

The CARES Explorer

Your newsletter and guide to discovering the world of CWS-CARES



“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”

- Helen Keller



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Register here to reserve your spot: [CWS-CARES Stakeholder Briefing #13 | Registration!](#)



On the Horizon

Learn more about the CWS-CARES Project through leadership messages, new resources, and timely updates to help you find success.

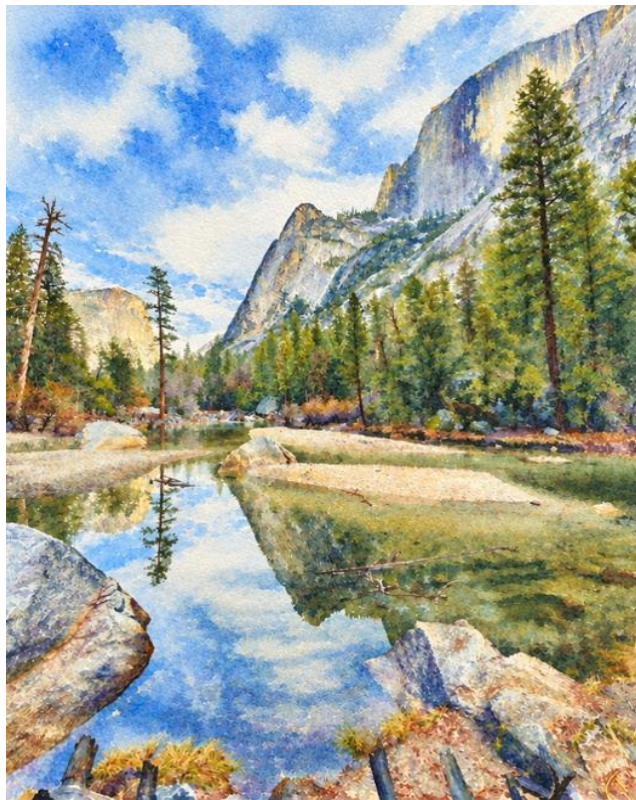
CWS-CARES Go-Live Date Update & Key Steps to Prepare

The CWS-CARES Project has officially updated the launch date for CARES Version 1 (V1) to Monday, December 7, 2026. This timeline change gives counties additional time to validate converted data, refine workflows, and strengthen readiness before transitioning from CWS/CMS to the new platform. Two post-Go-Live releases planned: March 1 & May 3, 2027

Why the Date Change?

Following county feedback at the 60-day checkpoint, the project extended the schedule to support:

- More stability in Prod Sim and data validation
- Higher-quality, county-specific training
- Additional time for reporting partners and Data Extract



Yosemite National Park

1

Mark Key Cutover Dates

Dec 3: CWS/CMS enters Read-Only mode

Dec 7: CARES V1 Go-Live

2

Test Production Access Early

Confirm all users can log into required environments before Go-Live.

3

Clean Up Inactive Accounts

Review and remove inactive CWS/CMS user accounts now.

4

Practice Workflows in Prod Sim

Rehearse workflows and validate converted data in Prod Sim.

5

Review Interim Workaround Guidance

82 detailed workarounds; 116 items needing temporary CWS/CMS reference.

6

Use Updated Training Resources

Quick Guides, training videos, fact sheets, and refresher sessions available.

7

Stay Connected to Communications

Stakeholder Briefings, weekly digests, bulletins, and readiness summaries.





Explore CWS-CARES

In this section, you will discover CWS-CARES through its service areas, system functionality, workgroups and interfaces, content management, data conversion, and external systems.

Iterative Design: How CWS-CARES Keeps Improving

Counties have reported **missing or inaccurate converted data** in Production Simulation (Prod Sim), including child welfare history, referrals, contact logs, placement information, and other critical records. CWS-CARES is actively addressing these concerns through **weekly deployments of defect fixes**. Each system release includes functionality and data conversion fixes identified by testers in Production Simulation. Since July, that work has **resolved hundreds of defects and data conversion issues**, refining functionality as counties test ahead of statewide Go-Live.

Weekly system releases **require downtime for the Prod Sim environment**. To minimize impact to Organizations, **Prod Sim is unavailable each Friday from 5:00 PM to Saturday by 12:00 PM PDT**. During this window, users will be unable to access the environment or test workflows in Prod Sim.

