



State vs. County Administration of Child Welfare Services

The administrative framework for child welfare services and programs varies from State to State. All States are responsible for compliance with Federal and State requirements; however, they may differ in the way child welfare services are operated and delivered.

The majority of States have established a centralized administrative system and can be classified as State administered: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming.¹

Nine States can be described as county administered: California, Colorado, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia.

Three “hybrid” States are partially administered by the State and partially administered by counties: Maryland, Nevada, Wisconsin.

The different types of administration determine the degree of centralization of authority and responsibility for child welfare funding, policymaking, licensing, training for workers, and more. A 2001 National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being study found a number of differences between State- and county-administered child welfare systems (see http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/abuse_neglect/nscaw/reports/wellbeing_local_child/wellbeing_local_findings.html).

¹ For the purposes of title IV-B and IV-E, Puerto Rico is considered a State, and it is a State with a centralized administration of child welfare services that can be considered State administered.



