Child and Family Services Reviews

Statewide Assessment

March 6, 2023

Minor formatting adjustments may have been made to this document for 508 compliance. Content is unaffected.

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

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Background

One of the ways in which the Children's Bureau (CB) helps states achieve positive outcomes for children and families is monitoring state child welfare services through Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The CFSR process[1] is designed to meet the statutory requirement to provide federal oversight of states' compliance with title IV-B and IV-E plan requirements and to strengthen state child welfare programs and improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families served. The CFSR process enables CB to:

1) Ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements

2) Determine what is happening to children and families receiving child welfare services

3) Assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes related to safety, permanency, and well-being

For more information about the CFSRs, see the *Child and Family Services Reviews* at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb.

Purpose of the Statewide Assessment

The CFSR is a two-phase process. The first phase is a statewide assessment and is conducted by staff of the state child welfare agency in partnership with representatives with whom the agency was required to consult in the development of the state's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) (45 CFR § 1355.33). These internal and external stakeholders are selected by the agency in collaboration with CB and may include other individuals, such as family and youth served by the state's child welfare system and members of the judicial and legal communities.

The second phase of the review process is an onsite review. The onsite review includes case record reviews, case-related interviews for the purpose of determining outcome performance, and, as necessary, stakeholder interviews to further inform the assessment of systemic factors. Information from both the statewide assessment and the onsite review is used to determine whether the state is in substantial conformity with the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors. States determined not to be in substantial conformity with one or more of the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors are required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address all areas of nonconformity.

States are required to complete and document an assessment of the extent to which their federally funded child welfare system functions effectively to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families with whom they have contact. This process involves a state:

- Using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (e.g., state administrative data, information management system reports, case record reviews, interviews with case participants and key stakeholders) to assess its performance on the outcomes and systemic factors

- Analyzing and explaining its performance in meeting the national standards for the CFSR statewide data indicators

- Providing supporting evidence of the state's assessment of its child welfare system, program, practice strengths, opportunities for improvement, and results of data-driven problem exploration

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[1] Procedures for the review. 45 CFR § 1355.33.

- Providing relevant and quality evidence for CB to determine substantial conformity with CFSR systemic factors

- Communicating about the child welfare system's performance with the communities the systems served

- Demonstrating the engagement of child welfare system partners and stakeholders in the state's CFSR assessment and in its continuous quality improvement (CQI) change and implementation process

- Identifying priority areas of focus for further examination and to target improvement plans to strengthen systems and improve child and family outcomes

- Describing progress to address practice, program, and systemic change, and needed adjustments, as applicable

- Using assessment results to inform planning for the onsite review and to provide a foundation for the state PIP

Stakeholder Involvement

The statewide assessment is to be completed in collaboration with, and reflective of perspectives and feedback obtained from, state child welfare system partners and stakeholders pursuant to 45 CFR § 1355.33 (a–b). CB recommends that states assemble a diverse and representative statewide assessment team (as described below) while also consistently soliciting feedback and perspectives from key stakeholder groups, including parents, caregivers, and youth, throughout the CFSR process.

Individuals on the statewide assessment team need to include representatives from those with whom the child welfare agency was required to consult in developing its title IV-B state plan. The statewide assessment team members are selected by the child welfare agency in collaboration with CB. CB recommends that states ensure family and youth representation on the statewide assessment team, as well as other key partners (e.g., members of the legal and judicial communities, including state courts, the Court Improvement Project, and stakeholders). Examples of other partners and stakeholders who might serve on the statewide assessment team include frontline workers; foster, adoptive, and relative caregivers; the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) lead agency and other prevention partners, such as Children's Trust Funds; the Children's Justice Act grantee; service providers; faith-based and community organizations; and representatives of state and local agencies administering other federal or federally assisted programs serving children and families, such as Head Start, child care, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

The statewide assessment team of internal and external stakeholders engage in the CFSR statewide assessment process by:

- Empowering families and youth to participate in ongoing conversations about system-level improvement needs by recognizing and honoring their lived experiences and expertise, soliciting from them their perceptions and experiences, and acting on their recommendations about what families need to be strong and healthy[2]

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[2] As outlined in the CB Information Memorandum to states (ACYF-CB-IM-19-03), parent, family, and youth voice is critical to understanding how well the child welfare system is achieving its goals. States are encouraged to integrate parents and youth throughout the CFSR process as they have lived expertise that provides critical context and information to identify and make child welfare system improvements.

- Collecting and analyzing data from selected partner and stakeholder groups through surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups

- Using partners' administrative data (may require data-sharing agreements with contracted service providers and other agencies providing services to the same populations) in the assessment process and to provide evidence of performance and systemic functioning

- Involving stakeholders in the review and analysis of data to help identify contributing factors, underlying causes of performance challenges, and possible solutions

- Discussing findings, recommended changes, and implications of proposed interventions, and obtaining stakeholder feedback regarding implemented solutions

- Systematically providing feedback to stakeholders regarding whether and how their input was used to change policy, processes, practice, or service provision

Capacity to Complete a Quality Statewide Assessment

States are encouraged to consider the following questions as they prepare to complete the statewide assessment:

- Does the statewide assessment team reflect the family and youth the system serves, as well as partners, stakeholders, and providers involved in the state child welfare system?

- Are team members committed to remaining involved, and is there a process to support them throughout the statewide assessment process, potential involvement in the onsite review, and development, implementation, and evaluation of the PIP?

- Do the state's infrastructure and information systems provide needed administrative and case record review data? What data are already collected and can be used, and what new data may be needed (e.g., resource family surveys, staff training participation and feedback)?

- To what extent do system partners collect data and make it available for the purposes of the statewide assessment? Are data-sharing agreements needed, and in place?

- Do some team members have expertise and experience in quantitative and qualitative measurement, data collection, data analytics, and technical writing? Are team members able to communicate the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses effectively to the range of stakeholders and partners who are part of the statewide assessment team?

- Do team members have knowledge and skills with the CQI change and implementation process (e.g., identifying root causes of performance challenges, developing and testing theories of change)?

- In what way do organizational cultures and climates support the activities necessary for system partners to conduct and complete a quality assessment?

- Are there recent or future organizational changes that may affect the state's child welfare system, programs, and/or service delivery (e.g., leadership change)?

- Are there organizational resources and infrastructure in place to support the assessment process?

- What changes in organizational capacity will be needed to complete a quality statewide assessment (i.e., resources, infrastructure, knowledge and skills, culture and climate, engagement and partnership)?

Availability and Use of Quality Data and Information

The statewide assessment represents a compilation of observations made about the state's child welfare system that is grounded in evidence. "Evidence is information that is used to support an observation, claim, hypothesis, or decision. Evidence may be qualitative or quantitative and can be found in or derived from a number of sources."[3] Gathering and exploring data evidence begins during problem exploration and continues over the course of implementing, assessing, and sustaining change. The statewide assessment process entails looking at past, updated, and new data to strengthen the team's understanding of state child welfare system performance and to identify the combination of data evidence used to determine:

- Strengths and opportunities for improvement

- Areas and factors influencing strong practice

- Nature of the problem and affected populations

- Variation in outcomes among populations of different races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic levels that may experience bias, inequities, or underservice within their communities or by systems seeking to serve them

- Contributing factors and underlying root cause(s) of the problem

This systematic development of evidence related to child welfare system performance may point to areas where change, innovation, and/or replication of certain practices, procedures, or policies may be warranted. This evidence then sets the stage for states to consider:

- Hypotheses that are rooted in theories of change (predictions about how and why needed change(s) will achieve the desired outcome)

- Selection of and lessons learned from implemented strategies/interventions

- Reasons to continue, modify, or discontinue the selected intervention, or revisit the original understanding of the problem and the hypothesis for change

Data sources states should consider using, as available, for the statewide assessment process include but are not limited to:

- CFSR state data profiles and supplemental context data; CFR 45 § 1355.33(b)(2)

- State child welfare agency information system data (e.g., SACWIS/CCWIS)

- Administrative data from partner agencies (public-, private-, and community-based)

- Information included in the CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR), e.g., National Youth in Transition Database

- Annual Court Improvement Project reports, legal and judicial information systems, and other data collected by the courts (e.g., quality hearing observation data)

- Case record reviews

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[3] Source: https://fcda.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014-07-Principles-Language-and-Shared-Meaning_Toward-a-Common-Understanding-of-CQI-in-Child-Welfare.pdf

- Child welfare studies (research, evaluation reports)
- Surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups

Effective CQI change and implementation processes rely on high-quality and reliable evidence from data to provide accurate information. Consider the following when assessing the quality of evidence used for the statewide assessment and note this information where relevant:

- Data source (see examples in section above)
- Methods used to generate measures and analyze data (e.g., application of sound measurement principles, process/individuals involved in analysis of data)
- Relationship between the analysis produced and the questions asked (e.g., how results of analysis are responsive to questions raised about performance; how they raised more questions that are the focus of additional inquiry)
- Scope of the data (e.g., geographic, population)
- Representativeness of the population served or the subpopulation of interest (e.g., universe, random sample of records, selected sites or population, response rate)
- Time period represented in the data, included in citations for the data source (e.g., CY2020, FFY2020; point in time (9/30/2020); or multiple years: CY2018–2020)
- Completeness, accuracy, and reliability of the data (e.g., data quality tests performed, and the accuracy of results confirmed; same measure used over time; results consistent with other data sources)
- Other known limitation(s) of the data (e.g., an array of stakeholders reported data integrity concerns; measure adjusted over time)
- Policy decisions/practices that affect the quality and consistency of the data (e.g., implementation of new information system; timeframes to respond to CPS reports changed; requirements for staff and/or provider training changed recently; new program recently implemented)

The Statewide Assessment Template

The statewide assessment is completed by states and submitted to CB at least 2 months before the case review (federal onsite or state-led review). The sections of the Statewide Assessment template are outlined below and used to provide the most current and relevant information for understanding state performance on child welfare outcomes assessed by the CFSR, and evidence required to demonstrate routine statewide functioning of systemic factors. Please see the *CFSR Procedures Manual* for additional information on completing the statewide assessment.

Section I: Provide general information about the state child welfare agency; a list of the stakeholders involved in completing the statewide assessment; and a description of how state child welfare leadership and staff from all levels of the agency, families and youth, the legal and judicial communities, Tribes, and key partners and stakeholders were actively engaged in the assessment of the state child welfare system.

Section II: Briefly describe the state's vision and organizational structure for the state's child welfare system, cross-cutting issues, factors affecting overall performance, and other statewide drivers (e.g., consent decrees, transformation projects) that are not addressed in the outcomes and systemic factor sections of this assessment.

Section III: Provide an updated assessment of state performance on safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and supporting practices. Include recent performance data, highlights of strengths and opportunities for improvement, a brief summary of observations, priority focus areas and results of problem exploration, and related CQI change and implementation activities, as applicable.

Section IV: Provide a combination of the sources of evidence needed to determine whether the state is in substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors. The systemic factors encompass items associated with select CFSP requirements and seven systems within the state that have the capacity, if routinely functioning statewide, to support child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

Appendix: Attach a copy of the CB-generated CFSR state data profile transmitted to the state to use in completing the statewide assessment.

The Statewide Assessment template is available electronically on the CB website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb.

Preparation

As states prepare for the statewide assessment, CB recommends that states:

- Review the *CFSR Procedures Manual*, "Statewide Assessment" section (available on the CB website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb, which provides guiding principles and a framework for completing the statewide assessment.

- Review the Capacity Building Center for States' "Change and Implementation in Practice" series.[4] The series is a collection of research-informed and user-friendly resources (e.g., briefs, guides, videos) to help agencies achieve meaningful changes in child welfare practice to improve outcomes and systemic functioning.

- In collaboration with the CB Regional Office, identify and invite individuals to be members of the statewide assessment team. Review information on stakeholder involvement in the state's assessment of the child welfare system.

- Review the most recent versions of the following documents, which provide information and past assessments of state performance on child and family outcomes and supporting practices, and statewide routine functioning of the systemic factors:
    – PIP and PIP progress reports
    – CFSP and APSR
    – Court Improvement Project self-assessment and strategic plan
- Review the following additional recent and relevant data:
    – Most recent CFSR state data profile and supplemental context information, providing performance information on the CFSR statewide data indicators
    – State administrative data and aggregate performance information and measures
    – Case record review results
    – Other available statewide data, e.g., learning management system reports,

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[4] Capacity Building Center for States' "Change and Implementation in Practice" series, available at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/

administrative data from partner agencies and contracted service providers, CIP data, research and evaluation reports, surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups

- Review the *CFSR Procedures Manual*, "Capacity Building Collaborative Data Support Services" section, available on the CB website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb, and determine the need for additional guidance and technical support with any step of the statewide assessment process, and request assistance as needed.

Instructions

State child welfare agencies, in collaboration with families and youth, the judicial and legal communities, Tribes, and other key partners and stakeholders, complete an updated statewide assessment of the state's child welfare system and the state's ability to achieve desired safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

- Develop the set of questions that when answered will provide the necessary information to assess the state's child welfare systems' processes, programs, and practices.

- Build on past work, including results of data exploration, progress made, lessons learned, and adjustments from development, implementation, and monitoring of the state's most recent CFSR/PIP, CFSP/APSR, and CQI activities in completing this section.

- Determine whether other relevant quality data are available and/or needed to provide a more recent and/or deeper understanding of state performance on the outcomes and systemic factor functioning. Use current (or the most recent available) data and/or information.

- Assess the agency's investment in the quality of programs and services to be delivered, the processes by which they are delivered, and the capacity of the agency to deliver them with fidelity.

- Determine which quality data and information are the most compelling and why they provide the best evidence to support the state's assessment of (a) strengths and areas needing improvement, and (b) statewide routine functioning of systemic factor items. Include data/measure descriptions, the sources of data and/or information used, time periods represented, and other information needed to understand the scope and quality of data used.

- Summarize the results of the assessment by responding to the questions that are designed to solicit the most notable information about state performance, evidence of key strengths and areas needing improvement, observations, results of data exploration, and related CQI change and implementation activities, as applicable. CB recommends that states concisely articulate the state's observations and supporting evidence in no more than 100 pages, beginning with Section I of this template.

Statewide Assessment

Section I: General Information

Name of State Child Welfare Agency:

Puerto Rico - Administration for Families and Children of Puerto Rico

State Child Welfare Contact Person(s) for the Statewide Assessment

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List of Statewide Assessment Participants

Provide the names and affiliations of the individuals who participated in the statewide assessment process and identify their roles in the process. Identify individuals with lived experience by including an asterisk (*) after their name.