System Updates and Fixes: July - September

County testing remains essential to a successful Go-Live. Validating converted data, practicing workflows, and reporting issues promptly allows the Project to catch defects early. Below is a month-by-month summary of fixes through September 2026. For more details on defect fixes, refer to the Weekly System Updates and Release Notes on the Production Simulation Hub.

July

Corrected data mappings, fixed permissions, and helped required fields populate properly across Case Management, Document Generation (DocGen), Adoption workflows, Resource Family Approval (RFA), and Financial Management.

Aug.

Focused heavily on data conversion, improving the accuracy of converted case records across areas including address, adoption, case, child location and placement, health, and person data. Fixes also touched case management, placement, courts, and intake workflows.

Sept.

Introduced new email notifications, alerting users directly when assignments change, approvals are requested, tasks are assigned, or a portal account is activated. The RFA and FFPSA Portals also became available for testing, alongside continued data conversion corrections.

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Defect Reporting

If you spot a potential defect and aren't sure if it's already logged, please submit a support ticket anyway or report the issue at Production Simulation Office Hours. We prefer to manage duplicate tickets than miss a critical defect.

Users may access the CWS-CARES Production Simulation Hub for resources, support, and regional office hours scheduling.

Feature Spotlight: Search Functionality Improvements

Search across CWS-CARES has also improved this summer. **Person and Resource Management Directory searches now use "AND" logic instead of "OR,"** so each additional criterion narrows results rather than broadening them. Phonetic name search can help locate a record even when spelling is uncertain, and Sex at Birth and Approximate Age are now fully functional search criteria. Additional search enhancements are planned in upcoming releases. For a detailed guide on recent search enhancements and tips for utilizing this feature, see the CWS-CARES Search Functionality fact sheet on the CWDS website.

Ongoing Data Fixes Through November 2026

Prod Sim will continue receiving weekly code and **data fixes through November 20**. After that, the environment will remain available for access as the Project prepares for **CWS-CARES V1 Go-Live on December 7, 2026**.

Data validation is critical through early November. This is the last structured window for counties to review converted case records against source systems and flag discrepancies before Prod Sim's final updates. We encourage all counties and Organizations to prioritize validation now to help ensure data is accurate at Go-Live.

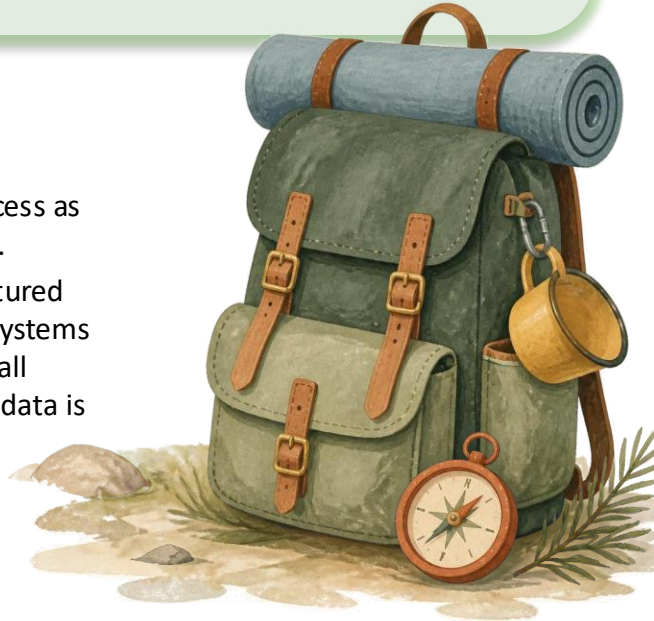
External Systems Decommissioning: A Revised Timeline for the Plan Ahead

As CWS-CARES becomes the single system of record, the external systems it replaces will eventually be decommissioned so that child welfare work happens in one place. With the CWS-CARES Version 1 (CARES V1) Go-Live date now adjusted to December 7, 2026, and complete CARES V1 scope arriving on May 1, 2027, the decommissioning timeline for fully in scope external systems has been updated to align with the new schedule and to support a smooth, efficient transition for counties and organizations.

Decommissioning Activities Will Start at Complete Scope, Not Go-Live

Originally, decommissioning activities were scheduled to begin shortly after the October 2026 Go-Live. Under the revised timeline, they will instead begin once complete CARES V1 scope is available on May 1, 2027. Users will have roughly five months of hands-on experience in CWS-CARES before the required decommissioning timeline begins, providing time to build familiarity and confidence in the system first. The project has also merged previously separate steps for developing and finalizing the decommissioning plan into a single step, reducing the planning and reporting effort for counties. Together, these adjustments keep the overall timeline on track while easing the burden on Organization partners.

