Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services

Pennsylvania Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)
Statewide Assessment

Submitted by the Office of Children, Youth and Families
February 1, 2026

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

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Section I: General Information

Name of State Child Welfare Agency: Pennsylvania

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

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Introduction

The CFSR 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 the Children's Bureau (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.

The CFSR is a two-phase process. The first phase is a SWA and is conducted by staff of the PA Department of Human Services (DHS), OCYF, in partnership with representatives whom DHS/OCYF was required to consult in the development of the state's CFSP (45 CFR § 1355.33). These internal and external stakeholders are selected by OCYF 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. 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:

1. 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.
2. Analyzing and explaining its performance in meeting the national standards for the CFSR statewide data indicators.
3. 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.
4. Providing relevant and quality evidence for CB to determine substantial conformity with CFSR systemic factors.
5. Communicating about the child welfare system's performance with the communities the systems served.
6. Demonstrating the engagement of child welfare system partners and stakeholders in the state's CFSR assessment and in its CQI change and implementation process.
7. Identifying priority areas of focus for further examination and to target improvement plans to strengthen systems and improve child and family outcomes.
8. Describing progress to address practice, program, and systemic change, and needed adjustments, as applicable.

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

The SWA represents a compilation of observations made regarding the state's child welfare system that is grounded in evidence. Gathering and exploring data evidence begins during the problem exploration phase. Proceeding with problem exploration phase, continued assessment occurs over the next three phases during implementation, assessment and sustaining change. The SWA process entails looking at all data from the last three years to strengthen the CFSR Project Team's understanding of PA's 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 underserved populations within their communities or by systems seeking to serve them.

List of Statewide Assessment Participants

Name	Affiliation	Role in the Statewide Assessment process
Valerie Zitterbart	OCYF CQI Manager	Committee Co-Chair
Jeanne Edwards	CWRC CQI Supervisor	Committee Co-Chair
Melissa Stump	CWRC Quality Improvement Specialist	Committee Co-Chair
Natalie Bates	OCYF Chief of Staff	Participant
Amanda Dorris	OCYF Director of Policy, Programs, and Operations	Participant
Carrie Keiser	OCYF Director of Programs	Participant
Elysa Springer	OCYF Director of Data and Systems Management	Participant
Melissa Erazo	OCYF Director of Budget and Fiscal Support	Participant
Alicia Tyler	OCYF Policy Director	Participant
Dr. Rachel Berger	OCYF Medical Director	Participant
Gerry Lynn Butler	OCYF Policy Supervisor	Participant
Roy Wotring	OCYF FFPSA Project Manager	Participant
Erin Bauer	OCYF Western Regional Representative	Participant
Jacquelyn Peters	OCYF Regional Rep	Participant
Emma Grimm	Individual with Lived Experience	Participant
Sandra Moore	Director of the Office of Administration of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC)	Participant
Christy Stanek	Deputy Director of the Office of Administration of Pennsylvania Courts	Participant
Jennifer Doyle	AOPC Judicial Analyst	Participant
Mike Byers	Director of the University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)	Participant
Sabrina Bishop	Assistant Director of the University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Resource Center	Participant
Christine Spencer	CWRC Department Manager of the Statewide	Participant

Name	Affiliation	Role in the Statewide Assessment process
	Quality Improvement Department	
Jennifer Zajac	CWRC Research and Evaluation Department Manager	Participant
Erin Miller	CWRC Curriculum Supervisor	Participant
Bethany Cloonan	CWRC Continuous Quality Improvement Supervisor	Participant
Andy Grimm	CWRC Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist	Participant
Anna Shawgo	CWRC Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist	Participant
Dr. Wendy Unger	CWRC, Organizational Effectiveness/Regional Team Department Lead	Participant
Jenna Meister	CWRC Curriculum Department Manager	Participant
Russell Cripps	CWRC Southeast Regional Team Supervisor	Participant
*Carl Butler IV	Youth Quality Improvement Specialist	Participant
*Felicia Matriccino	CWRC Parent Ambassador	Participant
Kevin Zacks	Public Consulting Group Project Manager	Participant
Kristi McGibbony	Public Consulting Group-Data Team	Participant
Tinnesha English	SWAN/Voce Program Director	Participant
Dr. Kristen Hennessy, Ph.D.	Licensed Psychologist	Participant
Brian Bornman	Director of Pennsylvania Child and Youth Administrators	Participant
Tammy Hendrix	Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN) Director	Participant
Rhonda Serrano	ABA Center on Children and the Law	Participant
Kimberly Hernandez	Quality Assurance Program Specialist at Adams County CCYA	Participant

Name	Affiliation	Role in the Statewide Assessment process
Perry Costic	Adams County Administrative Officer	Participant
Crystal Natan	Lancaster County Administrator	Participant
Ann Long	Lancaster County CYS QA	Participant
Terry Clark	CEO of PCCYFS	Participant
Belinda Muschar	SWAN/Voce Program Director	Participant
Lisa Weingartner	Valley Youth House Executive VP of Programming	Participant
Kevin Miller	Chief Juvenile Probation Officer	Participant
Joseph Birli	President/CEO of Bethany's Children's Home	Participant
Heather Bert	Bethany Christian Services of GDV	Participant
Carter Kopczynskie	BJJS Director of Juvenile Court Services Unit	Participant
Quinton Clark	Venango County Quality Assurance Program Specialist	Participant
Heidi Redlich Epstein	Associate Director, ABA Center on Children and the Law	Participant
Tia Maria Smith	Program Director of PA KinConnector	Participant
Laura Mains	Every Child Inc.	Participant
Shannon Snyder	Northampton County Quality Assurance Program Specialist	Participant
*Youth	Youth Advisory Board participants in focus groups and surveys	Participants
*Foster Parents	Foster Parents who participated in focus groups and surveys	Participants
*Adults	Parents and other adults who participated in focus groups and surveys	Participants

Description of Stakeholder Involvement in Statewide Assessment Process

Focus Group and Survey Participants

In August 2023, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Servcies' Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF) and the Child Welfare Resource Center (the CWRC) began working together to coordinate focus groups and prepare surveys with various system and community partners identified by OCYF. The intent of these collaborative efforts was to engage key partners to gather information to inform ongoing continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts as well as with the intention of informing the development of the Statewide Assessment (SWA). This collaborative approach was implemented because it is known that system and community partners play a critical role in helping to review and analyze data, define areas needing further improvement and because stakeholders can help prioritize system initiatives due to their unique perspectives and lived experience. A list of community partners engaged as part of the focus group effort can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. System and Community Partner Focus Groups Informing CQI Efforts

System and Community Partner Focus Groups	Date
Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force	10/27/23
Meeting with biological parents in South Central Region	11/14/23
Statewide Youth Advisory Board (YAB)	11/30/23
Independent Living (IL) Coordinators	11/30/23
OCYF Policy	12/5/23
OCYF Fiscal	12/8/23
OCYF Regional Office	1/8/24
Legal Service Initiative (LSI) staff	2/2/24 & 2/7/24
Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA)	2/22/24

Source [Themes from Community Partner Focus Group Report], [April 2024]

Focus groups were conducted between October 2023 and February 2024 to support the development of the 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan and the development of PA's Statewide Assessment. Participation in focus groups was voluntary. Each focus group session was led by co-facilitators and supported by two notetakers and all, but two focus groups, were recorded. Recordings were done to support quality data collection and accurate notetaking. Follow-up surveys were also distributed to focus group participants to create additional opportunities to supply feedback. Focus group participants across OCYF including Policy, Fiscal and Regional Office staff also described how regular and consistent meetings with County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYAs) have offered opportunities for collaboration and communication to inform quality assurance (QA) processes. Additionally, focus group participants noted that input gathered from Statewide YAB, IL Coordinators, CJA Taskforce and Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) are effective means of identifying strengths and needs related to the service delivery system. Utilizing these individuals'

knowledge and unique perspectives serves to support the state in implementing well-functioning QA processes. OCYF staff specifically identified their use of feedback methods used to inform policy development, implementation and monitoring. Feedback methods included polls, surveys, focus groups, and regular meetings to gather suggestions and questions from CCYAs and other system partners. It was also identified that engaging in regular collaboration with both county-level staff and regional offices to review policies, programs and requests through informational sessions and workgroups helps support and strengthen policy.

There were also 48 Judges, Hearing Officers and judicial partners who provided information to inform the development of the Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP) and SWA via survey and just over 3,300 surveys were disseminated to members of the workforce, to include caseworkers, supervisors and administrators (including some assistant administrators). Table 2 provides an overview of the responses received from the workforce as of June 6, 2024. Information gathered from system and community partner focus groups, SAC meetings, and the surveys included individuals with lived experience.

Table 2. Qualtrics Survey Respondents – Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators

System Partner	Audience Size	Surveys Started	Surveys Finished	Response Rate	Completion Rate
Caseworkers – CW	2167	547	370	25%	68%
Supervisors - SUP	1057	263	151	25%	57%
Administrators - ADMIN	86	49	37	57%	76%

Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators], [June 2024]

Statewide Assessment Committee (SAC)

Collaboration is a foundational component of Pennsylvania's child welfare practice that must be modeled at every level of the child welfare system and across all partnerships to improve outcomes for children and families. Additionally, the involvement of key stakeholders in achieving positive outcomes for children, youth and families is critical in a state-supervised, county-administered system like PA. In 2023, the PA Child Welfare Council was put on hold, due to new leadership re-evaluating and restructuring input relating to PA's child welfare system to be more streamlined and efficient in the approach to stakeholder engagement.

From this work, the Statewide Assessment Committee (SAC) was developed to provide a diverse forum of system and community partners, including those with lived experience. SAC was designed to be a time-limited team that convened for the development of the SWA; however, feedback from participants requested that the team continue to be active to support PA's capacity to implement a CQI framework and process at the broader system level. Additionally, it was expressed to participants that there may come a time that the team may re-convene to address additional CFSR activities such as the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). OCYF is currently evaluating

what the future of the SAC could look like, and in what capacity the members' expertise can best be utilized.

The kick-off meeting for the SAC was held on March 20, 2025, with 47 individuals representing various system partners coming together. Subsequent monthly meetings were held from March to August, with May having two convenings with eight meetings in total. Each meeting spanned over three hours that allowed participants time and space to not only provide their own thoughts, feelings and experiences, but a venue to reflect on and discuss data/information focused on the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors. Participants were provided data sheets for one systemic factor and one outcome at each meeting to analyze and synthesize a week prior to each convening. Participants were also provided with a meeting agenda that contained key questions that would generate stakeholder engagement during the focus group. The materials provided an opportunity for participants to consider and critically analyze evidence of disparities in decision-making, programs, and policies that may contribute to inequity in services and outcomes for persons who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality in the child welfare system.

The SAC provided a forum and space for PA to review evidence (quantitative and qualitative data and information) to evaluate seven systemic factors as well as seven outcomes that are monitored as part of PA's ongoing CQI efforts. During the meetings, the attendees were tasked with considering existing child welfare programs, practices and systems, and to consider programmatic goals and the extent to which desired outcomes for the children and families served are being achieved. The SAC enabled system and community partners to come together to identify system strengths and areas needing improvement to assess potential root causes to help inform program improvement approaches.

CFSR Data Team

In addition to the SAC team, a CFSR Data Team subcommittee was established at the onset of the development of PA's CFSR Round 4 infrastructure. Representatives from the CWRC, AOPC and OCYF were pulled together to review existing data and to brainstorm ways to leverage data to satisfy the requirements for CFSR Round 4 and the SWA. The CFSR Data Team has been meeting monthly to orchestrate data pulls, and to support the development of data sheets for SAC meetings. This team of subject matter experts have been tasked with taking a deep dive into PA's data, and CQI infrastructure to inform the SWA and all CFSR Round 4 activities.

Section II: State Context Affecting Overall Performance

Part 1: Vision and Tenets

The Office of Children, Youth, and Families' Vision:

OCYF's vision is that all children and youth grow up in a safe, loving, nurturing, permanent family and community. To this end, OCYF views its mission as supporting the provision of quality services and best practices designed to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of PA's children, youth and families. To achieve this vision and mission, OCYF believes that the child welfare system must model the following values:

- Balanced and restorative justice;
- Child, youth and family centered decisions;
- Child/youth's role and voice;
- Family's role and voice;
- Collaboration;
- Commitment to action;
- Continuous Quality Improvement;
- Fiscal accountability;
- Honest and respectful communication; and
- Personal responsibility.

The Office of Children, Youth, and Families' (OCYF) Mission:

The mission of the PA OCYF is to support the provision of quality services and best practices designed to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of PA's children, youth and families. This mission is reflected in OCYF's vision, which is that all children and youth grow up in a safe, loving, nurturing, permanent family and community. OCYF's efforts include child abuse prevention and treatment, in-home family support and preservation services, foster care, services to support older youth (OY) transitioning to adulthood, and adoption. OCYF also provides direct services to delinquent children and youth through secure youth development centers and a youth forestry camp.

Part 2: Cross-System Challenges

Covid-19 Pandemic

The global Covid-19 pandemic had significant impacts on the workforce within PA's child welfare system, much like other child welfare systems nationwide. Many child welfare services transitioned to virtual spaces, leaving caseworkers to quickly adapt to virtual home visits, interviews and court hearings. In PA, and across the nation, families

faced difficulties accessing services and living in a world where very few individuals left their homes in fear of what the potential impact of the pandemic would be on them as individuals and their families.

While Covid-19 no longer presents a significant impact, the child welfare system in PA is continuing to grapple with the lasting effects and unprecedented workforce challenges both among county child welfare staff and private providers of services to children and families involved in the child welfare system.

Placement Needs of Complex Cases

Another key challenge that has emerged as a priority area for PA's child welfare system involves finding appropriate placements for children and youth with complex behavioral health care needs. CCYAs have reported difficulties in finding placements that have the capacity to serve children and youth who are experiencing a constellation of different behavioral health issues that require an intense level of care to ensure child safety and appropriate treatment delivery.

In 2021, DHS released a bulletin titled, Complex Case Planning for Children and Youth Under Age 21[1]. The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance to all child-serving state and county agencies, family, and youth advocacy organizations, and both physical and behavioral managed care organizations that are involved in case planning for children and youth with complex needs up to age 21. This bulletin further established the process by which counties could request state-level assistance and coordination of services. This enhanced process created a mechanism for gathering data related to the identifying need and level of service being sought for these children and youth to help inform service array need. Between October 2020 - March 2024, DHS received 189 referrals through the complex case process and provided technical assistance (TA) and support through areas such as licensing, funding, sharing strategies across counties, facilitating planning meetings, and providing guidance and assistance with referrals to clinical resources.

In 2022, OCYF, along with partners at the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), distributed an in-depth survey to CCYAs and Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations (BHMCOS) to better assess the service needs of local communities in serving this population and to identify any barriers to service delivery. OCYF also developed a provider directory that offers greater information to the CCYAs about available providers and the types of populations they are available to serve. Further information about OCYF and system partner efforts to strengthen services to children and youth with complex behavioral health needs can be found in the Well-being Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 section of this assessment.

[1] https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/services/children/documents/Complex%20Case%20Planning%20Bulletin%2014-Bul-110.pdf

The Blueprint Workgroup[2] identified a desired future state in which all youth with complex needs and their families will have the opportunity to access timely support and services that are individualized, trauma-informed, holistic, family and youth driven, and available in their own communities. PA continues to work towards this desired future state; however, this remains a challenge as the child welfare system as a whole works to increase accessibility of appropriate placement settings for those individuals served across systems.

Workforce

Across PA's 67 counties, more than 3,000 county-employed caseworkers and case supervisors dedicate themselves to ensuring the safety and well-being of the Commonwealth's children, youth and families. PA is a state-supervised, county administered child welfare system in which CCYAs have significant autonomy to decide how they deliver child welfare services within adherence to state and federal regulations. As such, CCYAs may contract with private providers for the delivery of services to children and families. These workers in both the public and private sector – in concert with fiscal and administrative staff supporting their agencies – represent the backbone of the child welfare service delivery system in PA, serving on the frontlines protecting vulnerable children and supporting stronger families.

Focus groups, surveys, and SAC meetings were utilized to gather the top areas the workforce believed would be most impactful to support system and collaborative efforts to improve outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being. Staff turnover remains an issue in many CCYAs, as well as with service providers, which is affecting services provided or available to children and families. Higher caseworker turnover is associated with higher costs to children and families in the form of poorer outcomes, and higher financial costs to communities in the form of increased expenditures for service delivery. The issue is not new to child welfare agencies in PA or elsewhere in the United States; child welfare agencies across the nation have wrestled for years with the challenges of recruiting and retaining child welfare workers.

Efforts continue to address the recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce. In June 2024, OCYF released the Caseworker Recruitment and Retention Study report[3]. The report was a culmination of eight months of collaboration across multiple organizations who provided data, insights and feedback into the CCYA workforce recruitment and retention experience. Following a series of monthly steering committees, focus groups, employee surveys, research, interviews and analysis, the report provides 43 recommendations spanning the array of entities and factors that impact CCYAs' success in recruiting and retaining staff. As noted in the study, in PA:

[2] https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/services/children/complex-medical-conditions/documents/Youth-with-Complex-Needs-A-Blueprint-Workgroup-Report.pdf
[3] https://paproviders.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/OCYF-CCYA-Recruitment-and-Retention-Study-2024_FINAL.pdf

- Between SFY 2017 - 18 and SFY 2022-23, more than 3,500 CCYA caseworkers (including supervisors) separated from employment. Approximately half of these separations occurred within the first 2 years of service.
- Of the 878 CCYA caseworkers, supervisors and administrators hired in SFY 2017-18, more than four of five (81.3%) had separated by the end of SFY 2022-23.
- Fewer than 600 new caseworkers were hired in SFY 2022-23; prior to the pandemic, more than 800 caseworkers were hired each year.
- As a result of persistent turnover and reduced hiring, vacancy rates for caseworker positions have nearly tripled between SFY 2017-18, and SFY 2022-23 with more than a quarter (27.2%) of CCYA caseworker positions vacant as of SFY 2022-23.
- More than one in four CCYA caseworkers (25.5%) left their jobs in FY 2023.
- Nearly a third (32%) of CCYA caseworkers surveyed (n = 136) reported applying for a position with another employer within the prior 12 months.
- Nearly one in five CCYA caseworkers (17.3%) hired in FY 2023, quit before the end of the fiscal year.
- High turnover negatively impacts employee well-being as it often increases workloads for other caseworkers creating a cycle that results in more resignations.
- Staffing issues at CCYAs prevented community agencies from being able to provide services such as mental health, substance abuse, and trauma therapy to families and children that support their well-being.
- There is a need for “skilled, trauma-informed workforce.” Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is a key approach to supporting the mental health of the children, youth and families served. Mental health services are vital components in meeting the needs of complex case youth.
- The need for a statewide information system to better serve families is paramount. Having a statewide system will enhance collaboration and communication between all levels of the child welfare system.

Results of employee surveys conducted through the Recruitment and Retention Study found that compensation emerged as the most influential factor in determining whether to remain with the CCYA, followed closely by factors related to supervision, working conditions and organization culture. These factors point to the need for continued focus and efforts to strengthen and stabilize the workforce.

Additionally, the turnover in the workforce, both in public child welfare as well as in the private provider community, is attributed to multiple reasons including secondary/vicarious trauma. Discussion about the data related to the tenure of casework and supervisory staff was shared by participants during the SAC meetings, as it was acknowledged that the more tenure a staff person has, the more the quality of their practice improves. A particular practice issue highlighted as concerning is the failure of some CCYAs to consistently assess all appropriate individuals or identify circumstances and conditions that warrant assessment. Furthermore, when individuals

are assessed, it has been observed that there are inaccuracies in assessing needs and mapping appropriate services to address the needs that are identified. The Qualtrics survey given to caseworkers, supervisors and administrators in August of 2023, revealed a prioritized list of areas of needing improvement in the current child welfare system. Outlined below are the top five focus areas that were identified by the survey respondents.

The top five focus areas for improvement in the child welfare system identified by caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators:

- Address workforce turnover;
- Enhancing the service array;
- Enhancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce;
- Increased efforts to prevent children/youth from coming into foster care; and,
- Engagement of children, family and kin

PA's Practice Model prioritizes ensuring the child welfare system is comprised of skilled and responsive child welfare professionals who perform with a shared sense of accountability for assuring child centered, family-focused, policy, best practice and positive outcomes. Maintaining a skilled and knowledgeable child welfare workforce supported by a robust data infrastructure, and effective QA system are all key strategies in achieving PA's vision that all children and youth grow up in a safe, loving, nurturing, permanent family and community. Data and information utilized as a part of OCYF's ongoing CQI efforts has identified addressing workforce challenges as critical to strengthening this infrastructure. OCYF, through partnership with the CWRC, has been reviewing data on the turnover rate among child welfare caseworkers, with data showing increasing turnover in the SFY 2022-23.

While a number of efforts are currently underway in PA to strengthen the child welfare system infrastructure, in the next five years, PA will place particular emphasis on the strategies outlined in the 2025-2029 CFSP. In particular, efforts to strengthen both the public and private child welfare workforce will help strengthen the capacity of child welfare agencies to effectively address the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children, youth, and families. OCYF will assess the achievement of this goal through ongoing use of focus groups and stakeholder surveys as well as monitoring of the individual measures of success and/or completion of benchmarks identified specific to each strategy identified in the 2025-2029 CFSP.

Statewide Information System

Currently, PA does not possess a single statewide case management system. While the state does possess a statewide system which acts as a repository for all reports of suspected Child Protective Services (CPS) reports, General Protective Services (GPS) reports, and subsequent GPS and CPS outcomes, case management and service information is retained within the individual county case management systems. There are currently five county case management systems which are

leveraged by PA's 67 counties. Counties are only able to view information within their specific county, even in cases where multiple counties may be using the same case management system for their individual county data. Data is not structured in a uniform manner across the state, and OCYF does not currently possess a real-time view of key data needed to inform best practice or to assess compliance and performance. Additionally, OCYF is not currently benefiting from the cost savings which could be realized by maintaining a single solution that is used by the state and all counties alike, as opposed to funding both the current state Child Welfare Information System (CWIS) and the individual county case management systems.

PA acknowledges that a statewide information system that allows the state to pull robust data is not currently in place and as a result is currently reliant on counties providing data that is pulled from their case management system and manually transmitted to OCYF. Continuing to work towards implementation of a statewide Child Welfare Case Management (CW CM) system remains a key focus for OCYF that will provide enhanced support to the workforce and strengthen county and statewide CQI efforts.

Part 3: Current Initiatives

In 2012, OCYF, in collaboration with system partners, developed the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice Model (Practice Model)[4] to serve as a tool that guides children, youth, families, child welfare representatives and other children and family service partners in working together by providing a consistent basis for decision making; clear expectations of outcomes, shared values and ethics; and a principled way to evaluate skills and performance. The Practice Model helps benchmark achievement and clearly links the abstract ideals of the mission, vision and strategic plans to day-to-day practice.

The Practice Model is comprised of six core outcomes which together frame the vision for PA's child welfare system. These outcomes reflect the mission and values of OCYF as well as the mission and guiding principles for PA's child dependency system. The components of the Practice Model serve as a foundation in PA's approach to child welfare services and has consistently formed the basis of PA's CFSP since its inception.

PA's Practice Model focuses on the achievement of outcomes for safety, permanency and well-being to ensure children and youth are:

- Safe from incidents of abuse and neglect and children and their families can be served within their own homes and communities through comprehensive and accessible services that work to keep children and youth safe and prevent unnecessary removal of them from their homes.

[4] http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Resources/PAChildWelfarePracticeModel.pdf

- Attain permanency and timely achievement of stability, supports and lifelong connections.
- Living with strengthened families that can successfully sustain positive changes and lead to safe, nurturing, and healthy environments as well as access to services that build on strengths to meet their children's wellbeing, including physical, emotional, behavioral and educational needs.

PA's 2025-2029 CFSP demonstrates continuation of progress upon areas of focus that were identified in PA's Round 3 CFSR PIP. Many of these areas of focus involve complex, multi-year statewide initiatives focused on implementing adaptive and substantial change across PA's child welfare system. Some significant initiatives that build upon Round 3 CFSR findings and PIP activities include the following:

- **Workforce**
  PA's Round 3 PIP included a goal focused on recruiting, retaining and supporting a qualified, skilled, and committed child welfare workforce. As part of the strategies undertaken through the PIP, a method of data collection to support analysis of information regarding PA's child welfare workforce was developed and implemented. Some of this data in turn informed the Caseworker Recruitment and Retention Study report released in June 2024. The report was the culmination of eight months of collaboration across multiple organizations who provided data, insights and feedback into the CCYA workforce recruitment and retention experience. Following a series of monthly steering committees, focus groups, employee surveys, research, interviews and analysis, the report provided 43 recommendations spanning the array of entities and factors that impact CCYAs' success in recruiting and retaining staff. In response to the report findings, OCYF convened a CCYA Recruitment and Retention Workgroup to take lead on many of the recommendations identified in the Recruitment and Retention Study that require cross collaboration across multiple agencies. The workgroup is not just an opportunity for counties to share and suggest best practices; it also provides a statewide view of CCYA successes and challenges. The workgroup launched in August 2024, and there is no timeline for completion as it is expected to be an ongoing effort. In compliment to the workgroup activities, the CWRC is also implementing a statewide workforce assessment and intervention project. Through the project, the CWRC will administer the PA Annual Workforce Survey (PAWS) to identify strengths and gaps related to the overall functioning of CCYAs and factors associated with workforce retention. CCYAs can use the PAWS results to inform their next steps or engage in TA to plan for and adopt strategies to better support and retain child welfare professionals. The CWRC will monitor PAWS results to identify statewide trends and inform the development and selection of appropriate interventions. In addition, the CWRC will monitor the impact of interventions on the health of the organization and, ultimately, workforce retention.

