



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI

Issue 25-05

Date: 4/14/2025

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

In February 2018, the [Family First Prevention Services Act](#) (FFPSA) was signed into law. FFPSA aligns with several social work best practice enhancements, including:

- [Integrated Core Practice Model \(ICPM\)](#)
- [Six \(6\) Protective Factors](#)
- [Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) implementation](#)
- [Continuum of Care Reform \(CCR\)](#)
- [Continuation of prevention services via the Title IV-E waiver](#)

FFPSA supports the use of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) to promote the well-being of children, youth, and families and to decrease the reliance on out of home care. A [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#) was established to conduct an extensive review of research on programs and services intended to identify EBPs for this purpose. Among the list of approved EBPs is Motivational Interviewing (MI).

Los Angeles County will be utilizing MI as a case management engagement tool. MI has been implemented at specific DCFS offices referred to as FFPSA Learning Sites and will be expanding to all DCFS offices via a phased-in approach. This FYI outlines the purpose of MI, target population/case eligibility criteria, and staff responsibilities as it relates to MI.

Purpose of MI:

MI can be used on its own as an intervention or alongside other services to address ambivalence and boost internal motivation for change, offering families facing complex challenges, such as substance abuse, a supportive and empowering pathway to recognize and build upon their strengths. By fostering an environment of genuine empathy and partnership, MI helps caregivers and parents confront challenging behaviors in a way that encourages them to openly explore their values and goals, discover their own motivation, and commit to meaningful change. MI is being implemented as a case management and family engagement service, aligning with our commitment to the Core Practice Model by enhancing engagement and support for families.

The aim of MI is to encourage individuals to become active participants in their transformation process by evoking their intrinsic motivations for change. MI is based upon four (4) general principles:

1. **Expressing Empathy**
Carefully listening and displaying non-judgmental curiosity about a client's presenting problem;
2. **Developing Discrepancy**
Building awareness and creating a gap in the difference between one's current behavior and a desired different behavior;



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI

Issue 25-05

Date: 4/14/2025

3. Rolling with Resistance

Recognizing that simply confronting someone directly does not always work; and,

4. Supporting Self-efficacy

Focusing on previous successes and highlighting skills and strengths that the client already has.

These principles are intended to improve collaboration between child welfare/service providers and clients; evoke or draw out a client's ideas about change; emphasize the autonomy of the client; and help child welfare/service providers practice compassion in the process. FFPS does allow for claiming for Title IV-E federal reimbursement when MI is an intervention.

MI entails four practices that are referred to by the acronym “OARS”:

1. Open-Ended Questions
2. Affirmations
3. Reflections
4. Summaries

Research has shown that MI is an effective tool in helping families. It is anticipated that use of MI will improve outcomes for families, help parents uncover their own internal motivation to change, and strengthen engagement skills in daily interactions with their children and families.

Target Population/Case Eligibility Criteria:

FFPSA defines a candidate for prevention services as a child or youth who is at imminent risk of entering foster care but can remain safely at home or in a kinship placement with the right services. Evidence-based services available under FFPSA include mental health, substance use, and parenting skills services.

The target population to receive Family First services and EBPs, including MI, are:

- Family Maintenance(FM)/Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) cases & Family Reunification (FR) cases that become FM
- Expectant and Parenting Youth (EPY) in care
- Children whose guardianship or adoption arrangement is at-risk of disruption (Post-guardianship/Post-adoption)
- Children who have siblings in foster care (Siblings in Foster Care)
- Children with a substantiated or inconclusive disposition of a child abuse or neglect allegation, but no case opened (Substantiated/Inconclusive Disposition)
- Youth subject to a 602 WIC petition (the Probation Department and DCFS will be working together to implement interventions with this population)
- Families receiving services through a community pathway referral.

