

 **BLOOM WORKS**

The background image shows a city street scene with a large, ornate classical building on the left and modern skyscrapers on the right. In the foreground, a group of children are running and playing in a public water fountain, splashing water. Colorful balloons are visible in the air. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey filter.

Background Check Form Research Phase II

Presentation of findings

October 2023

**What might a new national standard
for background check forms look
like?**

Defining our scope

In our work, we:

- Determined what **documents and fields** are absolutely necessary to make sure a placement is safe for children
 - Shifted from background check form to application and separate consent document
- The **touchpoints** child welfare professionals and kinship caregivers have throughout the background check process and what the optimal process should be to increase equity and effectiveness

Methods and approach

What we've done

Discovery

Heard from 151 participants through agency conversations, kin survey responses, and kin interviews and **reviewed agency background check forms from 40 states**

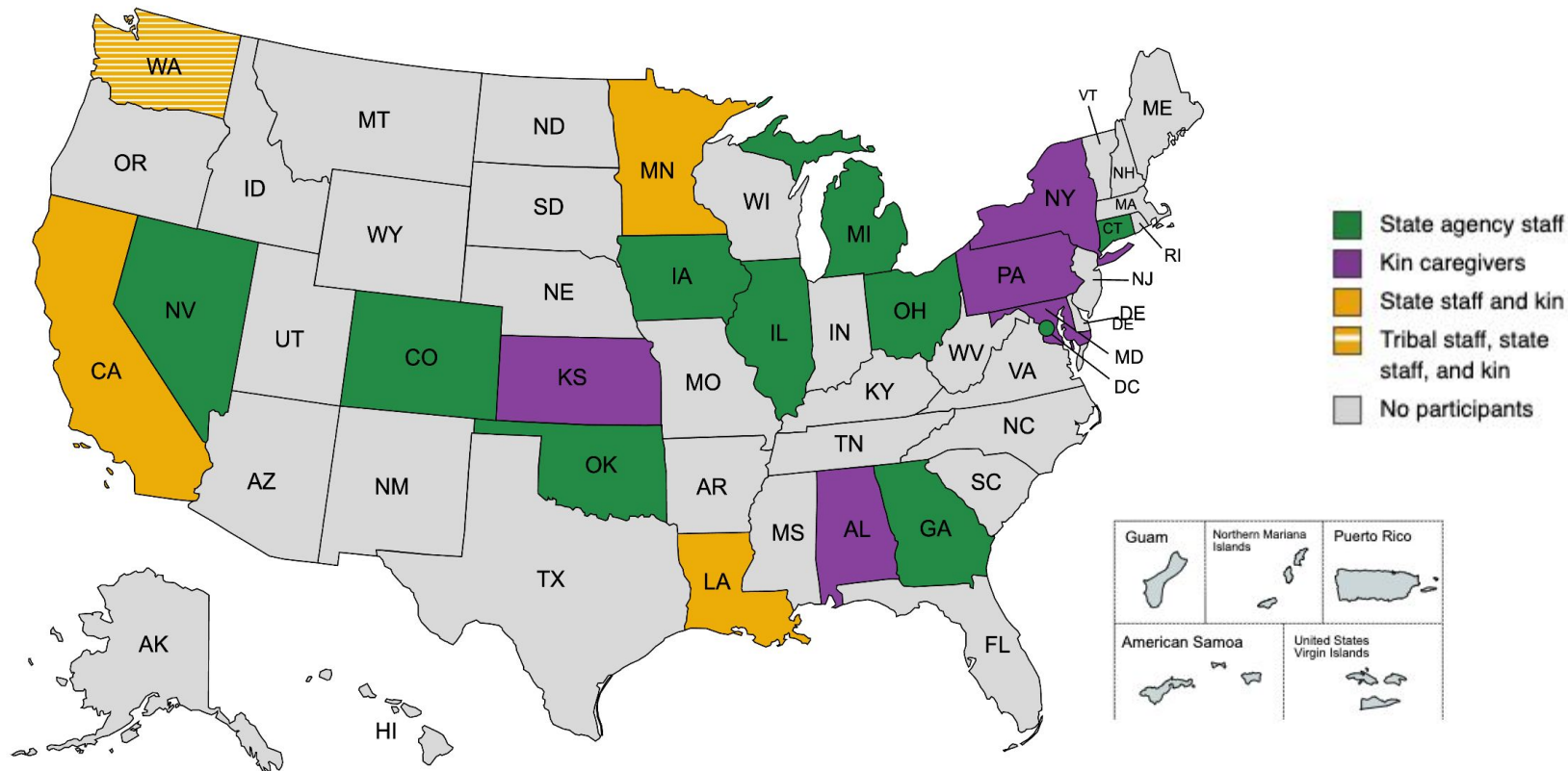
Draft form

Developed background check documents and forms based on formats and content agencies used and what participants said should be changed

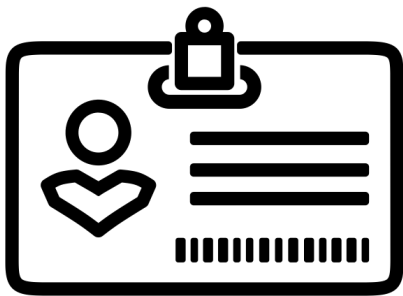
Testing

Conversations with 51 participants to increase equity and understanding for kin families and reduce administrative burden for child welfare professionals

States represented – testing phase



We spoke to:



30

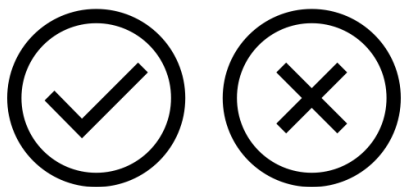
Child welfare professionals,
across 15 agencies



21

Kin caregivers