- **Family Engagement Initiative (FEI)**
  During Round 3 of the CFSR, PA selected strengthening engagement as a key goal, with one strategy focused on continued expansion of FEI. At the time of the PIP, PA was starting out with FEI implementation in seven counties. To date, a total of 20 counties are currently participating in the effort. Through the Leadership Roundtable structure, counties, the dependency court system and OCYF continue to evaluate implementation and assess opportunities to roll out additional phases of FEI. PA's FEI is designed to assist select counties in furthering collaborative efforts between the judiciary and child welfare agency to enhance meaningful family involvement in the child welfare system. Meaningful family involvement increases the likelihood that children will safely remain in their own home or will be placed with family if out of home placement is necessary. In addition, the initiative focuses on well-being of the child as well as the entire family. The FEI builds focuses on three components designed to meaningfully involve family: *Family Finding – Revised*; *Crisis/Rapid Response Family Meetings* and *Enhanced Legal Representation*.

  Current participating counties include:

  - 2018 Phase 1: Clinton, Northampton, Union;
  - 2019 Phase 2: Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Snyder, Tioga, Venango;
  - 2020 Phase 3: Dauphin, Lehigh, Philadelphia;
  - 2021 Phase 4: Bradford, Lycoming, Washington;
  - 2024 Phase 5: Erie, Juniata, Luzerne, Potter, Warren

- **Universal Assessment (UA)**
  During CFSR Round 3, PA identified a need to look at improving assessment of risk and safety and to ensure quality assessment of families through the entire life of a case. To that end, PA committed a PIP strategy to strengthening its safety assessment, planning and monitoring process through development of a streamlined risk and safety assessment process and measures the safety to risk continuum. Through the work of the Safety Subcommittee of the PA Child Welfare Council during the PIP implementation and monitoring period, it was determined PA would benefit from utilization of a single assessment tool that will reduce documentation and duplication of effort, while strengthening assessment practices overall. The Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) was selected as the Universal Assessment (UA) that will be implemented across all 67 counties in PA. Since the conclusion of the PIP, PA has worked with the Praed Foundation and internal and external partners to finalize and test a PA specific UA based on the FAST. For over a year, through the established UA governance structure, OCYF, county partners and the CWRC worked to establish draft policies and procedures for UA implementation and finalize the training curriculum. Beginning in early 2026, the PA UA will be piloted on a limited number of cases by trained and certified caseworkers across 18 different counties in PA

throughout the year. The pilot evaluation activities will help inform changes needed to train policies and procedures to move towards the goal full statewide implementation of the UA process.

- **Complex Case Planning**
  As part of targeted efforts to address service array findings during the Round 3 CFSR, PA developed a strategy to enhance collaboration with system partners to improve the behavioral health, intellectual/developmental disability and substance use disorder service array and facilitate access to services across the state. A critical activity to support this strategy involved working with system partners to review complex cases to identify process strengths/challenges and make necessary changes. This work undertaken in the PIP continued forward into PA's 2025-2029 CFSP. While the initial focus of the effort had centered on revising the DHS Complex Case Review Process and policy guidance, DHS identified the need to gather direct experiences from youth, their families and the systems who served them and between December 2022–May 2023, conducted a series of focus groups and surveys to further identify needed resources and strategies to meet the needs of these youth and their families. The themes of the information obtained through this outreach were communication, services and programs, resource navigation, staffing/workforce, and trauma-informed supports. Family engagement was noted to be ingrained throughout each of these themes. The themes became the framework of a Blueprint Workgroup that was convened to develop recommendations to improve systems serving youth with complex needs. The Blueprint Workgroup identified a desired future state in which all youth with complex needs and their families will have the opportunity to access timely supports and services that are individualized, trauma-informed, holistic, respectful of race and culture, family and youth driven, and available in their own communities. The workgroup met from July 2023–November 2023, and issued 22 recommendations as outlined in the workgroup's final report which can be found at Youth-with-Complex-Needs-A-Blueprint-Workgroup-Report[5]. DHS established a steering team as of May 2024, to begin the work toward implementation of the recommendations. This team will also be aligning and incorporating the recommendations from both workgroups toward identification of priority actions of both a short-term considering the impact on the immediate challenges facing the youth and their families and the child serving systems as well as those of a long-term nature that will impact service delivery systems in both structure and capacity. In June of 2024, the Blueprint Workgroup Steering Team identified priority recommendations which are currently being addressed through three implementation subgroups focused on workforce development, program development for unmet needs, and service array.

[5] https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Children/Complex-Medical-Conditions/Documents/Youth-with-Complex-Needs-A-Blueprint-Workgroup-Report.pdf

- **Implementation of a Statewide Information System**
  As PA did not achieve substantial conformity with the CFSR Item 19 during Round 3, work to move towards a statewide CW CM system was a key strategy outlined in PA's CFSR Round 3 PIP and subsequently carried forward into PA's current CFSP. On July 31, 2019, former Governor Tom Wolf issued an Executive Order related to the Protection of Vulnerable Populations, which included an action to "issue a procurement for a statewide electronic child welfare case management information system." In January of 2020, PA DHS submitted an Annual Planning Document (APD) that included a plan for the future Enterprise Case Management (ECM) System, which includes several sub-systems, one of which will be the CW CM sub-system. PA plans to implement a CCWIS compliant statewide CW CM system intended to replace both the current Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) as well as the individual county case management systems. This new platform will be a comprehensive, integrated system that will support best practices across the Commonwealth, implement standardization when possible/necessary, and allow flexibility to support unique processes considered critical by the counties. To support this initiative, OCYF worked closely with partners within the Commonwealth's Health and Human Services IT Delivery Center, as well as county partners, to create a Governance Structure to support the design, implementation and future ongoing maintenance of the CW CM System. The Commonwealth selected the Pega platform for the ECM System and subsystems. In 2023, Accenture was awarded the contract for the System Integrator (SI) vendor who will help DHS to implement ECM and its' subsystems in the Pega platform. OCYF and counties participated in Business Process Alignment and User Story sessions beginning in 2019, with the last of these sessions concluded in early 2024, due to a pause in the sessions during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak. The discovery work with the system integrator is anticipated to begin in 2026, with the modular development and deployment taking place in multiple releases over the course of multiple years. An as-needed advance planning document (APD) has been submitted to account for funding these efforts.

Section III: Assessment of Child and Family Outcomes

Data Sources

- Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) – Data reported covers various time frames, ranging from federal reporting period 2019AB (FFY 19) through 23AB, (FFY 23).
- Annual CCYA Licensing Inspections Summaries – Data covers licensing inspections which occurred in SFY's 2021-22, 2022-23, and Calendar Year 2024.
- Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) Data reported included information covering child protective services and general protectives services reports received in calendar year 2024. Further information about child abuse reporting data is available online in the PA 2024 Annual Child Protective Services Report[6].
- National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) – Data covering federal reporting periods 2021A-2024B.
- National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) – Data covering federal reporting periods, FFY 2020-2024, 2023A-2024B, cohort 4.
- 2021 and 2025 Child and Family Services Review case review data
    - It should be noted that the CFSR data has limitations which make it difficult to draw conclusions due to the small sample size and due to the number of counties most recently involved in CFSR case review activities. The number of cases evaluated will continue to grow as PA engages in Round 4 CFSR Onsite case reviews from April to September 2026, and as part of PIP monitoring, as well as implementation of qualitative case reviews expand as part of ongoing CQI efforts.
- Administration of the Pennsylvania Courts, Family Engagement Initiative permanency data calendar years, 2022, 2023,2024, and 2025.
- Child and Family Services Review (CFSR 4) Data Profile, AFCARS and NCANDS Submissions as of 8-3-25, August 2025.
- PFM Group Consulting LLC, Workforce Recruitment Study, June 2024
- Statewide Assessment Committee Meeting Group Findings - Qualitative information gathered from stakeholders across the system to inform system functioning from March 2025 to August 2025.
- Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP Focus Groups from October 2023 to– February 2024.
- Older Youth Retreat Focus Group August 2024 and August 2025.

[6] https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/ocyf/documents/2024-annual-child-abuse-report-final.pdf

- Survey of Judicial Community including judges, hearing officers, and judicial partners conducted in April 2024.
- Surveys across all 67 counties in PA of frontline staff including caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators conducted in June 2024.

A. Safety

Safety Outcomes 1 and 2

Safety outcomes include: (1) children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect; and (2) children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

State Response

Performance Data Highlights

PA performance regarding timeliness to reports of child maltreatment has remained consistent over the course of several years and data from annual CCYA licensing inspection has provided evidence of trending improvement in this area of practice in recent years. Below are some snapshots of CPS and GPS response time data:

- Analysis of annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries (LIS) over a three-year period showed that over 98.77% of intake records reviewed during the inspection process each year met requirements for timely investigations, meaning children were seen immediately or within 24 hours when CPS concerns are reported.
- Findings from annual CCYA licensing inspections consistently showed that counties performed better in meeting CPS response time requirements compared to GPS response time requirements.

The CFSR data being considered for the assessment of Safety Outcome 1 (Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment) are the combined results from case reviews conducted in 2021 and 2025.

- In CFSR Item 1, 94.59% strength rating of 37 total applicable cases reviewed; 94.59% were substantially achieved.
- Comparatively, 70% of applicable cases for CFSR Item 1 in 2017, (from the Round 3 CFSR Onsite) were rated as a strength, and after the PIP monitoring process showed marked improvement on CFSR Item 1 with an 86% strength rating for applicable cases reviewed in 2019, and 97% strength rating in 2021. Current combined data from 2021 and 2025 CFSR case reviews resulted in a 94.59% strength rating for all applicable cases which meets the federal standard of 95%.

PA observed areas for growth and improvement across multiple practice areas of Safety Outcome 2. Safety Outcome 2 is comprised of two CFSR Items 2, which assesses services to families to protect children in the home and prevent removal or reentry into foster care, and Item 3 which assesses risk assessment and safety management of the case. Combined CFSR Case review data from 2021 and 2025 for Items 2 and 3 shows:

- For CFSR Item 1,54.16% of 24 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for concerted efforts to prevent placement/re-entry. This is a marked decrease in performance from the 95% strength rating of 15 applicable cases in 2019.
- For CFSR Item 2, 75.32% of 77 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Risk/Safety Assessment and Management. This shows improvement from 2017 (71% Strength) and 2019 (69% Strength) Strength ratings performance.

Brief Analysis

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

- ❖ CFSR Item 1: Were the agency's responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports initiated, and face-to-face contact with the child(ren) made, within time frames established by agency policies or state statutes?

PA statute and policy outlines required response times for investigations of both CPS and GPS cases. For CPS reports, the county agency is required to begin its investigation within 24 hours of receiving a report of suspected child abuse. Upon receiving the report, the county agency must see the child within 24 hours of receipt of the report. The county agency is to begin the investigation immediately upon receipt of a report of suspected child abuse and see the child immediately if one of the following applies:

- Emergency protective custody has been taken or is needed;
- It cannot be determined from the report whether emergency protective custody is needed

Pennsylvania implemented the General Protective Services (GPS) Bulletin on October 3, 2020. The GPS Bulletin was intended to improve practice in a number of areas related to the handling of GPS reports while also helping to reduce the number of GPS reports sent to counties that did not involve true GPS concerns. This approach was taken to help promote CCYAs focusing capacity on addressing true child abuse and neglect concerns by reducing the volume of GPS reports unnecessarily transmitted to the CCYAs where child safety and well-being concerns were not alleged. Through the GPS Bulletin, OCY established parameters to better define minimum thresholds for classification of a report as involving GPS concerns. Additionally, the GPS Bulletin lays out the statewide GPS response timeframes for responding to reports of child abuse and neglect. These timeframes are determined by an assessment of child safety and potential risk of harm, not blanket examples. County agencies must initiate a GPS assessment within a specific timeframe based on the severity of the concerns identified

during the initial information gathering phase. The GPS Bulletin implements the following timeframes and requirements:

- Immediate (within two hours): for situations where there is an immediate threat to the child's safety, indicating "impending danger."
- Within 24 hours: for less severe situations than an immediate response but still involving a high potential risk of harm.
- Within 48 hours: For situations where there is a potential risk but no immediate danger identified.
- Within 72 hours: for potential risk situations that are less urgent than the 48-hour response.
- Within seven calendar days: for situations that meet the GPS criteria but present a lower level of potential risk to the child's safety.

Once the initial response has been made, the county agency generally has 30 days to complete the full GPS assessment, which can be extended up to 60 days if necessary.

While limited in scope, the data and information that became available through OCYF's data system, through CCYA licensing violation tracking, and through Round 3 PIP monitoring case reviews provided evidence to suggest the GPS Bulletin is achieving its intended impact. As part of ongoing data collection efforts, OCYF continues to monitor licensing data to see if there are any emerging trends related to the implementation of the GPS Bulletin provisions.

According to the 2024 Annual Child Protective Services Report[7], in calendar year 2024, PA received a total of 41,070 reports of suspected child abuse, with 4,756 substantiated upon completion of investigation. This was a decrease of 769 reports received from 2023, when PA received 40,301 reports of suspected child abuse. In addition, the percentage of substantiated reports decreased from 11.7% in 2023, to 11.6 in 2024. Statewide substantiated reports of child abuse remained the same in 2024, as in 2023, with 1.8 substantiated reports per thousand children in both years.

Monitoring of adherence to CPS and GPS response time requirements is conducted during Annual Licensing Inspections of CCYAs. During the licensing process, a sample of CPS and GPS intake records are reviewed for compliance with CPS and GPS response times as outlined in the Child Protective Service Law (CPSL).

Table 3 and Table 4 below outline the licensing inspection summary violations across PA from SFY 2021–23, and calendar year 2024. Based on the licensing inspection summaries conducted in 2024, counties were found to be in compliance with CPS response time requirements in approximately 98% of CPS cases and 91.75% of GPS cases reviewed, with only seven counties found to be in violation of CPS response time policy, and 18 counties found to be in violation of GPS response time policy.

[7] https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/ocyf/documents/2024-annual-child-abuse-report-final.pdf

Table 3. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: CPS Response Times

	SFY 2021-22[1]	SFY 2022-23	Calendar year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	11 counties	5 counties	5 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	0 counties	1 county	2 counties
Total Cases Cited	11	9	12
Total CPS Cases Reviewed	468	617	601
Total Counties Without Citation	**41 (of 53)**	**60 (of 66)**	**58 (of 65)**
Rate of Compliance (%)	**97.37 %**	**98.77 %**	**98.00%**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

Table 4. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: GPS Response Times

	SFY 2020-21	SFY 2021-22	SFY 2022-23	Calendar Year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	12 counties	11 counties	23 counties	13 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	1 county	0 counties	3 counties	5 counties
Total Cases Cited	20	31	57	52 cases
Total GPS Cases Reviewed	99	497	658	631
Total Counties Without Citation	**47 (of 60)**	**41 (of 53)**	**40 (of 66)**	**47 (of 65)**
Rate of Compliance (%)	**79.80 %**	**97.13 %**	**89.97 %**	**91.75 %**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

While CFSR Item 1, Safety Outcome 1, addresses the agency's responses to all child maltreatment reports within established agency time frames, in accordance with

ACF's CFSR Measures Crosswalk, Pennsylvania is including the following information to support this item.

Statewide Data Indicator - Maltreatment in Foster Care measures whether children experience abuse or neglect while under the placement and care responsibility of the state or local Title IV-B/IV-E agency. This measure considers the rate of victimization per 100,000 days in care for all children in foster care during a 12-month period. National performance on Statewide Data Indicator – Maltreatment in Foster care is currently rated as a Data Quality (DQ) which is actively being addressed at the state level due to data quality issues for FFY's 2021 - 22, 2022 - 23 and FFY 2023 - 24.

Table 5. Statewide Data Indicator- Maltreatment in Foster Care

	19AB, FY19	20AB, FY20	21AB, FY21	22AB, FY22	23AB, FY23
RSP Value	1.77	1.41	1.59	DQ	DQ
RSP Interval	1.41 - 2.21	1.09 - 1.82	1.23 - 2.05	DQ	DQ
Data Used	19A-19B, FY19-20	20A-20B, FY20-21	21A-21B, FY21-22	22A-22B, FY 22-23	23A-23B, FY 23-24

Source [AFCARS, NCANDS], [August 2025]

Statewide Data Indicator – Recurrence of Maltreatment measures whether children who were the subject of a substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment experience subsequent maltreatment. This measure considers what percentage of children were victims of another substantiated or indicated maltreatment report within 12 months of the initial victimization for all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during a 12-month period. The national performance on this measure is fixed at 9.7%. It should be noted that a lower value is desirable. PA's performance has historically remained well below the national performance during the last five years FY 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, and FFY 2023-24. Currently, in August 2025 data profile, a 5.2% rating was achieved by PA on the Recurrence of Maltreatment Statewide Data Indicator which is statistically better than the national performance standard.

Table 6. Statewide Data Indicator- Recurrence of Maltreatment

	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24
RSP Value	3.5%	3.8%	3.9%	4.3 %	5.2 %
RSP Interval	2.9%-4.1%	3.2%-4.5%	3.3%-4.6%	3.7%-5.0%	4.5%-6.0%
Data Used	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24

Source [AFCARS, NCANDS], [August 2025]

Pennsylvania acknowledges that there have been data quality issues associated with data indicators, Maltreatment in Care and Recurrence of Maltreatment due to several issues that can be explained by separating out the data indicators. As it pertains to maltreatment in care, case management data, including, but not limited to, foster care information, is currently maintained within the individual county child welfare systems. The state collects foster care data from counties for the purpose of meeting AFCARS compliance requirements, but this data is maintained in a separate system from the system that contains child maltreatment data. The two systems do not have a reliable way to match individuals between the two separate systems, as each uses a different master identifier for persons, so maltreatment data which requires both foster care and maltreatment information is not currently able to be provided by OCYF. The future statewide Child Welfare Case Management (CW CM) system is intended to resolve this issue by accommodating a single federal reporting identifier for a person. Data quality issues related to recurrence of maltreatment are also believed to be impacted by the lack of a consistent single person identifier for persons within the Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) system, the system of record for maltreatment data. While OCYF does make the greatest effort possible to maintain a single person record for persons in this system, there are some limitations of the current system design which limit these abilities. Again, plans are in place to resolve these issues and assure the maintenance of a single person record within the future CW CM system.

System and community partners engaged in analysis for the statewide assessment noted the importance of addressing DQ issues associated with the Statewide Data Indicators as soon as feasible. Requests for a deeper dive into the data to identify trends were also identified by SAC members as a goal for future CQI activities. For more information about CFSR case reviews and data/information collected as part of CFSR case reviews, please refer to the QA System Systemic Factor section of this report.

Looking further into Safety Outcomes 1, PA acknowledges incidents of child abuse fatalities and near fatalities play a role in the SWDIs, more specifically the

recurrence of maltreatment to the most vulnerable population that often times is already known to the child welfare system. PA is dedicated to taking a deeper dive into the root causes of fatality and near fatality incidents and implementing efforts to prevent further occurrences. A review of the Annual Child Protective Services Reports (APSR) from calendar years 2022-2024, shows fluctuating substantiated incidents of fatalities and near fatalities over the last three years, see Table 7 below. In calendar year 2022, there were 60 substantiated fatalities and 138 substantiated near fatalities. In calendar year 2023, there were 57 substantiated fatalities and 119 substantiated near fatalities. By comparing 2022, to 2023, there was a 5% percentage point decrease in the number of substantiated fatalities, and a 13.7% percentage point decrease in substantiated near fatalities. In 2024, there were 60 substantiated fatalities and 82 substantiated near fatalities. In comparing 2023 to 2024, there was a 5% percentage point increase in substantiated fatalities and a 31% percentage point decrease in substantiated near fatalities.

Table 7. Number of Substantiated Fatalities and Near Fatalities, Calendar Years 2022-2024

Calendar Year	2022	2023	2024
Substantiated Fatalities	60	57	60
Percentage Increase or Decrease	N/A	5% Decrease	5% Increase
Substantiated Near Fatalities	138	119	82
Percentage Increase or Decrease	N/A	13.7% Decrease	31% Decrease

Source [Annual Child Protective Services Report], [Calendar Years 2022 - 2024]

Table 8 below, compares the total number of substantiated fatalities and near fatalities that occurred in PA for incidents where the children and families were known by the CCYA prior to the substantiated fatalities/near fatalities. In 2022, there were 60 substantiated fatalities of those 60 cases, 46 families were known to the CCYA. The number of previously known CCYA children and families decreased to only 28 in 2023, and continued to decline in 2024, to 19. Additionally, in 2022, there were a total of 138 substantiated near fatalities that occurred. Of those 138 substantiated cases, 89 of the substantiated near fatalities the family was previously known to the CCYA. The number of previously known CCYA children and families decreased to only 56 in 2023, and continued to decline in 2024, to only 35 substantiated near fatalities with the child or family previously known to the CCYA.

Table 8. Total number of Substantiated Fatalities and Near Fatalities of Children known to the CCYA from Calendar Years 2022 - 2024

Calendar Year	2022	2023	2024
Children/Families Known to CCYA that had Substantiated Fatalities	46	28	19
Children/Families Known to CCYA that had Substantiated Near Fatalities	89	56	35

Source [Annual Child Protective Services Reports], [Calendar Years 2022 - 2024]

The decrease in the number of substantiated fatalities and near fatalities in both 2022 and 2024, could be influenced by the various prevention efforts implemented by PA. PA has worked hard to be transparent with the public regarding investigations where fatalities and near fatalities have occurred. PA has utilized the KeepKidsSafe webpage and media campaign to spread information and resources to the public to better educate on how these incidents can occur. The Keep Kids Safe webpage, www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe, is overseen by OCYF and serves as the hub for professionals and the public to access current information and resources impacting the safety, permanency, and well-being of PA's children, youth and families. The website includes information related to the CPSL, reporting suspected child abuse, training on child abuse recognition and reporting, child abuse and criminal history clearances, the Safe Haven program, fatality and near fatality reports, annual child abuse reports, the Governor's Institute on Plans of Safe Care (POSC), Family First, firearm and medication safety, as well as relevant media being used across PA. The KeepKidsSafe webpage is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure accurate information and data as it pertains to child protection. PA is still working on ascertaining the complete reasoning as to why the number of substantiated fatalities and near fatalities have decreased in 2022 and 2024. PA has contracted with Deloitte to complete a comprehensive assessment in collaboration with OCYF and community partners to gain a full understanding of the trends we are seeing in PA's fatality and near fatality data.

CFSR Results:

Table 9 below presents the CFSR results used in evaluating Safety Outcome 1, based on combined data from case reviews conducted in 2021 and 2025. Data analysis shows that PA performed exceptionally well with timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment and ensured children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect, achieving a 95% substantially achieved outcome rating. This is highlighted in Table 9 below showing the findings from CFSR Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment of 37 total applicable cases reviewed. The data indicates that PA observed the strongest Safety Outcome Performance with Outcome 1.

Table 9. Performance on Safety Outcome 1, Item 1

Outcome	Description	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved
Safety Outcome 1	**Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect (n=37)**	**94.59%**	**0%**

Item	Description	Percent Rated Strength
Item 1	**Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment (n=37)**	**94.59%**

Source [CFSR Online Monitoring System, JBS International], [September 2025]

The CFSR data being considered for the assessment of Safety Outcome 1 (Item 1) Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment) are the combined results from case reviews conducted in 2021 and 2025. Please refer to the "Data Sources" section in Section III regarding the timeframes and limitations of the CFSR data set.

- 94.59% strength rating of 37 total applicable cases reviewed; 94.59% were substantially achieved;

- Comparatively, 70% of applicable cases in 2017 (from Round 3 Onsite) were rated as a strength, and after the PIP monitoring process showed marked improvement on CFSR Item 1 (Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment) with an 86% strength rating for applicable cases reviewed in 2019, and 97% strength rating in 2021. Current combined data from 2021 and 2025 CFSR case reviews resulted in a 94.59% strength rating for all applicable cases which meets the federal standard of 95%.

<u>Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</u>

- ❖ CFSR Item 2: Did the agency make concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children's entry into foster care or re-entry after reunification?
- ❖ CFSR Item 3: Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care?

PA regulations (55 Pa Code §3130.35) require that CCYAs provide placement prevention and reunification services which include all the following:

- Counseling Services;
- Parent Education;
- Homemaker/caretaker services; and,
- Part-day services

The CCYAs work with families where there is risk of abuse to decrease risk factors by providing them with counseling, education and other supportive services. When services are needed, cases are managed in one of two ways based on the level of risk to the child. Higher risk cases are formally opened by the CCYA, prompting the development of a Family Service Plan (FSP) that outlines specific goals, services and actions for the family. In situations where the risk of abuse is low, cases may be closed, with families referred to appropriate community-based services. Most in-home services are provided without regard to cost, although agencies may charge a fee based on the family's ability to pay. A family will continue to receive services if the agency or the court determines that significant risk to the health and safety of the child(ren) remains.