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A Revised Timeline on External Systems Decommissioning (Cont.)

What the Revised Timeline Looks Like

Under the revised schedule, decommissioning moves through three main steps in 2027. First, from May to June, Organizations will validate that CWS-CARES fully performs the functions each external system currently handles. Next, from May through July, Organizations will develop the decommissioning plan and timeline for each in-scope system. Finally, from August through December, the Organizations will implement their decommissioning plans. Organizations that have already verified functionality and wish to begin decommissioning planning ahead of schedule are encouraged to do so.

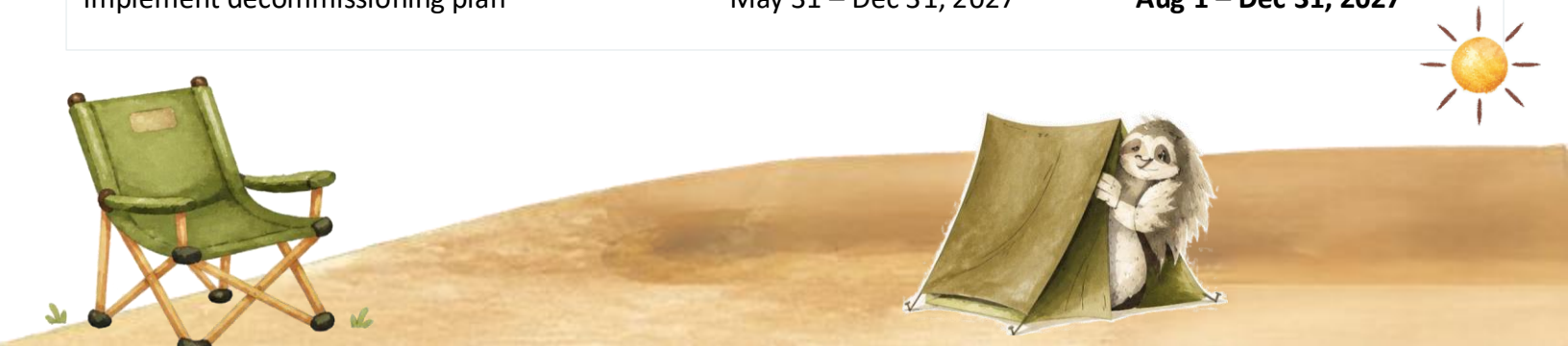
We thank all Organizations for their ongoing collaboration as we work together toward a practical, phased transition.

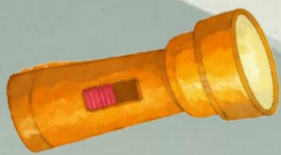


Key Change

Decommissioning activities will now begin at Complete Scope (May 1, 2027) rather than at Go-Live. This gives organizations roughly five months of hands-on CWS-CARES experience before the required decommissioning timeline begins. The project has also merged previously separate planning steps, reducing reporting effort for counties.

Decommissioning Step	Original Timeline	Revised Timeline
Validate CARES V1 functionality vs. external systems	Now – April 2027	May 1 – June 30, 2027
Develop decommissioning plan and timeline	Feb 1 – April 30, 2027	May 1 – July 31, 2027
Finalize decommissioning plan and timeline	April 30 – May 31, 2027	Combined with step above
Implement decommissioning plan	May 31 – Dec 31, 2027	Aug 1 – Dec 31, 2027





Implementation Corner

Learn about how stakeholders are transitioning to CWS-CARES and find information on implementation, training, and change management.

Spotlight: San Diego Builds Super User Readiness through Hands-On Engagement

San Diego County is taking a hands-on approach to Super User readiness while applying what they learn to the work of their own programs. The county has built a structure and community that encourages Super Users to learn the system with purpose, bring their program knowledge into the transition, and become trusted resources for their peers.

