



COLORADO
Office of Children,
Youth & Families
Department of Human Services



Dear Community Partner,

We're excited to share important news about a new pilot program that we believe will improve how Colorado supports children, youth and families. The 211 Colorado Warm Line will offer an alternative to the traditional Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (844-CO-4-KIDS or 844-264-5437) for situations where there are no concerns of abuse or neglect, but a family may need help from community services.

Following this letter, you'll receive an invitation to join a community conversation about this new approach, your role in it and what to expect when we launch this pilot. Please share this letter and the invite with those you wish to have included.

In 2024, the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline received over 100,000 referrals with nearly 70,000 of those screened out for further assessment, which means there was no allegation of known or suspected child abuse or neglect. While these calls are well-intended, they can have a long-lasting and detrimental impact on children and families. These families are recorded in the state's system as suspected of maltreatment – a label that is recorded indefinitely.

Research shows that there are many families who have needs that cannot be met by a call to a child abuse hotline including such things as food insecurity, housing instability, lack of access to mental health support, conflict between parents and youth and other social or economic challenges. The traditional child protection system is not built to solve these problems – and in fact, was never meant to be the front door for family support.

That's why the 211 Colorado Warm Line is being created.

What is the Warm Line Pilot?

The Warm Line Pilot will provide consultation and resource navigation to those who call the hotline. These callers will receive a responsive, supportive, and community-based alternative to calling the child abuse hotline when a report of suspected abuse or neglect isn't appropriate.

Instead of defaulting to the child welfare system, the Colorado Warm Line offers a connect between you with a trained 211 Navigator who will:

- Listen to your concerns,
- Share available community resources and service options to assist families,
- Provide coaching on how to support families directly when possible,
- Offer guidance on how to share helpful information with families in a respectful and empowering way,
- And, if after the conversation, concerns about safety are evident, will connect you warmly back to the child abuse hotline to make a report.

From August 1, 2025 - May 31, 2026, if you call the child abuse hotline in Boulder, Gilpin, or Pueblo County, you'll first hear a recorded message. It will explain your options and help you decide whether to:

1. Talk with 211 for support, services, or help for the family you're concerned about, or
2. Continue to the county's child abuse hotline to report known or suspected abuse or neglect.

We understand the pressure associated with mandated reporters. If concerns about child abuse or child safety remain after you speak with a 211 Navigator, you will be warmly connected back to that county's child abuse hotline to make a report.

During the pilot, we'll collect both data and feedback—including reaching out to you—to help decide if and how this approach should expand statewide. The goal is to provide all Colorado children and families with the support they need in their communities before child welfare involvement becomes necessary.

Why Does this Project Matter?

This pilot is part of a broader values-driven effort to reimagine how Colorado supports families. It's based on the belief that poverty is not neglect, and that communities - not just child welfare systems - should help ensure families get the support they need when they need it.

By using the Warm Line, you may:

- Help reduce unnecessary referral to and involvement in the child protection system,
- Support families in getting connected to help early, before crises escalate,
- Promote racial and economic equity in access and outcomes,
- And contribute to a larger movement to build a compassionate, robust and community-rooted response system for families.

We know your work is complex, and that you care deeply about children and families. This pilot doesn't change your role as a mandated reporter - it simply gives you more options to help respond in ways that better match a family's needs.

Let's build a system that supports families in their own communities when they need it. The Warm Line is one of many steps we are taking to achieve that vision.

With appreciation,

The Colorado Warm Line Pilot Team

Please see the next page for our partner signatories.

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