. The children's cabinet is now composed of the governor, or the governor's designee, the chief justice of the supreme court, or the chief justice's designee, two members of the house of representatives, two members of the senate, the superintendent of public instruction, the director of protection and advocacy, the commissioner of the DHHS, a representative of the tribal nations and others appointed by the governor to represent the schools and human service zones. The court continues to participate in the children's cabinet and will bring forward CIP efforts to the cabinet as necessary.

2. What barriers exist in your state that make effective joint child welfare program planning and improvement challenging? Existing barriers in our state that make effective joint child welfare program planning and improvement challenging include data collection issues. The child welfare data base has an old outdated system that makes it difficult for courts and child welfare to share information between systems and to pull desired data in a timely fashion. The juvenile court data system was recently updated and the child welfare system is in the process of building their new systems (OCEANS).

An additional barrier that makes joint program planning challenging includes the legal issue surrounding an active domestic violence protection order where the Children and Family Services director cannot have any contact with the CIP coordinator. Since the CFS Director remains in his position there are sometimes barriers or lack of communication from the agency to the court in a timely manner. Over the past year the ability of the CIP coordinator to attend specific meetings surrounding the CFSR and PIP planning was limited until recently when the CFS director pleaded guilty to stalking the CIP coordinator. The court continues to work with the agency to the best of their ability but thought it important to note that while the CFS director remains in his position there will inevitably be barriers that make effective joint planning challenging.

3. Regarding collaboration on training with the child welfare agency...

- a. Regarding training needs across the child welfare system, what is your process to work with the agency to consider how to maximize the impact of complementary resources and ensure there is no undue duplication of efforts?

The process by which CIP works with the agency to maximize the impact of complimentary resources includes inserting training as a standing agenda item on the CIP Taskforce quarterly meetings. Court and child welfare training efforts and topics are discussed at each meeting to ensure there is no duplication of efforts and provides an opportunity to receive feedback from stakeholders and collaboration between courts and child welfare. Communication on collaborative efforts occurs on a consistent basis between the CIP coordinator and agency administration through regular meetings and email correspondence.

- b. Does the state child welfare agency currently offer professional partner training to judges, attorneys, and court personnel as part of its Title IV-E Training Plan? No

If yes, please provide a brief description of what is provided and how.

If no, have you met with child welfare agency leadership to discuss and explore utilizing professional partner training for judges, attorneys and court personnel?

It has been discussed briefly but not in detail.

4. Please provide updates around Title IV-E supported legal representation (e.g. agency, parents, children, kin, other civil legal representation, Indian Child Welfare Act), if applicable.

During the 2024/2025 legislative session North Dakota's Indigent Defense Commission received spending authority so that they may utilize and spend Title- IV-E funds. CFS also received approval during session to use funds to support work supported by Title IV-E legal representation of parents in child welfare cases. The CIP supports the work and the coordinator continues to assist in the planning of a pilot program to support the multidisciplinary legal representation model as well as leveraging funds to assist in attorneys representing parents throughout the life of a CHIPS and TPR case.

C) Other Collaborative Activities

Please briefly describe (or cross reference if noted elsewhere) any significant collaborative activities with other child serving partners (e.g. employment, education, housing, mental health substance misuse providers). Note here the complex DSY group -

D) To facilitate collaborations, partnerships and technical assistance, please indicate where your Self-Assessment will be published or a provide a point of contact to request a copy.

Point of Contact – Heather Traynor, Youth and Family Court/CIP Coordinator htraynor@ndcourts.gov, 701-328-4287

IV. CQI Current Capacity Assessment

1. Has your ability to integrate CQI into practice changed this year? If yes, what do you attribute the change to? No

2. Which of the following CLJIA (or former CBCC) Events/Services have you/your staff engaged in this past year?

- ☐ Attorney Academy
- ☐ Judicial Academy
- ☒ CIPShare 2.0
- ☐ CQI Consult (*Topic:*_____)
- ☐ CQI Workshop
- ☐ Liberating Structures Immersion Workshops
- ☐ Evidence Building CIP Projects
- ☐ Constituency Group - Data/Evaluation
- ☐ Constituency Group - Family First Prevention Services Act
- ☒ Constituency Group - ICWA
- ☒ Constituency Group - Legal Representation
- ☐ Constituency Group - New Directors

- ☒ Constituency Group - Regional CIP Calls
- ☐ Constituency Group – State Tribal Partnerships
- ☐ Constituency Group - Other _____
- ☒ CIP All Call – *What % of All Calls does your CIP participate in? _90__%*

3. Do you have any of the following resources to help you integrate CQI into practice?

- ☒ CIP staff with data expertise
- ☒ CIP staff with evaluation expertise
- ☐ CIP staff with CQI expertise
- ☐ CIP staff with lived expertise
- ☒ a University partnership
- ☒ a statewide court case management system
- ☐ Contracts with external individuals or organizations to assist with CQI efforts
- ☐ Other resources: _____

a. Do you record your child welfare court hearings? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, are they ☒ audio ☐ video

b. Can you remotely access your court case management system? *For example, Odyssey systems often allow remote access to case files.*

☒ Yes ☐ No

c. What court case management software does your state use? If multiple, please indicate the most common:

d. Have you employed any new technology or applications to strengthen your work?

Yes. Tableau

e. Do any of these systems include an electronic filing system?

No

4. Considering the phases of change management and how you integrate these into practice, are there phases of the process (e.g., Phase I-need assessment, Phase II-theory of change) that you struggle with integrating more than others?

5. Is there a topic or practice area that you would find useful from the Center for Legal and Judicial Innovation and Advancement? Be as specific as possible (e.g., data analysis, how to evaluate trainings, more information on research about quality legal representation, how to facilitate group meetings, etc.)

DEFINITIONS

Definitions of Evidence

Evidence-based practice – evidence-based practices are practice that have been empirically tested in a rigorous way (involving random assignment to groups), have demonstrated effectiveness related to specific outcomes, have been replicated in practice at least one, and have findings published in peer reviewed journal articles.

Empirically-supported– less rigorous than evidence-based practices are empirically-supported practices. To be empirically supported, a program must have been evaluated in some way and have demonstrated some relationship to a positive outcome. This may not meet the rigor of evidence-base, but still has some support for effectiveness.

Best-practices – best practices are often those widely accepted as good practice. They may or may not have empirical support as to effectiveness, but are often derived from teams of experts.

Definitions for CQI Phases

Identifying and Assessing Needs – This phase is the earliest phase in the process, where you are identifying a need to be addressed. The assessing needs phase includes identifying the need, determining if there is available data demonstrating that this a problem, forming teams to address the issue.

Develop theory of change—This phase focuses on the theorizing the causes of a problem. In this phase you would identify what you think might be causing the problem and develop a “theory of change”. The theory of change is essentially how you think your activities (or intervention) will improve outcomes.

Develop/select solution—This phase includes developing or selecting a solution. In this phase, you might be exploring potential best-practices or evidence-based practices that you may want to implement as a solution to the identified need. You might also be developing a specific training, program, or practice that you want to implement.

Implementation – the implementation phase of work is when an intervention is being piloted or tested. This includes adapting programs or practices to meet your needs, and developing implementation supports.

Evaluation/assessment – the evaluation and assessment phase includes any efforts to collect data about the fidelity (process measures: was it implemented as planned?) or effectiveness (outcome measures: is the intervention making a difference?) of the project. The evaluation assessment phase also includes post-evaluation efforts to apply findings, such as making changes to the program/practice and using the data to inform next steps.

Paperwork Reduction Act

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-0307 and it expires 02/28/2026. The estimated time to complete the Self-Assessment is 40 hours