Note: All families meet imminent risk criteria based on having an open case or through a community pathway referral. However, there must also be an identified need for mental health, substance abuse, and/or parenting services to meet EBP eligibility under Family First.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI

Issue 25-05

Date: 4/14/2025

Staff Responsibilities:

MI Training

All CSWs and SCSWs are required to complete both foundational and advanced MI trainings within a 5-6 month timeframe, with all components designed to be completed in sequence to build skill proficiency. Comprehensive MI training, including foundational, advanced, and ongoing learning, is critical for ensuring fidelity in MI practice and improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. Early evaluation of the training demonstrates that those who missed one or more components and did not complete them in order had difficulty reaching competence on their coding session.

All trainees are required to attend two (2) in-person sessions (one foundational and one advanced) and complete six (6) virtual skill practices. Each skill practice includes an eLearning module with videos, a small group coaching session, and coding session.

During each coding session, participants will receive a score based on their performance, with a composite rating of 1 ("Fundamentally Inconsistent"), 2 ("Generally Inconsistent"), 3 ("Client-Centered"), 4 ("Competent"), or 5 ("Proficient"). The target is for all participants to achieve a score of 4 ("Competent") or higher.

Research and our county data shows that scores improve as trainees complete all components in sequence and as designed, with additional support and coaching. Office administration should ensure a process for emailing a copy of each CSW's coding report to the CSW and SCSW after each session is completed and becomes available. SCSWs and CSWs are expected to meet and review the coding report in accordance with the [coaching guide](#).

Foundational training begins with a 6-hour in-person session, followed by four self-paced eLearning videos (1-2 hours each). After each video, participants engage in a 1-hour group coaching session, followed by a 30-minute individual coding session.

Advanced training consists of a 6-hour in-person session, two (2) additional eLearning videos, two (2) group coaching sessions, and two (2) coding sessions. Advanced training can only be taken after the foundational training is completed.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

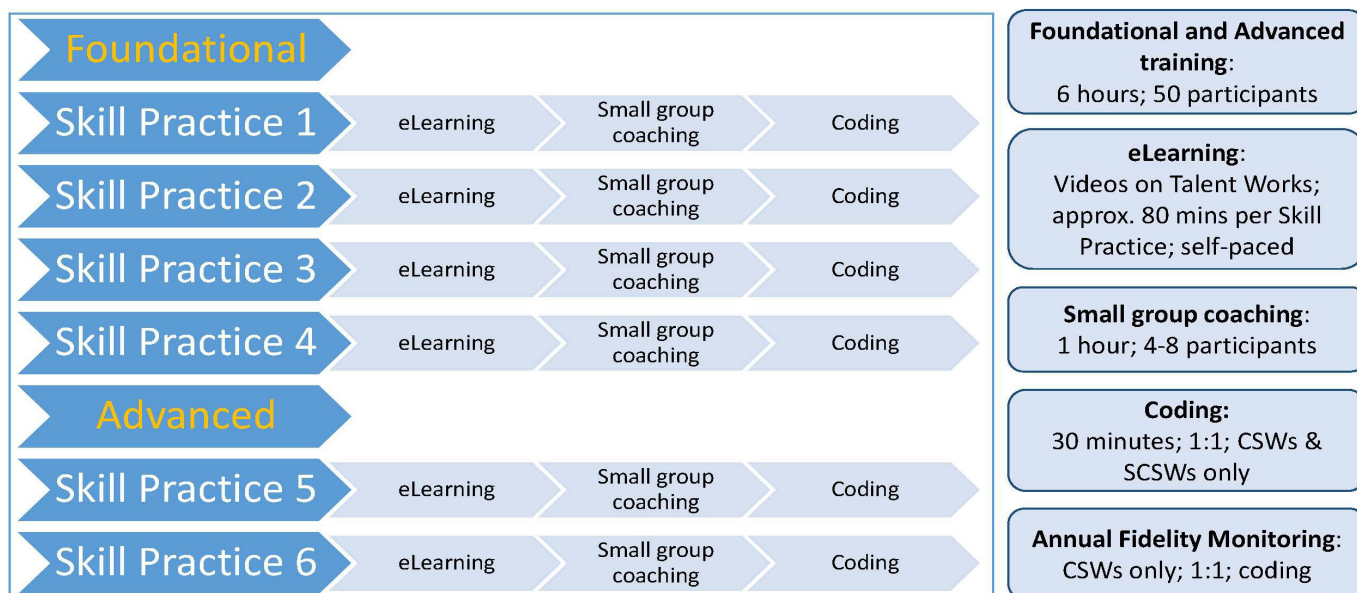
FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI

Issue 25-05

Date: 4/14/2025

Below is a visual of all the MI training components:

MI training process (5-6 months, virtual)



Upon completion of the training, all CSWs are required to participate in State-mandated Annual Fidelity Monitoring to evaluate MI practice. It used the same format as Coding.