Name	Affiliation	Role in Statewide Assessment Process
Yashira Gali Rodriguez	Director of the Quality Assurance and Training Office	Outcomes Evaluation Team (Lead)
Jannette Rodríguez	Social Work Supervisor – San Juan Region	Outcomes Evaluation Team
Maria Rivera-Garnica	Social Work Supervisor – Aguadilla Region	Outcomes Evaluation Team
Jasmin Fuentes	Social Work Specialist and CFSR State Leader	Outcomes Evaluation Team
Sandra Rosario	Social Work Specialist	Statewide Information System Evaluation Team (Lead)
Leila Pablos	Foster Care and Adoption Assistant Administrator	Statewide Information System Evaluation Team
Lisa Agosto Carrasquillo	State Center Director	Statewide Information System Evaluation Team
Iris J. Colón	Social Worker – SIMCa Coordinator in Bayamón Region	Statewide Information System Evaluation Team
Brenda Lozada	Regional Supervisor	Statewide Information System Evaluation Team
Jose Cruz Carlo	CSA – Social Work Specialist	Case Review System Evaluation Team (Lead)
Idelmarie Santiago	Associate Director – Mayaguez Region	Case Review System Evaluation Team
Brenda Rosario	Social Work Supervisor – Bayamon Region	Case Review System Evaluation Team
Nesmarie Merced	Information Systems Management – Caguas Region	Case Review System Evaluation Team
Eunice Rodriguez	Information Systems Management – San Juan Region	Case Review System Evaluation Team
Elizabeth Santiago	SIMCa and AFCARS Coordinator – Arecibo Region	Case Review System Evaluation Team
Jadeyra Rivera	Regional Supervisor – Humacao Region	Case Review System Evaluation Team
Yaritza Gomez Acosta	Social Work Specialist – Foster Care and Adoption	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team (Lead)
Dayra Sanchez	Regional Supervisor – Humacao Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team
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Maria Garay Garcia	Social Work Specialist – Preservation and Family and	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team

Section I—General Information

Name	Affiliation	Role in Statewide Assessment Process
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Michelle Rodriguez Delgado	Social Work Supervisor – Humacao Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team
Ivette Rivera	Nurse Supervisor	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team
Keyla Garcia	Social Worker	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team
Yashira Gali Rodriguez	Director of the Office for Quality Assurance and Training	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team
Hilda Rivera	Central Level Supervisor	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team
Pedro J. Cartagena	Specialist	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Team
Corali Gierbolini	Social Work II Supervisor – Carolina Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Participant
Wanda Quinones	Social Work I Supervisor – Carolina Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Participant
Nitza Rodriguez	Social Worker – Carolina Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Participant
Yolanda Ortiz Morales	Associate Director – Humacao Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Participant
Wandy Castro	Social Work I – Humacao Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Participant
Gimary Rodriguez	Social Work I – Humacao Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Participant
Pedro Rivera Colon	Social Work II Supervisor – Humacao Region	Quality Assurance System Evaluation Participant
Rebecca Ramos Gonzalez	Associate Director – Caguas Region	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation Team (Lead)
Veronica Torres	Regional Supervisor – Caguas Region	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation Team
Keyla Colon	Social Worker	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation Team
Hilda Rodriguez	Social Worker Supervisor II	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation Team
Yesenia Rivera	Social Worker	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation Team
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Carlos O. Rivera Otero	Associate Director - San Juan Region	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation
Johana Marquez	Regional Supervisor - San Juan Region	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation
Waleska Camacho	Regional Supervisor - Caguas Region	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation
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Section I—General Information

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Nilda Roque	Social Work Supervisor - Humacao Region	Staff and Provider Training Evaluation
Ingrid Pietri	Portal de Amor – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Alexandri Bernier Pagan	ADFAN psychologist – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Giselle Davila Villanueva	Hogar Teresa Toda – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Gloria M. Molina	AFANA program – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Iris Toro	Temporary Home – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Maribel D. and Osvaldo Loperena	Foster and potential adoptive parents – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Marisleyda Guzman Gonzalez	Foster and potential adoptive parents – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Michelle Aviles	Family temporary home – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Myrna Ramos Ramirez	ETV – ADFAN – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
Orlando Martinez	Temporary home for special needs (mental health and autism) – Service Provider	Service Array and Resource Development Evaluation Participant
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Section I—General Information

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William David Rolón	AFANA	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
Karina González	AFANA	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
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Carlos Colón	AFANA	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant

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Johana Galarza	ADFAN Social Worker – Guanica	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
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Daniel Velázquez	ADFAN Supervisor – Aguadilla Region	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
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Section I—General Information

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Carol González	ADFAN	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
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Wanda I. González Toro	EVF – Añasco Region	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
Tamara Bonet Olivencia	EVF – Añasco Region	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
María C. Román Cintrón	EVF – Añasco Region	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
José L. Robles Rodríguez	EVF – Añasco Region	Agency Responsiveness to the Community Evaluation Participant
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Section I—General Information

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This section was left blank on purpose.

Description of Stakeholder Involvement in

Statewide Assessment Process

Describe how child welfare leadership and staff from all levels of the agency, families and youth, the legal and judicial communities, Tribes, and other key partners and stakeholders were actively engaged in the assessment of the state child welfare system.

Description:

To follow the requirements of the Statewide Assessment, the Child Welfare Agency's leadership and staff from all levels, families and youth, the legal and judicial community, and other key partners and stakeholders were actively engaged in the assessment of Puerto Rico's child welfare system. A meeting was held with the Administration's Administrator and all its Assistant Administrators. An evaluation team was created to analyze the seven Systemic Factors and the Safety, Permanency, and Well-being Outcomes. Each of these teams included leadership and staff from the central office, and all ten regional and local offices. Each participant was selected to ensure an island-wide perspective and ADFAN staff was selected from all levels within the Agency. Each of these groups developed a work plan and ensured the even participation of stakeholders. All staff captured the lived experiences of stakeholders, their perceptions, and their recommendations for the Agency.

Methodology:

Puerto Rico choose a responsive assessment approach; an emerging form of evaluation that takes as its organizer the concerns and issues of stake holding audiences. The model, develop by Stake (1975)[1] is concerned with the objectives of the assessment and its effects in relation to the interest of relevant publics. In doing so the Agency put together teams to get a direct sense of its operations through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, data analysis and group discussions related to the Systemic Factors' items and the Safety, Permanency and Well-being Outcomes. The Statewide Assessment Instrument, developed by the Department of Health and Human Services Administration was the key instrument for conducting the SWA process. The procedures followed in carrying out responsive assessments, were typically qualitative in nature, although other data analyses needed to respond to audience concerns and emerging issues, were also implemented. An intensive commitment of time and resources was required to work with these audiences in clarifying their concerns and issues, which were also great limiting factors in the process.

The Audiences:

In general, the response rate was high (– 81.5%) among all diverse audiences. Respondents were selected because of their characteristics, involvement critical role within the Children and Families issues. All questions were phrased to fit to respondents own unique characteristics. It is safe to say that audiences interviewed

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[1] Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1985) Effective Evaluation. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco.

through questionnaires and focus groups were useful key informants who played key roles in the SWA teams, to explain processes and policies and other aspects of the Island's situation in depth.

Data Collected:

For the assessment of the Safety, Permanency, and Well-being Outcomes, ADFAN utilized data from the Quality Assurance Office (QA) for 2019 through 2022. A total of forty-five cases were reviewed, from the Aguadilla, Mayagüez and Guayama regions. Of these, twenty-seven are Foster Care cases and eighteen are Preservation cases.

For the assessment of the seven Systemic Factors, information was gathered with representation from all ten regions of ADFAN, through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and surveys directed towards:'

- Social workers and supervisors of the direct service in local offices, adoption units, the institutional child abuse unit, the independent living service, the special investigations unit, and the QA/Training Office.

- Licensing Office, Foster Care unit, and call center intake staff

- Associate and local directors

- Youth from the independent living service

- Biological parents

- Foster and adoptive parents

- Residential facilities staff

- Stakeholders and service providers

- Court staff

In addition, the following documents were reviewed:

- ADFAN procedure manuals and administrative documents.

- Case review documents and a special case review in Arecibo and Mayaguez.

- QA and Training Office documents

- Professional services contracts

- Information on Federal programs

Equity:

For the evaluation, there was no objective measure to determine the differences in outcomes across all ten regions. Each region has its own strategies, needs and differences that may not necessarily be measured the same way. The same goes with children and families in each region with different circumstances. For example, in the

metropolitan area of the Island, crime rates are higher, and this requires certain resources allocated to those regions. In smaller and rural Municipalities, there is increasing inequality and lack of resources in close proximity. The Agency has contemplated a possible plan for each region to address its needs on a micro-scale to reach an equitable outcome.

Availability of Relevant Statistics:

Staff agree that the availability of certain up-to-date statistics is limited due to the delay of acquiring the data. Data retrieved from units and regional offices is not done consistently.

Section II: State Context Affecting Overall Performance

In this section, describe the vision and core components of the child welfare system, and how the state is organized to produce the desired child welfare outcomes. Briefly outline cross-cutting issues not specifically addressed in the outcomes and systemic factor sections of the statewide assessment, and finally illustrate how current improvement initiatives provide opportunities to achieve desired outcomes and system change.

We encourage states to consider the experiences of populations within the state that may experience bias, inequities, or underservice—either in their communities or by the systems seeking to serve them—with a focus on variations in outcomes for members of those populations, and how their child welfare system processes, practices, and procedures may either exacerbate or seek to ameliorate any inequities.

We recommend dividing this brief summary into three parts:

Part 1: Vision and Tenets
Briefly describe the vision and core tenets of the state child welfare system (i.e., primary programs, including title IV-E prevention programs, as applicable; practice model; structure and approach to drive change) that are designed to produce desired child welfare outcomes and the routine statewide functioning of systemic factors.

Description:

> The Administration for Families and Children of Puerto Rico (ADFAN) is under its umbrella agency, the Puerto Rico Department of the Family (DF). The DF is within the Government of Puerto Rico and is responsible for the provision of a variety of social well-being services. ADFAN, alongside the other umbrella administrations, is an agency dedicated to executing the public policy established by the Secretary in the different priority service areas for children and their families, including the elderly population. The public policy of the DF includes the development and implementation of standards, norms, and procedures for managing the programs and providing the operational supervision of the Integrated Services Centers (ISC) at the local levels. The regional level, consisting of ten regional offices, supervises the local offices. The regional and local levels are responsible for implementing and developing those functions delegated by the Secretary through the redefinition and reorganization of the variety of services for families, including traditional services and the creation of new methods and strategies for responding to the needs of families. Work plans are prepared in agreement with guidelines and are subject to final approval

by the Secretary.

The Department of the Family incorporates the following principles into its public policy, which ADFAN follows:

- The Government of Puerto Rico proposes to improve the quality of life of families through better use of government resources, as well as community and faith-based resources; therefore, family and community involvement and participation are essential in adopting the philosophy and in channeling public services.

- The family is a fundamental unit of society, and the government should facilitate how families and their communities effectively become part of the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of services.

- The organizational structure and delivery of services of the DF must respond to the characteristics of changes in the family in terms of the roles of its members, educational level, income, status, structure, functions, and problems that affect all its members.

Under such a structure, ADFAN is responsible for the provision of all child well-being services and the administration of the Title IV-E Program, in coordination with the Administration for Socioeconomic Development of the Family and the Child Support Administrations. Its mission is to promote and support the efforts of individuals, families, and communities, to contribute to their own development and that of society. To this end, it facilitates the provision of social, educational, and preventive services, aimed at achieving better and more effective participation, equality, and social justice. ADFAN's vision is to be a leading, agile, responsive, and facilitating agency in the provision and promotion of excellent services for families and communities, with human and fiscal resources and the technology to achieve social justice.

Effective February 2, 2004, the Office of Budget and Management approved the reorganization of ADFAN to expand the procedures, workflow, and information of the operational programs. This reorganization consists of five Assistant Administrations, which are: Elderly and Adults with Disabilities, Preservation and Community Strengthening, Prevention and Community Services, Social Protection Services, and Foster Care and Adoption. ADFAN shares within the Department of the Family the facilities of the regional offices, integrated services center, local offices, and multi-service centers.

Part 2: Cross-System Challenges

Briefly describe cross-cutting issues not specifically addressed in other sections of the statewide assessment that affect the system's programs, practice, and performance (e.g., legislation, budget reductions, community conditions, consent decrees, staff turnover and workload).

Description:

Puerto Rico is often affected by disasters that impact day-to-day operations and service delivery. There are budget limitations, limited staff with larger than normal workloads, and difficulty in hiring qualified staff due to Puerto Rican professionals leaving the Island. The exodus of professionals is due to two emergencies in recent times: Hurricane Maria and COVID-19. The

Center for Puerto Rican Studies of the City University of New York estimates that "between 114,000 and 213,000 Puerto Rican residents will leave the Island annually in the aftermath of Maria".[2] The community's opinion of the Agency is not always as would be desirable, and since the Agency is under the Puerto Rico Department of the Family (DF), the Agency lacks the promotional control (and the fiscal resources) to improve community opinion. In addition, administration changes affect the continuity of Agency functions. Despite these challenges, Agency staff are highly committed to their functions, and were in constant collaboration with one another to complete this Statewide Assessment.

Part 3: Current Initiatives

Briefly describe the cross-cutting improvement initiatives (e.g., practice model, new safety model, workforce projects) to provide context for, and an understanding of, the priority areas of focus from the last CFSR that were addressed through the state's most recent PIP. This is an opportunity to highlight current initiatives and progress made toward achieving desired outcomes and systemic change.

Description:

One of the main conclusions of this Statewide Assessment was the lack of continuous cross-system improvement within the Agency. Each new CFSP, APSR, and PIP brings forth a new set of challenges that cannot be addressed, due to the major lingering limitations that the Agency faces. These limitations are the lack of resources, both in personnel and budget, and the lack of supervision and monitoring. Nonetheless, small strides are being made to improve Outcomes and Systemic Factors. These are documented in the yearly APSRs and were guiding factors to create the goals and objectives for the 2020-2024 CFSP. They are also included in this Statewide Assessment and can be supported with evidence. However, these do not resolve the Agency's macro-level constraints, making it difficult to see improvement over time. The results of this Statewide Assessment will be used to create a cross-system improvement plan that is realistic, and that considers the limitations that inhibit progress.

This section was left blank on purpose.

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[2] Melendez, E. and Hinojosa J. (2017) Estimates of Post-Hurricane Maria Exodus from Puerto Rico, Centro, Center for Puerto Rican Studies.

Section III: Assessment of Child and Family Outcomes

A. Safety

Safety Outcomes 1 and 2

Safety outcomes include: (A) children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect; and (B) children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.

1. **Performance Data Highlights**

   Highlight the most notable state performance and provide a brief summary of the state's most recent, relevant, and quality data pertaining to the CFSR Safety Outcomes and supporting practices. Examples of relevant data: references to safety indicators in recent CB-generated state data profile, case record review results, and administrative data such as state-generated performance on the statewide safety data indicators and timeliness of face-to-face contact with children who are subjects of screened-in CPS reports. Include a description of state-produced measures (denominator and numerator), data periods represented, and methodology.