PA remains committed to improving the safety of children and reducing the number of children in out-of-home care while providing resources to keep children in their homes or with family. The number of children entering foster care in PA has been decreasing since 2018, as seen in Table 10. A total of 5,493 children and youth entered care during March of 2022, AFCARS reporting period, with a low of 3,135 children and youth entering care during March 30, 2025, AFCARS reporting period. The impact of COVID-19 on foster care placements and discharges is not yet fully understood; however, OCYF monitoring of child abuse and neglect reporting during COVID-19 showed a significant decline in CPS and GPS reports in PA during the height of the pandemic. The decrease in reports may have subsequently contributed to a noticeable decrease in placements in FFYs 2020, 2021 and 2022. From March 2022 to September 2022, we saw a decrease of 442 children entering care, then between September 2022 to March 2023 we saw an increase of 108 children enter care. Continuing, between March 2023 in September 2023 we continue to see a trend upward of an additional 30 children enter care. However, then a significant decrease of 300 children and youth entered care between September 2024 to March 2025. Comparatively, a high of 6,104 children entered care during September of 2017 which was reported in CFSR Round 3 Statewide Assessment. In March 2021, the number of children in care dropped to 3,700 children and youth, which is a 39% decrease compared to the 6,104 that was reported in 2017. In looking at the last eight years the number of children entering care has significantly dropped. It is not fully clear what all the contributing factors are that the number of children and youth entering care has dropped over the years, however we can highlight some preventative measures Pennsylvania has implemented to prevent the placement of children and the support that has been provided to keep families together.

In the last three years, CCYAs and the AOPC, through FEI, have reduced the number of children entering foster care. This can be partially attributed to the crisis rapid response team meetings that are designed to address the immediate concerns within the home by involving extended family members to resolve the problem. By utilizing these meetings, children have been able to rely on family to support them, and prevent the children from entering formalized care. Overall, in the last years (March 2023-March 2025), the number of children and youth entering care has decreased by 12.55%.

Table 10. Foster Care Population Flow

	2022 31-Mar	2022 30-Sep	2023 31-Mar	2023 30-Sep	2024 31-Mar	2024 30-Sep	2025 31-Mar
Admit During Period	3,919	3,477	3,585	3,519	3,423	3,453	3,135
Discharges During Period	4,548	4,407	3,927	3,958	3,514	4,115	3,238
In Care Last Day	12,889	11,959	12,311	11,895	11,833	11,267	11,197
Total Served	16,815	16,081	15,965	15,617	15,133	15,117	14,283
Total Child Population	3,041,332	3,041,332	3,041,332	3,041,332	3,041,332	3,041,332	3,041,332
Admissions per 1,000 Population	1,289	1,143	1.179	1.157	1.125	1.135	1.031
Discharges per 1,000 Population	1,495	1,449	1.291	1.301	1.155	1.353	1.065
In Care per 1,000 Population	4,238	3,932	4.048	3.911	3.891	3.705	3.682
Served per 1,000 Population	5,529	5,287	5.249	5.135	4.976	4.971	4.696

Source [AFCARS, PCG Data Packages], [November 2025]

Based upon the limited data currently available specific to PA's implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Title IV-E Prevention Services Program, the state is utilizing evidence-based services with demonstrated effectiveness at preventing the placement of children in out-of-home care. As part of the monitoring efforts of CCYA implementation of the Title IV-E Prevention Services Program, OCYF has identified opportunities to further educate and support counties in growing their use of these evidenced-based programs (EBPs) approved for Title IV-E funding reimbursement. OCYF is also currently working with system partners to identify potential evidence-based services to consider adding to PA's Title IV-E Prevention Program 5-Year Plan to help leverage available federal funding to support growth and expansion of prevention focused EBPs across the state. Table 11 below illustrates how many youth have received prevention services across FFY 2022-2024. Additionally, the below figure maps out the total youth entries into out-of-home care after the receipt of prevention services across FFY 2022-2024.

Table 11. Youth Receiving Prevention Services[8]

Data	FFY 2022	FFY 2023	FFY 2024
Total Youth Receiving Prevention Services (unique child count)	90	132	136
Total Entries of Youth into OOHC AFTER receipt of Prevention Services	<11	27	25

Source [Family First Prevention Services Database], [September 2025]

Table 12 below represents the CFSR results used in evaluating Safety Outcome 2, based on combined data from case reviews conducted in 2021 and 2025. An analysis of the performance data indicates PA observed areas for growth on Safety Outcome 2 receiving 73% substantially achieved. Items 2 and 3 remain areas highlighted for opportunities for improvement strategies to focus on services to families to prevent removal and reentry, which was rated at 54% strength rating, as well as Risk and Safety Assessments and management, which was rated at a 75% strength rating.

Table 12. Performance on Safety Outcome 2, Items 2 and 3

Outcome	Description	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved
Safety Outcome 2	**Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate (n=77)**	**72.73%**	**5.19%**

Item	Description	Percent Rated Strength
Item 2	**Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-entry (n=24)**	**54.16%**
Item 3	**Risk and Safety Assessment and Management (n=77)**	**75.32%**

Source [CFSR Online Monitoring System, JBS International], [September 2025]

The CFSR data being considered for the assessment of Safety Outcome 2 (Item 2: Services to family to protect child(ren) in the home and prevent removal or reentry into foster care) are the combined results from case reviews conducted in 2021 and 2025. Please refer to the “Data Sources” section in Section III regarding the timeframes and limitations of the CFSR data set.

[8] Note: The data in the second row of the chart above would be the number of youth who entered care in that FFY who had approved invoices for prevention services prior to their entry into care. It does not reflect the FFY that the child received services, since a single youth could be in multiple FFY’s for services. The timeframe in which they received prevention services could have been during or prior to, the FFY they entered care.

- 54.16% of 24 applicable cases were rated as a strength for Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care.
- In 2017, 45% of the 11 applicable cases for Item 2 (Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Foster Care) were rated a strength. Subsequent PIP monitoring case reviews in 2019 revealed a 94% Strength rating for 15 applicable cases, but 24 reviewed applicable cases showed a continued decline in performance with a 54.16% combined data from 2021 and 2025 combined data.

The CFSR data being considered for the assessment of Safety Outcome 2 (Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management) are the combined results from case reviews conducted in 2021 and 2025.

- 75.32% of 77 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management

In 2017, 71% of the 65 applicable cases for Item 3 (Risk and Safety Assessment and Management) were rated as a strength. Subsequent PIP monitoring case reviews in 2019 revealed a slight decrease with a 69% Strength rating for the 65 applicable cases, but the 77 applicable cases reviewed in 2021 and 2025, showed an improvement in performance, as there was a 75.32% Strength rating.

Safety is the fundamental consideration guiding all decisions from intake through case closure. PA's approach to assessing child safety is through a structured process known as the Safety Assessment and Management Process (SAMP). For the purposes of the in-home SAMP, the focus centers on identifying safety factors, recognizing present or impending danger, assessing protective capacities, and implementing caregiver interventions to strengthen those capacities. The process supports informed decision-making for safety planning and the implementation of safety actions designed to manage identified safety threats.

Ongoing monitoring of the use of the SAMP tool occurs during annual licensure of CCYAs. Safety Assessments for CPS intake, GPS intake, in-home and placement cases are inspected as part of the licensing sample. Many of the cases that were reviewed had multiple safety plans and assessments that were developed throughout the life of the case. During licensing inspections, OCYF Regional Office staff assessed whether the Safety Assessments are completed timely and in the case file. They also reviewed other factors such as whether justification is provided for every child safety threat, each caregiver's protective capacities are assessed if safety threat(s) are present, the safety actions are clear, and the safety actions are immediately able to alleviate/control the threat.

All four regional offices performed on site licensing inspections throughout the 2024 calendar year and of the 67 CCYAs, 59 counties received full licenses, and eight counties received provisional licenses. Two counties did not have an annual licensing

inspection during the period under review. Findings from licensing inspections conducted during calendar year 2024 are outlined in Table 13 (Safety Assessment) and Table 14 (Risk Assessment).

Table 13. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Safety Assessment and Management Process (SAMP)[9]

	SFY 2019-20	SFY 2020-21	SFY 2021-22	SFY 2022-23	Calendar Year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	20 counties	19 counties	16 counties	17 counties	8 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	1 county	2 counties	0 counties	3 counties	3 counties
Total Cases Cited	**171**	**28**	**44**	**54**	**25**
Total Counties without Citation	**33 (of 54)**	**46 (of 62)**	**36 (of 53)**	**46 of 66**	**54 (of 65)**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

Table 14. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Risk Assessment[10]

	SFY 2019-20	SFY 2020-21	SFY 2021-22	SFY 2022-23	Calendar Year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	27 counties	60 counties	28 counties	28 counties	8 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	1 county	2 counties	1 county	5 counties	3 counties
Total Cases Cited	**207**	**66**	**69**	**69**	**25**
Total Counties without Citation	**26 (of 54)**	**36 (of 60)**	**23 (of 53)**	**23 (of 66)**	**54 (of 65)**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

Comparing SFY 2022-2023 to calendar year 2024 licensing inspection citations, there has been a 57% percentage point decrease in the number of cases cited for safety assessments, dropping from 44 to 25 in calendar year 2024. It is important to highlight the downward trend in citations, with the number of cases cited decreasing by 50% percentage points over the past three years compared to SFY 2021-22, and SFY 2022-23. Of the 622 citations that were issued to counties in calendar year 2024, Risk

[9] During Annual Licensing Inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.
[10] During Annual Licensing Inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

and Safety Assessments only account for 3.96% of the total citations (25 citations for Risk Assessments and 25 citations for Safety Assessments).

Additional analysis of citations related to safety and risk assessments for calendar year 2024 revealed the following findings:

- Issues related to not meeting required timeframes for completion of assessments led to citations in approximately 20% of cases cited related to safety assessments and 12% of cases cited related to risk assessments.
- Citations issued due to assessments never being completed or missing from the record were found in 24% of citations related to safety assessments and 36% of citations related to risk assessments.
- Missing or late signatures accounted for approximately 28% of citations issued related to safety assessments and 4% of citations issued related to risk assessments.
- Issues related to the actual application of safety and risk assessments and/or quality of assessments accounted for 28% of citations related to safety assessment and 48% of citations related to risk assessment. Common issues that led to licensing violations for Risk and Safety Assessments included:

    - Failure to assess all appropriate individuals;
    - Lack of documentation in the case record to support the overall risk and safety ratings;
    - Failure to identify case circumstances and conditions that warranted the reassessment

Results of Deeper Data Exploration for Priority Focus Areas

The SAC provided feedback relating to areas of strength and areas needing improvement related to Safety Outcomes 1 and 2 statewide. Feedback was received from the group across two meetings facilitated on March 27 and April 25, 2025. The SAC meetings provided opportunities for open discussion amongst professionals and individuals with lived experience. Although this demonstrates the sharing of perspectives and information across a small group, the data remains valuable, as lived experience and the use of qualitative data to inform system operations is essential for driving performance improvements.

The SAC reviewed Safety Outcome 1 data, and it was noted during the meeting that licensing inspections across all 67 counties resulted in 98.7% timeliness in response to reports of maltreatment. Members of the SAC noted that 98.7% timeliness was viewed as a successful achievement, and they found that certain factors contributed to that success. Members of the SAC noted certain factors play a role in how CCYAs respond to child abuse and neglect reports. SAC members noted the following factors: having a full or near full staff complement available to respond to received reports of alleged child abuse and neglect; the success of Foundations training in onboarding the workforce, as it offers clarity to ensure urgency and expectations; an increase in trauma awareness and coordinated efforts to minimize trauma; strong

interagency partnerships and case management coordination, competitive salary increases attracting qualified staff, and noted adjustments made to county-specific practice after receiving prior CFSR feedback which resulted in improved performance.

In identifying areas in need of improvement for Safety Outcome 1, SAC members noted that families expressed concerns about delays in the initiation of child abuse and neglect investigations and insufficient follow-up by the caseworkers after visits. SAC members also reported that the public needs more education on the requirements of timely investigations to better understand why CCYAs respond the way they do. SAC members recognized that there is always room for improvement despite achieving a 98.7% timeliness rate for responding to investigations, and listed areas they felt could use some improvement: data limitations, citing small sample sizes, and limited county representation in CFSR case reviews; jurisdictional complexities, discussing the nuance of response variations between CPS and GPS across counties and the lack of full information about the families and the circumstances of the incident provided at intake; and inconsistencies in tracking referrals across county lines when families moved back and forth between jurisdictions. Members further emphasized the importance of enhancing data quality and conducting deeper analysis of data variables, with a particular focus on fostering cross-county collaboration.

SAC members also identified strengths for Safety Item 2 and Safety Item 3. Members noted that approximately 20 counties participating in the FEI are experiencing positive outcomes from these practices, particularly in their work to keep children safely at home and in efforts aimed at preventing entry into foster care. Additional strengths discussed included: clearly defined processes for assessment of risk/safety, robust prevention services, training and TA, and data monitoring efforts such as through the implementation of FFPSA which includes tracking outcomes for EBPs.

SAC members were also asked to discuss gaps or areas in need of improvement for Safety Outcome 2. Their feedback identified the need to improve caseworker skills in conducting quality assessments to accurately identify and act on risk/safety appropriately while also ensuring services match the needs that were identified on the assessments Members also articulated gaps existing surrounding workforce crisis (staffing, burnout, workload demands, etc.), training limitations in some jurisdictions, concerns for bias and relationship barriers between caseworkers and families, accessibility of safety services in conjunction with the quality of services, and the need for the development of a new statewide case management system.

Between October 2023 and February 2024, a series of focus groups were held with both professionals and individuals involved in the child welfare system. These sessions were designed to collect insights and experiences that could inform the statewide performance on Safety Outcomes 1 and 2. The information collected was analyzed qualitatively, leading to the identification of key themes that aided in the development of the SWA. While the data reflects input from a relatively small group of participants, their direct experiences and feedback offer meaningful and valuable perspectives on how the system is functioning.

In relation to Item 2, did the agency make concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children's entry into foster care or re-entry after reunification; system and community partners stated that PA has many strengths and weaknesses in providing these efforts. Pa has a robust network providing prevention services to families, through the SWAN Network. In addition, PA has initiatives such as the Family Engagement Initiative (FEI) through the Administration of Pennsylvania Courts that is referenced earlier in this assessment on page 24 that outlines how FEI has been instrumental in preventing placement, re-entry and keeping families intact.

Community and system partner focus groups also identified that quality fundamentals of casework practice are instrumental in ensuring safety in relation to Item 3. Specifically, members noted the importance of safety and risk assessment procedures, frequency of announced and unannounced visits with the children and/or to the home and engaging in teaming (such as holding critical case reviews and offering in-home services) as areas of strength. Participants also identified the importance of networking and partnering with community organizations. A significant strength identified by the SAC included joint investigations with law enforcement and effective collaboration to assure safety of children and families. Additional strengths highlighted included seasoned caseworkers mentoring new caseworkers and quality supervision county specific resources, and ongoing training to child welfare workforce.

In relation to Items 2 and 3 community and system partner focus groups raised concerns regarding the ongoing staffing crisis in PA, which has led to the appointment of inexperienced supervisors who may lack the necessary skills to effectively support caseworkers. Group members also identified overall caseworker burnout, casework practices and protocols not being completed adequately/timely, as well as noting the amount of time needed to complete the paperwork as cumbersome. Although community and system partners identified the need for additional workforce support, the continued workforce capacity issues have not resulted in poorer outcomes for children as demonstrated in Safety Outcome 1. The participants in these focus groups identified gaps in training topics related to safety as well as the inability to meet the complex needs of youth and families via the safety service array. Group members discussed community concerns and contributing factors and identified concurrent public health concerns (mental health, substances use disorders, and gun violence) as presenting a challenge to safety.

Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities

While performance measures indicate improvement related to Safety Outcome 2, PA continues to implement strategies to improve overall safety. The state has observed a need for enhancements to the CCYAs ability to perform safety and risk assessments timely and accurately. PA introduced work to implement a Universal Assessment (UA) that will replace the current risk and safety tools that are utilized in PA. The UA will provide a new approach to understanding risk and safety through strengthened assessment practices. The following safety outcomes are expected to be improved and monitored outcomes are expected to be improved and monitored:

- Prevention of child abuse and maltreatment, to include reduced repeat child maltreatment;
- Improved service planning for families as evidenced by selection of strategies outlined in FSPs;
- Decrease in entries of children into the foster care system due to improved service delivery to address the needs of families; and,
- Improved workforce recruitment and retention due to streamlining assessment tools to reduce paperwork burden on caseworkers and by providing more effective tools to support caseworkers in their role.

The PA specific tool was tested on a limited basis on approximately 30 cases in the winter of 2024, to determine if the risk and safety outcome decision support model that was developed as part of the tool is providing the expected outputs. In 2026, the UA will be piloted in 20 counties across PA over the course of the year to evaluate various components that will inform the final training, policies and procedures and TA that will be used to support full statewide implementation.

OCYF will continue to monitor Safety Outcomes 1 and 2 through data sources that include, CFSR case reviews, AFCARS data, Annual Licensing Inspections, PA's Annual Child Abuse Report, and focus groups/surveys with community and system partners to continue to enhance existing, or to implement new strategies to assure children are safe.

B. Permanency

Permanency outcomes include: (1) children have permanency and stability in their living situation; and (2) the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

State Response

Performance Data Highlights

Findings from the most recent CFSR case reviews from 2021 and 2025 indicate that PA has not consistently met national performance standards for Permanency Outcomes 1. While strategies have been implemented to address these gaps, recent data from judicial surveys and focus groups with system partners and those with lived experience suggest that persistent barriers remain across multiple items, pointing to the need for continued refinement and targeted support.

Brief Analysis

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Permanency Outcome 1 is comprised of the following 3 CFSR Items:

- ❖ CFSR Item 4: Is the child in foster care in a stable placement and were any changes in the child's placement in the best interests of the child and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal(s)?
- ❖ CFSR Item 5: Did the agency establish appropriate permanency goals for the child in a timely manner?
- ❖ CFSR Item 6: Did the agency make concerted efforts to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangements for the child?

Table 15. Performance on Permanency Outcome 1, Items 4-6

Outcome	Description	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved
Permanency Outcome 1	Children have permanency and stability in their living situations (n=46)	39.13%	56.52%

Item	Description	Percent Rated Strength
Item 4	Stability of Foster Care Placement (n=46)	82.61%
Item 5	Permanency Goal for Child (n=46)	65.22%
Item 6	Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (n=46)	52.17%

Source [CFSR Online Monitoring System, JBS International], [September 2025]

Table 15 above shows the CFSR results of Permanency Outcome 1. The data displayed is the combined results from case reviews that have taken place in 2021 and 2025. An analysis of the data indicates that PA performed stronger on Item 4 (Stability of Foster Care Placement) with an 83% strength rating for those 46 applicable cases considered in this assessment in comparison to the other items measured as part of this permanency outcome. Performance on Item 5 (Permanency Goal for Child) was determined to be at a 65% strength rating and Item 6 (Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement) was rated as a 52% strength rating, for the applicable 46 cases, which lowered the overall outcome performance on Permanency Outcome 1.

Statewide Data Indicators

- Permanency in 12 months (entries)
- Permanency in 12 months (12-23 months)
- Permanency in 12 months (24+ months)
- Reentry to Foster Care
- Placement Stability (moves/1,000 days in care)

The most recent data profile from August 2025, related to the Statewide Data Indicators, was referenced for this assessment of Permanency Outcome 1. The Statewide Data Indicators consist of five permanency measures generated through analysis of AFCARS data. Three indicators are related to timeliness of the achievement of permanency, and the remaining indicators focus on re-entries of children and youth into out-of-home care and the stability of foster care placements. The following narrative analyzes PA's performance in these indicators over the past several reporting periods.

Statewide Data Indicator – Permanency in 12 Months (Entries) measures the percent of children who were discharged to permanency within 12 months after entering care, of the children who enter care within a 12-month period. National performance on Statewide Data Indicator – Permanency in 12 Months (Entries) is currently fixed at 35.2%, though a higher value is desirable. PA's performance has been steadily improving since FY 2020 (20A-20B period) and the state's performance on this measure was 38.8% during the 21A-21B period, which was statistically better than the national performance. There are DQ issues in the 21B-23B data and this has continued with subsequent submissions, which are being addressed. Please see Table 16 below for more information.

Table 16. Statewide Data Indicator – Permanency in 12 Months (Entries)

	21A21B	21B23B	22A24A	22B24B	23A25A
RSP VALUE	37.6%	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
RSP INTERVAL	36.4%-38.8%	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
DATA USED	21A-23A	21B-23B	22A-24A	22B-24B	23A-25A

Source [AFCARS,], [August 2025]

Statewide Data Indicator– Permanency in 12 Months (12-23 Months) measures the percent of children who were discharged to permanency within 12 months of the first day, of all children in care on the first day of a 12-month period who had been in care continuously between 12 and 23 months. National performance on Statewide Data Indicator – Permanency in 12 Months (12-23 Months) is currently fixed at 43.8%. It should be noted that a higher value is desirable. PA's Risk-Standardized Performance (RSP) value was assessed at 41.9% and the RSP range was 40.1% - 43.7% with 22B - 23A files, which is an improvement from prior periods, but not yet achieving the level of improvement desired. There are DQ issues in the 21B - 23B data and this has continued with subsequent submissions, which are being addressed. Please see Table 17 below for more information.

Table 17. Statewide Data Indicator – Permanency in 12 Months (12-23 Months)

	21A21B	21B22A	22A22B	22B23A	23A23B	23B24A	24A24B	24B25A
RSP VALUE	38.7%	36.7%	39.8%	41.9%	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
RSP INTERVAL	37.3%-40.2%	35.2%-38.2%	38.2%-41.5 %	40.1%-43.7%	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
DATA USED	21A21B	21B22A	22A22B	22B23A	23A23B	23B24A	24A24B	24B25A

Source [AFCARS,], [August 2025]

Statewide Data Indicator – Permanency in 12 Months (24+ Months) measures the percent of children who were discharged to permanency within 12 months of the first day, of all children in care on the first day of a 12-month period who had been in care continuously for 24 months or more. National performance on Statewide Data Indicator – Permanency in 12 Months (24+ Months) is currently fixed at 37.3%. It should be noted that a higher value is desirable. PA's RSP value was assessed at 38.6% and the RSP range was 37.3% - 40% with 22B - 25A files, which is an improvement from prior periods and was above national performance. There are DQ issues in the 21B - 23B data and this has continued with subsequent submissions, which are being addressed. Please see Table 18 below for more information.

Table 18. Statewide Data Indicator – Permanency in 12 Months (24+ Months)

	21A21B	21B22A	22A22B	22B23A	23A23B	23B24A	24A24B	24B25A
RSP VALUE	37.3%	36.6%	37.2%	38.6%	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
RSP INTERVAL	36%-38.6%	35.4%-37.8%	36%-38.4 %	37.3%-40%	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
DATA USED	21A21B	21B22A	22A22B	22B23A	23A23B	23B24A	24A24B	24B25A

Source [AFCARS], [August 2025]

Statewide Data Indicator – Reentry to Foster Care in 12 Months measures the percent of children re-entered care within 12 months of their discharge, of all children who exit foster care in a 12-month period to reunification, living with a relative or guardianship. National performance on Statewide Data Indicator – Reentry to Foster Care in 12 Months is currently fixed at 5.6%. PA's RSP value was assessed at 7.8% and the RSP range was 7% - 8.6% with 21B-22A files, which is an improvement from the 20B21A reporting period and was above national performance demonstrating PA is performing better on a national scale. There are DQ issues in the 21B-25A data and

has continued with subsequent submissions, which are being addressed. Please see Table 19 below for more information.

Table 19. Statewide Data Indicator – Reentry to Foster Care in 12 Months

	19B20A	20A20B	20B21A	21A21B	21B22A	22A22B	23B24A	24A24B
RSP VALUE	7.9 %	7.5%	8.5%	7.8%	7.8%	DQ	DQ	DQ
RSP INTERVAL	7.2%-8.7%	6.8%-8.3%	7.7%-9.4%	7%-8.6%	7%-8.6%	DQ	DQ	DQ
DATA USED	19B20A	20A20B	20B21A	21A21B	21B22A	22A22B	23B24A	24A24B

Source [AFCARS], [August 2025]

Statewide Data Indicator – Placement Stability measures the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care for all children who enter care in a 12-month period. National performance on Statewide Data Indicator – Placement Stability is currently fixed at 4.48%. It should be noted that a lower value is desirable. PA's RSP value was assessed at 2.09% and the RSP range was 2-2.18% with 22B-24B files, which is a continued improvement from prior periods and was above the national performance. There are DQ issues in the 21B-23B data and have continued with subsequent submissions, which are being addressed. Please see Table 20 below for more information.