Kin caregivers we spoke to:

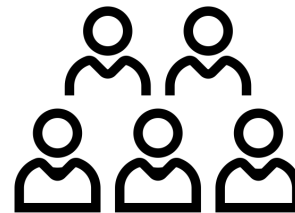
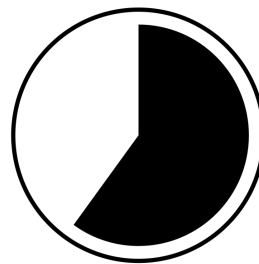


73% Passed with ease

13% Passed with difficulty

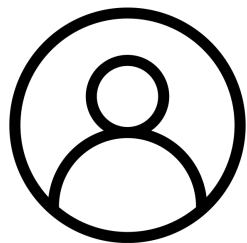
6% Did not pass

6% Still waiting for results



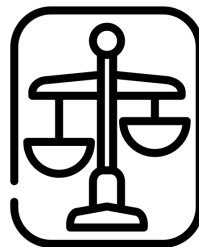
80% People of color

Kin caregivers we spoke to:



10%

People with a disability
or chronic disease



13%

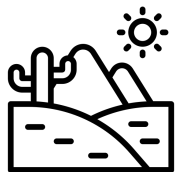
Interacted with the criminal
justice system

Child welfare agencies we spoke to:



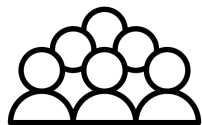
Poverty rates

4 of the states with the highest rates
2 of the states with the lowest rates



Geographic region

All 5 regions of the country represented



Population diversity

3 of the most racially diverse states
1 of the least racially diverse states

Our approach to creating the documents and forms

- **Center equity** — to work across an array of communities and families, especially ones that have been historically left out
- **Promote transparency** — explaining “the why” throughout the entire process and building out a separate robust consent document
- **Design for simplicity** — using plain language to reduce bias and create clarity where there has often been overwhelm
- **Not only forms, also a guide** — using a cover letter to assist kinship caregivers and document annotations to assist child welfare professionals

Key findings

Experiences with background check processes



The biggest thing I needed to accept was they weren't trying to take him from me and put him in the system. **They wanted him to stay where with me, but they needed all this information to keep him there.** Yes they seem like big steps, but they're little steps in the end."