Supporting County-Wide Learning

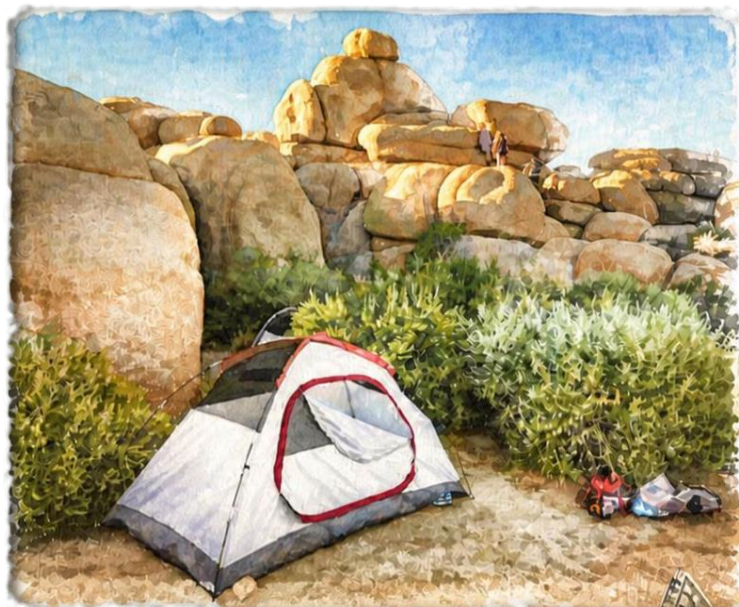
San Diego has actively recruited Super Users across program areas to ensure a diverse range of staff were represented. After attending orientation sessions, Super Users participated in virtual labs, office, hours, and led program-specific demonstrations for their staff to gain familiarity with CWS-CARES. Learning opportunities were offered both virtually and in-person depending on program needs, giving staff flexibility in how they engaged with the system.



San Diego also encouraged their Super Users to spend approximately two hours each week in CWS-CARES Production Simulation and participate in workgroups facilitated by Policy Analysts where they completed specific assignments and workflows. Through these activities, users explored how tasks would work in CWS-CARES, documented screenshots and feedback in shared OneNote spaces, and examined how business processes might change for staff in their programs. Their feedback helped inform county decisions and was also used to update facilitation guides for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). One of the most engaging resources San Diego developed was their county-specific Quick Guides that focused on business process changes identified through its workgroups and translating those decisions into practical direction for staff.

Thank you, San Diego County staff!

Throughout 2026, San Diego demonstrated meaningful participation at every level of the organization to prepare staff for CWS-CARES. Managers and senior leaders work alongside Super Users to identify implementation goals, consider barriers, and determine further readiness activities. By encouraging Super Users to contribute, and support their colleagues, San Diego builds collaboration and confidence across the county.



Joshua Tree / Jumbo Rocks

It's Not Too Late for OCM: Guidance for Preparing for Go-Live

With the Go-Live date updated **from October 26, 2026 to December 7, 2026**, Organizations have additional time to focus on readiness and adoption planning. Consider the following key actions:

- **Strengthen Staff Awareness and Reinforce the Why:** Reinforce why we are transitioning to CWS-CARES, share known updates, and acknowledge that some details are still evolving. Maintain steady communication and encourage flexibility.
- **Maintain Momentum with Staff and Super Users:** Encourage organization leaders and Project Team members (SPOCs, Implementation Coordinators, and OCM Coordinators) to support ongoing huddles and touchpoints to share updates, address questions, and keep teams connected.
- **Track and Complete Training:** Confirm training is complete or progressing as expected and identify staff needing additional practice or support.
- **Promote Practice and Familiarization:** Encourage staff to practice in the Prod Sim environment, revisit CWS-CARES resources, training materials, demonstrations, and quick reference guides to build skills and reduce day-one anxiety.
- **Update Local Implementation Plans:** Align communication, resource distribution, practice time, and staff outreach with the new Go-Live date.
- **Update Business Processes:** Identify any additional organization specific changes and refine local business processes and procedures.
- **Review Available Project Resources:** Revisit the Implementation Portal and CWDS Website for updates, tools, and resources to support the transition to CWS-CARES.



New and Updated OCM Resources

Below are key OCM resources available on the Implementation Portal to support planning and adoption. One newly added, and others refreshed monthly.

Resource #1: [Leadership Toolkit](#)

Description: A collection of leadership-focused guidance for supporting staff during the CWS-CARES transition, including action steps, talking points, team check-ins, strategies for managing resistance, and tips for sustaining change after go-live.

Organization Recommendation: Use the toolkit to align leadership messaging across departments and to provide consistent guidance to staff.

OCM Tip: Staff rely on their leaders for clarity and reassurance. Reinforce what is changing and why during regular meetings to help them feel more prepared.

