

Children's Bureau

Round 4 Child and Family Services Reviews

Fact Sheet for Foster and Adoptive Parents



What Are the Child and Family Services Reviews?

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) enable the Children's Bureau to:

(1) determine conformity with federal child welfare requirements; (2) learn about the experiences of children, youth, and families receiving child welfare services; and (3) assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

As part of this work, the reviews provide states an opportunity to consider and critically analyze evidence of disparities in decision-making processes, programs, and policies that may contribute to inequity in services and outcomes for people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality in the child welfare system.

As a foster or adoptive parent, your participation in the CFSRs is important. The CFSRs provide an opportunity for you to be heard and provide valuable input on critical child welfare agency policies and programs and the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of services that affect the lives of children and families involved in the child welfare system.

The reviews help states identify strengths and areas needing improvement within their agencies and programs. The goal of the reviews is to help states improve child welfare services and achieve the following seven outcomes for families and children who receive services:

Safety

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Well-Being

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Some of the questions asked to assess **Safety** include:

- Are children and youth safe in their homes?
- If there are risk or safety concerns, what services were provided to help parents take care of their children?
- Did the agency continually assess safety and risk of children and youth?

Some of the questions asked to assess **Permanency** include:

- If children and youth came into foster care, were they kept in contact with family members and people important to them?
- Did children and youth achieve permanency in a timely manner?
- Were children and youth kept stable in their placements and moved to different homes only when it was in their best interests (for example, to keep them safer, closer to home, or in a culturally appropriate environment)?

Some of the questions asked to assess **Well-Being** include:

- Have services provided to families improved their ability to care for their children?
- Are children and youth receiving the physical and mental/behavioral health and educational services they need?
- Did caseworkers visit children every month?
- Were the needs of caregivers assessed?
- Were services and supports provided to foster and adoptive parents to enable them to meet the needs of the children in their home?

The CFSR looks at seven areas that make up the building blocks, or foundation, of the child welfare system. If these systemic factors are not working well, children and families are less likely to be successful. The seven systemic factors reviewed are:

1. Statewide Information System

- Examines whether states collect data about all children and youth in foster care (for example, demographic characteristics, location, goals)

2. Case Review System

- Examines whether states ensure that each child has a written case plan that is developed with the child's parents and ensure that court-related activities occur in a timely manner as required (i.e., periodic reviews, permanency hearings, filing termination of parental rights petitions) and that notices are issued to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of hearings and their right to be heard

3. Quality Assurance System

- Examines whether states review cases for outcomes and collect and analyze other data to improve practice and make systemic change

4. Staff and Provider Training

- Examines whether all foster and adoptive parents, caseworkers, and supervisors were provided with quality training

5. Service Array and Resource Development

- Examines whether services are available to help create safe, permanent home environments for children and youth and provide effective services to them and their families

6. Agency Responsiveness to the Community

- Examines whether state child welfare agencies listen to and include input from people involved in the child welfare system (for example, persons with lived experience, foster and adoptive parents, Tribal representatives, service providers, court personnel)

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

- Examines how states recruit foster and adoptive parents, the requirements and standards that the state sets for becoming a foster or adoptive parent, and the supports and services they provide to foster and adoptive parents

The CFSR Process

The CFSR begins with a statewide assessment. The statewide assessment provides information on how the state is doing in meeting federal requirements related to safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and systemic factors. Next is the onsite review, where a joint federal-state team reviews the practices within a state.

Get Involved

The CFSRs bring together people in the state who can make a difference in the child welfare system. The Children's Bureau encourages the involvement of a wide range of individuals in the review process. Foster and adoptive parents, and others with lived experience, provide important perspectives. As a foster or adoptive parent, you can supply vital information to help your state make systemic improvements and improve outcomes for children and their families.

As a foster or adoptive parent, you can help improve the child welfare system in a number of ways:

Statewide Assessment



You can work with the child welfare agency and other system partners and stakeholders to develop the statewide assessment either individually or through your state foster/adoptive parent association or participate in focus groups or surveys to provide information for the assessment.

Onsite Review



You can participate in case-related interviews to share your perspective on how well the agency worked with you and the child(ren) in your home or participate in stakeholder interviews to provide information on systemic factor functioning.

Program Improvement Plan



You can help develop your state's Program Improvement Plan. You can share your ideas about changes you would like to see made in the child welfare system.

The onsite review process includes:

- Reviewing case files and interviewing the children, parents, foster and adoptive parents, caseworkers, and other people involved in each case in the sample (case-related interviews). Here are some things that you may be asked about during case-related interviews:
 - Did the agency assess your needs as a foster parent or pre-adoptive parent? Did they provide services to address any identified needs?
 - How often did the agency assess the needs of the child in your home? Did your child get the services he or she needed?
 - If the child was on medication, how was the medication monitored?
- Interviewing people involved in the larger child welfare system to look at how the system is working (stakeholder interviews). In stakeholder interviews, you may be asked questions such as:

- Did you receive initial and ongoing training that helped you develop the skills and knowledge necessary to care for the child(ren) in your home?
- How do you find out about court hearings for the child(ren) in your care?
- Do you attend court hearings and are you able to provide information to the judge?
- Are the types of services that children need available?

After reviewing all the data and information received, the Children's Bureau determines how well the state is doing in meeting federal requirements, including providing services and meeting the needs of children and families. Each state is then required to develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan to address areas of practice and systemic issues found needing improvement related to safety, permanency, and well-being.



More Information

Additional information on the reviews is available on the Children's Bureau's website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews> and the CFSR Information Portal at <https://www.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/resources>. Information about the CFSR in your state and opportunities for your involvement may be available on the state child welfare agency's website. A list of state child welfare agency websites is at https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=16.