– Kinship caregiver, reflecting in the shift of attitude towards undergoing background checks

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If you have history as long as mine...I haven't had anything since then. You need to have some leniency. **People can change.**"

– Kinship caregiver, reflecting on their background check experience

What we learned about the process

- **Communication** — the lines of communication are faulty in some instances as kinship caregivers don't know or understand what was happening with the process
- **Different experiences across the U.S.** — kinship caregivers and child welfare professionals both experience or carry out the background check process in different ways across the U.S.
- **Form assistance** — form assistance experiences vary across the board and there is an appetite to have the process completed in one day
- **Same day support** — there is an appetite among kinship caregivers to have the process completed in one day
- **Language support** — At least 4 states that we directly spoke to (and inquired) have forms in *multiple* languages

Communication with kin caregivers

What currently happening	What's needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● In some instances, kin caregivers didn't understand what was happening with the process or why● Agency staff emphasized how critical information like a social security number is to run checks quickly, but many caregivers are hesitant to share sensitive information without knowing why or how it will be handled	<p>For kin caregivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● To know that the background check process can help protect them and keep the child with them● To know what to expect throughout the process, what is happening, and why sensitive information is needed

Facilitating the process

What's currently happening	What's needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who fills paperwork and how paperwork is moved through process varies• At some agencies staff fill and process all paperwork. In others, kin fill and send their own forms• Consent usually happens before name-based checks are run, but not always	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For agency staff to facilitate collecting all information – centering the caregiver's preferences based on their current situation, disability, language barrier, and comfort level <p>For kin caregivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To see and have a record of all information collected• To give written consent to how their information will be shared and what it will be used for

Timing

What's currently happening

- How fast these processes happen varies — delays are often due to how many handoffs there are, other agencies or departments involved, and how easily kin caregivers can be fingerprinted

What's needed

For kin caregivers:

- To have all necessary information collected **at once, within 1 day**, to free up their time later
- To be **fingerprinted on the same day** they share background information