Table 20. Statewide Data Indicator – Placement Stability

	20B21A	21A21B	20B21A	21A21B	22B23A	23A23B	23B24A	24A24B	24B25A
RSP VALUE	3.5	3.16	3.05	3.13	2.09	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
RSP INTERVAL	3.04-3.27	3.05-3.26	2.95-3.15	3.03-3.24	2-2.18	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
DATA USED	20B21A	21A21B	21B22A	22A22B	22B23A	23A23B	23B24A	24A24B	24B-25A

Source [AFCARS], [August 2025]

The August 2025 and February 2025 CFSR State Data Profiles and Supplemental Context Data indicated that performance was not calculated due to exceeding the DQ limit on one or more DQ checks completed for the following Statewide Data Indicator: Permanency in 12 months (entries); Permanency in 12 months (12-23 months); Permanency in 12 months (24+ months); Re-entry to Foster Care; and Placement stability. Ongoing conversations between OCYF and Administration of Children and Families (ACF) occur regularly to remedy these DQ issues. PA continues to provide CCYAs with data to review their performance directly related to these standards and require CCYAs that do not meet the national standard to implement strategies to improve upon these indicators.

For CFSR Items 4, 5, and 6 Pennsylvania recognizes the need for children to have permanency and has invested significant resources to support this. PA partners with TA organizations such as the AOPC, SWAN, and the CWRC not only to support the achievement of national standard goals, but most importantly to find permanency for children and families that we serve. The SWAN is a public and private child welfare partnership that supports permanency-oriented child welfare practice and reduces barriers to legal permanency at all levels of the child welfare system (individual, agency and system). SWAN is designed to support and enhance timely permanency services for children in PA who are in the custody of CCYAs:

- Through the establishment, standardization and provision of permanency services directly to children, youth and families;
- Through the provision of legal and practice TA to private and CCYAs; and,
- By improving collaboration and communication between private and CCYAs

The SWAN program also supports permanency through the LSI by providing CCYAs with paralegal staff to address barriers within the legal process that delay permanency for children in the child welfare system. Additionally, the LSI program offers an LSI Warm Line, which fields legal inquiries from CCYAs. LSI Paralegals play a vital role in reducing delays in processing paperwork, legal filings and completing diligent searches to identify relatives or other individuals who may become a permanent resource for a child in the child welfare system. All counties have at least one paralegal with larger counties having multiple for a total of 267 LSI paralegals throughout the state.

For children involved with SWAN LSI, Table 21 below indicates average months spent in out-of-home care for each of the last three state fiscal years. An overall average for each year is provided as well as a breakdown by placement closure reason. The time spent in out-of-home care remains largely consistent for all placement closure reasons except for reunification. The amount of time spent in care for children who are ultimately reunified has been decreasing each year for the past three SFYs. During focus groups and SAC meetings, individuals suggested that SWAN LSIs play a large role in facilitating timely reunification. The reason for the longest amount of time spent in care is for adoption finalization, which may be impacted by the time necessary to provide permanency services and adhere to due process timelines, and emancipation,

or those children who age out of care. Table 22 examines the percentage of youth who emancipated from PA's child welfare system, which is generally lower than the national percentage between CY 2012 and 2022. In all calendar years, the emancipation percentage of youth who received at least one SWAN unit of service was lower than the PA and US emancipation percentages.

Table 21. SWAN LSI involved children's average time in out-of-home care (months)

Placement Closure Reason	SFY 2022-2023	SFY 2023-2024	SFY 2024-2025
Finalization	40	38	42
Reunified	18	17	15
Guardianship	31	32	30
Living with Relative	18	19	18
Emancipated	54	56	57
Overall average	32	32	34

Source [LSI Child report: SWAN PER], [August 2025]

Table 22: Comparison of Emancipation Rates

	2019	2020	2021	2022
PA Percentage of youth who emancipate	9.3%	9.5%	7.9%	7.6%
Percentage of youth who received SWAN services who emancipate	4.01%	4.93%	5.27%	3.35%
US percentage of youth who emancipate	8%	9%	9%	9%

Sources [SWAN Portal Children in Out of Home Closed, and service search], [August 2025] [Pennsylvania State of the Child Welfare Reports: 2023 and 2017; and Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center: 2024]

In addition to SWAN services, OCYF contracts with the American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law for PA's Barriers to Permanency project which is designed to reduce the time children spend in foster care and for the Education Barriers to Permanency Project, which is designed to improve school experiences and outcomes for children in foster care and to promote permanency and life success. Through these projects ABA staff work diligently with CCYAs, county courts, local school districts and key stakeholders to develop individualized plans to address county's specific barriers to achieving permanency in the child welfare system and to improve school stability. Additionally, the ABA is available to provide targeted training and TA to CCYAs on a variety of permanency issues such as how to effectively engage youth in court, working with immigrant children, developing a kin-first culture, and improving special education advocacy. TA may include conducting local trainings, performing legal research, and collaboratively developing county specific materials. The ABA is a national child welfare resource and participates on several statewide PA committees, which focus on issues such as concurrent planning, education,

permanency, kinship and legal representation. All these resources have been critical in minimizing the time children are in out of home care.

The Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Statewide Evaluation collects information about the stability of placements among counties that voluntarily participate in the evaluation. This information is collected using the Outcome Form, which may be completed at 45-60 days, six months and/or other time periods after the initial FGDM conference. Since most Outcome Forms submitted for the Evaluation are completed at 45-60 days after the initial FGDM conference, this is the data used for analysis purposes for this SWA. Table 23 presents information about placement stability at the 45-60 day follow-up time point for conferences occurring in the past three SFYs (2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25) that involved a family with an open CCYA case whose child(ren) were in out-of-home placement. The following indicators of placement stability were present at most of these conferences across the past three SFYs:

- The focus child/youth was still living in one of the placements discussed at the initial conference;
- The focus child/youth did not move since the initial conference; and,
- The focus child's/youth's living arrangements were rated stable or somewhat stable since the initial conference

Table 23. Focus Child/Youth Placement Stability at 45-60 Days After the Initial FGDM Conference Among Conferences Involving Open Out-Of-Home Cases According to SFY[11]

Description	SFY 22-23 N (% of total N)	SFY 23-24 N (% of total N)	SFY 24-25 N (% of total N)
Focus child/youth is still living in one of the discussed placements [a]	52 (83.9% of 62)	33 (82.5% of 40)	48 (85.7% of 56)
No moves since the initial conference	58 (75.3% of 77)	37 (72.5% of 51)	56 (73.7% of 76)
Daily living arrangements rated as stable or somewhat stable since the initial conference	72 (93.5% of 77)	50 (96.2% of 52)	75 (97.4% of 77)

Source [FGDM Statewide Evaluation SFYs 2022-23 to 2024-25], [August 2025]

To ensure compliance with state regulation and policy, timely and appropriate establishment of permanency goals are monitored by reviewing a random sample of placement cases during Annual Licensing Inspections that are conducted across the 67 CCYA. PA requires the establishment of both primary and concurrent goals and implementation of concurrent planning to support timely achievement of permanency. Licensing inspections data indicates that all 65 counties that were assessed are

[11] Note: The total number of conferences in each cell varies, as some Outcome Forms did not include a response to every question.
[a] Among conferences in which placement options were discussed.

establishing concurrent goals in accordance with state requirements. Table 24 below maps out the last three years of licensing data that shows 100% compliance with state regulation and policy regarding timely and appropriate establishment of permanency goals. The data for the Annual Licensing Inspections conducted since SFY 2019-20, leads to the conclusion that no systemic issues across the state related to the establishment of permanency goals are evident. In calendar year 2024, there were zero violations related to permanency goals. All 65 counties that were assessed were found to be in full compliance with assuring primary and concurrent child permanency goals are established among the cases sampled.

Table 24. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Timely establishment of Permanency Goals

	SFY 2021-22[12]	SFY 2022-23	Calendar year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	0 counties	0 counties	0 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	0 counties	0 counties	0 counties
Total Cases Cited	0	0	0
Total Counties Without Citation	**53 (of 53)**	**66 (of 66)**	**65 (of 65)**
Rate of Compliance (%)	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100%**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

County agencies follow the hierarchy of preferred goals as specified in §6351(f)(1) of the Juvenile Act[13] when establishing permanency goals. At each Permanency Hearing, the court must determine the permanency goal "best suited to the safety, protection and physical, mental and moral welfare of the child." The AOPC tracks children who have been adjudicated dependent at their first initial dependency hearing and subsequent hearings thereafter in their Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS). Table 25 below illustrates the number of children adjudicated dependent in calendar years 2022, 2023, and 2024. Of those children that were adjudicated dependent in 2024, 89% of them received a permanency review hearing within 180 days, or three months, of their initial adjudication hearing. Additionally, 93% of children had a permanency goal established at their disposition hearing in CY 2024, which is within the 60-day federal requirement for timeliness.

Table 25. Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS) Data of Permanency Review Hearings

Adjudication Year	Cases Adjudicated	First Permanency Review Held within 180 Days	Percent within 180 Days	Total Number of Permanency Reviews	Reviews Per Case	Number of Cases with Goal Determined at Disposition Hearing	Percentage of Cases with Goal Determined at Disposition Hearing
2022	6,612	6,005	91%	34,171	5.17	6,158	93%
2023	6,599	5,990	91%	29,246	4.43	6,171	94%
2024	6,246	5,590	89%	17,875	2.86	5,820	93%

Source [CPCMS], [September 2025]

[12] For one county, the total number of cases cited for a documented GPS response time violation was not provided.
[13] https://www.pacourts.us/assets/opinions/Supreme/out/395spct.attach.pdf

Additional data was obtained from AFCARS regarding timeliness of Permanency Hearings for children and youth in PA's child welfare system. Table 26 below illustrates the number of Permanency Hearings that were held between Federal Fiscal Years 2021-22 to present. Measure J shows an increasing number of children with permanency review hearings occurring within the required regulatory time frame, with an increase of 37.09% from FFY 2021-22 to FFY 2023-24. Measure K1 shows that there is an increased compliance with initial permanency review hearings occurring within the required regulatory time frame at 91.18% in FFY 2022-23. Measure K2 demonstrates that 51.75% of children received their subsequent permanency review hearing in a timely fashion. Lastly, Measure K illustrates that only 9.66% of children did not have a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) filing by the time they entered their 15 out of 22 months in placement in FFY 2022-23. This shows that 90.34% of children who are in out of home placement have a timely TPR filing within the 15 out of 22 months' time frame.

Table 26. Timeliness of Permanency Hearings

Measure J: Timely Permanency Reviews	FFY 2021-22	FFY 2022-23	FFY 2023-24	FFY 2024-25 (9mo)
Total Children in OOH Care during FFY for 6mo or Longer	9,537	11,934	11,615	10,155
# with Timely Permanency Review during the FFY	2,876	8,121	7,811	7,841
% with Timely Permanency Review during the FFY	30.16%	68.05%	67.25%	77.21%

Measure K1: Timely Initial Permanency Hearing	FFY 2021-22	FFY 2022-23	FFY 2023-24 (6mo)	
Total Children Entering OOH Care during FFY, in care for 12mo or Longer	-	3,924	1,863	-
# with Timely Initial Permanency Hearing	-	3,578	1,782	-
% with Timely Initial Permanency Hearing	-	91.18%	95.65%	-

Measure K2: Timely Subsequent Permanency Hearing	FFY 2021-22	FFY 2022-23	FFY 2023-24 (6mo)	
Total Children Served in OOH Care during FFY, in care for 12mo or Longer	-	15,135	12,042	-
# with Timely Subsequent Permanency Hearing	-	7,833	4,456	-
% with Timely Subsequent Permanency Hearing	-	51.75%	37.00%	-

Measure L: Timely Petition for Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)	FFY 2021-22	FFY 2022-23	FFY 2023-24	FFY 2024-25 (9mo)
Total Children Served in OOH Care during FFY, in care for 15 of the last 22 months	-	10,223	10,284	9,483
# with TPR Petition Filed by End of 15th Month in Care	-	997	993	911
% with TPR Petition Filed by End of 15th Month in Care	-	9.75%	9.66%	9.61%

Source [AFCARS], [September 2025]

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

- CFSR Item 7: Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings?
- CFSR Item 8: Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationships with these close family members?
- CFSR Item 9: Did the agency make concerted efforts to preserve the child's connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, tribe, school, and friends?
- CFSR Item 10: Did the agency make concerted efforts to place the child with relatives when appropriate?
- Did the agency make concerted efforts to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregivers from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation?

Case Review Results

Table 27 below shows the CFSR results of Permanency Outcome 2. The data displayed includes the combined results from case reviews that have taken place in 2021 and 2025. An analysis of the data indicates that PA performed best in Item 10 (Relative Placement) with a 93% strength rating of the 43 applicable cases, followed by Item 7 (Placement with Siblings) with an 88% strength rating of the 26 applicable cases. Performance on Item 9 (Preserving Connections), Item 8 (Visiting with Parents and Slings in Foster Care) and Item 11 (Relationship of Child in Care with Parents) lowered the overall outcome performance on Permanency Outcome 2. Overall, Permanency Outcome 2 had a Substantially Achieved rating of 71.73%. Please refer to the "Data Sources" section in Section III regarding the timeframes and limitations of the CFSR data set.

Table 27. Performance on Permanency Outcome 2, Items 7-11

Outcome	Description	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved
Permanency Outcome 2	**The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children (n=46)**	**71.73%**	**21.73%**

Item	Description	Percent Rated Strength
Item 7	**Placement With Siblings (n=26)**	**88.46%**
Item 8	**Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care (n=35)**	**68.57%**
Item 9	**Preserving Connections (n=45)**	**77.78%**
Item 10	**Relative Placement (n=43)**	**93.02%**
Item 11	**Relationship of Child in Care with Parents (n=32)**	**62.50%**

Source [CFSR Online Monitoring System, JBS International], [September 2025]

Other Relevant Data

CCYA compliance with state regulations related to visits between parents and siblings is monitored through annual CCYA Annual Licensing Inspections. Table 28 below shows that in calendar year 2024, there was only one violation noted in one of the 65 fully licensed counties, and there were no violations in any of the provisionally licensed counties. Annual licensing inspections focus on documentation of regulatory requirements being met; therefore, violations were limited to failure to provide notification to the parents of their right to visits or missing visitation schedules in the record. One fully licensed county received a citation because the county did not provide the parents with a written notification within 24 hours of placement and their right to visitation.

Table 28. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Parent and Sibling Visitation

	SFY 2018-19	SFY 2019-20	SFY 2020-21	SFY 2021-22[14]	SFY 2022-23	Calendar year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	4 counties	6 counties	0 counties	3 counties	3 counties	1 county
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	0 counties	0 counties	1 county	1 county	1 County	0 counties
Total Cases Cited	**13**	**12**	**1**	**5**	**6**	**1**
Total Counties Without Citation	**63**	**48 (of 54)**	**59 (of 60)**	**48 (of 53)**	**62 (of 66)**	**64 (of 65)**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

[14] For one county, the total number of cases cited for a documented GPS response time violation was not provided.

Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and preservation of tribal connections for children and youth in out of home placement, is monitored through the annual CCYA licensing inspection process. Three counties received a citation across 33 case files relating to compliance with ICWA provisions in calendar year 2024. In two of the counties, it appeared to be a systemic issue as ICWA documentation was not contained in any of the case files that were in the sample.

Efforts to locate and place children/youth with relatives when appropriate is also monitored through annual licensing of the CCYAs. County placement records are reviewed for compliance with federal and state law, as well as regulations, including Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. Table 29 provides information on the number of counties and cases cited over time due to lack of evidence/documentation that due diligence was used at the time of placement to locate relatives as potential placement resources. In the calendar year 2024, all counties were found to be compliant with the requirements of PA' Act 55 of 2013 that outlines the requirements of Family Finding and Kinship Care.

Table 29. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Fostering Connections[15]

	SFY 2018-19	**SFY 2019-20**	**SFY 2020-21**	**SFY 2021-22[16]**	**SFY 2022-23**	**Calendar year 2024**
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	7 counties	4 counties	5 counties	7 counties	5 counties	0 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	0 counties	1 county	0 counties	0 counties	2 counties	0 counties
Total Cases Cited	**30**	**9**	**5**	**23**	**17**	**0**
Total Counties Without Citation	**60**	**49 (of 54)**	**55 (of 60)**	**45 (of 52)**	**59 (of 66)**	**65 (of 65)**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

FGDM Statewide Evaluation data for the past three SFYs (2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25) were examined for conferences involving open out-of-home cases to explore

[15] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.
[16] For one county, the total number of cases cited for a documented GPS response time violation was not provided.

outcomes related to Item 9, efforts to preserve connections to extended family. Conference outcome data showed that at 45-60 days after the initial conference:

- Children consistently experienced stable placements;
- While formal kinship care placements increased, the increase was not enough to offset the decrease in informal kinship care placements, resulting in an overall drop in the use of kinship placements; and,
- Regardless of placement setting, at least one kinship support remained involved with the family since their initial conference

Table 30 illustrates the number and percentage of conferences involving open out-of-home cases in which the focus child/youth had been living in kinship care most of the time since the initial conference. The combined percentage of formal and informal kinship care placements is lower in SFY 2024-25, compared to SFY 2022-23, with the proportion of each type of placement trending differently. Conferences including informal kinship care placements decreased in SFYs 2023-24 and 2024-25, while formal kinship care placements increased from SFY 2022-23 to SFY 2024-25.

Table 30. Where Focus Child/Youth Has Been Living Most of the Time Since the Initial FGDM Conference as of 45-60 Days Later Among Conferences Involving Open Out-Of-Home Cases According to SFY

Description	SFY 22-23 N (%) Total N=77	SFY 23-24 N (%) Total N=52	SFY 24-25 N (%) Total N=77
Informal kinship care	17 (22.1%)	3 (5.8%)	3 (3.9%)
Formal kinship care	20 (26.0%)	12 (23.1%)	24 (31.2%)

Source [FGDM Statewide Evaluation SFYs 2022-23 to 2024-25], [August 2025]

As shown in Table 31, regardless of the placement setting, most families reported at least one kinship support remained involved since the initial conference, indicating success in maintaining children's connections with extended family.

Table 31. Kinship Support at 45-60 Days After the Initial FGDM Conference Among Conferences Involving Open Out-Of-Home Cases According to SFY

Description	SFY 22-23 N (%) Total N=77	SFY 23-24 N (%) Total N=52	SFY 24-25 N (%) Total N=77
At least one kinship support remained involved since the initial conference	64 (83.1%)	48 (92.3%)	70 (90.9%)

Source [FGDM Statewide Evaluation SFYs 2022-23 to 2024-25], [August 2025]

Results of Deeper Data Exploration for Priority Focus Areas

In taking a deeper dive into the data results of CFSR Items 7-11 system and community partners that participated in focus groups included the Statewide YAB, IL Coordinators, PSRFA, LSI staff and OCYF Regional Office, Policy, and Fiscal staff. Focus group participants believed there have been many improvements in providing services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. SAC members shared that approximately 60% of children in care receive SWAN and that these services have been found to support permanency outcomes, while also acknowledging that utilization of SWAN services varies statewide. LSI focus group participants described how diligent search efforts are to identify relatives, or other individuals support and expedite permanency by identifying family connections. A diligent search was identified as being especially effective in the beginning of a case to identify non-custodial parents who may be able to take custody and prevent a child from entering care. It was also noted that, as a practice, it has been helpful in identifying potential kinship placements, useful in identifying people who can offer support and/or should be involved in a case and an important phase of the process in moving forward with other permanency options when reunification is not possible (e.g., locating absent parents so they can relinquish their rights in a timely manner), and such efforts can also uncover additional information that can expedite a case (e.g., criminal or aggravated circumstances).

Focus group data from system partners considered TPR practices during focus groups conducted from October 2023 to February 2024. Those discussions offered support for the paralegal-led tracking of time in care, coordination of filings with goal change hearings, and alerts at key milestones (12 and 15 months). Judicial partners report confidence in the system's ability to manage TPR filings, and stakeholder feedback affirms that these mechanisms contribute to timely permanency decisions.

OCYF Regional Office staff highlighted practices that are working well to help ensure children and youth have permanency and permanent connections, including the following:

- Kinship placements & family finding;
- Regular meetings between counties and providers;
- FGDM & family engagement;
- SWAN Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) services;
- Facilitating visitation; and,
- Encouraging relationship building between parents and resource parents, even after reunification

Discussions with the SAC members denoted the practices that the CCYAs employ to review their jurisdiction's performance on the Statewide Data Indicators associated with Permanency Outcome 1 in conjunction with local data for trends, gaps, and disparities while also completing a root cause analysis as part of ongoing CQI efforts that are also monitored through the Needs Based Plan and Budget (NBPB) process. SAC members reported feeling PA's performance on Permanency Outcome 1 indicated meaningful progress in implementing strategies that promote timely hearings

and demonstrate PA's commitment to permanency through collaborative and innovative practices.

In the applicable cases reviewed as part of CFSR case reviews, PA has demonstrated its greatest strength in performance on Permanency Outcome 2, concerted efforts to place children in foster care with relatives, when appropriate, and ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings. SAC members highlighted that visitation in some counties is offered in the community or on weekends by service providers so that it is not as taxing on the caseworker to set up visits, arranging the location and transporting the family to the visit. When service providers are involved in visitation this allows for flexibility when and where visits occur. Additional examples of quality visitation programs include offering coaching to enhance the visitation time between children and their caregivers.

System and community partners denoted a strong collaboration between agencies and courts and their efforts to place siblings together and increase use of relative and kinship care. Initiatives such as the FEI have been identified as initiatives that are being implemented to support the ongoing CQI efforts. Focus group participants described efforts to improve kinship placement through the family engagement efforts, diligent search practices, and tools provided through FEI, such as connection circle charts and monthly child/youth involvement calendars. Additionally, 92.3% of respondents from a survey of 48 judges, hearing officers and judicial partners reported the use of bench-level strategies to promote kinship placement and preserve family relationships. These findings reflect meaningful progress in implementing strategies that promote the use of kinship care and child/youth and family engagement and demonstrate Pennsylvania's ongoing commitment to permanency through collaborative and innovative practices.

Despite these strengths, stakeholder feedback did highlight some challenges that continue to impact performance on Permanency Outcomes. Stakeholder feedback noted that kinship placement efforts can be complicated by strained family relationships, difficulty locating kin and periodic systemic barriers associated with the Interstate Compact process, primarily in other jurisdictions outside of PA. Focus groups shared that kinship caregivers have voiced capacity and financial constraints, particularly when formal kinship arrangements (in which the CCYA retained custody), were not established. Some youth have had to advocate for sibling contact, with support for maintaining these relationships and visitation with parents and siblings being frequently hindered by scheduling conflicts, transportation limitations and workforce capacity challenges. Additional barriers to siblings being placed together include circumstances when there are multiple fathers of children in foster care and maternal/paternal relatives choosing to only take blood relatives. Families also described negative perceptions of child welfare staff, which further strained relationships. Additionally, conflicts with other state systems (i.e. the state correctional system) can create barriers to supporting child/parent visitation. In an effort to counter systemic barriers, resources have been developed by SWAN to offer support and guidance for how to ensure children in care can maintain contact with incarcerated parents.

As part of ongoing CQI efforts and while exploring opportunities for potential improvement, SAC members and judicial respondents also identified barriers including delays in hearings, lack of clarity in the court process for families, staff shortages, and limited adoptive placements. Systemic barriers related to TPR were also identified, including delays in TPR hearings, lack of clarity in explaining the process to families, staff shortages, missing documentation, and limited adoptive placements. Inconsistent interpretation of compelling reasons and limited understanding of the emotional impact of TPR were also reported. These barriers directly affect the achievement of permanency and impact permanency outcomes.

Due to the emergency nature of many out-of-home placements, providers noted that sometimes a child's behavioral, emotional or cultural needs are not fully assessed in conjunction with the caregiver's capacity. It was also shared that important physical and mental health information is sometimes withheld from foster parents due to confidentiality concerns, leaving them unprepared. Even when families receive full disclosure, they may not understand how to support the child effectively, which could result in placement disruptions and delays in achieving permanency for the child.

Some focus group participants noted a gap in concurrent planning to achieve permanency, citing lack of training and implementation, while others observed that caseworker capacity limitations due to large caseloads pose a barrier to achieving permanency (e.g., interferes with communication and engagement with families and kin). General challenges to diligent search efforts pose barriers to permanency such as not initiating the search early enough, difficulty gathering identifying or demographic details, and lack of access to accurate tools, education and training, or feedback about outcomes to confirm the best strategies.

Focus group participants also shared observations that placement of children outside of their community due to insufficient placement options compromises their permanency, making reunification and preserving connections less likely due to distance. These barriers include: the lack of kinship placements, exacerbated by difficulty finding kin and kin being unable or unwilling to offer support; shortage of foster placements; and insufficient Community Residential Rehabilitation placements. Participants also discussed difficulty in achieving permanency for specific populations, including children with special needs, children with mental health instability, and Older Youth who may be reluctant to accept permanency options.

Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities

PA benefits from strong collaboration between the court system, OCYF and local CCYAs. This collaboration was leveraged during the past five years and in the development of the 2025-2029 CFSP. While entities such as the AOPC and the Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC) have representatives who serve on the Children's Roundtable Initiative, it is the foundational structure that helps support the court and child welfare agency collaboration.