2. **Brief Analysis**

   Briefly summarize the most salient observations, including strengths and areas needing improvement, and findings across data sources and practice areas, by answering the questions below. Consider how state risk-standardized performance compares to national performance on the CFSR safety data indicators, how current statewide case review performance compares to CFSR Round 3 findings and PIP measurement, and the quality of the data.

   - What is the trend in performance over time, and is the state trending in the desired direction? Are there changes in the denominator and numerator over time?

   - What information do other related data sources provide to inform state observations?

   - What does performance data from the legal and judicial communities show with respect to the impact of court processes on safety outcomes?

   - What does performance data show with respect to the impact of prevention efforts on safety outcomes?

   - What does the performance data identify as areas of strength?

   - What does the performance data identify as areas in need of improvement?

   - Are there data quality limitations (e.g., completeness, accuracy, and reliability)?

3. **Results of Deeper Data Exploration for Priority Focus Areas**

   Identify areas prioritized for deeper data exploration and reasons for selecting those areas. Briefly summarize results of data analysis, including evidence supporting the identification of contributing factors and potential root causes driving strengths and challenges. Consider observations from additional evidence that may have been gathered to deepen the state's understanding of the focus area (e.g., additional analysis of a target sub-population, qualitative data such as caseworker surveys or focus groups with key stakeholders).

- What meaningful differences were identified for sub-populations, including specific groups of children (e.g., age, race/ethnicity) and geographic location in the state?

- What events, conditions, or factors contribute to or lead to the strength or challenge?

- What supporting evidence is provided by key stakeholders (e.g., caseworkers, supervisors, program managers, birth parents and youth, caregivers, and service providers) regarding the contributing factors and/or root cause(s)?

- Are there data or research findings pointing to the root cause(s) and/or contributing factors?

4. Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities, As Applicable

Briefly describe how the information and results of the analysis above relate to or build on results of prior data exploration and CQI change and implementation activities. Has progress been made and/or have lessons been learned from development, implementation, and monitoring of improvement activities included in the state's most recent CFSR/PIP, CFSP/APSR, and other systemic improvement processes? Are adjustments needed to existing strategies/interventions/plans, or are new CQI changes and implementation plans needed to achieve desired outcomes?

This section was left blank on purpose.

ADFAN's Quality Assurance Office (QA) utilizes the Federal Child and Families Services Review Instrument for the local review entitled: Review of Services for Children and Families. Its purpose is to review the performance of our state's child protection systems related to Social Protection and Preservation and Family Strengthening, Foster Care and Adoption services and the Independent Living Program. Through this review, the following percentage of compliance with the results required for children and families was observed. A total of 45 cases were reviewed, from the Aguadilla, Mayagüez and Guayama regions. Of these, 27 are Foster Care cases and 18 are Preservation cases from years 2019 to 2022.

Safety Outcome 1 and corresponding items:

Results for Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect				
Region	% Substantially Achieved	% Partially Achieved	% Not Achieved	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	33.3% (2)	---	66.7% (4)	9
Mayagüez	---	---	100% (2)	13
Guayama	66.7% (2)	---	33.3% (1)	12

Item 1: Timeliness of investigations			
Region	%Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	33.3% (2)	66.7% (4)	9
Mayagüez	---	100% (2)	13
Guayama	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	12

Safety Outcome 2 and corresponding items:

Results for Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate				
Region	% Substantially Achieved	% Partially Achieved	% Not Achieved	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	---	13.3% (2)	86.7% (13)	---
Mayagüez	20% (3)	13.3% (2)	66.7% (10)	---

Results for Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate				
Guayama	46.6% (7)	6.8% (1)	46.6% (7)	---

Item 2: Services to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care			
Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	12
Mayagüez	33.3% (2)	66.7% (4)	9
Guayama	75% (3)	25% (1)	11

Item 3: Risk and safety assessment and management			
Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	---	100% (15)	---
Mayagüez	20% (3)	80% (12)	---
Guayama	46.7% (7)	53.3% (8)	---

The following historic data relates to ADFAN's sequential procedure applicable in security intervention to investigate reports of abuse and/or neglect. The primary purpose of the security intervention is to help the father, mother, or person responsible for the child who has been a victim of abuse to develop protective abilities, so that they are the ones who ensure the safety of their children. All ADFAN regions have experienced a continuous decrease in the number of investigators. As of August 2022, there are only eighty-nine on-going investigators throughout the Island.

In 2019, there were 9,077 substantiated reports in total.

Type of report breakdown in 2019: Present Danger: 152, Imminent Danger: 1,112, and Allegations of Abuse: 7,813.

In 2020, there were 7,158 substantiated reports in total.

Type of report breakdown in 2020: Present Danger: 150, Imminent Danger: 866, and Allegations of Abuse: 6,142

In 2021, there were 7,598 substantiated reports in total.

Type of report breakdown in 2021: Present Danger: 207, Imminent Danger: 1,438, and Allegations of Abuse: 5,953.

As of August 24, 2022, there are 2,780 substantiated reports.

Type of report breakdown as of August 24, 2022: Present Danger: 72, Imminent Danger: 606, and Allegations of Abuse: 2,102.

ADFAN has a contract with *Proyecto PIES*, to increase the number of workers to investigate reports, mostly allegations of abuse. In 2019, they investigated a total of 2,500 referrals from all over the island, which is the amount they are expected to complete for each year per their contract. *Proyecto PIES* has twenty-eight researchers to investigate reports, in addition to ADFAN staff. All personnel of the UIE and *Proyecto PIES* are constantly receiving training to master the application of the security model to investigate reports.

The following qualitative and quantitative data were used to evaluate Safety Outcomes 1 and 2:

- Case review results
- SIMCa reports
- Data from surveys from social workers and focus groups
- Administrative data such as jurisdiction-generated performance on safety data indicators.
- Data on the timeliness of face-to-face contact with children who are the subject of investigated CPS reports.
- Statistical data on positive impacts, strengths, and areas for improvement.
- Relevant information on the impact of judicial processes on Safety results.
- Performance data from interviews or surveys with participants in outcomes' prevention efforts.
- Supporting data provided by key stakeholders (examples: social workers, supervisors, program directors, birth parents and youth, caregivers, and service providers) on contributing factors.

CFSR Statewide Data Indicators for Safety Outcomes:

- Maltreatment in Foster Care

Puerto Rico's performance (2.77%) is statistically better than national performance (9.07%). ADFAN has strict vetting requirements for temporary homes and foster parents. Although foster homes are decreasing in availability, this is due in part to the complexity and costs associated with the process.

- Recurrence of Maltreatment

Puerto Rico's performance (9.9%) is statistically no different than national performance (9.7%). Puerto Rico has culturally specific socio-economic issues that may affect individual mental health and therefore the family unit. A study should be conducted to understand how these issues impact parents in raising their children, to prevent child maltreatment.

Safety Outcome 1:

Item 1: Timeliness of investigations

In eight of the forty-five cases, two cases (25%) complied with the timeliness of child face-to-face contact, according to the priority level. The remaining six cases (75%) did not comply.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Investigator knowledge in the application of the security model. Current collaborative agreements with the FBI and ICE include cross-training between agents, investigators, and supervisors that enhance expertise.
- Supervisor support and coaching are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, through the Social Protection Assistant Administration.
- A differential pay agreement exists for the retention of employees.
- ADFAN, through the contracted company Visual Learning Communications, supplies sign language interpreting services for reports. Services can be requested 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Lack of personnel, including investigators, assistants, and supervisors.
- Larger than normal workloads for current staff, including employees covering shifts from other regions.
- Cases are delayed when the local office does not carry out the investigation and the final disposition of that referral.
- An increase in older-adult abuse reports, which takes time from the investigation of child abuse reports.
- Work plans constantly changing due to Court pressure, cases that get public attention, and emergencies that arise, including COVID-19 absentees.
- Fixed work shifts do not allow for employee rotations.
- Employees being assigned to non-core functions.
- Progress notes are insufficient in SIMCa which delays the investigation process and the final disposition of the referral.
- Expert testimony in court is not mastered by staff.
- SIMCa reports do not have needed information, special requests need to be made and this delays investigations.
- Personnel are not feeling supported in the workplace.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

1. Administrative Level
   - Consider a financial incentive for the completion of reports.
   - Recruitment efforts should focus on non-fixed schedules and differential pay to set the proper expectations.
   - Minimization or elimination of UIE staff assignments outside of their core functions. Their core functions should be discussed during recruitment, and expectations should be met.
   - A separate unit should be created to investigate older-adult abuse reports. This should be included as a separate job title in recruitment efforts.
   - UIE assistants should be included in the differential pay agreement.
   - Formal investigation should be conducted for active cases in Preservation and In-Home cases.
   - Provide more training for employees in well-being and self-care.
   - Create a workplace culture that is more supportive to improve output. Employee opinions need to be heard and they should partake in solutions, cooperatively.

2. Regional Level
   - Regional supervision should include follow-up on reports completed by employees.
   - Regional supervision should not include employee favoritism.

Safety Outcome 2:

Item 2: Services to protect children at home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care and Item 3: Risk and safety assessment and management.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Investigators are proficient in referring individuals for services that avoid removal.
- In some cases, the necessary plans are applied to avoid removals and guarantee the safety of children. These include protective action plans and security plans.
- In compliance with Family First, personnel from the Bayamón, Guayama, Humacao, and Mayagüez regions have been trained on a trauma-informed approach to service delivery. In this way, they can provide or coordinate services for families to improve their protective abilities, control threats, and keep children with their families.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- The review identified cases without continuous safety evaluations, and in other cases, there was no continuous evaluation nor was there a final evaluation for safety.
- There is no formal document to assess the safety of active cases without referrals.

- When investigators request emergency custody from the courts, some judges do not grant the request because they believe that 1) it must be provided through Family First; 2) that relatives should be found; and 3) that there is a lack of evidence. It has been reported that there is a lack of documentation such as a checklist or verification list for these circumstances.
- Lack of personnel to identify safety concerns.
- Families are not receiving a service plan that is unique and that satisfies their specific needs.
- More detailed definitions are needed to describe what "weak" or "absent protective capacities" mean.
- Verification is deficient for actions and services that are being provided to the child and their family. These are not being documented through progress notes in SIMCa.
- There is no standardization in the vocabulary or terminology being used in the progress notes within SIMCa.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

1. Recruitment of sufficient personnel for Preservation and Foster Care cases.
2. Investigation of active case referrals to identify safety concerns.
3. Dissemination of the variety of services for families that prevent children from entering foster care.
4. Adequate evaluation of the provision of services to families that focus on the needs of the family nucleus, guaranteeing the Safety, Permanency, and Well-being of children.
5. Verification of visits and continuous safety evaluations, which includes preparation of documentation to use during visitation.
6. Reinforce knowledge of risk and safety assessment. The following must be done continuously:
   - Evaluation of the conduct of the father, mother, or responsible person.
   - Evaluation of the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional protective capacities.
   - Descriptive and detailed protective capacities identified to determine whether or not the child is at risk.
   - Consistent documentation in the progress notes within SIMCa to determine if a child is safe, and documentation of "no-risks identified" at the time of the visit.
   - Supervisors reviewing the safety manual with their staff on a consistent basis. Employees must have easy access to a copy of the manual, and they must review important points on investigation procedures during visits.

B. Permanency

Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2

Permanency outcomes include: (A) children have permanency and stability in their living situations; and (B) the continuity of family relationships is preserved for children.

1. **Performance Data Highlights**

   Highlight the most notable state performance and provide a brief summary of the state's most recent, relevant, and quality data pertaining to the CFSR Permanency Outcomes and supporting practices. Examples of relevant data: references to permanency indicators in recent CB-generated state data profiles, case record review results, and administrative data such as time to permanency-by-permanency goal, percentage of children placed with relatives/kin, percentage of children in foster care placed with some or all siblings; court performance measures; and quality hearing review project results. Include a description of the state-produced measures (denominator and numerator), data periods represented, and methodology.

2. **Brief Analysis**

   Briefly summarize the most salient observations, including strengths and areas needing improvement, and findings across data sources and practice areas, by answering the questions below. Consider how state risk-standardized performance compares to national performance on the CFSR permanency data indicators, how current statewide case review performance compares to CFSR Round 3 findings and PIP measurement, and the quality of the data.

   - What is the trend in performance over time, and is the state trending in the desired direction? Are there changes in the denominator and numerator over time?

   - What information do other related data sources provide to inform state observations?

   - What does performance data from the legal and judicial communities show with respect to the impact of court processes on permanency outcomes?

   - What does the performance data identify as areas of strength?

   - What does the performance data identify as areas in need of improvement?

   - Are there data quality limitations (e.g., completeness, accuracy, and reliability)?

3. **Results of Deeper Data Exploration for Priority Focus Areas**

   Identify areas prioritized for deeper data exploration and reasons for selecting those areas. Briefly summarize results of data analysis, including evidence supporting the identification of contributing factors and potential root causes driving strengths and challenges. Consider observations from additional evidence that may have been gathered to deepen the state's understanding of the focus area (e.g., additional analysis of a target sub-population, qualitative data such as caseworker surveys or focus groups with key stakeholders).

   - What meaningful differences were identified for sub-populations, including specific groups of children (e.g., children entering foster care, children in foster care for longer periods of time, child age and race/ethnicity) and geographic location in the state?

   - What events, conditions, or factors contribute to or lead to the strength or problem?

- What supporting evidence is provided by key stakeholders (e.g. caseworkers, supervisors, program managers, birth parents and youth, caregivers, and service providers) regarding the contributing factors and/or root cause(s)?

- Are there data or research findings pointing to the root cause(s) and/or contributing factors?

4. **Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities, As Applicable**

Briefly describe how the information and results of the analysis above relate to or build on results of prior data exploration and CQI change and implementation activities. Has progress been made and/or have lessons been learned from development, implementation, and monitoring of improvement activities included in the state's most recent CFSR/PIP, CFSP/APSR, and other systemic improvement processes? Are adjustments needed to existing strategies/interventions/plans, or are new CQI change and implementation plans needed to achieve desired outcomes?

This section was left blank on purpose.

ADFAN's Quality Assurance Office (QA) utilizes the Federal Child and Families Services Review Instrument for the local review entitled: Review of Services for Children and Families. Its purpose is to review the performance of our state's child protection systems related to Social Protection and Preservation and Family Strengthening, Foster Care and Adoption services and the Independent Living Program. Through this review, the following percentage of compliance with the results required for children and families was observed. A total of 45 cases were reviewed, from the Aguadilla, Mayagüez and Guayama regions. Of these, 27 are Foster Care cases and 18 are Preservation cases from years 2019 to 2022.