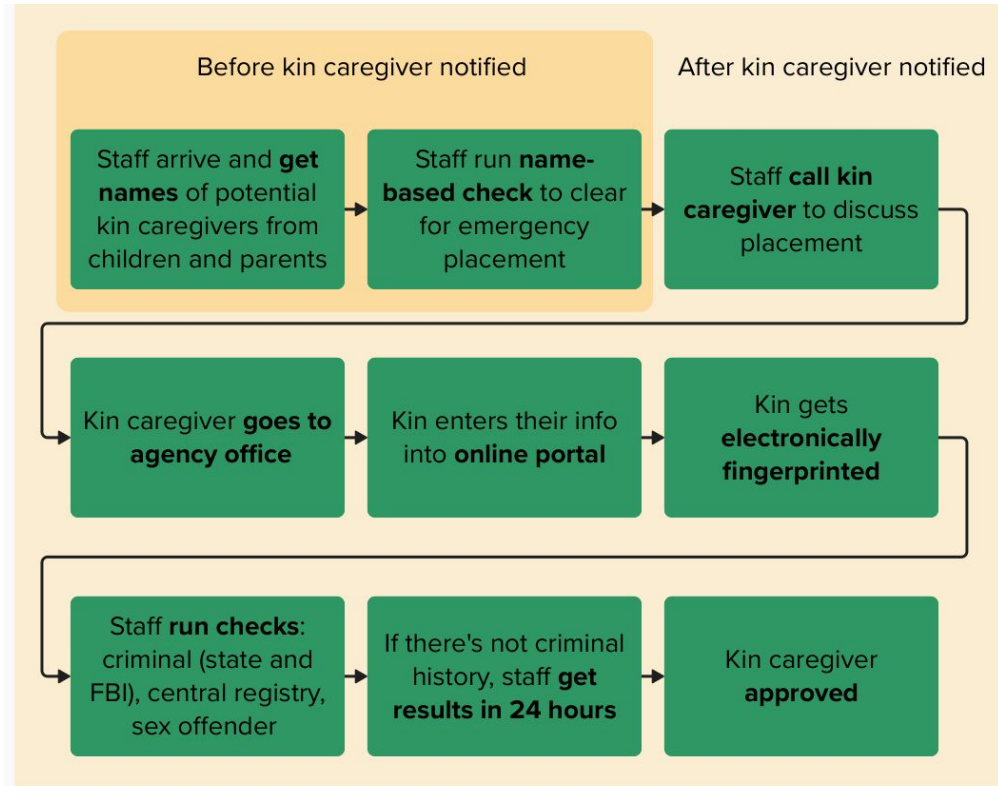
Promising processes

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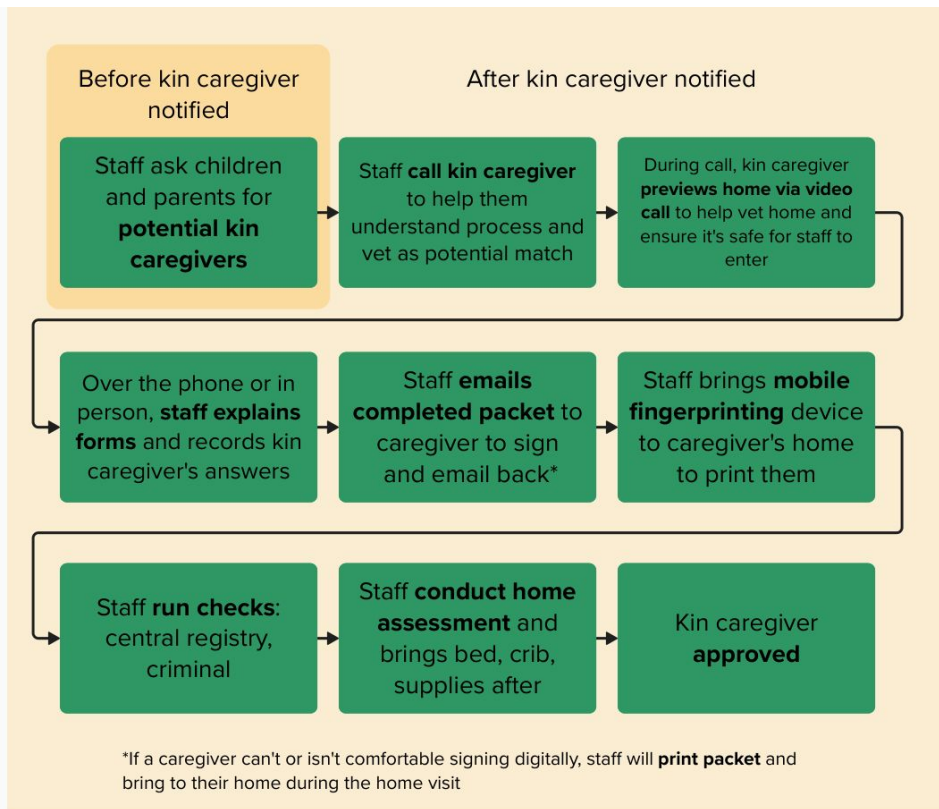
It would be nice to just schedule a day off to do everything. The agency likes to piecemeal things and it slows down the process. It means multiple days off.”

– Kinship caregiver expressing enthusiasm about the possibility of completing all of the background check steps in 1 day

Ohio's emergency approval process – One stop shop



DC's emergency approval process – Tech forward



Form fields and components



Name, aliases, and date of birth is what we really need. If we have name and date of birth, we can work with that.

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- Child welfare professional sharing what they need to run a background check

Critical information for background checks

- **Name, other names used, and date of birth** are the most important fields required for agency staff to run name-based checks
 - A **social security number or tax ID number** is also very useful — helping to identify the right name in the database quickly and disambiguate them from other similar names
- **City/county and state for the past 5 years** are needed to run out of state child abuse and neglect checks

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Why does it matter? As long as I can get the job done.”

– Kinship caregiver, reflecting on the overall sentiment of being asked their **race or ethnicity** on background check forms



We ask staff to ask (applicants) –
"how do ***you*** identify?"

– Child welfare professional, detailing the process of requesting applicant's **race or ethnicity** on background check forms

Identity markers

- While many agencies include identity markers (such as sex, gender, race, and ethnicity) in their background check forms, this information is **typically not necessary** for background checks
- Agencies sometimes collect identity markers to get to know families better and sometimes for statistical purposes
- Kin caregivers want to know **how these data points will be used**. For instance:
 - Some kin caregivers of color feared that sharing their race or ethnicity would lead to racial bias, while others were okay with being asked about how they identify

Putting it all together

Kin-facing background check forms

Application cover page

Kinship Caregiver Application Form

You are receiving this application to be a formal kinship caregiver for a child who has been removed from their parents. We consider any adult with a meaningful relationship to the child a family member (or "kin"), even if you are not related by blood or marriage.