The Supreme Court of PA and AOPC developed the Office of Children and Families in the Court (OCFC) to administer the federal court improvement program (CIP). One of the most critical aspects of the CIP in PA was the development of the Children's Roundtable Initiative. The Children's Roundtable Initiative created a statewide infrastructure that allows for effective court/agency administration and communication through a three-tiered system. The three levels include Local Children's Roundtables (LCR) in each of the 60 judicial districts, seven statewide Leadership Roundtables (LRT), and one State Roundtable. The highest level of the initiative is the State Roundtable, tri-chaired by a Supreme Court Justice, the OCYF Deputy Secretary, and the OCFC Director. This three-tiered system of roundtables allows for the flow of dependency practice innovations as well as much-needed administrative collaboration between the dependency courts, OCFC, OCYF, local CCYAs and other relevant stakeholders.

Statewide issues are brought to the State Roundtable, which most typically results in forming a workgroup tasked with examining the issue and recommending possible statewide solutions. Current work groups are addressing the following topics: mental health, autism, kinship care, the dependency bench book and hearing officer education. As new issues are identified, the State Roundtable is expected to set a course for addressing them in a way that embraces PA's collaborative values and recognizes the importance of family and children's safety, permanency and well-being.

AOPC, through the OCFC, will continue to collaborate with OCYF and other systems partners to utilize strategies that have proven to be successful as the FEI and the Children's Roundtable Initiative. Judicial and legal professional training needs will be met by continuing advanced legal training in relevant and needed topic areas. A coordinated training process will be applied via similar training topics presented across judicial educational sessions, hearing officer training and legal representation training. This coordinated effort is expected to positively impact quality court hearings by having all legal systems professionals working from the same page.

The Children's Roundtable Structure continues to build collaboration between dependency courts, OCFC, OCYF, local CCYAs and other relevant stakeholders. Over the last three years, the State Roundtable commissioned workgroups to address the following issues: mental health, Autism, kinship care, the Chief Justice Max Baer Children's Summit, the PA Dependency Benchbook and hearing officer education. Outlined below are some notable achievements of the Children's Roundtable:

- The Autism Taskforce and the Kinship Care Taskforce accomplished all the tasks requested by the State Roundtable. Both groups were sunsetted by the 2024 State Roundtable. Although these taskforces are no longer meeting, the information and resources from their work remain available to all dependency courts and CCYAs, including support to implement any resources from OCFC.

- The Dependency Benchbook Committee completed the Fourth Edition of the PA Dependency Benchbook. The new edition was distributed statewide to all dependency judges, juvenile court hearing officers and CCYA Administrators as part of the LRT Meetings. Presentations highlighting the updated content and new bench cards were provided at the 2025 PA State Trial Judges Conference and the 2025 Spring Juvenile Court Hearing Officers Education Session.

- The Juvenile Court Hearing Officer Committee hosts education sessions two times per year. The topic presented in the 2024 Fall session focused on mental health specific to PA law and the dependency system. The 2025 Spring education session focused on the intersection of medical marijuana and dependency and the presentation of the Fourth Edition of the PA Dependency Benchbook.

- The Mental Health Workgroup (MHWG) continues to tackle the intersection of mental health and the dependency courts. The workgroup spent several months educating itself by inviting experts in mental health to monthly meetings. After several months of examining the issue, nationally and statewide, MHWG members could apply their knowledge to create informational handouts shared with the CCYAs and dependency courts at the LRT meetings. These resources help support a better understanding of how to navigate the mental health system for the children and families involved in the dependency system.

- The MHWG is implementing an education plan for the dependency courts and child welfare professionals as part of their work. The MHWG provided an education session for judges, “A Judicial Understanding of Pennsylvania’s Mental Health System,” during the Dependency Education Session of the PA Conference of State Trial Judges. In the future, the MHWG plans to provide the same presentation at the upcoming 2025 Fall Juvenile Court Hearing Officer education session. The MHWG also presented “Addressing the Impact of Mental Health on Children and Families” during the AOPC Behavioral Health Summit. Attendees included teams from counties across the state of judges and Children and Youth Administrators.

- Members of the MHWG also met with the PA YAB to gain insights into the youth's lived experiences. This information was shared with the entire MHWG to help all members better understand how to implement their work.

- The Chief Justice Max Baer Children’s Summit Committee has been meeting to plan and prepare for the 2026 Chief Justice Max Baer Children’s Summit, which will be held from April 22 to April 24, 2026. Each county across the Commonwealth will bring a team from their county and

is required to have the lead dependency judge, and the Children and Youth Agency Administrator attend as part of the team. At the 2026 Summit, the first youth scholarships will be announced. Counties will nominate former and current dependent youth for the scholarships. We will begin with seven statewide scholarships. The plan at this point is for those to be two years at $1,500.00 per year for a total of $3,000.00 per scholarship. The 2025 Virtual FGDM Conference was held on April 23rd and 24th from 9 AM to 12 PM. Participants were offered CEUs, CLEs, and CJE credits. This conference, co-hosted by the OCFC and the CWRC, is for child welfare and dependency court professionals. Each day, there was a keynote speaker and breakout workshops. Workshop sessions included: FGDM and Domestic Violence; FGDM Role in a Truancy Prevention Program; Creating an Agency Environment that Embraces a Family Teaming Approach; Enhanced legal representation and resource parent mentors in Snyder County who teach, coach, listen, advocate and support families; and The FGDM process/Individual with Lived Experience.

In addition to these workgroups, the State Roundtable also identified specific areas of interest, including length of court supervision, reasonable efforts findings, family engagement, kinship care, father engagement, children and youth court participation, staff retention, and enhanced legal advocacy. These topics are discussed at the LRT meetings with dependency judges, juvenile court hearing officers, CCYA Administrators, OCYF and other dependency stakeholders. As new issues are identified, the State Roundtable is expected to set a course for addressing them in a way that embraces PA’s collaborative values and recognizes the importance of family and children's safety, permanency and well-being.

AOPC, through the OCFC, will continue to collaborate with OCYF and other systems partners to utilize strategies that have proven to be successful, including the FEI. OCFC offered virtual education sessions to the counties participating in the FEI focused on the purpose of the FEI, which is to reduce trauma and promote healing through resiliency to support safety, permanency and well-being. The session included dependency judges, juvenile court hearing officers, Guardians ad Litem, parent attorneys, solicitors, CCYA Administrators, Supervisors and Caseworkers. There were four different educational sessions over seven different dates for a total of 17 hours of training with 926 attendees.

In addition to the virtual education sessions, OCFC hosted an FEI Leadership Forum. Each FEI County attended with a team of eight, which consisted of the lead dependency judge, juvenile court hearing officers, dependency attorneys, CCYA Administrators and other CCYA FEI leaders from their county. OCYF also had representatives in attendance at this forum. The forum focused on providing an opportunity for FEI county leaders to network, share ideas and strategies, and promote fidelity to the advanced practices of the FEI model. The day-and-a-half forum provided intentional time for the county teams to collaborate and plan new ways counties can make changes to their dependency system.

C. Well-Being

Well-Being Outcomes 1, 2, and 3

Well-Being outcomes include: (1) Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs; (2) Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs; and (3) Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

State Response

Performance Data Highlights

PA observed strong performance across areas of each CFSR Well-being Outcome including:

- ❖ Well-Being Outcome 1 - PA excelled at needs assessment and services to foster parents highlighted in Item 12C, achieving an 88% strength rating across cases reviewed in 2021 and 2025.
- ❖ Well-Being Outcome 2 - PA also observed strong performance on children receiving appropriate services to meet their educational needs, receiving 88% strength ratings across cases reviewed in 2021 and 2025.
- ❖ Well-Being Outcome 3 - PA performed the highest on Item 17 with over 90% of the applicable cases reviewed in 2021 and 2025 receiving strength ratings for children receiving adequate assessment and services to meet physical and dental health needs.

Additional data highlights provided from the Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries indicated that:

- PA demonstrated strong performance relating to the monitoring of state educational record requirements as only 4 out of 65[17] CCYAs received licensing inspection violations during the 2024 licensing review cycle, due to noncompliance of these regulations. These citations were observed during inspections for two fully licensed counties and two provisionally licensed counties.

PA observed areas for improvement across practice areas of CFSR Well-Being Outcome 1:

- PA performed the lowest on Item 15 (Caseworker Visits with Parents) and Item 12B (Needs Assessment and Services to Children), achieving 50% strength rating for applicable cases reviewed in 2021 and 2025.

[17] During Annual Licensing Inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

- Performance on Item 13 (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning) was a 56% strength rating for applicable cases reviewed in 2021 and 2025.
- PA also observed areas for practice improvement related to Item 14 (Caseworker Visits with Children), achieving 73% strength rating for applicable cases reviewed in 2021 and 2025.

Additional data highlights provided from the Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries indicated:

- The state's monitoring of frequency of caseworker visits with children suggests this is an area for improvement as 18 out of 65[18] CCYAs received citations during the 2024 Annual Licensing Inspections, due to noncompliance of the regulation relating to caseworker visits with children. These violations were observed among 15 fully licensed counties and three provisionally licensed counties.

These performance data highlights were pulled from the CFSR case reviews that took place 2021 and 2025, which included 77 total cases reviewed across seven sites in 2021, and three sites in 2025. This represents the most recent and relevant data source for this component. Reports were taken from the Online Monitoring System (OMS) and reviewed for this assessment. Additionally, data from the most recent 2024 CCYA Annual Licensing Inspections, which included, 65 out of the 67 counties in PA was used for this assessment.

Brief Analysis

Well-being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs

- ❖ CFSR Item 12: Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess the needs of and provide services to children, parents, and foster parents to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family?
- ❖ CFSR Item 13: Did the agency make concerted efforts to involve the parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis?
- ❖ CFSR Item 14: Were the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and child(ren) sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?
- ❖ CFSR Item 15: Were the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers of the child(ren) sufficient to ensure the safety,

[18] During Annual Licensing Inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?

Table 32 below shows the CFSR results being considered for the assessment of Well-being Outcome 1. Please refer to the "Data Sources" section in Section III regarding the timeframes and limitations of the CFSR data set. An analysis of the data indicates that PA excelled in performance associated with needs assessment and services to foster parents, as highlighted in Item 12C, achieving an 88% strength rating. It is important to note that Item 12C demonstrated higher rates of strength ratings than with needs assessment and services to children, in Item 12A, and parents, in Item 12B, which lowered the overall Item 12 outcome performance.

Case review data has revealed that PA will need to improve performance on Well-being Outcome 1, as only 51% outcome was substantially achieved. Cases reviewed for this assessment indicated lower performance related to caseworker visits with parents in Item 15, associated with child and family involvement in case planning, in Item 13, being able to more effectively assess for and meet the needs of children, in Items 12A, and parents, in Items 12B, as well as a need for continued efforts to enhance practice pertaining to caseworker visits with children, as evaluated in Item 14.

Table 32. Performance on Well-being Outcome 1, Items 12-15

Outcome	Description	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved
Well-Being Outcome 1	**Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs (n=77)**	**50.64%**	**29.87%**

Item	Description	Percent Rated Strength
Item 12	**Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents (n=77)**	**53.24%**
Item 12A	**Needs Assessment and Services to Children (n=77)**	**75.32%**
Item 12B	**Needs Assessment and Services to Parents (n=64)**	**50.00%**
Item 12C	**Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents (n=40)**	**87.50%**
Item 13	**Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning (n=72)**	**55.55%**

Source [CFSR Online Monitoring System, JBS International], [September 2025]

The state also monitors the frequency of caseworker visits with children in foster care, and this information is used to inform state performance pertaining to Well-Being Outcome 1. OCYF Bulletin 3490-08-04, Frequency and Tracking of Caseworker Visits to Children in Federally Defined Foster Care, reinforces Title 55 Pa. Code § 3490.61(c) and § 3490.235(g), requiring that when a case has been accepted for services, the CCYA shall make face-to-face contact with the parent(s) and the child as often as necessary for the protection of the child, but no less often than:

1. Once a week, until the case is no longer designated as high-risk by the county agency, if the child remains in or returns to the home in which the abuse occurred, and the county agency has determined a high level of risk exists for the case.
2. Once a month for six months or case closure when the child is either:
    a. Placed out of the home or setting in which the abuse occurred;
    b. Not at a high risk of abuse or neglect

PA monitored visitation data three times in 2022, with the addition of caseworker visitation information provided in the AFCARS data submission. OCYF is now able to leverage the AFCARS system to monitor caseworker visitation information more regularly for all youth in care. In 2023, reports on caseworker visitation were in accordance with the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Public Law 112-34). Although OCYF recognizes that the 90% required minimum threshold for FFY 2024 has not been met, it is believed that it, in part, is a symptom of the new AFCARS data submission and not solely based on non-compliance. OCYF has been distributing manually generated workbooks twice per AFCARS reporting period to provide a more proactive outreach to CCYAs and private agencies. These workbooks show all the youth in their population who do not have at least one visit every full month in care. By bringing this awareness to the forefront, it helps ensure that if visits have been completed in those months, caseworkers can make the necessary corrections in the county case management system so that accurate data is available. PA believes that maintaining a strong commitment to frequency and quality visitation with children will lead to improved outcomes.

CCYA compliance with state regulations and policies related to caseworker visits with children receiving both in-home services and in foster care are monitored through the Annual Licensing Inspection process. As seen in Table 33, 43 cases were cited for issues related to caseworker visits with children during calendar year 2024. Issues were more commonly identified for placement and GPS/CPS cases reviewed during Annual Licensing Inspection versus in home records reviewed. These citations were acquired across fifteen fully licensed counties and three provisionally licensed counties.

Table 33. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Caseworker Visits with Children[19]

	SFY 2020-21	**SFY 2021-22**	**SFY 2022-23**	**Calendar Year 2024**
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	15 counties	20 counties	9 counties	15 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	2 counties	1 county	4 counties	3 counties
Total Cases Cited	**47**	**54**	**26**	**43**
Total Counties Without Citation	**43 (of 60) 72%**	**31 (of 53) 58%**	**53 (of 66) 80%**	**47 (of 65) 73%**

[19] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counties, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

The concerted efforts that counties make in providing IL support to eligible youth is evaluated through the IL site visit monitoring process. This includes ensuring all youth's needs are assessed at age 14 or older for IL services and utilizing that information to inform transition plans for these youth. These concerted efforts speak to CFSR Items 16, 17, and 18 which outline the need to ensure the youth receive appropriate services to ensure the youth's physical, educational, and mental/behavioral health needs are being met. Counties also speak to how they engage the youth's family and support in the development of the IL Transition Plans through a variety of practices including Family Group Decision Making, Family Team Meetings and other county specific meeting formats. This begins by informing youth of their right to have at least two supportive adults involved in their planning, per the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act.

Table 34 below provides NYTD data related to the 10,627 youth who received IL services in FFY 2023-2024. The data highlights the number and percentage of youth out of the 10,627 that received support in the areas of academic, post-secondary, health education family support.

Table 34. NYTD Youth report on Academics, Health and Family Support

Academic Support	Post-Secondary	Health Education	Family Support
4,884	3,424	6,315	4,970
45.96%	32.22%	59.42%	46.77%

Source [NYTD Database], [October 2025]

To further support the youth's mental health needs under CFSR Item 18, youth who are involved in the IL program are provided with opportunities to attend events such as the Annual Older Youth Retreat giving them the opportunity to participate in activities and workshops. During the 2025 Older Youth Retreat, youth were invited to participate in a focus group to share their perspectives on normalcy. Eighty-nine youth from 28 counties across the Commonwealth participated in these focus groups during the Retreat. Conversations revolved around what normalcy looks like, how normalcy impacts mental health, the role of the family and friends in helping youth feel normal, how IL workers contribute to that sense of normalcy, coping strategies youth use, and how their understanding of normalcy has changed over time.

Across all focus groups at the 2024 Older Youth Retreat when discussing CFSR Item 18, one common theme expressed was the importance of belonging and social connection and how these contribute to youth feeling normal. Some youth described feeling connected through participation in extracurricular activities, such as sports or work. Others found connection through time spent with family and friends. Many youth also identified their IL worker as a key source of nonjudgemental social and emotional support during their transition to adulthood. These insights reinforce the importance of positive, trusting relationships as central to a youth's sense of normalcy and well-being. When normalcy was absent, youth described experiencing anxiety, depression, and

stress. Below in Table 35. illustrates several key themes that emerged from these discussions.

Table 35. 2025 Older Youth Retreat Themes

Question Topic	Themes			
What Normalcy Looks Like	• Activities and hobbies • Friends and family	• Independence • Self-expression and authenticity	• Stability • How one was raised	• Self-care • Fairness and equity • Normal is subjective
How Normalcy Impacts Mental and Emotional Health	• Impacts on mental health • Belonging and social connections	• Equality and fairness • Stability and safety	• Coping strategies • Self-worth	• Cultural adaptation
How Family and Friends Support Normalcy	• Emotional support and safety • Belonging and trust	• Non-judgmental and accepting	• Autonomy and age-appropriate rules	• Practical and material support
How IL Worker Supports Normalcy	• Opportunities and resources • Emotional support and stability	• Respect, listen, and understand	• Prepare for adulthood	• Recognize positive behavior
How to Cope When Not Allowed to Participate in Activities	• Engage in alternative activities • Self-reflection and emotional regulation	• Self-reliance • Acceptance	• Emotional suppression and isolation	• Advocacy and communication
How Normalcy Has Changed Over Time	• Past trauma as non-normal	• Foster care and connection	• Breaking from the past	• Growing up fast
Additional Theme	• Parentification			

Source [CWRC Research and Evaluation Report], [September 2025]

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

- ❖ CFSR Item 16: Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess children's educational needs, and appropriately address identified needs in case planning and case management activities?

Table 36. Performance on Well-being Outcome 2, Item 16

Outcome	Description	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved
Well-Being Outcome 2	**Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs (n=57)**	**87.71%**	**1.75%**

Item	Description	Percent Rated Strength
Item 16	**Educational Needs of the Child (n=57)**	**87.71%**

Source [CFSR Online Monitoring System, JBS International], [September 2025]

CFSR Results

The table above shows the CFSR results being included for the assessment of Well-being Outcome 2. The data displayed is the combined results from case reviews that have taken place in 2025. Due to limitations in sample size and timeframes represented in this data set, trends in performance are unable to be accurately calculated. Please refer to the "Data Sources" section in Section III regarding the timeframes and limitations of the CFSR data set.

CFSR data reviewed for this assessment indicates that PA observed the strongest performance on well-being outcomes with Well-Being Outcome 2, which focuses on children receiving appropriate services to meet their educational needs, receiving an 88% substantially achieved outcome. Of the data reviewed for the overall well-being assessment, Item 16, assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs, had the second highest percentage of strength ratings, scoring an over 87% strength rating.

The Annual Licensing Inspection records also provide the state with additional data to inform outcome performance. CCYA compliance with state regulations 3130, 3700 as well as policies related to obtaining and assessing education records of children who are of school age are monitored through the licensing process. As seen in Table 37, 14 cases were cited for issues related to education records not being in the child's case record during calendar year 2024. Non-compliance was more commonly identified for placement cases reviewed during annual inspection versus in-home records reviewed. These citations were issued among two fully licensed counties and two provisionally licensed counties.

Table 37. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Education Record Requirements[20]

	Calendar Year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	2 counties
Total Fully Licensed Counties in 2024	57
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	2 counties
Total Provisionally Licensed Counties in 2024	8 counties
Total Counties Without Citation	**61 (of 65)**
% Rate of Counties in Compliance	**93.84%**
Total Cases Cited	**14**
Total Number of Placement Cases Reviewed	**484**
% Rate of Cases in Compliance	**97.11%**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

Youth who attended the 2024 Older Youth Retreat were invited to participate in a focus group to share their experiences related to education. There were 58 OY, ranging

[20] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

in age from 16 to 20 years of age and representing 21 counties across all regions of the state, that participated in the 2024 Older Youth Retreat focus groups. Results of the 2024 Older Youth Retreat's education focus group does not represent all OY served by the IL Program in PA. While the number of youth who participated may limit how representative the findings are of the entire state, the information gathered from the focus groups provides valuable insight into the youths' experiences related to education.

The questions posed during the focus groups at the 2024 Older Youth Retreat focused on challenges youth faced while working towards obtaining their high school diploma, supports needed and received while in high school, awareness of options for postsecondary education or trade school, how prepared they felt to begin postsecondary education or trade school, what encouraged pursuit of postsecondary education or trade school, and how prepared they felt for the workforce if continued education was not part of their plan. During the focus groups, youth shared a variety of experiences related to educational challenges as well as support they felt and their preparation for further education or entering the workforce. Their experiences differed from county to county and school to school, given that the opportunities available to youth in these varied locations are different. Youth spoke about their desire for a standardization of services and support provided across the state of Pennsylvania to ensure equitable opportunities available to all youth in care.

Across all focus groups, the most common topic discussed was social support, either received or not received and what support is needed. This topic came up throughout the focus group and not just in response to the questions that specifically asked about their experiences with support. The sources of support varied from youth to youth. For example, some youth received it from their family or placement caregivers, while others acquired it from school staff. Various forms of social support were provided by the sources, including emotional support (e.g., showing care or providing encouragement), informational support (e.g., sharing guidance, advice, or helpful information), and tangible support (e.g., providing concrete assistance or services). These results reinforce the importance of social connections among youth in care and how interpersonal relationships can assist youth with their transition to adulthood.

Another common topic mentioned throughout the focus group in response to multiple questions was financial support. Youth discussed financial support in various ways, including challenges they have faced related to receiving such support (e.g., struggles with securing financial support, lack of awareness of financial resources, inconsistent availability of financial resources), types of financial support they have received, how assistance in securing financial support was helpful in preparing them for postsecondary education/trade school, and how having financial support motivated them to do well in school and pursue further education. This recurring focus on financial support throughout the discussion suggests that youth value this type of support during their educational endeavors, and it is important for them as they transition to becoming productive adults.

While educational supports also vary from county to county, access to the Education and Training Grant (ETG) and the PA Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver (FosterEd) remains consistent across the state. All youth who have experienced foster care on or after their sixteenth birthday, have completed high school or earned an equivalent certification, and are under 26 years of age by July 1 of the upcoming academic year are eligible for both programs. FosterEd requires PA postsecondary schools or institutes of higher education to waive tuition and mandatory fees, once all federal, state, and other scholarships and grants have been applied to a student's account. Over the last three academic years (2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24), Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has disbursed an average of 468 ETG awards (192 new and 276 renewals) to eligible youth.

Further, efforts made by counties to support youth in their educational endeavors are explored through the IL site visit process. Specifically, participants are asked to describe the educational support provided to youth to help them complete academic requirements to graduate from high school and to assist them throughout post-secondary/technical/vocational education, including helping them prepare for this academic path, complete academic requirements, and graduate. CCYAs are encouraged to collaborate with resource parents, families, schools and other partners who support youth in achieving their educational goals. Agencies are also required to provide the number of OYs who have participated in post-secondary education preparation activities (tutoring, school visits, assistance in completing applications, scholarship searches, etc.) as well as those eligible to graduate, those that did graduate and those that earned a G.E.D.

During the IL site visit process, efforts are made by CCYAs to support youth in their educational endeavors. Specifically, during site visits, youth are asked to describe the support they are looking for to help them complete academic requirements to graduate from high school and how they could be assisted in moving on to post-secondary education. This provides an opportunity for the IL worker to customize their support to the youth to meet their specific needs and achieve their educational goals. This support can take the form of tutoring, GED assistance, college or technical school visits, and assistance in completing applications for scholarships and college enrollment. Additionally, efforts are made to collaborate with the youth's supporters including their resource family, teachers, and other involved service providers to help achieve these educational goals. This provides the mentality that raising, supporting, and nurturing a child is a shared responsibility that extends beyond the immediate family. Even after the child ages out of formalized care, it becomes about securing these connections and ensuring that all supporters of the youth are on the same page about their goals and aspirations.

IL Youth who participate in IL services who were eligible to take the NYTD survey at ages 17, 19 and 21 are asked if they have received a high school diploma or have participated in a higher education program, below in Figure 1 are the self-reported responses received in FFY 2020-24. These individuals were from cohort 4 of the NYTD survey respondents. It is important to highlight that 76% of the 140 individuals who were

21 years of age reported they had successfully received their high school diploma or GED, while 89% of respondents who were 17 years of age report still being enrolled in school.

Figure 1. NYTD Responses for FFY 2020-2024 on Education

Outcomes Reported

Outcomes	Percentage at age 17	Percentage at age 19	Percentage at age 21
High school diploma or GED	6%	70%	76%
Associate's degree	0%	0%	0%
Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.S.)	0%	0%	0%
Higher degree	0%	0%	0%
None of the above (Education)	92%	28%	19%
Declined (Education)	1%	2%	4%
Vocational certificate	0%	1%	1%
Vocational license	0%	0%	0%
Current enrollment and attendance	89%	41%	24%

Source [NYTD Database Cohorts 4 and 5], [October 2025]

In addition, youth who are actively parenting or expecting while receiving IL services have access to additional resources and support to assist them in raising their children. Table 38 below illustrates the number of youth who identified that they were pregnant or already raising children of their own during the 2024-25 site visit cycle.

Table 38. Services offered to youth who are Pregnant or Raising Children in FY 2024-25.