All Assistant Regional Administrators (ARAs) and Regional Administrators (RAs) will be required to complete the foundational and advanced training sessions, all eLearnings, all small group coaching sessions, and a minimum of two (2) coding sessions. It is essential that ARAs and RAs participate in this training to fully understand and support the implementation of MI across their teams. This leadership involvement is crucial for fostering a culture of MI fidelity and improving overall client outcomes across the organization.

Ongoing learning, including regular booster sessions and community of practice, is essential for continuous skill development and mastery of MI methods, ensuring practitioners maintain high proficiency and effectively engage clients. The frequency of ongoing learning is guided by fidelity monitoring. CSWs who receive a score of 3 ("Client-Centered"), 2 ("Generally Inconsistent"), or 1 ("Fundamentally Inconsistent") are required to participate in ongoing learning.

Ongoing Fidelity Monitoring

Fidelity monitoring is essential for ensuring the quality and consistency of MI delivery, using an approved tool to evaluate whether the practice aligns with the intended model. This process is crucial for achieving positive client outcomes. To fully realize the benefits of MI, it must be implemented with fidelity and consistently integrated into routine practice.

Fidelity monitoring includes the following key components:



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI

Issue 25-05

Date: 4/14/2025

1. **Observation, Coaching and Coding:** MI coding sessions are observed to assess specific MI behaviors and strategies. Based on the observed sessions, participants are coded on how well they adhere to MI principles, receiving scores such as “Client-Centered,” “Competent,” or “Proficient.” Coaching is then provided to support skill improvement.

All CSWs are required to participate in ongoing fidelity monitoring at different intervals based on the rating score.

The expectation of each regional office administration is to participate in MI Implementation/CQI workgroups with the goal of reviewing documentation, tracking training completion as well as tracking fidelity scores including coding/coaching sessions as well as ongoing training. The goal will be to identify problems and make course corrections when needed. Regional office administration is expected to provide CSW/SCSW coding scores from Tableau for review and coaching with their supervisor.

Documentation Requirements

Documenting MI is essential for federal FFPSA claiming, which allows us to reinvest funds to keep caseloads low and provide more prevention efforts.

In addition to existing [documentation requirements](#), all CSWs must document the use of MI during in-person monthly visits with the parents/caregivers and/or youth. [This document](#) provides examples of MI documentation. In the CWS/CMS Client Services Notebook, CSWs must document:

1. Whenever MI is utilized with the parent/caregiver or adolescent.
 - a. For each time MI is utilized, describe how MI was used in the case contact note (e.g., MI was used to validate the parent’s frustration, or, MI was used to acknowledge possible feelings of being pressured).
 - b. To identify the service as ‘Family First: Motiv. Interviewing’:
 - i. Open the case of the oldest child in the family in CWS/CMS and select the Special Project tab.
 - ii. Click the ‘+’ sign, scroll down, and select ‘Family First: Motiv. Interviewing’ EVERY TIME it is used with the parent/caregiver or adolescent.
 - iii. Enter Start Date and End Date when MI was used (start and end dates will be the same date).

For families with multiple children: ‘Family First: Motiv. Interviewing’ does not need to be entered for every child – only do so for the oldest child in the family.

For time studies, use the following appropriate codes in documentation:

- For FFPSA related training:
 - Enter PIN 10120094 Start Up/Nonrecurring Costs DTP A115 CWD – Title IV- E Prevention Admin & Training.



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FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI FYI

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If you have any questions regarding this release, please email your question to:
Policy@dcfs.lacounty.gov