Permanency Outcome 1 and corresponding items:

Results for Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations:				
Region	% Substantially Achieved	% Partially Achieved	% Not Achieved	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	---	88.9% (8)	11.1% (1)	6
Mayagüez	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)	---	6
Guayama	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	6

Item 4: Stability of foster care placement			
Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)	6
Mayagüez	77.8% (7)	22.2% (2)	6
Guayama	55.6% (5)	44.4% (4)	6

Item 5: Permanency goal for the child			
Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)	6

Item 5: Permanency goal for the child			
Mayagüez	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)	6
Guayama	44.4% (4)	55.6 (5)	6

Item 6: Achievement of reunification, guardianship, adoption, and other permanent housing plan:

Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	22.2% (2)	77.8% (7)	6
Mayagüez	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)	6
Guayama	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)	6

Permanency Outcome 2 and corresponding items:

Results for Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children				
Region	% Substantially Achieved	% Partially Achieved	% Not Achieved	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)	---	6
Mayagüez	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.2% (1)	6
Guayama	77.8% (7)	22.2% (2)	---	6

Item 7: Placement with siblings

Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	100% (8)	---	1
Mayagüez	100% (8)	---	1
Guayama	100% (3)	---	6

Item 8: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	16.7% (1)	83.3% (5)	9
Mayagüez	66.7% (4)	33.3% (2)	9
Guayama	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)	6

Item 9: Preserving connections

Region	% Strengths	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	100% (9)	---	6
Mayagüez	22.2% (2)	77.8% (7)	6
Guayama	100% (9)	---	6

Item 10: Relative placement			
Region	**% Strength**	**% Improvement Needed**	**Does Not Apply**
Aguadilla	50% (3)	50% (3)	9
Mayagüez	25% (1)	75% (3)	11
Guayama	40% (2)	60% (3)	10

Item 11: Relationship of child in care with parents			
Region	**% Strength**	**% Improvement Needed**	**Does Not Apply**
Aguadilla	50% (2)	50% (2)	11
Mayagüez	100% (1)	--	14
Guayama	50% (1)	50% (1)	13

The following qualitative and quantitative data were used to evaluate Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2:

- Case review results
- Administrative data such as permanency goal types, percentage of children placed with relatives/family members, percentage of children in foster care placed with some or all siblings, court performance measures, and other quality reviews.
- Surveys for social workers or focus group data, when available.
- Statistical data on positive impacts, strengths, and areas for improvement.
- Supporting data provided by key stakeholders (examples: social workers, supervisors, program managers, birth parents and youth, caregivers, and service providers) regarding contributing factors.

As of September 23, 2022, the number of children in Foster Care was 2,358. These children are divided in the following age groups:

- 0 to 5 years old – 482 children in foster care
- 6 to 10 years old – 452 children in foster care

- 11 to 15 years old – 566 children in foster care
- 16 to 18 years old – 517 children in foster care
- 19 to 21 years old – 341 children in foster care

Of the total number of children in foster care, 252 were placed with relatives or family members, 372 are in temporary homes with private resources, and 686 are in residential establishments. The remaining children (1,048) are either residing in apartments for independent living or formalized contracts, and/or are self-located, or in hospitals due to health situations.

Regarding the permanency plans of these children, the following was identified:

- Children who achieved reunification: 1,184
- Children who are under legal custody of a family member: 132
- Children who achieved adoption: 287
- Children who are under legal custody of a private resource: 53
- Children with other permanency living arrangements and emancipation: 702

Permanency Outcome 1:

Item 4: Stability of foster care placement

CFSR Statewide Data Indicators for Permanency Outcomes:

- Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Care

Puerto Rico's performance (24.3%) is statistically worse than national performance (35.2%).

- Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 12 to 23 Months

Puerto Rico's performance (29.9%) is statistically worse than national performance (43.8%).

- Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 24 Months or More

Puerto Rico's performance (12.9%) is statistically worse than national performance (37.3%).

Puerto Rico's pool of temporary homes continues to diminish, despite recruitment efforts. This is negatively impacting the availability of stable homes for children entering foster care. It may be necessary to approach potential families differently and facilitate the financial component of documentation and background checks. The lack of staff to investigate removals also greatly impacts the timeliness of achieving permanency for children. Additional data exploration is needed to identify why certain regions do well or worse than the rest.

Reentry to Foster Care

Puerto Rico's performance (2.8%) is statistically better than national performance (5.6%). Puerto Rico has been able to reunify 1,184 children with their families, as of September

23, 2022. However, it is unclear whether this is beneficial for the child, in comparison with other permanency situations, and additional data exploration is needed to verify that these children are maintaining stability with their families. It is also important that permanency plan data be reported by age group, that way if additional services are needed for particular age groups, these needs can be easily identified.

- Placement Stability

Puerto Rico's performance (5.12%) is statistically worse than national performance (4.48%). Additional data exploration is needed on the contributing factors to the stability of child placements.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Data indicates that this result has improved, improving the stability of children in Foster Care. In the eighteen child cases reviewed, 72% of children have stability at their location.

- When evaluating what services the child needs, placement is made in accordance with those needs. For example, when there are behavioral problems, placement changes are being carried out in most cases, which are in favor of the child.

- Specialized Homes, such as Grupo SEPI and COPAS, in compliance with Family First, ensure that their network of temporary homes receives temporary support and comprehensive health services/care for children.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Some children remain in emergency shelters for longer than they should, and this does not promote their stability. Some cases involving removed children are delayed in the UIE until they can be placed in certified places or residential establishments, also negatively impacting their stability.
- There are fewer foster homes, in part due to the certification process that requires documents, police and background information, and home improvements. The documents are also paid for by the homes every two years, which is unappealing for current and potential foster families.
- Fewer temporary homes in the western part of the Island, in comparison with the rest of the Island.
- Lack of formality in the discussion of a child's trauma presented to the foster parents, leaving them with unclear expectations regarding the child.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Follow-ups for visits to foster homes to reassess the needs of placed children.
- Improving communication with foster parents, reinforcing the standard for prudent and responsible parenting.
- Initial security and stability assessments of foster homes.
- Documentation on the justification for relocations within SIMCa.

Item 5: Permanency goal for the child

In Puerto Rico, the timeframe for establishing the permanency goal is 30 days after the child enters Foster Care.

Regarding Reunification as the main goal in the Permanency Plan:

- As of August 2022, 1,184 children in Foster Care have this goal type.
- Forty-one percent of them have had this goal type for 6 months.
- The Guayama region has the largest number of children with this goal type.

Regarding Legal Custody with Relatives as the main goal in the Permanency Plan:

- As of August 2022, 132 children in Foster Care have this goal type.
- Thirty-seven percent of them have had this goal type for more than 2 years.
- The Mayagüez region has the largest number of children with this goal type.

Regarding Adoption as the main goal in the Permanency Plan:

- As of August 2022, 60% of children in Foster Care have had this goal type for more than 2 years.
- The Arecibo region has the largest number of children with this goal type and 83% of them have had this goal type for more than 2 years.

Regarding Legal Custody with an Individual as the main goal in the Permanency Plan:

- As of August 2022, 53 children in Foster Care have this goal type.
- The Carolina region has the largest number of children with this goal type and 90% of them have had this goal type for more than 2 years.

Regarding Other Permanent Living Arrangements as the main goal in the Permanency Plan:

- As of August 2022, 702 children in Foster Care have this goal type.
- Sixty-nine percent of them have had this goal type for more than 2 years.
- Emancipation is the second most frequent arrangement made.

Additional data exploration is needed to ensure the regularity and effectiveness of the Permanency Plan Review Committees, which entail a judicial and/or administrative review at least every 6 months, to help achieve permanency for children within a 6-month period, as established in the Safety, Well-being, and Protection of Children Act, enacted on December 26, 2019.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Results indicate that of the 18 cases reviewed for this item, 55% of cases have their permanency plan goal established in a timely manner and in accordance with the needs of the child.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Identification of family members as a legal resource.
- Compliance with the corresponding review of permanency plans.
- Review of permanency plan goals with social workers.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Continuous efforts in the Permanency Plan Review Committees.
- Periodic reviews to support plan goals or modify if necessary.
- Consistency and effort regarding the needs of the child to achieve their permanency plan goals.

Item 6: Achievement of reunification, guardianship, adoption, and other permanent housing plans

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Of the eighteen cases reviewed, almost 45% obtained a strength classification since there are efforts being made to achieve the goal for the child in the corresponding time.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Most cases reviewed demonstrate that there are no efforts being made to achieve the goal for the child in the corresponding time. Some children have been in the foster care system for more than 5 years with goals that have not been achieved.
- In some cases, the goals or reviews are not being documented.
- Goals do not always adequately meet the needs of children. This is an area where greater data exploration is needed.
- Cross-agency efforts between the Agency and the Courts to achieve permanency plans are lacking.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Continuous efforts in the Permanency Plan Review Committees.
- Training for case managers, supervisors, and court staff, including judges and attorneys, to achieve inter-agency collaboration in achieving permanency plans.
- Periodic reviews to support plan goals or modify them if necessary.

Permanency Outcome 2:

Item 7: Placement with siblings

In compliance with the Foster Care manual, the first option is to place siblings together, if it is beneficial for them. Locations such as Grupo SEPI therapeutic homes help siblings stay together as they are encouraged to take in the entire group of siblings. This is so even when only one sibling requires therapeutic services.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- 100% of the reviewed cases for this item fully comply with placement with siblings.
- Justification for the alternative placement of siblings is correctly documented.

Item 8: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Visits occur at different frequencies to encourage the parent/sibling relationship. Visits occur once a week, twice a month, or once a month.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Of the twelve cases reviewed for this item, 42% had visits between parents and siblings in foster care.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Improvement is needed in the evaluation of aggressive parents before visitation can occur.
- Between 2020 and 2021, the licensing for employees to drive official vehicles was exceptionally low, as well as the renewal process. There are few drivers willing to take on this task due to the perceived liability. Licensing is provided by General Services, an external entity.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Pre-agreements need to be made among all parties to carry out parent/sibling visits, in accordance with the Foster Care manual. The pre-agreement must include the presence of the case manager in supervised visits.
- Improve employee perceptions of their duties. Some employees do not want to be licensed for fear of retaliation if an emergency occurs. Verification needs to take place to ensure that all employees have up-to-date official vehicle licenses. At the same time, their concerns must be recognized, and support should be provided to them.

Item 9: Preserving connections.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- From region to region, results for this item vary. Of the eighteen cases reviewed, 61% evidenced that the relationships between siblings outside of foster care who

live in or outside of Puerto Rico were preserved. This includes the continuity of participation in sports teams/recreational activities, religious activities, birthdays, and access to their pets. This was made possible by having cultural-adaptive placement for children.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Reinforcement of awareness of the importance of maintaining relationships.
- Establishing trips with siblings at least twice a year should be part of the service plan. This can improve bonding between them.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Establishment of less restrictive measures allowing children to connect when separated. Foster parents can serve as nurturing models for birth parents in achieving compliance with the service plan. This helps children establish better emotional ties and guarantees their safety and well-being.

Item 10: Relative placement

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- No strengths were identified.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- There is no effort made to identify and locate other relatives who, if evaluated and consulted, could provide a foster home, and receive the removed child and their siblings.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Consult with the child themselves, if age allows, to identify significant people in their lives, such as godparents, aunts/uncles, among other relatives.
- Enact new strategies (in addition to Ecomap, Genogram, and Social Study) such as round tables to identify more family resources.

Item 11: Relationship of the child in care with parents

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- No strengths were identified.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- The transportation manual and/or regulations make it difficult for parents to coordinate appointments and other activities with their children.
- Coordination with correctional partners needs improvement so that children can visit their incarcerated parents.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Support by the Agency for foster parents to serve as role models in parenting matters and to promote healthy family dynamics.
- Assessment of items of sentimental value given to a child by their biological or foster parents when the child is relocated.

This section was left blank on purpose.

C. Well-Being

Well-Being Outcomes 1, 2, and 3

Well-being outcomes include: (A) families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs; (B) children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs; and (C) children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

1. **Performance Data Highlights**

   Highlight the most notable state performance and provide a brief summary of the state's most recent, relevant, and quality data pertaining to the CFSR Well-Being Outcomes and supporting practices. Examples of relevant data: case record review results, administrative data such as participation in family team meetings, caseworker visits with children and parents, children receiving timely well-child visits; service utilization rates. Include a description of the state-produced measures (denominator and numerator), data periods represented, and methodology.

2. **Brief Analysis**

   Briefly summarize the most salient observations, including strengths and areas needing improvement, and findings across data sources and practice areas, by answering the questions below. Consider how current statewide case review performance compares to CFSR Round 3 findings and PIP measurement, and the quality of the data.

   - What is the trend in performance over time, and is the state trending in the desired direction?

   - What information do other related data sources provide to inform state observations?

   - What does performance data from the legal and judicial communities show with respect to the impact of court processes on child well-being outcomes?

   - What does the performance data identify as areas of strength?

   - What does the performance data identify as areas in need of improvement?

   - Are there data quality limitations (e.g., completeness, accuracy, and reliability)?

3. **Results of Deeper Data Exploration for Priority Focus Areas**

   Identify areas prioritized for deeper data exploration and reasons for selecting those areas. Briefly summarize results of data analysis, including evidence supporting the identification of contributing factors and potential root causes driving strengths and challenges. Consider observations from additional evidence that may have been gathered to deepen the state's understanding of the focus area (e.g., additional analysis of a target sub-population, qualitative data such as caseworker surveys or focus groups with key stakeholders).

   - What meaningful differences were identified for sub-populations, including specific groups of children (e.g., age, race/ethnicity) and geographic location in the state?

   - What events, conditions, or factors contribute to or lead to the strength or problem?

   - What supporting evidence is provided by key stakeholders (e.g., caseworkers, supervisors, program managers, birth parents and youth, caregivers, and service providers) regarding the contributing factors and/or root cause(s)?

   - Are there data or research pointing to the root cause(s) and/or contributing factors?

4. Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities, As Applicable

Briefly describe how the information and results of the analysis above relate to or build on results of prior data exploration and CQI change and implementation activities. Has progress been made and/or have lessons been learned from development, implementation, and monitoring of improvement activities included in the state's most recent CFSR/PIP, CFSP/APSR, and other systemic improvement processes? Are adjustments needed to existing strategies/interventions/plans, or are new CQI change and implementation plans needed to achieve desired outcomes?