Number of pregnant youth	Number of parenting youth
289	644

*This number is based on the number of counties in Pennsylvania, not the number of pregnant and parenting youth

Supports That Counties Offer To Youth	Total Youth Served
Child care	36
Early childhood learning and development services (e.g. Head Start/Early Head Start)	40
Housing for parent and child	46
Individualized support specific to this population	48
Infant care and/or safety supplies (e.g. diapers, formula, medication lockboxes, car seats)	52
Local community providers	59
Medical care	41
Medical education	41
Mental health services	47
Parenting Programs	52
Parenting support groups	35
Prenatal and/or post-natal education and/or programing (e.g. Nurse-Family Partnership)	47
Transportation	54
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	55

Source [IL Pre-Site Visit Questionnaire Results], [October 2025]

As part of this assessment, qualitative data was gathered from professionals and individuals with lived experience from across the system during SAC meetings. In reviewing Well-being Outcome 2, SAC members shared their perspectives and insights into how county agencies are making concerted efforts to assess children's educational needs and address those needs in case planning and case management activities. When taking a closer look at issues surrounding truancy, root causes were identified for those children who are experiencing behavioral health or trauma, which appeared to have an impact on children's attendance and engagement at school. The group spoke about the benefits of staff making concerted efforts to talk with and engage children and youth to support accurate assessment of needs as well as providing school-based therapeutic support services to better help meeting children's needs. Group members also highlighted strengths in being able to have continuity of staff and ongoing communication when youth changes school districts to support transitions and promote academic success.

SAC members also identified areas for improvement in assessing and meeting children and youths' educational needs. It was noted that at times, agencies experience struggles in working with school districts in navigating issues surrounding truancy, noting that too often school districts can be reactive instead of proactively working to support youth. The group highlighted systemic needs impacting children and youth related to access to services, waitlist challenges, and differences in outcomes for children in foster care, voicing higher rates of out-of-school suspension impacting those caring for the child and the stability of the youth's school and placement. The roles of CCYA Educational Liaisons[21] were highlighted as a positive resource that serves as a bridge between state and local child welfare and education systems to ensure educational stability for students in foster care.

Well-being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

- CFSR Item 17: Did the agency address the physical health needs of children, including dental health needs?
- CFSR Item 18: Did the agency address the mental/behavioral health needs of children?

PA foster care regulations establish requirements and time frames for medical and dental care for children entering care, as well as children in ongoing foster home care. A child is to receive a medical appraisal by a licensed physician within 60 days of the child's admission to foster family care, unless the child has had an appraisal within the last 90 days and the results of the appraisal are available. The appraisal includes: a review of the child's health history; physical examination of the child; and laboratory or diagnostic test as indicated by the examining physician, including those required to detect communicable disease. Children placed in residential and day treatment facilities

[21] https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/adopt-pa-kids/roles-responsibilies-ccya-education-liaisons

are required to have a health examination within 15 days after admission or more frequently at specific ages in the periodicity schedule recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**.** Additionally, children in these facilities three years or older are required to have a dental examination performed by a licensed dentist and teeth cleaning performed at least semi-annually. If the child has not had a dental examination and teeth cleaning within six months prior to admission, a dental examination and teeth cleaning must be performed within 30 days after admission.

With regards to regulations governing mental/behavioral health assessment and treatment, there is no specific requirement in PA for a standard mental health assessment for a child entering placement. State requirements for mental health examination and treatment are covered by the same provisions that govern physical health care and treatment. These needs are addressed within services such as the IL program that is offered to all youth 14 years of age or older who have been in care at least 24 hours proceeding their fourteenth birthday.

IL Youth who participate in IL services who were eligible to take the NYTD survey at ages 17, 19 and 21 are asked questions related to services received or access to services, including mental health. Figure 2 are the self-reported responses received in FFY 2020-24. These individuals were from cohort 4 of the NYTD survey respondents and out of the 140 respondents at age 21,89% indicated they have access to mental health services and 90% have access to medical services.

Figure 2. NYTD Survey Results, FY 2020 – 24

Outcomes	Percentage at age 17	Percentage at age 19	Percentage at Age 21
Medical	89%	79%	90%
Mental Health	87%	85%	89%

Source [NYTD Database], [October 2025]

CFSR Results

Table 39 below shows the CFSR results being considered for the assessment of Well-being Outcome 3. The data displayed is the combined results from case reviews that have taken place in 2021 and 2025. Please refer to the “Data Sources” section in Section III regarding the timeframes and limitations of the CFSR data set. CFSR data reviewed for this assessment indicates that PA observed strong practices in assessing children’s physical and mental health needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs with Well-Being Outcome 3 receiving 84% substantially achieved. Of the cases reviewed for this period, PA performed the highest on Item 17 with over 90% of the cases receiving strength ratings. It is important to note that performance on Item 18, assessment of mental health needs and provision of services, only received 73% strength, which was not as strong as performance on Item 17 physical/dental health needs, indicating an area for continued improvement.

Table 39. Performance on Well-being Outcome 3, Items 17-18

Outcome	Description	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved
Well-Being Outcome 3	**Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs (n=67)**	**83.58%**	**7.46%**

Item	Description	Percent Rated Strength
Item 17	**Physical Health of the Child (n=63)**	**90.47%**
Item 18	**Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child (n=37)**	**72.97%**

Source [CFSR Online Monitoring System, JBS International], [September 2025]

During the Annual Licensing Inspection process, a random sample of placement cases from each county are reviewed to ensure children/youth are receiving appropriate medical and dental appraisals within the regulatory time frames set by state regulation. Twenty-seven citations were issued across 65 counties during the 2024 calendar year for not meeting the requirements of medical and dental appraisals. One of the citations noted in the 2024 calendar year was related to medical requirements; 13 of the citations noted were related to dental requirements.

Table 40. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Medical and Dental Requirements[22]

	SFY 2020-21	SFY 2021-22	SFY 2022-23	Calendar Year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	11 counties	11 counties	4 counties	11 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	1 county	1 county	1 county	1 county
Total Cases Cited	**25**	**21**	**7**	**14**
Total placement cases reviewed	**213**	**368**	**480**	**484**
Total Counties Without Citation	**48 (of 60) 80%**	**39 (of 53) 74%**	**61 (of 66) 92%**	**53 (of 65) 82%**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [May 2025]

Another data source used to support Well-Being Outcome 3 observations comes from the NYTD. Youth who turn 17 years of age while in foster care also have the opportunity to complete NYTD baseline surveys, where they can express whether they have experienced barriers to medical and mental health services, while in care. Over the last three years, an average of 75% of 17-year-old youth who completed the survey agreed that they had not experienced any barriers to receiving medical care, while in foster care. Similarly, an average of 77% of youth reported that they had not experienced

[22] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

any barriers to receiving mental health care. In FFY 2023-24, NYTD service data reported that Health Education was the most prevalent service that youth received statewide, with this service being in the top three services in each of PA's four regions.

Additionally, Act 118 of 2022, entitled "Helping Older Foster Youth Find Permanency", went into effect on January 2, 2023, and requires CCYAs to submit data to the Department when the court terminates jurisdiction of a youth, aged 18 years of age or older including those who resume care and then later terminate jurisdiction. Data is submitted via a questionnaire that asks questions about youth at the time of their discharge, such as:

- Was youth enrolled in Medicaid
- Whether the child/youth was a parent or expectant parent; and,
- Whether the child/youth had possession of health insurance card

In the years since Act 118 went into effect, counties reported that 87% of youth who left care at 18 years of age or older were enrolled in Medicaid at the time of their discharge. While this does not eliminate every barrier that youth face when accessing medical and mental health services, it does remove some of the burden that accompanies securing these health needs. Additional barriers to obtaining both physical and mental health care exist in different areas of the state. At times, access is limited due to a youth's location, and youth may need to travel long distances due to the lack of appropriate clinicians that accept their insurance, which is often a barrier in and of itself. It was noted by focus group participants, and SAC members that often, youth are unwilling to attend appointments or agree to treatment. Act 118 data show nearly all youth are enrolled in Medicaid upon leaving care.

The physical, dental and mental health needs of OY are also addressed during the IL site visit process during the onsite review. This information is then documented in the IL report, Prevention and Wellness section, written by the Older Youth Practice Improvement Specialist.

As part of this assessment, qualitative data was gathered from professionals and individuals with lived experience from across the system during SAC meetings. SAC members spoke of effective strategies in meeting the physical/dental and psychological/ behavioral health needs of children and youth in Well-being Outcome 3. It was voiced by the group that conducting quality assessments when youth enter care supports the accurate identification of needs and appropriate provision of services. Group members added that the monitoring of services is taking place through Annual Licensing Inspections from all four of the OCYF regional offices for all 67 counties, which track the provision of services to meet medical and dental needs. Group members also identified strengths in the workforce's access to trauma trainings, use of service animals as a therapy resource for children, and the presence of managed care health professionals in dependency court hearings to provide real-time updates and referrals.

Committee members also spoke to challenges in meeting physical/dental and psychological/behavioral health needs related to access to services, waitlists, staffing challenges, and transportation needs. The group also spoke about challenges in obtaining

timely initial appointments for physical and dental exams following children entering care, as well as times where the quality of services being provided may have been impacted due to lack of service providers. It was also noted that additional trauma-informed services would more effectively meet the needs of children, youth and families served by the system.

Additionally, community and system partner focus groups provided insights into performance on Well-being Outcome 3. Focus groups included people with lived experience shared that receiving individualized services helped them in meeting their mental health needs. They also noted the benefits of tailored services and options for group therapy approaches in supporting them with getting connected to other people with similar experiences which helped them not feel alone. These same focus group members also emphasized the importance of having accessible mental health services across the state in both school and provider settings. The group also highlighted systemic challenges, noting times when county agencies struggle to identify physicians who will take Medicaid to provide medical services for children and youth.

Another method that supports the state's monitoring of Well-Being data is through the FGDM Statewide Evaluation. The FGDM Statewide Evaluation gathers information about the services and supports involved with the family since the initial FGDM conference, suggesting efforts to address the needs of families and to provide services to them. These services and supports depend on the individual needs of the family and therefore vary from family to family. The information is collected using the Outcome Form, which may be completed at 45-60 days, six months and/or other time point after the initial conference. Since most Outcome Forms submitted for the Evaluation are completed 45-60 days after the initial conference, these are the data used for analysis purposes. Table 41. presents information about the services and supports involved with the family during the 45-60 days since the initial conference among conferences occurring in the past three SFYs (2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25) that involved a family with an open CCYA case (i.e., the family's case was open with CCYA only or both CCYA and Juvenile Probation Office) whose child(ren) were receiving in-home services or were in an out-of-home placement.

Among conferences involving open-in-home cases:

- Educational support was reported for less than a third of conferences in SFY 2022-23 and then decreased to less than a quarter in SFY 2024-25.
- Mental health services and support for the parent fluctuated around a third of conferences across the past three SFYs.
- Mental health services and support for the child were reported for more than a third of conferences across the past three SFYs.
- Intellectual and development disabilities services and support for the parent and child and early childhood developmental services remained low for all three SFYs.

Among conferences involving open out-of-home cases:

- Educational support fluctuated around a third of conferences across the past three SFYs.
- Mental health services and support for the parent were reported for slightly more than a third of conferences across the past three SFYs.
- Mental health services and support for the child were reported for less than a third of conferences in SFY 2022-23 and then increased to over half in SFYs 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- Intellectual and development disabilities services and support for the parent and child and early childhood developmental services remained low for all three SFYs.

Table 41. Services and Supports 45-60 Days Since the Initial Conference Among Open In-Home Cases and Open Out-Of-Home Cases According to SFY

Family Open for Services & Receiving IN-HOME Services	**SFY 22-23 N (%) Total N=101**	**SFY 23-24 N (%) Total N=56**	**SFY 24-25 N (%) Total N=113**
Education support	32 (31.7%)	14 (25.0%)	26 (23.0%)
Intellectual and developmental disabilities services and support (parent)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Intellectual and developmental disabilities services and support (child)	7 (6.9%)	2 (3.6%)	9 (8.0%)
Mental health services and support (parent)	39 (38.6%)	17 (30.4%)	37 (32.7%)
Mental health services and support (child)	36 (35.6%)	20 (35.7%)	45 (39.8%)
Early childhood developmental services	11 (10.9%)	5 (8.9%)	5 (4.4%)

Family Open for Services & Child in OUT-OF-HOME Placement	**SFY 22-23 N (%) Total N=77**	**SFY 23-24 N (%) Total N=52**	**SFY 24-25 N (%) Total N=77**
Education support	25 (32.5%)	22 (42.3%)	29 (37.7%)
Intellectual and developmental disabilities services and support (parent)	1 (1.3%)	4 (7.7%)	1 (1.3%)
Intellectual and developmental disabilities services and support (child)	3 (3.9%)	5 (9.6%)	6 (7.8%)
Mental health services and support (parent)	30 (39.0%)	19 (36.5%)	26 (33.8%)
Mental health services and support (child)	25 (32.5%)	27 (51.9%)	44 (57.1%)
Early childhood developmental services	2 (2.6%)	8(15.4%)	8 (10.4%)

Source [FGDM Statewide Evaluation SFYs 2022-23 to 2024-25], [August 2025]

One of the key principles of FGDM is the involvement of families in case planning decisions. This is reflected in families' involvement in initial conferences as well as follow-up conferences held for the purpose of reviewing the plan to monitor what has worked and areas that may need more planning to achieve their initial FGDM purpose. The FGDM Statewide Evaluation collects information about continued participation in

FGDM via follow-up conferences for the same identified need discussed during the initial conference. This information is also collected using the Outcome Form (completed at 45-60 days, six months and/or other time point after the initial conference). Families may choose not to have a follow-up conference despite being offered. Table 42 illustrates the number and percentage of follow-up conferences that were offered and occurred at any point after the initial conference.

Across all three state fiscal years, for both open-in-home cases, and open-out-of-home cases, families were offered a follow-up conference when at least one outcome form had been submitted to the statewide FGDM evaluation. Specific to conferences involving open-in-home cases where a follow-up conference was offered, the percentage of follow-up conferences occurring fluctuated between approximately a quarter to a half of conferences across the past three SFYs. Regarding conferences involving open out-of-home cases where a follow-up conference was offered, the percentage of follow-up conferences being held increased from approximately a third in SFYs 2022-23 and 2023-24 to over half of conferences in SFY 2024-25.

Table 42. Follow-Up Conferences Offered and Occurred at Any Point After the Initial FGDM Conference Among Conferences Involving Open In-Home Cases and Open Out-Of-Home Cases According to SFY[23]

Family Open for Services & Receiving IN-HOME Services	SFY 22-23 N (%)	SFY 23-24 N (%)	SFY 24-25 N (%)
Total conferences with at least one Outcome Form submitted	108	64	121
Family was offered a follow-up conference [a]	95 (88.0%)	58 (90.6%)	103 (85.1%)
Follow-up conference occurred [b]	39 (41.1%)	16 (27.6%)	51 (49.5%)

Family Open for Services & Child in OUT-OF-HOME Placement	SFY 22-23 N (%)	SFY 23-24 N (%)	SFY 24-25 N (%)
Total conferences with at least one Outcome Form submitted	84	53	84
Family was offered a follow-up conference [a]	73 (86.9%)	47 (88.7%)	74 (88.1%)
Follow-up conference occurred [b]	25 (34.2%)	16 (34.0%)	45 (60.8%)

Source [FGDM Statewide Evaluation SFYs 2022 – 23 to 2024 – 25], [August 2025]

Data submitted to the FGDM Statewide Evaluation also indicates whether the family's plan directly or indirectly improved the child's/youth's overall well-being, physical needs, emotional or mental health needs, educational needs, and living environment since the initial conference. These responses are provided by a professional, typically the FGDM coordinator or facilitator, based on their perspective and interactions with the family. Table 43 displays information about conferences

[23] [a] Percentages are based on the total number of conferences with at least one Outcome Form submitted to the FGDM Statewide Evaluation.
[b] Percentages are based on the number of conferences at which a follow-up conference was offered.

involving open-in-home cases and conferences involving open out-of-home cases in which the professional indicated that the family's plan moderately or significantly improved identified needs among the focus child/youth at 45-60 days since the initial conference. Data is presented according to SFY. For over half of conferences that involved open in-home cases, professionals indicated that the family's plan moderately or significantly improved various needs of the focus child/youth at 45-60 days across the past three SFYs. In general, these findings trended slightly upwards across the past three SFYs, with SFY 2024-25 having the highest percentages. Among conferences that involved open out-of-home cases, the percentage of conferences in which professionals indicated that the family's plan moderately or significantly improved various needs of the focus child/youth at this follow-up timepoint fluctuated below and above half across the past three SFYs.

Table 43. Family's Plan Moderately/Significantly Improved the Focus Child's/ Youth's Needs at 45-60 Days Since the Initial Conference Among Conferences Involving Open In-Home Cases and Open Out-Of-Home Cases According to SFY[24]

Family Open for Services & Receiving IN-HOME Services	SFY 22-23 N (% of Total N)	SFY 23-24 N (% of Total N)	SFY 24-25 N (% Total N)
Overall well-being	53 (54.1% of 98)	30 (56.6% of 53)	73 (64.6% of 113)
Physical needs	43 (51.2% of 84)	22 (59.5% of 37)	64 (64.0% of 100)
Emotional or mental health needs	51 (52.6% of 97)	28 (57.1% of 49)	69 (62.2% of 111)
Educational needs among school-aged focus children/youth	42 (54.5% of 77)	22 (52.4% of 42)	59 (64.1% of 92)
Living environment	49 (53.8% of 91)	25 (59.5% of 42)	65 (63.7% of 102)

Family Open for Services & Child in OUT-OF-HOME Placement	SFY 22-23 N (% Total N)	SFY 23-24 N (% Total N)	SFY 24-25 N (% Total N)
Overall well-being	36 (48.6% of 74)	27 (55.1% of 49)	45 (60.0% of 75)
Physical needs	33 (45.8% of 72)	17 (37.0% of 46)	40 (56.3% of 71)
Emotional or mental health needs	35 (47.3% of 74)	21 (42.9% of 49)	41 (55.4% of 74)
Educational needs among school-aged focus children/youth	23 (42.6% of 54)	23 (60.5% of 38)	34 (55.7% of 61)
Living environment	32 (44.4% of 72)	23 (46.0% of 50)	48 (63.2% of 76)

[24] Note: Total Ns include the number of responses received by the FGDM Statewide Evaluation, which varies by item and year.

Source [FGDM Statewide Evaluation SFYs 2022-23 to 2024-25], [August 2025]

Overarching areas that were identified by youth as strengths to improve their well-being outcomes were:

- Needs assessment planning;
- Involving youth and their two supportive adults in transition and case planning;
- Educational supports and services;
- Physical/dental needs; and
- Mental health needs

Overarching areas that were identified by youth as an area needing improvement to improve their well-being outcomes were:

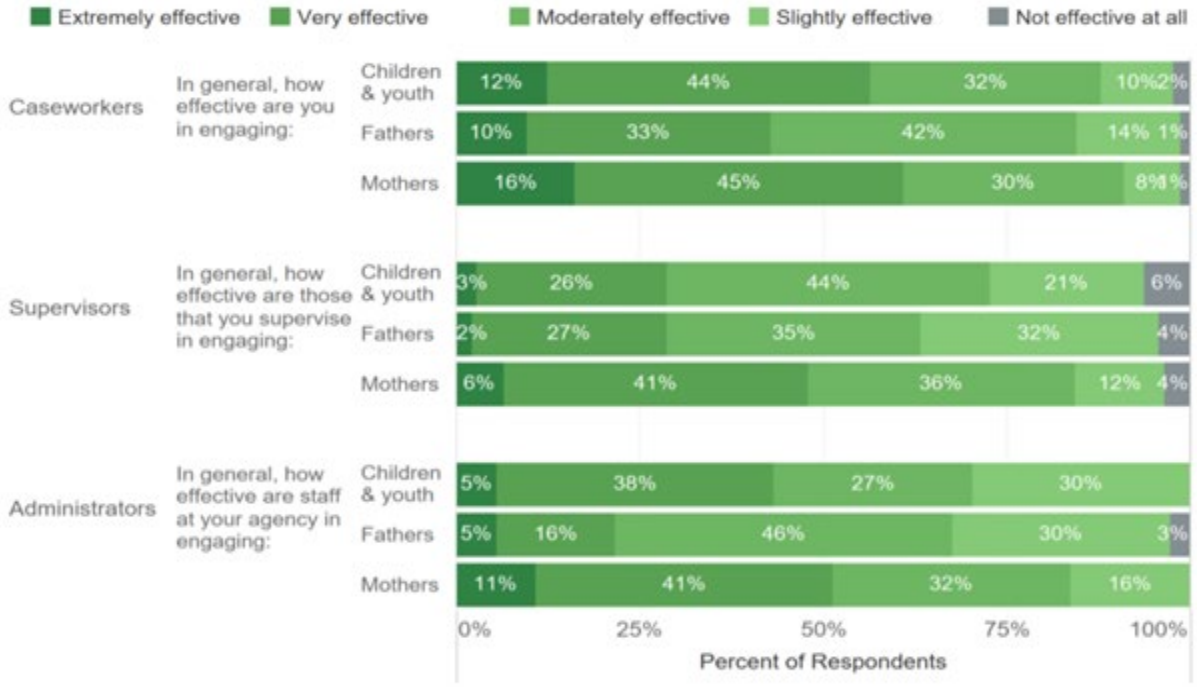
- Access to safe and affordable housing for OY;
- Increased staff knowledge and understanding of housing vouchers and programs; and,
- Increased staff knowledge related to financial aid including the difference between Education and Training Grant and FosterEd Tuition Waiver.

Results of Data Exploration for Priority Focus Area

As part of this assessment, PA focused on exploring qualitative data including analysis from focus groups and surveys highlighting the perspectives and feedback from community and system partners related to performance on Well-being Outcomes 1, 2, and 3. One of the themes that was generated from this qualitative analysis centered on engagement practices. The following section takes a closer look at insights shared by community and system partners related to factors and conditions influencing engagement practices. This information provided a better understanding of the state's strengths and areas for improvement to the overall performance on Well-being Outcome 1.

Dynamics related to engaging children, youth and families in the case planning process came from results of a broad survey to the public child welfare workforce. From May to June 2024, caseworkers, supervisors and administrators in CCYAs received a targeted survey seeking workforce perspectives on a variety of topics. For these surveys, there was a 25% response rate from both caseworkers and supervisors and a 57% response rate from administrators. A component of the surveys was aimed at gathering information related to written case planning, specifically related to the effectiveness of engaging children/youth as well as mothers and fathers in case planning. For more information, please see Figure 3. Furthermore, information was gathered about the key elements that have supported the workforce's ability to engage successfully with individuals and the barriers that have inhibited successful engagement.

Figure 3. Qualtrics Survey Results of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators Beliefs About Effectiveness of Engagement of Children, Fathers and Mothers in Written Case Plans



Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators], [June 2024]

Caseworkers expressed their ability to successfully engage individuals in the development, implementation and monitoring of the written case plan included listening to the concerns of the family as well as attempts to keep case participants engaged by calling, texting and sending letters. Other elements that are believed to support efforts are building rapport, understanding, patience and acceptance of reality. At the time of report writing, survey results from these system partners confirm that caseworkers self-assess their ability to engage children/youth, mothers and fathers in the development, implementation and monitoring of a written case plan as follows:

- Building a rapport and trust with the child/family;
- Being transparent and having open and honest conversations;
- Empathy and understanding the child/family's needs and strengths;
- Allowing for a safe space to give individuals the opportunity to express their opinions;
- Allowing time for the proper amount of engagement with individuals;
- Being non-judgmental and having good communication skills;
- Consistent communication with the child and family; and,
- Experience and feedback from supervisor.

Caseworker survey respondents expressed belief that some barriers to engaging children and families in written case planning include:

- Fathers are sometimes difficult to engage;

- People change their phone numbers or move often;
- The public has a negative image of CCYAs;
- Lack of comprehensive training on case plan development;
- Drug and alcohol and/or mental health issues with parents; and,
- Lack of follow-through from the parents.

When supervisors were surveyed and asked how effective those that they supervise are in engaging children, youth and families in the development, implementation and monitoring of the written case plan, most of the respondent's expressed belief that these caseworkers were very effective or moderately effective. There were two main themes that were identified because of the responses offered from supervisors related to the key elements that have supported those that they supervise in successfully engaging individuals in the development, implementation and monitoring of the written case plan. Those two themes that were identified are, family engagement (e.g. building rapport and developing relationships at the outset: open and honest communication with families, determination to follow through in engaging families, developing relationships at the outset, reminders to engage fathers, ongoing communication, and clear goals) and supervision and training (e.g. supervisor engagement in the field, ongoing case supervision using teaching tools, frequent supervision, transfer of learning, monitoring of engagement efforts and sharing knowledge that parents and children can identify and solve problems with support). Supervisors identified the following barriers to engaging individuals in the development, implementation and monitoring of case plans:

- High caseloads;
- Lack of engagement of the non-custodial parent (usually father);
- Fear among caseworkers to discuss sensitive issues;
- Time constraints;
- Abundance of paperwork;
- Lack of competency and skill;
- Use of standardized instead of individualized plans;
- Need for accountability; and,
- Family members' lack of buy-in.

