



# Best Practices for Family Time in Colorado:

## Recommendations for Family Time Infrastructure

These standards guide capacity building so that best practices can be feasible and sustainable.

**Recommendation C1:** Provide shared messaging and tailored implementation materials on the purpose, requirements, and best practices of family time for all participating parties.

**Standard:** For cohesive implementation, standard communication and support materials should be developed for all parties who interact with family time. Professionally, this includes human services, judicial, legal, and third-party providers. Communication and support materials should be adapted for use with parents, children/youth, foster families, and kin. Consistent messaging across all materials and audiences is essential.

**Recommendation C2:** For each case, clarify responsibilities in family time and align roles, using a team-based approach.

**Standard:** There are different responsibilities in family time and these look different on each case. All parties involved in family time (e.g., parents, caseworker, professional and non-professional supervisors, foster families, and legal/judicial professionals) must understand their role and the role of others in fulfilling family time best practices. Roles should be revisited regularly to remain responsive to evolving needs.

**Recommendation C3:** Provide kin who supervise family time with adequate support and manageable expectations.

**Standard:** Kin are not child welfare professionals, and they should not be expected to take on caseworker responsibilities. They do have unique responsibilities in supervising and facilitating family time. Fulfilling their role requires tailored support. When there are challenging family dynamics, therapeutic supports should be offered to unpack underlying causes that may prevent kin from supervising, and to otherwise strengthen the parent's family support network long-term.

**Recommendation C4:** Assist parents with transportation to and from family time.

**Standard:** Assisting parents with transportation can minimize missed family time, promote greater frequency of family time, and build parental skills. Assisting with transportation goes beyond direct dollars to also account for creative support mechanisms (e.g., skill building around public transportation) that can help families build lasting foundations.

**Recommendation C5:** Develop realistic scheduling standards for family time that reflect parent and child/youth obligations.

**Standard:** Family time should be scheduled with consideration for the very high demands placed on parents involved in a dependency and neglect case, in addition to usual life obligations. Family time should not overlap with other essential obligations and when possible, should be done adjacent to other activities that may be concentrated in a shared location. Child/youth activities should also be considered when scheduling family time. Family time should not conflict with school hours. Extracurricular activities are a prime opportunity for additional family time.

**Recommendation C6:** Build capacity for more regular family time, including evenings and weekends, by using multiple supervisor options.

**Standard:** A family time plan need not have a singular supervisor. Family time plans should identify multiple supervisors available to support the family, depending on activity, location, and time. Using a “bench of supervisors” reduces burden on any one supervisor and increases capacity for more frequent family time that reflects usual family activities and cultural values.

**Recommendation C7:** During placement assignments, prioritize keeping siblings together and placing children/youth in the same geographic area as their parents.

**Standard:** When there is more than one child/youth removed from the home, placement together should be prioritized. Placing siblings together can facilitate sibling-to-sibling bonding and improve feasibility of frequent family time with parents. Placing children/youth in the same geographic areas as their parents will also help improve frequent family time and better maintain the family’s long-term ties with their community.

**Recommendation C8:** Make technical updates to the child welfare data system (Trails) to align with and support changes to family time.

**Standard:** In Trails, wording and documentation should be aligned to the language and requirements of current family time statute, rule, and best practice recommendations. Trails should be modified to consistently capture key elements of family time so implementation trends can be monitored over time and evidence on effectiveness built.

**Recommendation C9:** Develop a collaborative protocol for corrections and county departments of human services to ensure family time is available to incarcerated parents.

**Standard:** Incarceration poses unique challenges to implementing family time best practices, particularly for who can supervise, setting, and frequency. The de-centralized nature of human services and corrections in Colorado adds to this issue and leads to inconsistencies. A collaborative protocol between corrections and county human services departments should be developed that outlines standard topics to be agreed upon for that facility and the surrounding counties. By pre-determining the expected approach, less time will be wasted in re-negotiating terms each time the need arises.



Details and the data behind each practice recommendation are included in the full [strategy report](#). Funding structure considerations are also included.



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