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Well-Being Outcome 1 and corresponding items:

Results for Well-being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs				
Region	**% Substantially Achieved**	**% Partially Achieved**	**% Not Achieved**	**Does Not Apply**
Aguadilla	13.2% (2)	46.7% (7)	40% (6)	---
Mayagüez	46.6% (7)	6.7% (1)	46.6% (7)	---
Guayama	40% (6)	26.7% (4)	33.3% (5)	---

Item 12: Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents			
Region	**% Strength**	**% Improvement Needed**	**Does Not Apply**
Aguadilla	53.3% (8)	46.7% (7)	---
Mayagüez	53.3% (8)	46.7% (7)	---

Item 12: Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents			
Guayama	40% (6)	60% (9)	---

Sub-Item 12A: Needs assessment and services to children

Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed
Aguadilla	66.7% (10)	33.3% (5)
Mayagüez	60% (9)	40% (5)
Guayama	60% (9)	40% (6)

Sub-Item 12B: Needs assessment and services to parents

Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	70% (7)	33% (3)	5
Mayagüez	37.5% (3)	62.5% (5)	7
Guayama	50% (4)	50% (4)	7

Sub-Item 12C: Needs assessment and services to foster parents

Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	37.5% (3)	62.5% (5)	7

Sub-Item 12C: Needs assessment and services to foster parents			
Mayagüez	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	12
Guayama	50% (3)	50% (3)	9

Item 13: Child and family involvement in case planning			
Region	% Strength	% Improvements Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	43% (6)	57% (8)	1
Mayagüez	36.3% (4)	63.7% (7)	4
Guayama	50% (5)	50% (5)	5

Item 14: Caseworker visits with child			
Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	6.7% (1)	93.3% (14)	---
Mayagüez	6.7% (1)	93.3% (14)	---
Guayama	60% (9)	40% (6)	---

Item 15: Caseworker visits with parents

Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	---	100% (11)	4
Mayagüez	12.5% (1)	87.5% (7)	7
Guayama	12.5% (1)	87.5% (7)	7

Well-being Outcome 2 and corresponding items:

Results for Well-being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs

Region	% Substantially Achieved	% Partially Achieved	% Not Achieved	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	66.7% (8)	---	33.3% (4)	3
Mayagüez	70% (7)	10% (1)	20% (2)	5
Guayama	82% (9)	---	18% (2)	4

Item 16: Educational needs of the child

Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply

Item 16: Educational needs of the child			
Aguadilla	66.7% (8)	33.3% (4)	3
Mayagüez	70% (7)	30% (3)	5
Guayama	81.8% (9)	18.2% (2)	4

Well-being Outcome 3 and corresponding items:

Results for Well-being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs			
Region	**% Substantially Achieved**	**% Partially Achieved**	**% Not Achieved**	**Does Not Apply**
Aguadilla	40% (6)	46.7% (7)	13.3% (2)	---
Mayagüez	26.7% (4)	33.3% (5)	40% (6)	---
Guayama	53.3% (8)	20% (3)	26.7% (4)	---

Item 17: Physical health of the child			
Region	**% Strength**	**% Improvement Needed**	**Does Not Apply**
Aguadilla	38.5% (5)	61.5% (8)	2
Mayagüez	33.3% (5)	66.7% (10)	---
Guayama	57.1% (8)	42.9 (6)	1

Item 18: Mental/behavioral health of the child			
Region	% Strength	% Improvement Needed	Does Not Apply
Aguadilla	85.7% (12)	14.3% (2)	1
Mayagüez	57% (8)	43% (6)	1
Guayama	64.3% (9)	37.5% (5)	1

Well-being Outcome 1:

Item 12: Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents

The services for children, parents, and foster parents that are provided include:

- Recreational services
- Drug tests
- Mental health assessments
- Reeducation for domestic violence aggressors
- Transportation
- Living arrangements
- Services for victims of domestic violence
- Services for victims of sexual abuse
- Family Life School (Spanish acronym EVF) and the Coexistence and Upbringing School Spanish acronym ECC)

Other coordinated services include, on a special grant basis, the purchase of graduation gowns, educational materials for extracurricular classes such as arts, senior prom attire, and sports equipment.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- ADFAN has improved compliance with this item. Fifty-three percent of cases reviewed have had the needs of children, parents and foster parents evaluated, and the corresponding services provided to meet those needs.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- From the focus group with lawyers who provide legal services, services are scarce in the Carolina and Fajardo regions, and service plans are not individualized. Furthermore, other stakeholders agree that services are scarce, island wide.
- There exists a lack of transportation for low-income individuals to receive services.
- Initial removals are restrictive, not enabling family preservation services.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Strengthening the comprehensiveness of the service plan and involving additional staff and service providers in the process.
- In tandem with points made in the evaluation of Service Array and Resource Development, improving the evaluation of services and service providers, and broadening their availability.

Sub-Item 12A: Needs assessment and services for children

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- In tandem with points made in the evaluation of various systemic factors, services need to be individualized for the child by means of a thorough assessment of such, and the proper coordination of service delivery.

Sub-Item 12B: Needs assessment and services for parents

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- In tandem with points made in the evaluation of various systemic factors, services need to be individualized for the parents by means of a thorough assessment of such, and the proper coordination of service delivery.

Sub-Item 12C: Needs assessment and services for foster parents

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- In tandem with points made in the evaluation of various systemic factors, services need to be individualized for the foster parents by means of a thorough assessment of such, and the proper coordination of service delivery.
- Strengthen communication between ADFAN staff and foster parents.
- Improve ADFAN's commitment to foster parents through informative brochures and communications.
- Ongoing guidance from supervisors on placement, preliminary reports, and agreement terms.
- Communication and collaboration between case managers and educational institutions on a child's needs, so that needs are communicated to foster parents.
- Adequate documentation of services provided.

Item 13: Child and family involvement in case planning

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- No strengths were identified.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- In most cases reviewed, the service plan was not updated by staff.

- Only 40% of cases reviewed involved family participation in the case planning process.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Review the service plan and adjust it when needed. This includes making it more accessible and creating a form to fill out that is effective and simple.

Item 14: Caseworker visits with children

Most cases have a visit requirement of once a month.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- No strengths were identified.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Of the thirty cases reviewed, 6.7% met the visit requirement of once a month. Although monthly visits are beneficial, the visit frequency is not enough to guarantee the Safety, Permanency, and Well-being of children.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Visits require prior planning.
- SIMCa progress notes and proper documentation supervision.
- Completion and verification of a security evaluation of the home.
- Strategize an effective increase in personnel to handle complex cases.

Item 15: Caseworker visits with parents

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- No strengths were identified.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- In most cases, caseworker visits are not documented with frequency and quality for effective resolutions in the service plan.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Establish the frequency standard for visits with parents.
- Visits require prior planning.
- SIMCa progress notes and proper documentation supervision.
- Completion and verification of a security evaluation of the home.
- Strategize an effective increase in personnel to handle complex cases.

Well-being Outcome 2:

Item 16: Educational needs of the child

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- In most cases reviewed, 68% received an educational evaluation and the child received the corresponding educational services.
- Most foster care cases have a periodic evaluation on educational matters.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- In the cases that did not receive an educational evaluation, these did not have updated documentation, such as COMPU and PEI (specialized documents to address special educational needs).
- There is no evidence that staff coordinate educational services for in-home cases of educational negligence.
- In some cases, when children switch schools, they are not withdrawn from the previous school.
- Case managers are not attending COMPU or PEI meetings.
- Staff do not coordinate counseling services with children.
- Assessment for educational needs is ineffective.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Verify that staff are accurately assessing the educational needs of children with documentation and that services are being coordinated for them, including follow-up on services delivered.

Well-being Outcome 3:

Item 17: Physical health of the child

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- No strengths were identified.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Most cases reviewed are not assessing needs related to the physical health of the child.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Explore the financial capability of the Agency to increase healthcare service providers, considering the cultural limitations that are causing healthcare professionals to leave the Island.

Item 18: Mental/behavioral health of the child

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Most cases reviewed are assessing the needs for the mental/behavioral health of the child.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Additional data exploration is needed to understand what is limiting the compliance on this item, specifically regarding mental health needs versus services available.

Priority Focus Areas to Improve Results:

- Explore the financial capability of the Agency to increase healthcare service providers, considering the cultural limitations that are   causing healthcare professionals to leave the Island.

This section was left blank on purpose.

Section IV: Assessment of Systemic Factors

The statewide assessment includes a review of 18 items associated with 7 systemic factors that are used to determine the CFSR ratings for substantial conformity for each factor. For CFSR Round 4, the expectation is that the statewide assessment team will use relevant, well-constructed, valid, and defensible evidence that speaks to how well each systemic factor requirement functions across the state.

The Children's Bureau recognizes that in many states the information systems that house data submitted to the federal government for AFCARS and NCANDS also contain a wealth of administrative data that could be considered when evaluating the systemic factors. Where possible, we recommend that states make use of these and other available data sets to demonstrate systemic factor functionality.

Whether quantitative or qualitative evidence is used to demonstrate the functionality of systemic factor items, states are strongly encouraged to use systematic processes to assess state performance, include explanations regarding how well the data and/or information characterizes statewide functioning, and provide information regarding the scope of the evidence used.

If the federal review team determines that the statewide assessment does not conclusively demonstrate substantial conformity, the team may collect additional information through stakeholder interviews during the onsite phase of the CFSR. Stakeholder interviews on the Service Array and Case Review systemic factors, jointly conducted by the federal-state team, will be held in all states.

States are encouraged to review the CFSR Round 3 Systemic Factors report for examples of the combination of evidence used to demonstrate systemic factor functioning in Round 3, and the CB information briefs developed for each systemic factor (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/systemic-factors-results-cfsrs-2015-2018) that provide additional ideas and suggestions for demonstrating functionality.

A. Statewide Information System

Item 19: Statewide Information System

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the statewide information system functioning statewide to ensure that, at a minimum, the state can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address each of the four components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to how end users experience the statewide information system?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 19 needs improvement.

Puerto Rico does not have a comprehensive statewide information system, in comparison with other States. The information system for case management used by the Agency is known as SIMCa. It contains quality data that is vital for the analysis of processes involving children and their families. The System contains fields for status, demographics, placement and permanency goals for each child in care. It also contains the four elements that are required by the Federal Level. The quality of qualitative information and data requires that the system be more agile in the input of data. The quantitative data could improve if more reports were generated with accurate and reliable data.

This systemic factor was evaluated utilizing surveys and holding focus groups. Surveys were sent to social workers and contracted supervisors of the private corporation Social Community Concepts. A total of twenty-six responses were received. Three focus groups took place, which included the following ADFAN personnel: Specialized Investigations Unit (UIE) social workers and supervisors, associate directors and Institutional

Maltreatment Unit (UMI) staff from different regions across Puerto Rico. The evaluation team for this systemic factor agreed that certain questions were left out of the surveys after receiving responses. Another focal group may take place to raise additional questions.

In the 2018 Statewide Assessment, the barriers identified with Item 19 are still present. The system has seen improvements, and yearly APSRs document these improvements. As stated in the APSR 2021-2022, the SIMCa Support Committee discusses with staff, incidents in the SIMCa application and improvements to present to Softek. The SIMCa Support Committee is an active user of the system, and therefore has firsthand awareness of what updates are needed. An assessment by the Committee will take place to analyze how effective it is in resolving issues pertaining to SIMCa in the following year. Most users of SIMCa agree that in general, the system has beneficial functions. However, it does require improvements in its stability and functionality. There was no data to evaluate the types of incidents reported most to the contracted company, and why the needed improvements have been delayed. However, the committee will request and review incident data. Alongside the needed improvements, staff need notification and training on system updates. ADFAN currently does not have the personnel to train employees on SIMCa updates. The evaluation team contemplated a "Train the Trainer" concept for champion employees who maneuver the system well to train other personnel. The discussion is taking place on the implementation of the concept.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- The system is accessible to employees of the hotline, research units, the Preservation, and the Foster Care and Adoption Assistant Administrations.

- SIMCa guarantees user security and information access by assigning permissions according to the role, in addition to private organizations that offer services to the Agency.

- The SIMCa application had improvements related to the management of the security model. It is now more precise and allows for the evaluation of child safety.

- The system can generate reports at the local and regional levels as a tool for supervision, evaluation, and compliance.

- SIMCa data allows for the discussion and transfer of cases between regions, facilitating handling.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- What is expected of staff when inputting information into the system is unclear. Expectations may also differ by region.

- The system is not user-friendly in particular areas. It is difficult to obtain accurate data related to the demographic characteristics, status, location, and permanency goals of each child.

- It is difficult to generate all the reports required on federal and state levels, such as NCANDS, AFCARS, and NYTD, among others.

- The process carried out for the migration of data from the previous system, SIRCSe, caused the contamination of information in SIMCa. A cleaning process for migrated cases was established. All regions were completed in the first phase.

The second phase began in the Guayama and Bayamón regions.

- The locations are not identified by service needs in the system, such as sexual abuse, ADHD, LGBTTQ, among others. Respondents believe that this would help find the proper placement that meets the needs of the child being removed.

- The SOAP method (patient assessment documentation) should be structured into the progress note section in SIMCa to provide necessary information.

- Training for users in case management is not continuous for newly appointed staff.

- There are no in-house system coordinators to provide training, incident management, and support related to SIMCa.

- The system's vocabulary is too technical and not consistent with the language used by Agency staff.[3]

This section was left blank on purpose.

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[3] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022) *Factor Sistémico I: Sistema de Información del Estado*. Unpublished internal agency document.

B. Case Review System

Item 20: Written Case Plan

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a written case plan that is developed jointly with the child's parent(s) and includes the required provisions?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address each of the three components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to families' experience with the case planning process?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 20 needs improvement.

The Case Review System was evaluated utilizing 25 SIMCa case records from the Caguas and Humacao regions, as well as interviews and focus groups with social workers, family service technicians, social worker supervisors, judges, attorneys, and parents.[4] The SIMCa case records included over forty questions covering items 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24.[5] Regarding the family experience, parental involvement in the case management process is needed. This comprises certain elements of the process that families noted, including timeliness of the process, lack of preventive options for children before placement into foster care, lack of mental health services for children, and the lack of adequate communication between caseworkers and parents.[6]

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[4] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Contestación a la matriz*. Unpublished internal agency document.

[5] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Englobado de la Lectura de Casos SWA Final- Cuantitativo*. Unpublished internal agency document.

[6] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Datos del cuestionario suministrado a los promovidos de caguas y Humacao*. Unpublished internal agency document.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Staff compliance with the service plan.

- Focus is on the protective capacities for removed children.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Effectiveness and stability of the SIMCa system itself.

- Adequate documentation in SIMCa including historical data and activities that were carried out.

Item 21: Periodic Reviews

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the periodic reviews process?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 21 is a strength.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- The Agency has established a procedure at the regional level for periodic reviews.

- Documented periodic reviews in SIMCa.

- An internal document was created to help assess whether follow-up is given to the different review areas regarding the child's permanency plan.

- Permanency plans are reviewed once a week.

- The Caguas regional office summons parents and children to follow-up hearings.

- The summaries of previous reviews are used in the follow-up review of each case and offer continuity to the established recommendations.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Overall effectiveness of the SIMCa system and lack of permanency plan documentation.[7]

Item 22: Permanency Hearings

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that, for each child, a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the permanency hearing process?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 22 needs improvement.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Prosecutors and judges are complying with the terms established in the follow-up hearings. Video conferences have made it easier for all parties to attend and to guarantee that hearings take place.

- The SUMAC system helps speed up the filing of social reports and information letters prior to hearings.

- Judges and attorneys provide follow-up on health and educational needs. They can also provide reinforcement to for permanency plan compliance. Additionally, they are being informed on the requirements of Title IV-E and they involve children in the follow-up hearings.

- ADFAN involves family members in court processes.

- Judges and attorneys agree that the Independent Living Service assists in the achievement of permanency plans.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- Lack of mental health services and providers is a great barrier in achieving permanency plans.

- Lack of housing alternatives for children who will be exiting foster care.