Administrators responded similarly to their staff about how well children, youth and families are engaged in developing, implementing, and monitoring written case plans. Administrators identified the following as strengths to successful engagement for written case planning:

- Use of the FGDM model;
- Shadowing experienced workers;
- Having the capacity (skills and time) to engage;
- Involvement in the FEI;
- Agency training and policy focused on engagement; and,
- QA or supervisory monitoring of engagement practices.

Administrators identified the following barriers to successful engagement for written case planning:

- Overall workload demand;
- Being understaffed, which reduces the time caseworkers can spend on each case, ultimately affecting the quality of engagement;
- High caseloads, competing tasks and job stress limit the time available for effective engagement;
- Increased demand due to the number of referrals and various state initiatives;
- Relationship dynamics and trust, as some parents may not trust caseworkers due to past experiences or frustrations;
- The nature of the relationship between the system and parents;
- Staff must explain their role, plan components and the monitoring processes which at times can cause additional challenges;
- Burnout;
- Unique challenges, to include engaging incarcerated parents; and,
- Family refusal, as some family members refuse to participate in planning.

Additional sources of qualitative data provided further insight into underlying issues and factors impacting engagement practices. For this focus area, data from the SAC was gathered from meetings that occurred on May 14, May 29, and June 24, 2025. The SAC met to discuss well-being outcomes gathering important perspectives and experiences from professionals and individuals with lived experience from across the system. Another source of qualitative data came from community and system partner focus groups that were conducted from October 2023 to February 2024. These focus groups also provided insight from system professionals and individuals served by the child welfare system. The feedback received from the focus groups underwent qualitative analysis and themes were developed to inform assessment of well-being outcomes. It is important to be aware that data gathered represents a small sample size of participants, but their first-hand experience and knowledge provide valuable qualitative insight into system performance.

The SAC reviewed Well-being Outcome 1 performance data and discussed strategies and practices that lead to strong outcomes. The group identified that meaningful engagement of individuals was supported by use of Crisis Rapid Response, FGDM, Special Grant Initiatives, SWAN services, and training available for the workforce on engaging families in case planning that have supported engagement efforts of children, youth and families. Additionally, committee members voiced benefits of prior PIP workgroups efforts where system and community partners convened to discuss and review data to identify strategies such as the development of the Meaningful Engagement Toolkit[25] to assist the workforce in accessing resources to facilitate developing effective engagement practices. The group also discussed the

[25] https://engagepa.pitt.edu/

benefits of the intentional use of formal assessments to accurately identify family strengths and needs and support tailored delivery of services to meet needs.

When discussing factors that lead to areas needing improvement, committee members voiced the impact of workforce turnover, paperwork overload, and at times focusing too much on completing requirements and not on quality interactions, all of which influence effective engagement of children, youth, and families. Group members also noted that at times they observed a lack of recognition among the workforce that assessing the needs of parents is a key to success in meeting the needs of children. It was also noted that additional support and supervision of caseworkers through monitoring and observations is needed to foster further skill development. Committee members also voiced experiencing challenges at times in navigating different standards of practice and identification of quality across county, state and federal criteria.

Community and system partner focus groups identified collaboration as a foundational component to engagement leading to strong performance on Well-Being Outcome 1. The group identified areas of strength including having consistent and regular communication with providers, working with schools, using a team approach to casework and service delivery, having consistent communication with families and caregivers, and engaging other community partners such as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and contracted foster care providers and the courts. Several agency practices that support families in providing their children's well-being needs were also identified including complex case initiatives, regular home visits, referrals to community services, teaming, and family service planning.

Community and system partner focus groups also identified contributing factors leading to areas needing improvement and gaps in the system associated with effective child and family engagement. Workforce shortages and turnover rates were areas of focus articulated by the group as having contributed to challenges in meeting the well-being needs of families. Focus group participants also identified that shortages of services, funding, and providers contribute to barriers in meeting the children's well-being needs. It was noted that, in some cases, caseworkers may be unaware of services to provide children and families and would benefit from additional training and support in resource availability of services available in the community. Members of the group also voiced a desire to have more trauma-informed providers to effectively meet the needs of children and families. It was also noted that a lack of communication between children and families and the CCYAs and provider community also contribute to challenges in meeting needs. Focus group participants shared a range of experiences and perspectives on intentional engagement of children, youth, and families in the case planning process revealing inconsistencies in practice across the state.

Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities

As a result of performance measures indicating areas for continued growth and improvement related to Well-Being Outcome 1, PA is implementing targeted CQI change activities. Through multiple measures and methods of assessment, the state

has observed needed enhancements to training and resources to support the workforce in effectively engaging children, youth, and families. Analysis of CFSR Round 3 data informed the development and implementation of the state's PIP which included focused strategies on meaningful engagement. These strategies have been implemented including the growth and expansion of the FEI, the development of the Meaningful Engagement Toolkit[26] (https://engagepa.pitt.edu/), and enhanced simulation-based trainings to support skill development for the workforce. PA has continued to monitor progress from Round 3 and apply lessons learned to more focused strategies. One example of a CQI change activity is the recent development and roll-out of focused training specifically tailored to support the workforce in engaging families in case planning. The learning objectives for this simulation-based workshop are aimed at participants demonstrating engagement skills during case planning conversations with caregivers while developing their child welfare competencies of teaming and engagement. This strategy demonstrates adjustments that have been made to identify specific skill areas needed and provide focused learning opportunities where the workforce can exercise those skills through simulation with standardized clients.

[26] https://engagepa.pitt.edu/

Section IV: Assessment of Systemic Factors

A. Statewide Information System

Item 19: Statewide Information System State Response

- CFSR Item 19: 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?

PA does not currently possess a single statewide case management system. While the state does possess a statewide system which acts as a repository for all reports of suspected child abuse (CPS reports), GPS reports, and subsequent GPS and CPS outcomes, and GPS screen-outs, case management and service information is retained within the individual county case management systems. Data is not structured in a uniform manner across the state, and OCYF does not currently possess a real-time view of key data needed to inform best practice or to assess compliance and performance. Additionally, OCYF is not currently benefiting from the cost savings which could be realized by maintaining a single solution that is used by the state and all counties alike, as opposed to funding both the current state CWIS and the individual county case management systems. The DHS/OCYF remains fully committed to developing a single case management solution to be used by both the state and all counties, rather than continuing to fund both the statewide CWIS and the individual county systems.

Background

On July 31, 2019, former Governor Tom Wolf issued an Executive Order related to Protection of Vulnerable Populations, which included an action to “issue a procurement for a statewide electronic child welfare case management information system.” In January 2020, PA DHS submitted an APD that included a plan for the future ECM System, which includes several sub-systems, one of which will be the CW CM sub-system. This is a continuation of PA’s plan to implement a CCWIS compliant statewide child welfare case management system intended to replace both the current CWIS as well as several other OCYF legacy systems, and the individual county case management systems. This new platform will be a comprehensive, integrated system that will support best practices across the Commonwealth, implement standardization when possible/necessary, and allow flexibility to support unique processes considered critical by the counties. The platform will also ensure that OCYF is able to effectively meet state and federal data needs, which would include, but not be limited to, enabling OCYF to provide more meaningful and measurable data in response to areas of the CFSR where OCYF currently has data limitations.

To support this initiative, OCYF continues to work closely in partnership with the DHS HHSDC and county child welfare partners, to maintain a Governance Structure to

support the design, implementation and future ongoing maintenance of the CW CM system. The Pega platform was selected as the platform for the ECM System in 2021, and Accenture was awarded the SI vendor contract in 2023. The ECM project was planned to contain two phases, with CW CM being the second phase. In September of 2024, the first sub-system of phase one, the hearing and appeals subsystem, was successfully deployed. While work continues to complete the remaining two releases that will make up phase one (the Health and Community Based Services sub-system, and the Office of Long-Term Living enrollment subsystem), work has also been occurring on phase two for CW CM.

User story and business process alignment sessions for CW CM began in late 2019. While these sessions had to be paused in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they resumed in 2021 and were completed in early 2024. After a final review and commentary period, the user stories and process flows developed as outputs from these sessions were approved and provided to the SI vendor for review and to facilitate the addition of the CW CM scope to the existing ECM contract. The contract amendment was successfully completed in June 2025 and identified a start date of July 1, 2025. Since that time, the HHSDC and OCYF Project leads have been working with the Accenture Team to draft a proposed release schedule for CW CM. It was determined that deploying the CW CM in smaller, more manageable releases will help to minimize project risks and ensure a smoother transition for end users.

Currently, placement data for children in foster care is reported to the OCYF by the counties for the AFCARS for reporting purposes. Should OCYF determine a need to identify the specific placement location of a particular child, OCYF Regional Office staff are able to reach out to counties directly to obtain the information in real time. Most Regional Office staff also have access to the county case management systems in the counties they oversee and can pull placement information for a particular child directly from the system if needed.

With the implementation of the AFCARS Final Rule, some updates were made to the AFCARS process in PA which did not exist at the time of CFSR Round 3. These changes have allowed PA to make important progress as it pertains to having a closer to real-time view of youth in out-of-home care. The new process involves the county systems extracting required AFCARS data from their county case management systems and delivering it to OCYF through a secure file transfer process, to in turn be absorbed by DHS’s data storage solution. While the prior AFCARS process involved the counties manually sharing AFCARS data with OCYF only twice a report period, this data is currently being shared with OCYF at least once every month. While it remains the case that OCYF would still have to rely on the regional offices to view very specific placement location data within the county case management systems, until such a time as the CW CM System releases which would involve direct entry of placement related data into the state system, this new process does afford OCYF a much more frequent update as to the high level placement location, demographic information, and permanency goals, of youth in the out-of-home care population.

The first release of the CW CM system, which will be the permanent replacement to the interim AFCARS statewide data collection system, will focus on making additional enhancements to this process, by establishing a direct interface with the county case management systems which will allow for real time AFCARS data to be shared with OCYF, as opposed to the monthly frequency that currently exists. Later releases will see that permanency and placement data is being directly entered into the CW CM as the system of record. In summary, OCYF will remain focused on the implementation of the CW CM, which will afford additional improvements in this area, and strengthen county and statewide CQI efforts.

CWIS relies on counties to report information correctly, but there are identified issues with data quality (DQ). The statewide system will be critical to PA's improvement on DQ in the future. CWIS currently houses referral intake information, including all referrals received by the ChildLine Hotline, all referrals made electronically through the CWIS Self-Service Portal, and GPS and CPS referrals which may initially be received by CCYAs; referral outcomes for CPS referrals and assessed GPS referrals, as well as screen out information for GPS referrals which are screened out by CCYAs; Child Abuse History Clearance information for records received manually by the Clearance Verification Unit or submitted electronically via the CWIS Self-Service Portal; Child Abuse Appeals information; and a log of Juveniles detained over six hours, though this is a less heavily used portion of the CWIS system.

Case management and service information is retained solely within the individual county case management systems. There are currently five county case management systems which are leveraged by PA's 67 counties, and counties are only able to view service information within their specific county, even in cases where multiple counties may be using the same case management system for their individual county data. Data is not structured in a uniform manner across the state, and OCYF does not currently possess a real-time view of key data needed to inform best practice or to assess compliance and performance. There are also person management issues, including instances where individuals do not have a single person record/ID in the system. The current system has limitations to how this can be corrected, and in some cases perpetuates the issue.

SAC members provided feedback on the challenges of the current state system, namely the lack of accurate and consistent tracking of data due to the multiple case management systems in place across 67 counties. Members envision a robust system that is easily searchable, that highlights trends and risk/safety concerns, measures progress or regression, shows the history of referrals and outcomes for the family, and includes a record of services offered and completed.

Strengths of the current system include the ability to capture all the referral and outcome information that is required per PA's CPSL. While counties cannot access service information from other jurisdictions, they are able to view the referral and outcome information which is stored in CWIS. There is also a self-service portal which allows mandated reporters to electronically submit reports of suspected child abuse,

request child abuse history clearances, and view electronic results. The system also interfaces with all the county case management systems, as well as the Certification and Licensing Services (CLS) system used by the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) to manage the state's childcare facilities.

B. Case Review System

Item 20: Written Case Plan State Response

- CFSR Item 20: 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?

OCYF regulations at §3130.61 require that the county agency prepare a written service plan for each family receiving services through the agency within 60 days of accepting the family for service. For children placed in out of home care, regulations at §3130.67 outline additional specific requirements for a written placement plan and include all required federal written case plan elements as described in PA's title IV-E plan. OCYF regulations, in compliance with federal statute, require that the county agency provide family members, including the child, their representatives, and service providers, the opportunity to participate in the development and amendment of the service plan if the opportunity does not jeopardize the child's safety. The agency is required to record the method by which these opportunities are presented in the plan.

Verification of compliance with the regulations pertaining to written case plans occurs during the Annual Licensing Inspection where a sample of case records are pulled and reviewed. The following data outlined in the table below demonstrates licensing inspection findings, during SFY 2020-21 through May 2025 regarding provisions for written case planning, which includes the FSP and the child permanency plan (CPP) for children in foster care, to include the existence of all required case plan elements, adherence with timeliness of plan development, and joint development of the plan with the child/youth and parents.

Table 44. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Written Case Planning[27]

	SFY 2020-21	SFY 2021-22	SFY 2022-23	Calendar year 2024
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	21 counties	23 counties	32 counties	3 counties
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	2 counties	0 counties	4 counties	1 county

[27] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

Total Cases Cited	**77**	**129**	**256**	**66**
Total FSP Citations	**48**	**32**	**64**	**8**
Total CPP Citations	**22**	**39**	**63**	**18**
Total Counties Without Citation	**39 (of 60)**	**29 (of 53)**	**30 (of 66)**	**62 (of 65)**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries, May 2025]

A further analysis of Annual Licensing Inspections of CCYAs revealed citations issued related to case plans in calendar year 2024, specifically FSPs and CPPs, revealed the following:

- Citations issued due to not meeting required timeframes for completion of case plans led to citations in approximately 30% of cases cited related to FSPs and 16% of cases cited related to CPPs.
- Citations issued due to missing or late signatures accounted for approximately 23% of sampled cases related to FSPs and 20% of sampled cases related to CPPs.
- Citations issued due to plans never being completed or missing from the record were found in 3% of sampled cases related to FSPs and 5% of sampled cases related to CPPs.
- Citations related to providing opportunities for parents and/or children to engage in plan development, documentation that parents were provided the opportunity to sign the plan. These types of citations were found in 44% of cases cited for FSP violations and 59% of cases cited for CPP violations.

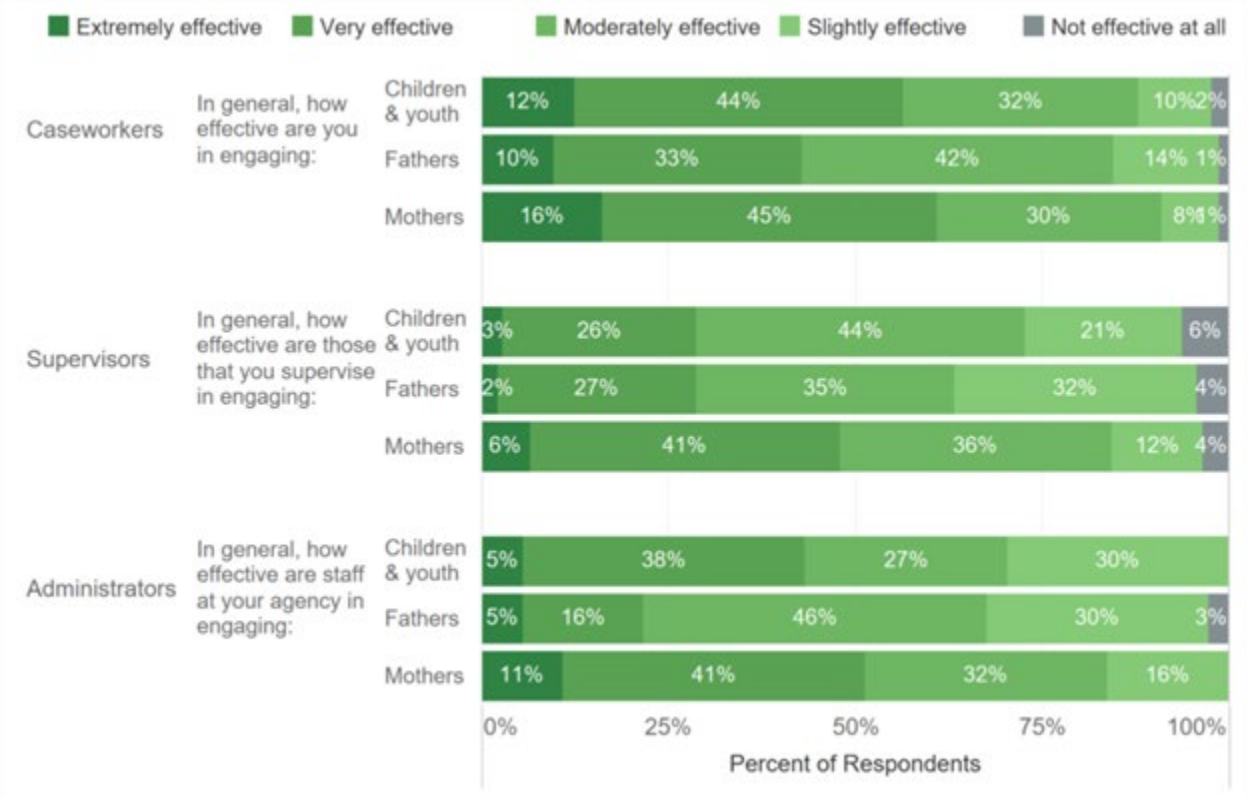
Licensing is one way that PA assesses how written case plans are developed jointly with a child's parents. PA also gathered information about written case plans as part of the CFSR case reviews. Of the 72 applicable cases that were evaluated pertaining to Item 13 (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning) as part of CFSR case reviews in 2021 and 2025, it was revealed that 56% of cases were rated as a strength Please refer to the "Data Sources" information at the outset of Section III for information about CFSR data limitations.

To gain greater insights from additional sources relating to written case plans, PA gathered information from focus groups and surveys. As part of PA's assessment of the systemic factor, Case Review System, evidence shows significant strengths in ensuring that each child has a written case plan developed jointly with their parent(s) and the plans were inclusive of the required provisions. Feedback from these focus groups and surveys reflect a shared commitment to collaborative planning with families, children/youth and caseworkers.

Youth engagement is notable as a strength among OY involved in IL programs in PA. Participants from the YAB and IL Coordinators emphasized that youth are often empowered to drive their case plans, with their voices being utilized in case planning. Practices such as regular communication, celebrating accomplishments, and having case planning be a collaborative effort were highlighted as effective strategies.

A component of the surveys distributed to caseworkers, supervisors and administrators from May to June 2024, was aimed at gathering information related to written case planning, specifically regarding inquiry related to the effectiveness of engaging children/youth as well as mothers and fathers in case planning. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of how caseworkers, supervisors and administrators believe caseworkers are effectively engaging children/youth, fathers and mothers. Furthermore, information was also gathered about the key elements that have supported the workforce's ability to engage successfully with individuals and the barriers that have inhibited successful engagement.

Figure 4. Qualtrics Survey Results of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators Beliefs About Effectiveness of Engagement of Children, Fathers and Mothers in Written Case Plans



Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators, June 2024]

Survey responses from caseworkers, supervisors and administrators further reinforced the importance of early engagement and relationship building. Administrators cited participation in the FEI, Motivational Interviewing and face-to-face interactions as key contributors to successful engagement. Supervisors noted that they believe that

ongoing supervision, training and accountability help support staff in administering effective family engagement.

However, despite these strengths, barriers to consistent and inclusive case planning remain areas for continuous improvement. The youth that participated in the focus group reported feeling excluded from meaningful decision making, some describing their plans as broad and developed without their input. Also, during the focus group, IL Coordinators noted limited family involvement with OY case planning. Survey data revealed systemic challenges such as high caseloads, staff burnout, lack of training specifically related to meaningful engagement of children and families in FSPs and CPPs development and engaging non-custodial parents (most often fathers). Administrators and casework supervisors identified additional barriers including time constraints for the development of the FSP and CPP plans only being 30 days for placements and 60 days for in home FSP's, plans being more standardized (not individualized), and mistrust between families and the child welfare system which limits the agency's ability to ensure that each child has a written case plan developed jointly with parents. These factors and the lack of data from a statewide information system highlight some root causes that impact PA's functioning on Item 20 requiring children to have a written case plan developed jointly with children and their families.

The SAC members indicated that PA demonstrates promising practices in written case planning within select counties, particularly those involved in the FEI and FGDM. These counties report improved collaboration and consistent parent participation. FGDM counties offer families private family time to develop their plans and FEI counties implementation of crisis/rapid response meetings initiate engagement in planning development early in the agency's involvement. These strategies offer support to create a more inclusive and effective development of written case plans; however, these initiatives are not implemented statewide. Additionally, there is no statewide evaluation framework to measure the quality or the impact of written case plans. This hinders the state's ability to assess system functioning. The SAC also noted that the anticipated implementation of the UA may enhance collaboration by providing a more holistic view of family needs and strengths, which could improve the development of written case plans.

In an effort to address the CFSR Round 3 findings and as part of ongoing CQI efforts, PA initiated targeted improvement efforts through development and implementation of a new training launched in Spring 2025, called *Engaging Families in Case Planning*. This simulation-based training uses a standardized client to help caseworkers practice developing written case plans collaboratively between the caseworker and the standardized client, with a focus on navigating difficult conversations. SAC members spoke of the benefits of this training being implemented across units to support both in-home and out-of-home case planning. These efforts demonstrate a targeted response to Round 3 findings and reflect a commitment to improving performance efforts pertaining to this the practices of collaborative development of written case plans.

Item 21: Periodic Reviews State Response, and Item 22: Permanency Hearings State Response

- CFSR Item 21: 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?
- CFSR Item 22: 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 looking at the systemic factor for Case Review System, states must examine performance around ensuring that "periodic reviews" occur no less frequently than once every six months and that "Permanency Hearings" occur no less frequently than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter, either by a court or by administrative review, as outlined in federal law. Because PA regulations require "Permanency Hearings" to be held no less frequently than every six months, CFSR systemic items 21 and 22 will be assessed together for the purpose of the SWA, while denoting key elements of what is examined at hearings.

After a child has been adjudicated dependent and the court has issued a disposition order under 42 Pa. C.S. § 6351(a), PA's Juvenile Act requires the court to continue its oversight of the case by holding a series of subsequent hearings "for the purpose of determining or reviewing the permanency plan of the child, the date by which the goal of permanency for the child might be achieved and whether placement continues to be best suited to the safety, protection and physical, mental and moral welfare of the child" (42 Pa. C.S. § 6351(e)). All such post-Dispositional Hearings, whenever they occur, are designated "Permanency Hearings" in PA. Moreover, the Juvenile Act specifies a long list of determinations that must be made at all Permanency Hearings whenever they occur. The list of key questions and determinations are outlined on page 18 of Chapter 10, *Disposition Hearing* in the 4th Edition Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook – Office of Children & Families in the Courts[28].

Hearings that are designated "Permanency Hearings" in the Juvenile Act may have different functions, depending on when they occur in the dependency proceeding. Hearings will vary substantially, depending on the status of the dependency case and case circumstances. In general, Permanency Hearings that occur early in the life of case often serve as status review hearings, in which the primary focus is with issues of compliance with and adherence to the initial permanency plan, progress being made towards plan goals, and minor plan adjustments that may be necessary in light of case circumstances. Permanency Hearings that occur later in the life of a case focus is on

[28] https://ocfcpacourts.us/judges-legal-professionals/4th-edition-pennsylvania-dependency-benchbook/

the steps needed to finalize permanency and whether the original goal still appears to be appropriate and achievable. In some cases, it is necessary to hold a Permanency Hearing to choose a new goal. Some of the basic sub-types of Permanency Hearings include:

- **Expedited Review Hearings for Youth in Shelters —** If at the time of disposition, the child has not been returned to the care of the parents or guardians and remains in shelter care, respite care, or other short term/ temporary placement, the Judge or Hearing Master should review the child's placement within 30 days to ensure that the child has either returned home or has been placed as directed by the dispositional order.

- **Expedited FSP Status Hearings —** PA statutes encourage an expedited court process through adjudication and disposition. Ideally, adjudication occurs within ten days of petition filing and most courts routinely consider dispositional issues immediately after adjudicatory determinations are made. Review of the appropriateness of the FSP should be a central component of the dispositional process. However, the agency has up to 30 days in removal cases and 60 days in non-removal cases to fully complete the case plan. Consequently, a fully developed FSP might not be available for consideration at the time of disposition. The court has statutory discretion to proceed with disposition even if an FSP is not available. Waiting six months for the next *required* permanency review to examine the FSP is too long, given the short permanency timeframes envisioned by Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and PA statutes. In these instances, it makes sense for the court to schedule an expedited FSP status hearing that allows for an in-court examination of the FSP (with all parties present). This practice helps to ensure that all parties understand FSP provisions/expectations, and it allows the court to examine the steps that have already been taken with respect to the plan. This hearing should occur within 45-60 days of the disposition hearing.

