



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

2021 CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING LEARNING COHORT

Updated 2/18/2021¹

Purpose: To provide technical assistance and cross-state networking opportunities to states interested in preventing child abuse and neglect and promoting child and family well-being.

Optional Bidders' Call:

February 24, 2021; 3:00 p.m. ET

<https://zoom.us/j/8142024106>

Dial in: 888-475-4499; Meeting ID: 814 202 4106

UPDATED Applications Due:² Friday, **March 12**, 2021 at **5:00 p.m. ET**

UPDATED Selection Announcement: **March 19**, 2021

Virtual Kick Off Convening: **March 24**, 2021; 1-4:00 p.m. ET

NGA Contacts:

Rosalynd Mosser, Senior Policy Analyst
rmosser@nga.org; (202) 624-5329

Jordan Hynes, Program Director
jhynes@nga.org; (202) 624-7894

PURPOSE

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) is partnering with Casey Family Programs to relaunch the **Child and Family Well-being Learning Cohort**. This initiative will bring together state teams in a collaborative network to develop and coordinate solutions to prevent child abuse and neglect and promote child and family well-being. Through this initiative, the

¹ Originally published 2/3/2021

² **2/18/21 UPDATE:** Applications for the General Learning Cohort will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis. Please contact Rosalynd Mosser or Jordan Hynes for more information.

NGA Center and Casey Family Programs will work with state teams throughout 2021.

Many states have seen a large decline in reports of child abuse or neglect during the COVID-19 pandemic, in part due to stay-at-home orders, the transition to virtual schooling, and children's limited interaction with other mandated reporters. State leaders are perennially challenged in balancing both their responsibility to ensure children and families are connected with critical resources and their obligation to maintain the safety and well-being of vulnerable populations. Throughout the pandemic, governors and other state leaders have been working tirelessly on behalf of their constituents to meet these two obligations. This network will enhance states' work by bringing together a collaborative cohort of state leaders committed to enhancing child and family well-being, allowing them to work together on ways to assess state needs, explore challenges impacting multiple states, and strategize on results-driven improvements.

The 2021 **Child and Family Well-being Learning Cohort** will facilitate the development and implementation of state action plans. States will benefit from participating in cross-state working groups where they can share expertise and experiences between teams, participate in high-level national technical assistance workshops, and benefit from tailored technical assistance from NGA and Casey Family Programs. Casey Family Programs will also share learnings from its other related initiatives such as "Thriving Families, Safer Children". The 2021 Cohort will support state teams collaborating on topics intended to improve outcomes for children and families, including:

- Advancing racial equity in state and county child- and family-serving systems, including tribal child welfare
- Using data to identify factors that can impact and improve service delivery, especially in cases with greater risk for substantiated abuse or neglect
- Using data to identify environmental and community indicators commonly associated with child maltreatment to inform decision-making, strategic interventions, and stakeholder engagement
- Using data to examine child protection reporting systems and CPS responses to ensure children and families receive the appropriate level of intervention and support for their situation
- Using evidence-based differential and alternative response strategies to best meet the needs of those at greatest risk of abuse
- Leveraging local, state, and federal funding and cross-system partnerships to support and evaluate evidence-based programs to prevent abuse and neglect and allow children to reside safely with their families in healthy communities
- Leveraging concrete supports, such as those provided through delivery models like Family Resource Centers, to support child and family well-being

- Using data to understand trends in child maltreatment and develop strategic responses
- Developing cross-system and cross-branch partnerships to engage other state and local agencies that support child and family well-being
- Engaging constituents— including birth families, foster and adoptive families, and former foster youth—in all stages of program development and policy-making, such as information gathering, development, implementation, and evaluation
- Coordinating state and community programs to identify and meet the needs of children and their families to prevent abuse and neglect
- Working with court systems to support timely legal proceedings and reduce prolonged foster care placements through family reunification and other permanency placements
- Developing sustainable child welfare system reforms and facilitating long-term planning
- Understanding adaptations states have made as a result of the pandemic and how those lessons can apply to child welfare systems and practice going forward

LEARNING COLLABORATIVE DESCRIPTION

The NGA Center will provide technical assistance throughout 2021 to assist participating states with their strategies for preventing child abuse and neglect and promoting child and family well-being. Based on their applications, states will be selected to participate in the following opportunities:

- **Intensive technical assistance:** Up to seven states will be selected to receive intensive technical assistance from the NGA Center and Casey Family Programs to achieve their goals. Such assistance can include monthly telephone consultations to assess progress towards state-determined goals, discuss challenges, and identify technical assistance needs; peer-to-peer exchange opportunities via multi-state calls and/or webinars; facilitated meetings with other states or experts; and written technical assistance regarding information about other states' policies and practices. States that apply for intensive TA but who are not selected will be invited to join the general Learning Cohort.
- **General Learning Cohort:** Learning Cohort states will have access to the same technical assistance opportunities for collaborative learning and engagement, without the supplementary coaching and consultation meetings. States that elect to participate only in the General Learning Cohort and do not want to be considered for intensive TA should indicate so in their application.

LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

All participating states (including states involved in both Intensive TA and the General Learning Cohort) will:

- 1. Attend the virtual kick-off meeting:** NGA Center will host a virtual kick-off meeting in February 2020 to introduce state teams and facilitate planning sessions with each team to solidify individual state goals and discuss initial technical assistance needs, as well as identify next steps for completing state action plans.
- 2. Develop a high-level plan of action to adapt and implement lessons learned:** Within two months of the kick-off convening, participating states will develop and share with the NGA Center a high-level plan of action to address the unique needs of their state. The plan should include objectives, measurable goals, and an implementation timeline.
- 3. Attend regular cross-state virtual meetings:** Cross-state meetings will be held on a regular basis to facilitate peer-to-peer sharing. States may be paired together to discuss best practices and challenges related to their work based on complementary goals and action plans or similar past experience.
- 4. Communicate technical assistance needs:** In partnership with Casey Family Programs, NGA staff will provide customized technical assistance throughout the learning cohort. NGA will also facilitate technical assistance support from national, state and local experts.
- 5. Attend the Governors' Summit on Child and Family Well-being:** At the conclusion of the Learning Cohort, NGA will host a Governors' Summit for participating states to discuss best practices and lessons-learned from the cohort.

REQUIRED APPLICATION CONTENT

All states in good standing with the National Governors Association may apply to participate in the learning cohort.

To apply, states should submit:

- 1. Letter from the Governor:**³ The letter must include the governor's interest in, and desired outcomes related to, the technical assistance opportunity. The letter should indicate the governor's designated the team leader who will serve as the main point of contact between the NGA Center and the state.
- 2. Brief Narrative:** The narrative should not exceed **five (5)** pages (excluding the letter), and should include the following elements:

³ **2/18/21 UPDATE:** States applying for the General Learning Cohort ONLY will not be required to submit a letter from the governor. These states must receive acknowledgement from the governor's policy advisor or Washington Representative about their participation in the General Learning Cohort.

- **Description of current challenges:** Applicants should provide a brief description of the current challenges they face in improving child and family well-being. *(20 points)*
- **Description of current collaborative activities across departments, agencies, and branches of government (if applicable), that support improvements to the safety and success of children and families:**
Applicants should provide a brief description of how state departments and agencies are currently working together to prevent child abuse and neglect and promote family stabilization, including specific goals and current benchmarks of progress. This description should identify existing policy initiatives and state priorities and include a complete list of any existing technical assistance support the state is receiving from the NGA Center, Casey Family Programs (e.g. through multi-jurisdiction initiatives such as Thriving Families or work with Chapin Hall), or other organizations. For existing Casey Family Programs technical assistance, include a description of how the work with NGA will enhance current plans, goals or objectives. *(25 points)*
- **Description of preliminary goals and outcomes:** Applicants should provide an overview of goals, expected outcomes, and how the state will measure the success of this learning opportunity. Applicants should describe how they envision this technical assistance opportunity will meet state goals and help them overcome challenges they are facing. Each application shall include an evaluation of the state's ability and readiness to adopt new strategies or approaches undertaken in concert with the learning collaborative. *(35 points)*
- **Learning cohort team:** Provide a brief statement describing the anticipated cross-agency core team that will engage with the learning cohort, including the reason each member and agency is participating. If key individuals are identified as instrumental in implementing the state's action plan but are not included in the team, describe how these individuals will be included in this work. *(20 points)*

State teams should include:

- The Governor's human services or education policy advisor*
- Leadership from the state human services or child and family services agency
- Leadership from the state child welfare agency*
- Leadership from the state education agency
- Representatives from state courts or the judicial community
- Representatives from nonprofit or community-based organizations
- Persons with lived experience in child welfare or representatives of persons with lived experience (Advisory Board leaders, organizations led by those with lived experience, etc)

* Indicates required team members

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

The scheduled deadline for applications for Intensive Technical Assistance is **5:00 p.m. EST on March 12, 2021**. Please contact us if you require an extension. Applications must be submitted by the governor's office. Please combine all application materials into a single PDF document and email to Rosalynd Mosser or rmosser@nga.org. Following submission, applicants will receive a confirmation email from the NGA Center verifying receipt of your application.

Please contact Rosalynd Mosser (rmosser@nga.org) with any questions.