- Lack of inter-agency communication.

- Children 14 years and up are not appearing in court hearings.

- Permanency plan inconsistencies with the child's age and current situation.

- Children who do not qualify for the Independent Living Service have issues achieving their permanency plans.

- Difficulties of case managers in ensuring that plans align with the child's needs.

Data indicates that regular discussions on ADFAN procedures for the review of permanency plans need to take place, in court and in the Permanency Plan Review Committees in each region. Several prosecutors and judges indicated that they have been in their positions for a short time. This implicates less expertise in the processes of the permanency plan review. However, all new judges and attorneys are required to receive training on ADFAN's processes.

Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights

For this item, provide evidence that answer this question:
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that the filing of termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the TPR process?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response

Overall, Item 23 needs improvement.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- The agency has a manual for Foster Care and Adoption services.

- The agency has established a formatting guide for reporting the termination of parental rights.

- Judges and attorneys initiate the process of termination of parental rights when necessary.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- According to judges and attorneys, the petition for the termination of parental rights is not being submitted in a timely manner due to the lack of services (especially for mental health and sexual abuse victims).

- Judges agree that in follow-up hearings, social workers, and family service technicians do not give reasons for not requesting the termination of parental rights. They opt for permanent custody and parental custody.

- The electronic files do not have the necessary justification for not terminating parental rights.

Data obtained indicates that local office staff need to be re-trained on the case stages to assess and determine the termination of parental rights. The formatting guide for reporting termination of parental rights should be included in the electronic file, if possible. There is no clear communication between the judicial branch and ADFAN staff (social workers and family service technicians) on the justification for not terminating parental rights.

Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care (1) are receiving notification of any review or hearing held with respect to the child and (2) have a right to be heard in any review or hearing held with respect to the child?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address both components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to caregivers' experience with the hearing and review notification process?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 24 needs improvement.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- Attorneys and judges indicate they have no difficulties in the process of notifying and summoning the parties for permanency hearings.

- The supervisor in charge of the Permanency Plan Review Committee in the Humacao region indicated that she would establish a plan to start summoning parents, caregivers, and children to their permanency review hearings.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- All evaluation participants agree that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, family members, and children are not frequently summoned. to participate in permanency hearings. Attorneys and judges indicate that if the child requests it, he or she can participate in the permanency review hearing.

- Supervisors and social worker/family service technicians indicated that the Permanency Plan Review Committee meetings are held virtually and not all participants are able to utilize the Teams platform.

Data indicates that there is no uniformity among the regional offices regarding the process established by ADFAN for meetings of the Permanency Plan Review Committee. The agency must establish a document for convening the committee. In addition, the judicial system does not have an instrument to determine if the parties involved in the cases have been notified.

C. Quality Assurance System

Item 25: Quality Assurance System

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the quality assurance system functioning statewide to ensure that it is (1) operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address each of the five components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the QA/CQI process?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 25 needs improvement.

The Quality Assurance System (QA) was evaluated by an evaluation team utilizing data[8] obtained through focus groups, interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and a review of official federal and state documents. Forty-eight staff members from ADFAN participated, including staff from the ten regional offices and from the central level. These included social workers, social work supervisors I and II, associate directors, social work specialists from different assistant administrations, a nursing supervisor, the QA director, and an assistant administrator. Only 70% of invitees participated in the focus groups and 57% of all questionnaires sent out were completed. The participants were not a varied representation of ADFAN's staff. A

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[8] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *6 Sept. Statewide Assessment Garantia de Calidad*. Unpublished internal agency document.

minimal number of associate directors, regional and local supervisors, and social workers were selected to participate. Families and children were not directly engaged in the evaluation of the system.

The QA system functions as follows:

1. Yearly review planning

2. Active cases and sample selection

3. Case review process

4. Data collection, both quantitative and qualitative

5. Analysis and discussion of findings

6. Follow-up and improvement plans

The five elements that determine whether or not the system is functioning properly are:

1. Operates in the jurisdiction where services are provided.

2. Has standards for assessing the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care receive quality services that protect their health and safety).

3. Identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system.

4. Provides relevant reports.

5. Evaluates program improvement measures that are implemented.

At its highest functioning capability, with adequate staffing, case reviews in all regions could be completed, and the dissemination of results would be quicker. This would assist in the guidance of regional work plans, to which QA provides follow-up and support. From the dissemination of results stem the formulation of improvement plans, or CQI that are meant to improve service delivery.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- The two staff members of the office and its director review cases with the CFSR federal instrument model, as well as other forms designed to meet ADFAN requirements.

- There is a valid structured methodology to obtain samples and carry out the review process.

- The staff has vast knowledge of internal processes of the office and ADFAN, and master federal review requirements.

- Staff utilize the Online Monitoring System (OMS) for the evaluation of Foster Care and Family Preservation services in the areas of Safety, Permanency, and Well-being.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

- The office fails to review all 10 regions on an annual basis. The review is meant to ensure quality in the provision of services.

- File review occurs both physically and electronically, increasing the time it

takes to complete the review.

- The office does not draft reports with findings and recommendations. This is a strategy meant to be informative and to be included in the improvement plans for monitoring.

- The system does not comply in an agile and timely manner with the presentation of findings and results of file reviews.

- The two social workers that make up the QA Office not only perform their core tasks, which include reviewing and analyzing cases, but also performing non-core functions.

- The office does not offer continuous and sustained support and follow-up in the CQI processes required for all regional improvement plans.

- The office does not present, discuss, and disseminate findings to all the personnel of all 10 regions consistently, which makes it difficult for staff to correctly identify, differentiate, and apply the concepts and definitions of national and state standards.

- The QA Office and the Training Office function as a single unit when they are separate units with their own missions and tasks.

- The QA Office lacks human and fiscal resources.

- ADFAN must recognize, value, and prioritize the crucial mission of the office and the QA process in the evaluation and supervision of services offered to families and children, as well as its vital role in monitoring and supporting ADFAN's improvement plans.

Data obtained indicates that while each region is required to complete a corrective action plan to address the issues identified during the review, the lack of staff and the increasing workload is preventing them from doing so. Regional staff cannot recall when QA case reviews take place, much less the creation of an improvement plan. This is consistent with the fact that during the 2019 to 2022 period, only three regions have been reviewed: Aguadilla (2018-2019), Guayama (2022), and Mayagüez (2019-2020, yet results have not been disseminated. In the 2010 Statewide Assessment, the office had eleven employees, as of date, that number has decreased to three. The tasks that the three employees are burdened with include functions that they understand should be separate from the QA office, such as case review and dissemination of results, improvement/monitoring plans, and training.

D. Staff and Provider Training

Item 26: Initial Staff Training

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that initial training is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP so that:

- Staff receive training in accordance with the established curriculum and timeframes for the provision of initial training; and

- The system demonstrates how well the initial training addresses basic skills and knowledge needed by staff to carry out their duties?

"Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, includes all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to participants' experience with initial training?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 26 needs improvement.

Staff and Provider Training was evaluated with the following data[9]: surveys in the Humacao, San Juan, Guayama, and Mayagüez regions; review of official documents (provided by the Training Office and the Foster Care and Adoption units); a semi-structured interview with the interim director of the Office of Quality Assurance and Training; questionnaires given to foster care service providers, social workers,

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[9] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *SWA FACTOR SISTEMICO CAPACITACION ITEM 26, 27 y 28 FINAL*. Unpublished internal agency document.

supervisors (87 respondents), and ADFAN attorneys; and three focus groups comprised of judges, family attorneys, supervisors of social workers I and II, and associate directors.

The social worker (new hires) questionnaire was completed by 24 individuals.

Key findings:

- Approximately 63% of respondents consider that the trainings received were not sufficient to initiate their functions.

- Approximately 58% of respondents received training before being assigned a case.[10]

The evaluation team reviewed documents provided by the Office of Quality Assurance and Training, including statistical data, training schedules, the 2020-2024 training plan, the 2018 SWA, related regulations, the training database, and workshop attendance sheets. A semi-structured interview took place with Ms. Yashira Galí Rodríguez, Director of the Office of Quality Assurance and Training as well. In addition, a questionnaire was prepared through the Google Forms platform, addressing the newly appointed personnel hired during the review period. From this questionnaire, twenty-four responses were received. Likewise, an associate director, five social work I supervisors and four social work II supervisors from the Caguas, Humacao and San Juan regions participated in an organized focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to learn about the experiences and opinions on training offered to employees.

ADFAN has a training plan for all newly appointed staff, as stated in the 2020-2024 CFSP. The Item 26 curriculum has eleven topics, focusing on the development of basic and essential skills and knowledge for providing child welfare services. During the period under review training was given to 114 employees.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:

- All personnel convened for the pre-service training were trained. In addition, most of the topics established in the training plan were covered. Pre-service training for new hires outside of the recruitment cycle is provided by training staff.

- The pre-service curriculum received accreditation hours for continuous education required by the Social Work Professional Association of Puerto Rico.

- ADFAN retained Social & Community Concepts to conduct investigations of abuse and/or neglect, reducing the number of pending referrals. As a result of this, the training plan was adapted to training new staff before they begin investigation activities.

- The Training Office maintains effective and constant communication with the training liaisons in each region.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:

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[10] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Cuestionario Dirigido a Trabajadores Sociales de Nuevo Nombramiento(1-24)*. Unpublished internal agency document.

- Topics not addressed were: Conceptualizing the Puerto Rican family and the situations that they face, Introduction to Family First, and the Trauma-Informed Approach.

- The Training Office is unaware of newly appointed personnel. This is a communication issue between offices.

- Lack of human resources to offer trainings.

- Training logistics need to improve, and evaluation of training effectiveness is needed in terms of employee performance in all service areas.

- Needs assessments for training are not being carried out.

The data indicates that although newly appointed staff are being trained, this is only when the Training Office is made aware of these new hires. Additionally, training is lacking in certain topics and is deemed insufficient by staff to carry out their core functions. In the supervisors' focus group, all ten participants responded that newly appointed personnel did not receive pre-service training. They added that investigations and cases are assigned without prior training. The questionnaire for newly appointed ADFAN staff in the Humacao, Mayagüez, Ponce, and Guayama regions, showed that 58% of investigator and case manager staff received pre-service training before being assigned to an investigation or a case. However, the respondents were also asked whether the training received was sufficient when initiating their tasks and 58% answered "No". Regarding the additional training needs, 19% of respondents consider it necessary to receive further training. Some of the issues identified are sexual abuse, SIMCa, SIPH, Law 121, and parental alienation.

Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that ongoing training is provided for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP so that:

- Staff receive ongoing training pursuant to the established curriculum and timeframes for the provision of ongoing training; and

- The system demonstrates how well the ongoing training addresses basic skills and knowledge needed by staff to carry out their duties?

"Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, includes all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

"Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, also includes direct supervisors of all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all of the components of this question, including the two bullets and all required staff as described above.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to participants' experience with ongoing staff training?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 27 needs improvement.

The supervisors' questionnaire was completed by 28 individuals. The following regions and offices were represented in the questionnaire: Caguas, Guayama, Humacao, San Juan and the Quality Assurance Office. Some questions required respondents to rate satisfaction levels 1 through 5, 5 being highly satisfied.

Key findings:

- Approximately 60% of respondents do not think trainings are announced in a timely fashion, making it difficult to comply with continuous education hours.

- Approximately 46% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction with ADFAN training a 3 or less.

- Approximately 71% of supervisors rated the virtual training modality 3 or less, showing lesser satisfaction with this type of modality.

- Approximately 57% of respondents rated training provided to new hires 3 or less, showing lesser satisfaction.[11]

The service providers' questionnaire was completed by 128 individuals and responses were collected anonymously. The type of services provided included residential facilities, temporary homes, family homes and pre-adoptive homes. The following regions were represented in the questionnaire: Aguadilla, Caguas, Carolina, Ponce, Arecibo, Mayaguez, Dorado, Humacao, Las Piedras and Guayama. Respondents

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[11] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Cuestionario Dirigido a Supervisores de ADFAN (1-28).* Unpublished internal agency document.

were asked whether or not they received training from January 1, 2019 to March 31, 2022.

Key findings:

- Approximately 86% of respondents received training during the period.

- Most respondents received 1-3 trainings during the period.

- Most respondents believe that the trainings they receive are pertinent.[12]

The social worker and service technicians' questionnaire was completed by 62 individuals. The following regions were represented in the questionnaire: Caguas, Gurabo, Guayama, Humacao, San Juan and central level staff. Some questions required respondents to rate satisfaction levels 1 through 5, 5 being highly satisfied. Respondents were asked whether or not they received training from January 1, 2019 to March 31, 2022.

Key findings:

- Approximately 95% of respondents received training during the period.

- The majority of respondents received 1-3 trainings during the period.

- Most respondents rated their overall satisfaction with trainings 3 and above.

The ADFAN attorneys' questionnaire was completed by 14 individuals. Some questions required respondents to rate satisfaction levels 1 through 5, 5 being highly satisfied.

Key findings:

- Approximately 43% of respondents do not believe that ADFAN social workers dominate the intervention models adopted by the Agency, including the security model and the generalist model.

- Approximately 71% of respondents have noted progress in the partial testimony of ADFAN social workers after training is provided.

- Approximately 71% of respondents consider that ADFAN social workers are complying with the redaction of social reports completed in the courts (Normative letter ADFAN-CSA-2013-016).

- Approximately 57% of respondents consider that ADFAN social workers do not know the required components of the social report in accordance with the type of visit.

- All respondents rate their overall satisfaction with cross-trainings a 3 or above.[13]

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[12] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Cuestionario Dirigido a Proveedores de Servicios de ADFAN (1-128).* Unpublished internal agency document.
[13] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Cuestionario Dirigido al Componente Legal en Casos de Ley 246 (1-14).* Unpublished internal agency document.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- The broad array of training topics.
- ADFAN has initiated the implementation of Family First. This broadens the training database.
- Participants equally engage in trainings and participation for each employee exceeds three or more training topics.
- Participants are being timely notified of trainings.
- Staff members consider training topics a significant source for professional growth, and they trust the resources that provide the topics.
- The surveyed supervisors see improved performance from social workers and family service technicians after training.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- Supervisors are not aware of the training plans.
- There is no formal methodology to evaluate the progress of employees after training sessions.
- No training on supervision is provided. Current supervisors received no training before employment or after.
- Based on the focus groups with judges and lawyers, social workers receive court-related training and normative requirements, but the training is not applied.

Data indicates that although employees receive appropriate and consistent training, post-tests may be necessary and adaptive trainings may need to be included. Additionally, employee input on topics to be provided is limited. Supervisors, who may better understand their staff's needs, do not partake in the creation and drafts of the training plan. There is no formal way to evaluate the effectiveness of these trainings on the output of employees. Supervisors have no formal training on their supervision duties. A supervisor's ability to evaluate the efficiency of their staff may be dependent on the adequate training to do so. Regarding the reliability and true representation of the evaluation, not all offices participated in the questionnaires. The reasons for the low turnout are unknown. Four of the ten ADFAN regions were sampled to participate in answering the questionnaires. Respondents did not form part of a needs assessment to improve quality of training.

Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the staff and provider training system functioning to ensure that training is occurring statewide for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of state licensed or approved facilities (who receive title IV-E funds to care for children) so that:

- Current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff receive training pursuant to the established annual/biannual hourly/continuing education requirement and timeframes for the provision of initial and ongoing training; and

- The system demonstrates how well the initial and ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties regarding foster and adopted

children?

In your analysis:

Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all of the components of this question, including the two bullets and all required trainees as described above.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to caregivers' experience with foster and adoptive parent training?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 28 needs improvement.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- Most cases for foster and adoptive parent training comply with standards.
- Regional offices coordinate additional training for temporary homes. These efforts help families achieve the requirement of thirty contact hours of education every two years.
- Parents are overall pleased with the training they receive.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- There exists no single registry in ADFAN where compliance with training hours of temporary, adoptive, or potential adoptive homes is evidenced.
- ADFAN requires foster homes to meet the thirty contact hours requirement for education every two years. This requirement is often difficult to satisfy because children are placed on an emergency basis before the certification process.
- The licensing regulations do not require continuous education for licensed homes.
- Training for temporary homes is coordinated in different offices, at times from the Training Office, and in some cases from the Foster Care and Adoption Assistant Administration.

- The evaluation of the training offered to providers takes place in different offices.
- There is no registry for the trainings offered per region in the Training Office.
- The Training Office does not have data on the training offered to service providers and adoptive or pre-adoptive parents, the Foster Care Assistant Administration and external providers mostly coordinate these.
- The Training Office has only one employee and the director who has held the position since 2016 on an interim basis. Training is often not evidenced due to a lack of personnel.
- The training calendar is affected by various factors, including cancellation of service providers, natural disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes, among others), and the pandemic.
- There are many suggested topics to consider for future training based on the questionnaire to service providers.

Data indicates that most foster and adoptive parents are complying with training participation. However, there appear to be many issues in the way that these trainings are evidenced and evaluated for effectiveness. In addition to this, it may be necessary to centralize and automate internal functions. There is also no evidence that shows how involved parents are in deciding the topics that are provided to them. However, in this assessment, parents suggested that over forty-five topics should be included in the curriculum, reflecting a greater need for specific topics.

This section was left blank on purpose.

E. Service Array and Resource Development

Item 29: Array of Services

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that the range of services specified below is available and accessible in all political jurisdictions covered by the CFSP?

- Services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs;

- Services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment;

- Services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable; and

- Services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all four components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with the availability, accessibility, and delivery of services?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 29 needs improvement.

Service Array and Resource Development was evaluated utilizing questionnaire and focus group data.[14] Participants include ADFAN personnel, preservation and foster care service participants (youth), service providers, judges, and attorneys. Stakeholders came from diverse populations such as the deaf community, the LGBTTQ+ community, and

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non-native Spanish speakers. There were limitations in the data collected. There were more responses from the adoption service than there were for preservation. This is due to the lack of communication between staff and families for preservation services. Family units were not interviewed due to time constraints for evaluation and limited staff. In addition, many respondents claimed they did not request or need certain services, these results may or may truly reflect the opinions of participants.

It should be noted that the agency maintains custody of children due to a lack of family resources and health conditions. Children can fulfill their reunification permanency plan only if they receive services at the appropriate time. The service plan must be established according to the needs of the family and follow-up is essential. Sometimes permanency plans are delayed because of the time it takes to establish the service plan and deliver the services.

Many stakeholders are unaware of services available, and this impacts their delivery. There is a lack of communication and a formal process to make these services be known. There is misunderstanding behind services that are directly provided by ADFAN and the services that are delegated. A region-to-region comparison was not completed to understand possible differentiation in data because not every process is carried out uniformly across all regions. Each office would have to complete an evaluation in their perspective region.

ADFAN has data on the following services and whether they are available and accessible or available and not accessible, based on the questionnaire results from ADFAN personnel contained in the table below. The survey was completed by 121 staff members with representation from all 10 regions of ADFAN, including local, regional and central offices. Staff representation included social workers, service technicians, associate directors and social work specialists, with varying years of experience, from 0-1 year to 30-35 years.

Service	Available, but not accessible	Available and accessible	No Information Available
Special education	27	76	15
Tutoring	27	46	45
Speech evaluation and therapy	27	72	20
Occupational evaluation and therapy	32	64	23
Psychological evaluations	22	84	10
Psychological services	27	85	7
Mental health evaluations	37	69	11
Psychiatric services	41	60	16
Medical services	13	102	4
Medical forensic evaluations	46	25	46
Drug tests	21	73	22
Services for problematic drug use	41	42	34
Services for problematic alcohol use	40	43	33
Re-education for aggressors of gender violence	44	40	33
Services for victims of gender violence	31	70	17
Services for victims of sexual abuse	34	65	18
Recreational services	27	67	21
Transportation	34	69	13

Service	Available, but not accessible	Available and accessible	No Information Available
Legal services	25	80	13

ADFAN also compiled data on the pays and copays required for the abovementioned services and wait times for each service.

Key findings from the abovementioned questionnaire:

- 79.3% of respondents do not think services available are sufficient to tend to the needs of children and their families.

- The following services need improvement and are high priority: psychological services, mental health evaluations, psychiatric services, re-education   for aggressors of gender violence and services for victims of sexual abuse.

- Effectiveness of inter-agency coordination according to staff:

Agency	Very Effective	Effective	Less Effective	Not Effective
Department of Education	2	56	49	10
Department of Housing	7	36	68	4
The Puerto Rico Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services Administration (ASSMCA)	2	24	57	32
Department of Health	3	46	49	15
Courts Administration	20	69	24	3
Department of Justice	17	69	26	5
Corrections Administration	3	32	54	15
Department of Sports and Recreation	1	37	48	16
State Police	9	71	32	4
Municipal Police	10	68	30	7
Women's Advocate Office	6	54	38	11
Citizen's Advocate Office	6	41	45	12
Patient's Advocate Office	6	38	47	15
Municipality	14	50	40	9

The questionnaire provided to 63 ADFAN service participants (families) also compiled data on the services received by participants and the services they required but have not received. Those surveyed received either the preservation services (42.9% of respondents), foster care services (3.2% of respondents), and post adoption (54% of respondents). Respondents had varying number of years receiving services, from less than 1 year to 13 years.

Key findings:

- Approximately 75% of respondents believe that the services they received are sufficient.

- The following services should be given greater priority, these are: services for adoptive families, adequate foster homes for children and housing for families.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- The requirements for temporary housing have improved.

- LGBTTQ+ youth feel supported by the Agency in terms of Agency treatment towards the community.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- Parents from the LGBTTQ+ community, however, are not receiving support and services that are tailored to their specific needs.
- Judges agree that they personally are unaware of the services that the agency provides for the community. Some agency workers are unaware of certain services.
- The agency does not provide the community with services aimed at preventing removal.
- Attorneys agree that services are not being offered in a timely manner. The Family Life Education services for parents are not available and can take 4-6 months to be offered.
- For some cases with removed children, reunification is not granted due to the lack of housing alternatives.
- Services for lower-income individuals are needed as they may not have financial resources and virtual commodities to receive services.
- Housing alternatives are limited for children with autism due to inter-agency communication difficulties.
- The amount and quality of temporary housing is decreasing.
- There are limited services for residents in Puerto Rico's outer island Vieques and the Municipality of San German only has one pediatrician.

- The evidence issues with SIMCa make it difficult for adequate data entry for services provided.

- There is great difficulty in collecting data because there is a lack of human resources to do so.

Item 30: Individualizing Services

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the service array and resource development system functioning statewide to ensure that the services in Item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency?

Services that are developmentally and/or culturally appropriate (including linguistically competent), responsive to disability and special needs, or accessed through flexible funding are examples of how the unique needs of children and families are met by the agency.

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient

observations, including strengths and areas needing improvement, and findings by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with accessing and participating in individualized services?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 30 needs improvement.

Representation of the child focal group included 13 individuals, both male and female, from the Carolina and Humacao regions. Each individual has unique demographics, demonstrating diverse representation. Representation includes:

- LGBTTQ+ community members.
- Victim of domestic violence and gun violence.
- Disabled and blind community.
- Working university students and independent living service recipients.
- Residents of the outer Island of Vieques.
- English-speaking individuals.
- Individual with ADHD.
- Support group members.

Representation of the service provider focal group included 12 individuals, both male and female from the following services:

- Psychology.
- Temporary and foster homes.
- Temporary homes for special mental health and autistic needs.
- Potential adoptive homes.
- ADFAN service (ETV).
- Therapeutic home.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- ADFAN psychologists assess strengths and weaknesses for independent living. They screen families, individuals, and youth exiting the system.
- Emergency clinical screening takes place in research units and for removals.
- The purchase of standardized tests is facilitated by the assistant and regional directors.
- Regarding the independent living service, most youth find the service to be beneficial.
- The therapeutic center, SEPI, has psychological assistance and personnel that conduct weekly visits.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- Service is automated in most cases, not individualized. This does not reflect the unique experiences of each family. Stakeholders indicate that social workers are not committed to personalizing the service experience for them.
- There is a lack of English-speaking social workers.
- There exists a shortage of services for the deaf community and for individuals with literacy and cognitive limitations. There are no personnel with sign language abilities.
- Referrals sent to CIMVAS are delayed due to the lack of social workers, providers, and psychiatric specialists.
- There is a lack of service providers for mental health, psychological assistance, sexual abuse victims, and mothers who are victims of domestic violence.
- Regarding validation services for victims of sexual abuse, response time needs to improve, and reporting is slow (at times, more than one year).
- Regarding mental health services, there is little to no social worker follow-up in evaluations and for services that they coordinate. Mental health service providers, psychologists and psychiatrists need to be in constant communication with social workers.
- Evaluation modalities need to improve confidentiality involving children.
- Regarding psychologist services (ADFAN staff), children are referred for evaluation late.
- Regarding ADFAN's payment system, the lack of payment causes delays in services. Bureaucracy makes it impossible to make payments for surgery deductibles and university payments. There is a lack of electronic billing methods. Services are not tracked, and processed payments are not documented. The finance division does not report certain items.
- Service participants in the independent living service agree that the money for personal expenses is not enough.
- Regarding educational services, services are slow. Service providers agree that patients with Medicaid are often discriminated against.

- Regarding medical services, services are slow and not all of them are covered by the healthcare plan, yet they are still coordinated. Children have specific health needs that are not being met.
- Regarding transportation services, there is a lack of drivers and there is an issue tending to family relations. Those of low economic resources cannot make it to appointments that are far away.
- Regarding temporary homes, there are confidentiality issues and a lack of training.

Upon further validation with staff, the quantitative and qualitative data obtained for this systemic factor indicate that no progress has been made due to the lack of staff. The lack of timely services is detrimental to the individualization of services for children with specific needs. Mental health issues are running rampant among parents and children, while there is only one psychiatrist servicing half the population on the Island. Child mental health patients are under medication and often they are not provided with any alternative or follow-u. They may become drug-dependent or reactive to the use of certain medications. Some children point out that they do not receive evaluation calls from the service provider. Child mental health patients and child victims of sexual abuse stay in state custody longer due to the difficulty in achieving reunification and their permanency plans. There is great stigmatization among children regarding sexual abuse and mental health. This may impact their belief systems on the importance of services available to them. The negative public perception of the Agency may lower the expectations of service recipients, and this can be a limitation in the quality of their responses. There is no mention of a follow-up and evaluation methodology for individualized services. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of service providers and ADFAN personnel. In conclusion, there is a major delay in the referral of services, and needs assessments are not being conducted to validate the satisfaction of the needs of children and families. Accountability is needed and contract agreements should be reviewed.

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F. Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Item 31: State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, the state engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all elements of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the ongoing consultation process?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 31 needs improvement.

Agency Responsiveness to the Community was evaluated utilizing questionnaires through the Google Forms platform, focus groups and interview data.[15] The criteria considered for the questionnaires, interviews, and formation of the focus groups were:

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[15] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Matriz para el SWA - RESPUESTA A LA COMUNIDAD (002).* Unpublished internal agency document.
Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *PREGUNTAS REALIZADAS Y DATA RECOPILADA EN GRUPOS FOCALES Y ENTREVISTAS..* Unpublished internal agency document.
Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *respuesta cuestionario fuerza laboral - coordinacion de programas federales externos a ADFAN.* Unpublished internal agency document.
Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *respuestas de cuestionarios- Fuerza laboral- Proveedores y Participantes- Prog. federal de la ADFAN.* Unpublished internal agency document.

- A standard evaluation period from September 2021 to August 2022.
- Focus group participants must have received the service since September 2021 or received it during the period.
- Availability of the participants, since their participation was voluntary.
- Consent sheets signed by participants.
- Focus group regions included Bayamón, Humacao, Guayama and Mayagüez. The other regions also participated in the process.
- The number of participants for the focus groups had to be greater than three.
- To guarantee diversity and the ability to consent to participation, participants included those of diverse genders, special needs, language diversity and required that they be at least 18 years of age.

Data sources included focus groups, questionnaires, and interviews with ADFAN staff, service providers, and service participants. A total of 112 ADFAN staff members participated in the assessment between focus groups (52 participants) and questionnaires (60 participants). A total of fifty-four service provider staff participated in the assessment between focus groups/interviews (36 participants) and questionnaires (9 participants). A total of 111 service participants were involved in the assessment. Services included: *La Escuela para la Vida en Familia (EVF), Escuela de Convivencia y Crianza (ECC), Servicio de Vida Independiente (SVI), AFANA, Proyecto Encuentro, Nidos Seguros, Centro Sor Isolina Ferrer, Centro Ayani,* and CIMVAS/PAF. Thirty-five participants formed part of the focus groups and sixty-seven participated in the questionnaires. There were various limitations in the collection of data. There was confusion on assessment deadlines for the SWA work committee, which caused the rush to deliver quantitative data. Participation for data collection was conditioned only on the availability and willingness of the participants, without restrictions. Each group was formed with the expectation that the participants had personal knowledge and/or experience with ADFAN's services and response to the communities. The availability and consent criteria could guarantee the reliability and integrity of the data obtained. However, the answers are mostly based on the individual character, interest, and the motivation of each participant. Some groups of ADFAN participants were accompanied by representatives of the non-profit entity that offered the services, which could alter the integrity of the responses provided. The moderator of the group, using a virtual platform, had limited control of the activity, although it is understood that this is the best method to deter the spread of COVID-19. The goal was to obtain as much data as possible from different sectors. Accuracy may have been limited by variables such as: the level of concentration of the participants, distractions in the environment or surroundings, Internet signal interruptions, among others.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- Some ADFAN staff members indicate that the participants' satisfaction with programs is collected in the following services: schools (EVF/ECC) with each educational activity and SIPH in the completion stage.

