

A User's Guide to the *Working With Children and Youth With Complex Clinical Needs: Strategies in the Safe Reduction of Congregate Care* Guide



Capacity Building
CENTER FOR STATES

This guide supports states in reducing reliance on congregate care placements, particularly for children and youth with complex clinical needs. This resource may be particularly helpful as states move toward more significant investment in prevention services.

The guide is a comprehensive resource that agency leaders, program managers, agency staff interested in reducing congregate care, and private providers can use to develop and implement program and practice strategies to safely and effectively increase family-based placement options that meet children's mental and behavioral health needs.

Access at <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/foster-care-permanency/congregate-care-guide>

Introduction

The guide's introduction sets the foundation for engaging in new program and practice strategies.

Practice Strategies

This section contains concrete guidance and evidence-informed approaches to help states:

- ▶ Prevent entry into care and increase reunification
- ▶ Use early screening and assessment to tailor mental health services
- ▶ Increase the number of available out-of-home options

Program Strategies

The practice strategies in this section can help states:

- ▶ Collaboratively develop desired prevention services
- ▶ Provide opportunities to increase clinical skills
- ▶ Support data-driven practice and quality improvement
- ▶ Develop a multidisciplinary review process
- ▶ Monitor facilities to ensure high quality service

Organizational Assessment

Using the information in this section, states can:

- ▶ Assess current use of congregate care
- ▶ Identify strengths and challenges
- ▶ Plan for capacity building necessary to serve children and youth with complex clinical needs

RELATED RESOURCES

Video:

[Young Adult, Formerly in Congregate Care: Treat Me Like a Normal Child](#)

Webinar:

[Safely Reducing the Use of Congregate Care: Considerations in the Age of Family First](#)

CapLEARN Courses: (registration required)

[Post-Reunification Supports and Prevention of Reentry into Out-of-Home Care](#)

[Achieving Placement Stability](#)

How Can You Use the *Working With Children and Youth With Complex Needs: Strategies in the Safe Reduction of Congregate Care Guide*?

The sections of the guide described here can be used alone or together to help states or private providers develop and implement strategies to reduce reliance on congregate care.

To Understand Your Organization's Strengths and Areas for Improvement

The Organizational Assessment tool is designed to support agencies—including public child welfare organizations and private providers—in understanding their current capacity, identifying areas to develop further, and planning for a safe and effective reduction in congregate care placements.

To Reduce Initial Placements in Congregate Care Settings

The “Practice and Program Strategies” sections of the guide contain helpful strategies to both increase the number of resource family homes and prepare them to adequately meet the mental and behavioral health needs of children and youth in their care.

To Improve the Service Array for Children With Complex Clinical Needs

The “Practice and Program Strategies” sections of the guide provide support for states as they identify and implement appropriate interventions designed to promote mental health and stabilize placements.

To Work Collaboratively to Understand the Landscape and Increase Family Placement Options for Children and Youth With Complex Needs

The full guide can help agencies collaboratively plan for improved services and a reduced reliance on congregate care.

1. Understand the current landscape, including current trends and opportunities to partner.
2. Understand and see examples of practice strategies to reduce congregate care placements.
3. Assess your organization and identify strengths and capacity building needs.
4. Prepare and plan for implementation.

To ask questions or request free services related to building agency capacity for reducing congregate care placements, email capacityinfo@icfi.com or [contact your Tailored Services Liaison](#)

This product was created by the Capacity Building Center for States under Contract No. HHSP233201400033C, funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