Resource #2: [Change Impacts and Key Legacy Terminology Crosswalk](#)

Description: A set of change impact summaries and terminology updates clarifying what is different in CWS-CARES and how CWS/CMS terms have evolved. These resources are reviewed and updated monthly.

Organization Recommendation: Review the Implementation Portal monthly to check for updates to these two files. Discuss change impacts and terminology during team meetings to help staff understand how upcoming changes will affect daily tasks.

OCM Tip: Revisit terminology and changes often. People usually need to hear information several times before they become familiar, so consider using the crosswalk during huddles or highlighting changes with training.

Training Activities for CWS-CARES

Practice in ProdSim

Practicing in ProdSim is one of the most valuable steps you can take to ensure a smooth transition into upcoming releases. ProdSim gives users a safe, realistic space to explore new features, validate workflows, and build confidence before changes go live. Your participation helps us catch issues early, strengthen system performance, and deliver a better experience for counties and end-users.

Supplemental Training

Supplemental Training began October 26th and runs through November 20th, with Micro-Learning Videos, Targeted ILT Make-Up Sessions, and Virtual Training Office Hours. Micro-Learning Videos offer short, on demand tips and tricks for common training needs. Targeted ILT Make-Up sessions is available for organizations that were unable to complete training and Office Hours will cover topic specific sessions.

What Training Materials to Leverage at Go-Live

What you can expect to have available and rely on at Go-Live:

- Quick Guides for fast, step-by-step workflow instructions
- Desk Guides for guidance on approved workarounds needed at Go-Live
- Microlearning Videos for short, targeted demonstrations
- Recorded training sessions and ILT materials for on-demand refreshers

All training materials are available on the Implementation Portal and will be updated through December 7.

Now Available: New Fact Sheets on High-Interest Topics

The CWS-CARES Project Team has released a series of fact sheets that answer county questions about CWS-CARES Version 1 (CARES V1) features. Additional fact sheets on high-priority topics Will be shared over the coming weeks.



Case Plans and CANS Assessments in CARES V1

Covers how CARES V1 supports social workers with case planning, including reduced duplicate data entry through integration with the Person-Centered Intelligence Solution (P-CIS), flexibility in creating CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths) assessments, data tracking tools, and access to historical CANS information.

CWS-CARES Search Functionality

A guide to search in CWS-CARES and its recent enhancements, covering the application-wide Global search and targeted options such as Person Search, the Resource Management Directory, and Placement Search.

FCED Transaction Guide: Mandatory Fields

A reference guide to the mandatory fields needed to complete a successful Foster Care Eligibility Determination (FCED) transaction from CWS-CARES to CalSAWS, and where to find them in the system.

County Forms in CWS-CARES: An Introductory Guide

An overview of the forms migration process and what counties need to know ahead of Go-Live, covering how forms are built, validated, migrated and maintained after Go-Live.

The Project Team is working to create additional fact sheets as Organizations raise questions and concerns related to CARES V1 features. To find these and other resources, visit the [CWS-CARES Infographics, Flyers, and Slogans](#) webpage. These resources are also available in the Quick Guides folder of the [Implementation Portal](#).

CWS-CARES Resources at a Glance

Learn more about CWS-CARES with the resources below.



Resources on the [CWDS Website](#)

*Account log in required for full access.
Create an account here: [Account Signup](#).

CWDS Website

Account log-in required — create an account

* Log-in required for full access

- [Demonstrations](#) Introductory videos and system demos categorized by service area.
- [Implementation Portal](#) On-demand trainings, Quick Guides, how-to videos, OCM and BPR resources.
- [Production Simulation Hub](#) Resources, scheduling information, and recent system updates.
- [FCED and External Systems Hubs](#) Meeting materials, resources, and demos for FCED and external systems.
- [Follow our progress](#) CWDS Bulletins, Project and Engagement Summaries, and the Meetings and Events Calendar.

No log-in needed — available on [the User Resources webpage](#)

[FAQs](#) and [Glossary](#)

Common terminology and county questions, searchable by service area.

[Fact Sheets and Guides](#)

Sheets on Search, Case Planning, FCED, Forms, and more.

[Newsletters](#) and [Articles](#)

The CARES Explorer and the CWS-CARES Public Library.

Practice and Development Environments:

Available by invitation. View the Environment Matrix for an overview of what's currently available.



Follow progress with the CWS-CARES Weekly Digest

Project updates, announcements, new resources, and recaps of recent communications directly in your inbox every Monday. [Subscribe now](#).