Our agency is committed to ensuring a safe environment for the child and this means considering everything we can about whoever cares for them while they are separated from their parents. In addition to ensuring child safety, getting approved as a kin caregiver has benefits for your household including:

- Government funds to assist with expenses
- Training and service referrals to support the child
- Power as a decision maker for the child, with the ability to:
 - Enroll the child into your local school district
 - Work directly with the child's doctors (pediatrician, dentist, etc.)
 - Give input on when and how the child interacts with their parents until reunification

The application to become a formal kinship caregiver includes all of the following checks:

- ☐ Criminal background records, including fingerprinting
- ☐ Child abuse and neglect records
- ☐ Sex offender registry records
- ☐ Home assessment to make sure your home is safe for the child, completed by the case worker while you are present
- ☐ Suitability assessment to make sure you're able to care for the child

To complete the above checks you will need to show an ID, like a driver's license or passport. Refer to the fingerprinting ID form for more information. If you have a social security number or a tax ID number (ITIN), we recommend sharing it to get the fastest background checks results.

Talk with your case worker if you need these forms in a different language, accommodations for a disability, or do not understand something for any reason. Your case worker will refer you to resources including the opportunity to connect with other kin caregivers.

We recognize that this process looks into highly sensitive information about you, your past, and your home. For instance, even if you have a record, the agency might be able to approve you so long as there is proof that it will not affect the child's safety and well-being.

Thank you for going through this application process and offering a home for your family member.

Application form

Section 2: Applicant information

Applicant 1

Full name (first, middle last)		Date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY)
Other names (birth, previous, etc.)		Relationship to child(ren)
Social security number (SSN) or Tax ID (ITIN) (helps identify you quickly)		Email
Gender	Race or ethnicity	Tribal affiliation
Cell phone	Work phone	Home phone

If you lived out of state in past 5 years, list each city or county and state

City or County	State

Applicant 2

Full name (first, middle last)		Date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY)
Other names (birth, previous, etc.)		Relationship to child(ren)
Social security number (SSN) or Tax ID (ITIN) (helps identify you quickly)		Email

Consent

Consent to Background Checks

By signing below:

1. I agree to undergo a criminal background check and be fingerprinted.
2. I agree to undergo a Child Protection Registry check.
3. I agree to undergo a National Sex Offender Registry check.
4. In order to complete the above checks, I must provide valid and unexpired photo identification.
 - Note: If you have a social security number or a tax ID number (ITIN), we recommend sharing it to get the fastest background checks results.
5. I understand that I have the following rights:
 - I do not have to consent to the release of this information. However, if I do not consent, I will not be able to go through this process.
 - State and federal privacy laws protect my records.
 - I must give written consent to the [Agency] to give out my information.

I have reviewed this form as it applies to me. I give permission for [Agency] to verify any or all information I have provided.

Applicant name

Applicant signature

Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

Agency-facing background check forms

Out-of-state child abuse and neglect form

Out of State Child Abuse and Neglect Findings Request

INSTRUCTIONS: Use this form to check whether an individual has substantiated findings of child abuse or neglect in another state. This form must be completed if a kin caregiver applicant, or another adult living in their home, has lived out of state in the past 5 years. Follow the steps below:

1. Complete one form for each individual for each state they have resided in.
2. Refer to the state reference document [insert hyperlink] for the point person from each fulfilling agency.

Section 1: Applicant Information

First name Middle name (write "none" if no middle name) Last name (include suffix)

Other names used (list all names used, including birth name and previously married name)

Date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY) Social Security Number or ITIN (optional)

Past addresses where the applicant has lived in the past 5 years

City or County State

Section 2: Requesting agency

Agency name Staff name Staff title

Staff email (results will be sent here) Staff phone number Request date

Criminal history evaluation

Criminal History Evaluation Form

Section 1: Applicant Information

Full name Date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY)