- The statistical data that ADFAN collects monthly contains quantitative figures that assists in the provision of services.
- ADFAN is complying with public notices on the availability of funding for non-profits for community prevention services. This entails that organizations provide proposals that often include needs assessments. In this way, the evaluation team that compares proposals is made aware of the needs of communities and can compare them to federal specifications.
- The non-government entities that provide services have been operating for more than 15 years. They feel supported by ADFAN and respect the professional relationship that exists between them.
- In relation to the courts, there is a direct connection between the courts and ADFAN. The two meet to address tasks, work plans, requirements, and Title IV-E.
- APSR's are completed using reports compiled by the different service areas. Various meetings take place on a yearly basis to disseminate results and how they compare with the goals and objectives of the State Plan, and Outcomes. Recommendations are also shared.
- Through Court Improvement, cross-trainings are being conducted to train judges, in compliance with guidelines on social reports, for demonstrating proper case management and child protection.
- ADFAN is included in the Courts' State Plan. The courts are also involved in strategy for Program Instruction (2021), in the goals of ADFAN's State Plan.
- ADFAN participates in inter-agency committees and has collaborative agreements with different public agencies and non-government organizations. Included in these are: Municipalities, the Department of Justice, Courts, the Administration, ICE, the Department of Health and the Department of Education. Non-government agreements with community and faith-based organizations are mentioned in the 2021-2022 APSR.
- Services are available island-wide for children, young adults, adults, and older adults. LM Mental Health Care, Inc. was contracted to investigate back-logged referrals and case management to guarantee the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.
- Foster home operators have good communication with social workers and describe the communication between social workers and children as good and positive. The staff address operational needs in a timely fashion.
- Youths say that the Independent Living Service (SVI) service has taught them responsibility, has increased their self-esteem, and has helped them develop leadership skills.
- NGO service participants express that they are treated positively, are offered security, and they feel the commitment on behalf of the social workers in the service they received. They received orientation on the services and parents express that they can maintain relationships with their children. All AFANA service participants are satisfied with the service.
- The majority of EVF and ECC participants are satisfied with the services.

- The majority of supervised visitation (PE) and *Nidos Seguros* participants are satisfied with the services.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- Families are not being made aware of service criteria. They wish to receive formal and consistent orientations on the available services. To do this, ADFAN must update the federal service directory and ensure that all staff are made aware of such updates.
- The public perception of ADFAN is negative, seeing ADFAN as punitive. The promotion of services through social media, the website, and other methods of communication (formal and informal) are necessary to address social issues. Federal programs are perceived as unrelated to ADFAN, and this affects the public's perception of ADFAN as an community-oriented agency that provides assistance.
- Most services do not have a formal evaluation process to identify areas for improvement and to determine whether or not the community's needs are being addressed. A process that evaluates the services, achievements and results is needed to draft work plans and improve services.
- Identification of the needs of participants and communities.
- The employment conditions and salary do not motivate social workers to work with ADFAN. Currently, staff are not receiving per-diems and mileage reimbursements. Staff is not receiving adequate salary increases and workplace conditions are worsening.
- There is a lack of foster care homes for children under State custody, children with autism, or interventions under PR Law 88-1986. This limits the safety, permanency, and well-being of these children.
- There is no evidence that ADFAN develops APSRs in consultation with the courts or non-government organizations (NGOs). State Plan and APSRs are not being discussed with NGOs.
- The two Citizen Review Panels (East and West) and the Review Panel on Child Deaths are being reorganized and are therefore inactive. The valuable data that their yearly reports provide is key for ADFAN improving services.
- Disbursement of funding for NGO's is untimely (more than 3 months at times). This process is delayed in the legal division, and this interferes with the delivery of services.
- There exist delays in the delivery of EVF services (sometimes up to six months).
- Judges and attorneys agree that social worker service plans are repetitive and often do not address the needs of the participants due to distant service providers, lack of locations, and lack of transportation to allow for family visitation, and lack of timely mental health and addiction prevention services.
- Children's social reports are not always up to date.

- Foster home operators indicate that they do not receive orientation on the processes and decisions made in children's cases, and the children are often upset over these decisions.
- All youth participants in SVI agree that the health services within the program need to be improved.
- Service participants say that local office social workers require more supervision, have a lack of empathy, and do not provide quality service for one reason or another.
- SVI participants wish to see more flexibility in the program requirements.
- EVF participants describe some activity dynamics as outdated and are not attractive to them.

- The Agency is engaging stakeholders, however this should be done with more regularity, if possible, once or twice a year.

Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services with Other Federal Programs

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with service coordination between child welfare and other federal programs?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 32 needs improvement.

As of right now, there are no shared platforms where coordination can be facilitated. As mentioned below, meetings occur with service providers, but the information that is discussed in those meetings is not disseminated for the Agency to improve this Item. There are no efforts to improve staff knowledge on the services available which greatly limits their ability to coordinate services based on family and child needs.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- Staff have access to the directory of services for federal prevention programs.
- Staff members indicate that they receive some type of guidance on services through communications and informative material via email.
- Staff recognizes the importance of understanding the services offered by ADFAN so that the development of the Service Plan is more efficient and meets the needs of families.
- Monthly, prevention staff meet with service providers (those with contracts with ADFAN, or funding recipients through ASFA and CAPTA). These meetings include discussion of progress and evidence of service delivery. Providers have a space to share community concerns, offer solutions, and provide information that is included in ADFAN work plans.
- Associate Directors agree that the evaluation methodologies allow for evidence-based practices, for both services provided and work plans prepared by ADFAN to comply with federal requirements.
- The services provided by ADFAN for the participants are mostly considered by the community as a response to their needs, particularly those offered by federal programs/NGO's contracted by ADFAN. However, the participants agree that they are not linked to ADFAN. Some examples are AFANA, Proyecto Encuentro (supervised visitation), Nidos Seguros (assistance for new parents), and non-governmental organizations. The services in which the participants say they feel satisfied are Independent Living Service and AFANA.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- The service directory for federal programs is not updated consistently. Some staff members indicate that the only time they received guidance was when they first began working at the agency (mostly more than 10 years ago).
- The bureaucracy in the coordination of services adversely impacts the timeliness of services, in particular, health services, due to the lack of documents and specialists that are service providers.

- Judges and attorneys are not aware of the federal programs that ADFAN offers.
- Many participants are unaware of the agency structure and how federal programs are linked to ADFAN.
- Participants referred to AFANA describe poor communication on behalf of social workers and lack of consistent status calls from case managers.
- Parents with children in the autistic spectrum describe a lack of knowledge on the disorder on behalf of case managers.

Upon further validation with staff, this systemic factor has not improved nor has progress been made to improve it. The evaluation of services is not taking place, directly impacting results. If a formal evaluation of services were made, this would facilitate the evaluation of this systemic factor and it would increase consultation with stakeholders. There is a lack of communication with stakeholders and personnel to promote services. Participants are not seeing ADFAN as the backbone of the services they receive because they do not know that service providers are contracted by the Agency. They see them as standalone service providers, and this impacts the public perception of the Agency.

ADFAN is in the process of review, in compliance with Family First, to include new strategies to improve this systemic factor. Furthermore, the following were recommendations given to improve results:

- Every certain number of months, service providers can provide data for review that can also be added into State Plans and APSRs.
- Integrate an evaluation portion in the request for proposals to ensure that services can be evaluated, and that the expectation is set from the beginning.
- Improve the online presence for service delivery and promotion of services.
- Recruit additional personnel.
- Present a "Rebrand ADFAN" campaign to the Department of the Family.

This section was left blank on purpose.

G. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Item 33: Standards Applied Equally

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or childcare institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with state standards being applied equally?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 33 needs improvement.

Two focus groups were held on April 20, 2022 to evaluate this item. Both groups were comprised of twenty-eight professionals specialized in Licensing, Foster Care, Residential Facilities, and Adoption. An additional focus group was comprised of employees of the Residential Establishment Unit, with a total of ten participants.[16] Statistical reports on Foster Care and Adoption and twelve records of certified and licensed homes were reviewed. Two large regions (Carolina and San Juan) and one medium-sized region (Humacao) were reviewed. No limitations were identified in the evaluation of this systemic factor. All focus group participants had the required expertise, and the integrity of the data received is considered valid for evaluation purposes.

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[16] Departamento de la Familia Administración de Familias y Niños. (2022). *Matriz para el SWA - Matriz Retencion Hogares Temporeros y Adoptivos.* Unpublished internal agency document.

Additional activities for evaluation:

- REVA panel participants interview.

- Adoptive parents and adopted children interview (as of September 7, 2022).

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- The following required policies and standards are being met for certification or licensing and adoption: protection and criminal background check; background checks for sex offenders; first aid course; regulations under Act 173-2016; Regulation 8860 of November 2016 and other regulations established by the Agency. These apply to all members of the family nucleus who have reached the age of eighteen or older and who are residing in the place where the child or children will be located. The purpose of ensuring that the home offers the security and protection to which every child is entitled to is fulfilled. However, the requirements for Certified and Licensed Homes must be harmonized. Therefore, Act 173-2016 and Regulation 8860 must be revised to conform to state and federal standards.
- Virtual certifications were achieved during the pandemic and other natural phenomena.
- There was accessibility to the files where compliance with the required documentation was evidenced.
- At the state level, there are specialized Licensing, Foster Care and Adoption units in the ten regional offices, although they are limited to working on certification, licensing foster homes, and evaluating adoptive homes. Currently, at the state level, a manual is being prepared for the certification of temporary homes to standardize the documentation and requirement of the files at the state level. The Licensing Office is also working on the revision of Regulation 8860.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- A lack of uniformity was identified in the documentation requirements in the files of licensed homes versus certified homes.
- The system at the state level has hierarchical professional staff that provides direction, support and follow-up for the fulfillment of the duty in accordance with the established Norms.
- The system has not been effective in being able to implement the two entities that regulate the process of licensing or certification of temporary homes.

Item 34: Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements, and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the criminal background check process?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 34 needs improvement.

The source of data to analyze this item was an examination of records of certified, licensed, and adoptive homes and a focus group. Additionally, an external consultation was held with the Director of the Title IV-E Unit in relation to the validation of federal requirements. According to the consultation carried out, it was possible to corroborate that the Agency complies with the fingerprinting of service providers. To comply with the Criminal Background Checks requirement, the Agency had to obtain a contract with an external provider which was valid until September 30, 2022.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- The agency is working on a protocol for taking fingerprints according to federal government standards.
- All certification of temporary homes, residential establishments, and adoptive homes comply with the requirement of criminal records, certification of

records of child abuse, and fingerprint certification before starting operations in order to guarantee the safety and well-being of children.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- The central government appointed the Department of Health as the Agency to improve fingerprinting. However, a collaborative agreement is needed with the Department of Health to streamline processes to obtain fingerprint certification.
- According to the data collected in the focus group, service providers did not have direct access to fingerprinting or the financial resources to obtain fingerprinting.

Item 35: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed is occurring statewide?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with the ensuring a diversity of foster and adoptive parent homes?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 35 needs improvement.

The data sources to evaluate this item were the focus groups and statistical data discussed utilized in Item 33. Interviews were also conducted with adoptive families and specialized personnel from the adoption unit.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- Contracting of private service providers of therapeutic homes for children with special needs and emotional health conditions was increased.
- The Agency has continued to offer training workshops to temporary home service providers and residential establishments.
- Adoption Unit staff are present in support visits during the process of adaptation and adjustment of the children with their new family.
- The cost of adoption is much cheaper than through a private Agency.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- Temporary homes have decreased, while therapeutic homes continue to increase, because subsidies for private agencies are higher than those of the Department of the Family.
- Improved promotion is needed for the recruitment of temporary homes, despite the promotional activities carried out monthly by all the regional offices. There has been no increase in the number of temporary homes.
- A massive campaign is needed to promote the adoption of children with special needs.
- Temporary shelter services for children from the LGBTTQ+ community needs strengthening to avoid arbitrary discharges due to a child's sexual orientation.
- Based on the interviews with adoptive families, there is a long delay between the time the adoption application is filed and the adoption hearing. Termination of parental rights is also mentioned. In the process, documents expire and must be replaced, which is time consuming and sometimes expensive.
- A protocol is needed to collect important data on children in state custody. This includes biological family information, photos of the child's development, and basic information on congenital and/or hereditary diseases.

Item 36: State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide?

Please provide relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information that show the state's process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide.

Please include quantitative data that specify the percentage of all home study requests received to facilitate a permanent foster or adoptive care placement that are completed within 60 days.

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.

- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children process overall?

- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Item 36 needs improvement.

The source of information used for Item 36 was the application ae focus group on ADFAN's Interagency Service. The people identified were personnel who work in the Interagency Service assigned to the Foster Care and Adoption Assistant Administration. The group was composed of ten officials including Social Workers (coordinators) and Social Work Supervisors from each regional office. The purpose of this was to self-evaluate the effectiveness of Interstate services in Puerto Rico and the United States and to identify the limitations and possible strategies to strengthen and/or improve the service. The meeting was held virtually on June 22, 2022 through Teams.

The evaluation team identified no limitations in obtaining the information since the participants work directly in interagency services and provide complete and reliable information. All the employees participating in the focus group expressed that they know what the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) is. They also indicated that they were aware of the documents and requirements related to the social study from the ICPC. Although Puerto Rico is not part of the ICPC, it has a courtesy services agreement with most States to make efforts to attend to interagency requests. In cases of placement of children in custody in Puerto Rico to other States that do not have a collaborative agreement with the Island, asocial worker from Puerto Rico is authorized to conduct the social study and/or supervisory visit.

The evaluation team identified the following as Strengths:
- ADFAN identified an interagency services coordinator in each regional office to address interstate requests and channel interagency services at the central level through the Assistant Administration for Foster Care and Adoption.
- In 2018, a guide was created to direct and structure these services, setting forth the processes to be followed in channeling requests for social study

services outside of Puerto Rico and regional office responses to requests from other States. The guide also includes receiving requests for social studies and/or supervision visits by other States for children in Puerto Rico.

The following are Areas in Need of Improvement:
- Practices and agreements on universal processes need to be integrated among all States and territories, especially in the case of States that do not have reciprocity with Puerto Rico. In the case of Florida, Maryland and Texas, efforts should be made to achieve a collaborative agreement. Barriers have been identified in those jurisdictions which create limitations in the placement of children, impacting their well-being.
- A law in Puerto Rico should be created to regulate all care and protection services when a child is to be placed in another State or jurisdiction. Such a law should be created to comply with Federal regulations for being a part of the ICPC. Puerto Rico faces obstacles when requesting studies from some States. Some States refuse to provide courtesy services to Puerto Rico, until Puerto Rico becomes a part of the ICPC.
- Puerto Rico requires translation services for documents received from States, from English to Spanish and vice versa.
- Response times for requests are slow since States do not respond immediately.
- There is a shortage of human resources to carry out the social studies requested by other States, since social studies or courtesy visits are carried out by employees with other primary functions.

This section was left blank on purpose.

End of Report.

**The state data profile can be requested from the state
or the Children's Bureau.**