Background check purpose

- ☐ Kinship care
- ☐ Foster care
- ☐ Adoption
- ☐ Guardianship
- ☐ Other

Background check type

- ☐ In-State
- ☐ Fingerprint

Date submitted Case number Provider number

Section 2: Evaluation Criteria

Even if the individual has a conviction* from their background check, the agency may approve them so long as there is proof that the conviction will not affect the child's safety and well-being. The agency may consider the following factors:

- The type of crime*
- The amount of time that has passed since the crime
- The individual's age at the time of conviction
- The seriousness of the crime
- Evidence of rehabilitation since conviction (may include completion of treatment, court-ordered classes, community service, etc.)
- The total number and types of crimes, and ages at the time they were committed
- The role the individual plans to have with the child

If the individual was forced to commit the crime because they were a victim of human trafficking, they may not be penalized for this crime.

* This may be a conviction but also could include a court order, court judgment, or an adverse action taken by a government agency.

Kin-facing background check documents

Identification options

Fingerprint Identification Options

To your fingerprinting appointment, you must bring **either**:

- One primary identification document **OR**
- One secondary identification document, along with two supporting documents

Primary Identification Documents

Primary forms of identification must be valid* and unexpired and have your full name, date of birth, and an identifiable photo. Applicants may provide **one** of the following primary documents for fingerprinting:

- Driver's License issued by a state or U.S. territory, including:
 - Driver's License Permit
 - Driver's License Paper/Temporary
 - Enhanced Driver's License (EDL)
 - Commercial Driver's License
 - Commercial Driver's License Permit
- State Identification Card (DMV issued)
- Enhanced Tribal Identification Card (for federally recognized U.S. tribes)
- ID card issued by a federal, tribal, state or local government agency or by a Territory of the U.S.
- Government-issued employee identification card with photograph (includes federal, state, county, city, etc.)
- Department of Defense Common Access Card (CAC)
- Uniformed Services Identification Card
 - U.S. Military Identification Card (active duty, retiree, reservist) (000 10-2)
 - U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Card
 - Military Dependent's Identification Card
 - U.S. Passport or U.S. Passport Card
 - Foreign Passport
 - Permanent Resident Card or Alien Registration Receipt Card
 - Employment Authorization Card/Document (I-766) that contains a photograph
 - Canadian Driver's License
 - Mexican Driver's License
 - U.S. Visa issued by the U.S. Department of Consular Affairs for travel to or within, or residence within, the U.S.

Denial letter

Kinship Caregiver Denial Letter and Appeal Instructions

[Today's date]

[Applicant name]

[Applicant address]

Applicant's full name

Dear

Thank you for offering to provide a kinship foster home for:

Child(ren)'s full name(s)

After careful review and consideration, [Agency] **will not recommend** to the [Agency Making Final Call / Family Court] that the child(ren) live with you.

We are not recommending placement because:

- ☐ One or more adult members of your household did not clear the background check. Concerns about criminal background records may be directed to the [Criminal Records Agency] at [phone number]. [Child Welfare Agency] staff are not allowed to provide criminal records.
- ☐ Your home does not meet the child(ren)'s placement needs, for the following reasons:
- ☐ We selected another kinship foster home.
- ☐ Other disqualifying reason(s):

We appreciate your willingness to provide a home for them and all the efforts you've made in the application process. Although our agency is not recommending placement at this time, you may be able to play an active role in your family member's well-being through visitation, transportation, and other forms of support.

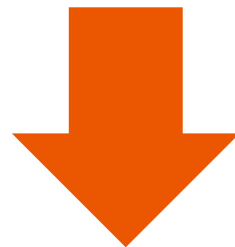
Your rights and next steps

Moving forward

Limitations

- Process evolved as we were going and resulted in our data being thin in some places
- Were not able to talk with staff who process out of state child abuse and neglect checks
- Limited conversations with staff who are knowledgeable about identifications for fingerprinting
- Were not able to get forms from all agencies we requested them from
- Were not able to talk to any participants who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+, an immigrant (undocumented or documented), or non-English speaker

Where we're going next



Phase I: Background checks
Mar - Apr '23

Safety and Needs Assessment
Apr - Aug '23

Phase II: Background checks
Aug - Oct '23

Agency pilots
Oct '23 - April '24



!🌀 BLOOM WORKS

Thank you!