- **Six-Month Permanency Hearing —** This is the first statutorily required Permanency Hearing after disposition. At this hearing, the agency is required to submit an updated FSP and, depending on the court, a report summarizing case progress to date. The report usually also addresses the continuing appropriateness of the placement, the permanency plan and an estimated date for achieving this plan. At this hearing the judge or hearing master makes sure that all the services are in place and fine-tunes the permanency plan. As in every proceeding, the court must determine, through proper inquiry, whether the children are safe. This hearing marks the beginning of a transition in focus from examining case progress to the initiation of some definitive steps to finalization of the child's permanency plan. Serious discussion of a child's concurrent plan is appropriate if substantial case progress has not occurred.

- **12-Month Permanency Hearing —** By this time (unless extenuating circumstances apply) the focus of the Permanency Hearing process should clearly shift to finalization of the child's permanent plan. If the plan goal remains reunification but the child cannot now be returned home, the judge or hearing master should set very clear expectations regarding what needs to happen to achieve this goal within a clearly defined timeframe. In these situations, it is also appropriate for the judge or hearing master to schedule expedited status reviews to ensure that steps are being taken to return the child home. The judge or hearing master should make it clear that if expectations are not met, a goal change is likely to occur at the next Permanency Hearing.

- **18-Month Permanency Hearing —** Again, unless some very extenuating circumstances apply, the primary decision made at this hearing will be to immediately reunify the child with the parents or guardians or, if this is still not possible, to schedule a Permanency Hearing to consider changing the goal (with the agency being required to file the appropriate pleading requesting termination of parental rights or permanent legal guardianship) or a hearing to determine the specifics of an alternative permanent plan.

- **Permanency Hearing: To Consider Change of Goal —** The Juvenile Act generally requires the agency to request a goal change and file a petition for termination of parental rights when the child has been in care for 15 out of 22 months (42 Pa. C.S. § 6351(f)(9)). This requirement is consistent with federal law, as amended by ASFA (42 U.S.C. § 675 (5)(C) and (E)). In addition, there are other points when the agency should request, or the court should consider a goal change. In cases involving aggravated circumstances, including severe physical abuse, sexual abuse, or aggravated physical neglect, where it is demonstrated at the outset of the case that the circumstances that led to removal cannot be remedied and that the child cannot be safely reunified with the parents, the court can establish a goal other than reunification from the beginning. The permanency goal should also be changed when there have been aggravated circumstances found and the court has determined that reasonable efforts to preserve or reunify the family are not required, when the child has been abandoned and no parent has made substantial or continuing contact for a period of six months, or at any time when it is clear to the judge that reunification is not viable and another permanency goal seems to be more appropriate for the child.

It is worth noting that over the past few years (2021-25), county agencies have moved to expedited reviews with at least 37 counties having hearings every three months. As a result of the improvements made by AOPC and SWAN in collaboration with the counties these 37 counties were able to move from six-month reviews to three-month permanency reviews. Some counties have also instituted Permanency Planning Conferences at various intervals within the first 12 months of placement to review the efforts made toward permanency. This has proven successful in supporting the

adherence to the required timelines of permanency review hearings to occur every six months. Integrated hearing practices for 'periodic reviews' and 'Permanency Hearings' also demonstrated evidence in streamlining judicial oversight and reducing scheduling delays. In PA, most hearings occur at least once every six months. In the figure below, illustrates the number of youth who were adjudicated dependent, and if their subsequent hearings occurred within the regulatory time frame between the FFYs 2022-24. It is important to note that annually, PA has been in the 90th percentile of ensuring that these hearings occur within the required time frame.

Table 45. Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS) Data of Permanency Reviews from FFY 2022-24

Adjudication Year	Cases Adjudicated	First Permanency Review Held within 180 Days	Percent within 180 Days	Total Number of Permanency Reviews	Reviews Per Case	Number of Cases with Goal Determined at Disposition Hearing	Percentage of Cases with Goal Determined at Disposition Hearing
2022	6,612	6,005	91%	34,171	5.17	6,158	93%
2023	6,599	5,990	91%	29,246	4.43	6,171	94%
2024	6,246	5,590	89%	17,875	2.86	5,820	93%

Source [CPCMS Data System], [September 2025]

In Table 46 below, illustrates the number of Permanency Hearings that were held between Federal Fiscal Years 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and nine months of 2025. Taking a deep dive into Measure J, the table below shows an increasing number of children with permanency review hearings occurring within the regulatory time frame has increased by 37.09 percentage points from FFY 2021-22 to FFY 2023-24. Moving down to Measure K1, shows that across PA there is an increased compliance with Initial Permanency Review Hearings occurring within the regulatory time frame at 91.18% in FFY 2022–23. Measure K2 demonstrates that 51.75% of children received their subsequent Permanency Review Hearing in a timely fashion. Lastly, Measure K illustrates that only 9.66% of children did not have a TPR filing by the time they entered their 15 out of 22 months in placement in FFY 2022-23. This shows that 90.34% of children who are in out of home placement have a timely TPR filing within the 15 out of 22 months' time frame.

Table 46. Timeliness of Permanency Hearings for Youth in Care 6 months or longer

Measure J: Timely Permanency Reviews	FFY 2021-22	FFY 2022-23	FFY 2023-24	FFY 2024-25 (9mo)
Total Children in OOH Care during FFY for 6mo or Longer	9,537	11,934	11,615	10,155

# with Timely Permanency Review during the FFY	2,876	8,121	7,811	7,841
% with Timely Permanency Review during the FFY	30.16 %	68.05%	67.25 %	77.21%
Measure K1: Timely Initial Permanency Hearing	FFY 2021-22	FFY 2022-23	FFY 2023-24 (6mo)	
Total Children Entering OOH Care during FFY, in care for 12mo or Longer	-	3,924	1,863	-
# with Timely Initial Permanency Hearing	-	3,578	1,782	-
% with Timely Initial Permanency Hearing	-	91.18%	95.65 %	-
Measure K2: Timely Subsequent Permanency Hearing	FFY 2021-22	FFY 2022-23	FFY 2023-24 (6mo)	
Total Children Served in OOH Care during FFY, in care for 12mo or Longer	-	15,135	12,042	-
# with Timely Subsequent Permanency Hearing	-	7,833	4,456	-
% with Timely Subsequent Permanency Hearing	-	51.75%	37.00 %	-
Measure L: Timely Petition for Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)	FFY 2021-22	FFY 2022-23	FFY 2023-24	FFY 2024-25 (9mo)
Total Children Served in OOH Care during FFY, in care for 15 of the last 22 months	-	10,223	10,284	9,483
# with TPR Petition Filed by End of 15th Month in Care	-	997	993	911
% with TPR Petition Filed by End of 15th Month in Care	-	9.75%	9.66%	9.61%

Source [AFCARS], [September 2025]

As part of ongoing CQI efforts since CFSR Round 3, there have been efforts to establish a statewide process for CCYAs and the courts to enhance the monitoring of the timeliness of initial/subsequent 'periodic reviews' and 'Permanency Hearings.' Evidence from focus groups conducted with SWAN LSI staff, who serve as paralegal support to CCYAs revealed that periodic reviews are being scheduled on three-month timelines for permanency review hearings instead of the required six months. Additionally, survey data from Judges and Hearing Officers collected in March-April 2024, reflects a broadly positive assessment of stakeholder experience with timely 'periodic reviews' and 'Permanency Hearings' to include identification of the importance of tracking hearings to ensure ongoing compliance related to 'periodic reviews' and 'Permanency Hearings. LSI staff noted:

- Reviews are conducted either by a court or through administrative processes;
- Hearings for each child occur every three months, and no less frequently than once every six months; and,
- Paralegals play a role in tracking hearing schedules to ensure timeliness.

Additionally, surveys administered to Judges, Hearing Officers, and judicial partners identified the permanency review process as a strength of the Case Review System. A key procedural practice of announcing the next hearing at the conclusion of the current one was consistently identified as a support to timely scheduling and a streamlined process for all parties. Additionally, judicial reviews are conducted between formal hearings to monitor case progress, and the use of three-month review cycles in many counties has further strengthened judicial oversight allowing more frequent reassessment of case activity, agency efforts and child/family outcomes.

Judicial respondents overwhelmingly report timely compliance with Permanency Hearing requirements. Specifically, that, for the child entering foster care, hearings occur within 90 days. Also, 87.7% of these respondents report initial Permanency Hearings are timely and are occurring within the first 90 days of a child's placement. Additionally, judicial respondents were asked if "Periodic Reviews" were occurring and if they were timely, 80% affirmed timely 'Permanency Hearings', and 80% affirming timely 'periodic reviews' occur overall. These findings suggest that permanency planning and goals are being reviewed within required timeframes. Counties with expedited review cycles of every three months strengthen oversight of the child's status in care, their permanency timeline, and allowing more frequent reassessment of the permanency process. LSI contributes to monitoring hearing schedules and preventing delays in scheduling. LSI focus groups also identify that they aim to schedule periodic reviews at three to five months to allow a buffer before the six-month mark.

To further evaluate and support the evidence on the systemic factor functioning pertaining to Items 21 and 22, a SWAN LSI County Partner Survey was distributed in 2024, to county employees across the Commonwealth. This survey contained key questions aimed at ensuring case reviews are occurring in a timely manner. Over 100 county employees across PA who regularly interact with LSI paralegals were surveyed. Included in this group were agency directors/administrators, agency solicitors, and casework supervisors. Below are the key takeaways that highlight the responses gathered from survey respondents:

- 93% of all survey respondents either agree or strongly agree that LSI paralegal activities help to ensure the meeting of statutory timelines as required under ASFA;
- 94% of all survey respondents either agree or strongly agree that LSI paralegal activities increase the efficiency of both Juvenile Court and Orphans Court processes;
- 93% of all survey respondents either agree or strongly agree that LSI paralegal activities increase the timeliness of filing of petitions for termination of parental rights

Compliance with licensing requirements for Permanency Review Hearings are monitored by OCYF's Annual Licensing Inspections of the county agencies. During the Annual Licensing Inspections, OCYF Regional Office staff review a sample of county case records to ensure that Permanency Hearings are held every six months, and if not, agencies are cited for statutory non-compliance. Findings from licensing inspections from SFY 2018-2019 through Calendar Year (CY) 2024 suggest that counties are consistently meeting these requirements. In Table 47 below, the data from the county annual licensures reveal that over the last seven years there have only been two citations that have been issued for failure to hold a permanency review hearing within the regulatory time frame. Evidence from system partners highlights and attributes this success to SWAN LSI program, which places LSI paralegals in CCYAs to not only assist with regulatory requirements, but who also play a vital role in ensuring that court proceedings occur, run smoothly and ensure children find timely permanency.

Table 47. Annual Licensing Inspections-Permanency Review Hearings, SFY's 2018-2023, Calendar year 2024

	SFY 2018-19	SFY 2019-20	SFY 2020-21	SFY 2022-23	Calendar Year 2024
Placement case files reviewed	491	344	213	467	484
Citations issued pertaining to hearings	1	1	0	0	0

Source [Annual Licensing Inspections], [May 2025]

CQI efforts have explored areas for potential improvement, despite evidence of a well-functioning system pertaining to timeliness of initial and subsequent periodic reviews and Permanency Hearings. Barriers that impact the consistency of the review and hearing practices in some jurisdictions were identified by LSI staff during focus groups. LSI staff noted that while many counties meet the required timelines, at times the court will order a continuance due to limited court availability, staff illness (particularly during the time at the wake of the pandemic), and challenges with counsel staffing – especially in more rural areas.

Additional barriers shared by LSI staff regarding hearings that occur more than six months apart include constraints on court time, state correctional facilities that do not provide any flexibility in changes to court schedules for parents who are incarcerated, caseworker shortages and docket loads; however, it was recognized that these challenges are not representative of the state overall. Concerns also surfaced that the court process could feel compliance-driven, with concern that space for meaningful conversation and relational accountability is limited. This is evidenced by people with lived experience acknowledging the struggle to understand court language and the lack of time provided to meet with attorneys, denoting that this often occurs just prior to the hearing, leaving them unprepared. A concern was raised that youth's voice is at the discretion of counsel which prevents the youth from actively participating in the hearing.

Another barrier noted is the lack of data sources and availability of data from hearings is a struggle to obtain or is not regularly tracked.

Stakeholder feedback from the SAC affirms that PA's case review system is functioning with procedural consistency and timeliness in most jurisdictions. Counties routinely conduct reviews and Permanency Hearings that exceed the federal requirement and indicate flexibility to reconvene sooner, when case circumstances warrant. Overall, stakeholder feedback and data suggest that PA's case review system for Items 21 and 22 are compliant at meeting standards, and the system demonstrates a consistent commitment to timely periodic reviews. The alignment of 'periodic reviews' and 'Permanency Hearings' support timely reviews for children in out-of-home care.

Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights State Response

- CFSR Item 23: How well is the case review system functioning to ensure that the filing of termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions?

When evaluating systemic functioning pertaining to Item 23 of PA's case review system focused on the filing of TPR proceedings in accordance with required provisions, PA law outlines that if a child has been in placement at least 15 of the last 22 months, the county must file a TPR petition or request the court for an exception, if applicable. During the Annual CCYA Licensing Inspections, placement cases are reviewed for compliance with meeting ASFA requirements related to the timely filing of TPR. Table 48 below illustrates the number of licensing violations in reference to TPR. The singular violation was a repeat violation for not filing TPR paperwork within the required time frame and was identified to be a systemic issue within that one county. This county has a POC to ensure that the TPR filings occur within the required time frame. No other counties received a violation for TPR.

Table 48. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations on Termination of Parental Rights

	Total Number of Cases Cited in Calendar Year 2024
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	0 cases (0 counties)
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	1 case (1 county)
--	--
Total Cases Cited	**1**
Total Placement Records Reviewed	**484**
Total Counties Without Citation	**64**
Rate of Compliance (%)	**99.8 %**

Source [Annual Licensing Inspections, May 2025]

Review of Practice Performance Reports for CFSR case review data from 2021 and 2025, included an evaluation whether the agency filed or joined a TPR petition in a timely manner or if an exception was sought. It was determined that 78% (29 of 37) applicable cases did provide justification that the agency did indeed file or join a TPR petition in a timely manner, unless an exception was applied.

Information gathered through stakeholder input via focus groups and surveys indicate that PA's case review system includes procedures that support the timely filing of TPR proceedings in accordance with required provisions. Practices such as involving LSI paralegals in tracking time in care and coordination of filing TPR with the goal change hearings are described as practices that have contributed to strengthening systemic factor functioning for Item 23. LSI focus group participants emphasized their own role as paralegals and how they play an important role in ensuring TPR hearings occur in a timely manner. LSI staff are tracking the time a child is in care, typically using a spreadsheet, entering pertinent information in the Permanency Review Order at each Permanency Hearing/periodic review. LSI staff report initiating discussion at the 12-month mark and notifying caseworkers as the 15-month mark approaches because they have found these efforts to be important factors in filing TPR proceedings occur in accordance with required provisions.

Engagement of Judges and Hearing Officers as part of ongoing CQI efforts, yielded their position of having a high to moderate level of confidence in the system's ability to manage TPR filing, with some noting that periodic court reviews help continue the positive momentum toward achieving permanency. The majority of those that responded to surveys indicated that filing of TPR proceedings occurs in accordance with the required provisions in their jurisdictions.

SAC member feedback reflected some concerns about the inconsistent application of timely TPR filing as well as lack of clarity for families regarding filing of TPR in accordance with required provisions. While procedural mechanisms exist, stakeholders note that children may linger in care post-TPR and that there are gaps in data and data limitations on TPR filings and timelines. While some challenges were identified to impact functioning on Item 23, such as staffing limitations, documentation gaps and scheduling constraints, the information reviewed pertaining to this item reflects ongoing continued efforts to monitor and address these challenges within the Case Review System specific to Item 23.

CFSR Round 3 findings showed that PA received an overall rating of Strength for Item 23 based on information outlined in the SWA and Round 3 stakeholder interviews. The current evidence is consistent with that of PA's Round 3 rating of Strength for Item 23. LSI through SWAN continues to remain a key factor in contributing to procedural consistency across counties.

Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers State Response

CFSR Item 24: How well is the case review system functioning to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child?

Based on the review of quantitative and qualitative data available, PA's performance on Item 24 was determined to continue to be an area of strength. With regards to notification to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers, PA follows the federal mandate in Section 104 of ASFA to provide caregivers with the opportunity to be heard at all court proceedings involving the child placed in their home for foster care services, as required in the PA Juvenile Act in §6336.1. The Resource Family Care Act requires CCYAs to inform resource families of scheduled meetings and the opportunity to be heard: 'opportunity' was changed to 'right' by the passage of the federal Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006. The Juvenile Act, PA Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure regarding Dependency Matters and child welfare regulations require that notice and the opportunity and right to be heard be provided to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care. These notices are sent either by the Court and/or CCYA or JPO.

During Annual Licensing Inspections, records are reviewed for documentation verifying that agency foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of the right to be heard in any review hearing held with respect to the child. Review of findings from statewide Annual Licensing Inspections conducted in calendar year 2024 indicate that counties are meeting requirements for providing notification to resource families. In 2024, zero counties were identified as having issues pertaining to documentation verifying notice was provided. In Round 3 the rate of compliance was at 99.87% and counties received no citations in calendar year 2024, which increases compliance to 100%.

Table 49. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Notification of Right to be Heard[29]

	Total Number of Cases Cited in Calendar Year 2024
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	0 cases (0 counties)
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	0 cases (0 counties)
Total Cases Cited	**0**
Total Resource Family Records Reviewed	**670**
Total Counties Without Citation	**65**
Rate of Compliance (%)	**100 %**

Source [Annual Licensing Inspections], [May 2025]

[29] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

In CFSR Round 3, PA received a rating of strength for Item 24. Since that time, evidence supports that the state has sustained and, in some jurisdictions, expanded practices that promote caregiver inclusion in hearings and receipt of notice of hearings. Evidence, including judicial survey responses and stakeholder focus groups, indicates that many counties utilize many means as communication strategies including phone, text, emails, mail and in-person delivery to ensure that caregivers receive timely notice. Judges and Hearing Officers acknowledged their efforts to routinely invite caregiver input during hearings, and CASA and Guardians ad litem (GALs) assist in conveying caregiver concerns to the court. During focus groups, members stated that several jurisdictions in PA report successfully implementing “Right to Be Heard Hearings” to support a more wholistic approach to decision making. Right to be Heard Hearings, are court sessions where children and their caregivers have a legal right to speak directly to the judge about critical life decisions, ensuring their voice matters in placement, services, and permanency plans, fostering a sense of care and empowerment as judges hear their needs, preferences, and concerns directly, making decisions based on the child’s best interests, and not just reading case files.

Despite these clear strengths, there was some evidence that highlighted some variability in practice across counties. Focus group participants noted that some caregivers are not consistently notified or provided with information to meaningfully engage in the court process. Infrastructure differences across jurisdictions impact consistency. The evidence reflects concerns with a variation in communication strategies, workforce capacity, and access to support such as interpreter services and internet connectivity. These differences shape how reliably caregivers are informed and able to participate, even within a system where the foundation is established. While focus groups of LSI staff and PSFRA members offered valuable insights, the current evidence does not include direct systematic input from a representative group of foster parents, pre-adoptive parents or relative caregivers. As a result, further CQI efforts will need to focus on ensuring direct input and feedback from these individuals with lived experience.

The SAC members discussed hearing notification and right to be heard during the August 28, 2025, SAC meeting. Members confirmed that notification practices are in place and caregivers are formally invited to hearings. During those conversations, it was noted that formal invitations alone are insufficient to ensure meaningful engagement as some committee members noted that caregivers feel that their voices are undervalued or ignored, even when given the opportunity to speak or submit written reports. The committee identified a need for the system to better prepare caregivers for hearings, including guidance on how to contribute effectively and with emotional clarity. Kinship caregivers were identified as facing relational tensions that make participation more emotionally charged and challenging.

C. Quality Assurance System

Item 25: Quality Assurance System State Response

- CFSR Item 25: 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 Child and Family Services Plan (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?

The assessment of this systemic factor is based on available quantitative and qualitative data as well as feedback from the SAC, focus groups, and surveys conducted with stakeholders and community partners. The SAC committee met monthly from March to August of 2025 and were consulted for the purposes of the development of PA's SWA. They were tasked with identifying information and data to include in the assessment as well as highlighting the strengths and gaps of PA's CQI/QA system. One of the most identified gaps involves using the various data produced through both county and statewide QA systems to drive service delivery improvement, which to note, was also identified in CFSR Round 3.

PA's CQI system has a number of processes in place that help provide data/information to drive CQI efforts and monitor the quality of services provided to children and families throughout the Commonwealth which include the following.

- **Child and Family Services Reviews** - The CFSRs and use of the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) support the state in ensuring conformity with federal child welfare standards and gathering performance data on safety, permanency and well-being. Since the completion of CFSR Round 3, efforts have been made to grow and expand the state's CQI structure and integrate regular use of the OSRI and OMS to support a State-Led Review Process for CFSR Round 4. Expanded internal use of the OSRI and OMS will provide greater collection of data and enhance the CQI system statewide. The state uses feedback loops to disseminate CFSR findings, data extracts and reports drawn down from the OMS.

- **Quality Service Reviews (QSR)** - The QSR is an in-depth case review and practice appraisal process utilized to find out how children, youth and families are benefiting from services received. The QSR uses a combination of record reviews, interviews, observations and deductions made from fact patterns gathered and interpreted by trained reviewers regarding children, youth and families receiving services. The QSR Protocol contains qualitative indicators that measure the status of the focus child/youth's safety, permanency and well-being and the child/youth's parents' and/or caregivers' functioning.

- **Family First Prevention Services Act CQI Monitoring** - Since the completion of CFSR Round 3, PA expanded its QA/CQI system to encompass Family First Title IV-E Prevention Program CQI monitoring. This component of the system focuses on monitoring outcomes for the approved EBPs included in the state's Title IV-E Five-Year Prevention Plan.

- **CCYA Annual Licensing Inspections** - The OCYF Regional Office staff conduct the Annual Licensing Inspection by means of a random sample record review, interviews with administrative, supervisory, and casework staff, internal policy/procedures review, personnel record review and agency fiscal documentation review. A case sample is drawn from cases assigned to all program units and casework functions within the agency. For each case record reviewed, the OCYF Regional Office staff refers to a variety of documents contained in the record in addition to administrative components of the CCYA.

- **Needs Based Plan and Budget (NBPB) Process** - CCYA funds are allocated through the annual NBPB process. Through the NBPB process, counties are asked to identify strategies toward program improvement after identifying root causes based on the analysis of their data. The NBPB process builds upon identification of historical and current service levels and outcome measures, directs the need for data analysis toward program improvement, identify strategies and practice changes needed and request the resources necessary for implementation. The NBPB is a road map toward improving outcomes for children, youth and families within counties.

- **Fatality/Near Fatality Review Process** - Act 33 of 2008, requires that child fatalities and near fatalities where abuse is suspected be reviewed at both the state and county levels. By completing detailed reviews of child fatalities and near fatalities and conducting an analysis of related trends, PA is better able to ascertain the strengths and challenges of child serving systems and to identify solutions to address the service needs of the children and families served within, but also beyond, the child welfare system. These reviews and subsequent analyses become the foundation for determining the contributing factors and symptoms of abuse and responses that may prevent similar future occurrences.

- **Independent Living (IL) Site Visits** - The IL site visit process assists PA in evaluating the quality and standards of services and supports provided to OY. This process assesses services statewide, by county, to ensure OY are receiving quality services and support as they make the transition to adulthood. These reviews provide a comprehensive look at the provision of services, including successes and challenges. These visits include a facilitated discussion with CCYA, private provider agencies, stakeholders, OY who are currently receiving services and supports and system partners providing services to OY.

1. Operating in all jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided

Annual Licensing Inspections are required by statute to be conducted in all 67 counties. Inspections may be completed more frequently if the county is issued a provisional license or the OCYF Regional Office generates an inspection based upon complaints received regarding the operation of the agency. During the calendar year 2024, Annual Licensing Inspections were conducted on all CCYAs. At the time of this report, the finalized licensing inspection summaries were available for 65[30] of the counties with the number of cases reviewed for these counties as follows:

Table 50. Type and Number of Cases Reviewed During Annual CCYA Licensing, in 2024

Case Record Type	Total Number of Cases
CPS	601
GPS	631
Screen Outs	532
In-Home	464
Placement	484
Resource Family	670
Adoption	171
New Staff	414
Ongoing Staff	1402

Source [Annual Licensing Inspections], [May 2025]

At the conclusion of each Annual Licensing Inspection, a LIS is completed. The summary includes a list of any regulatory findings requiring a plan of correction. After the issuance of the inspection summary, the county must document the plan to address the areas of non-compliance. These LISs that include required plans of correction are made available to the public online through the Human Services Provider Directory on the DHS website.

The submission of the annual NBPB is also required for all 67 counties under state statute. Each year, OCYF issues instructions to counties regarding the preparation and submission of the NBPB through a bulletin. Through the NBPB process, counties engage a wide range of stakeholders in their planning for their submission including developing a team that will assist in data identification, root cause analysis, identification of and selection of strategies based on relevant data analysis, and continuous monitoring of the implementation activities and outcomes.

CF/NF reviews are required to occur in counties where a child dies or nearly dies because of suspected child abuse. If the case is not unsubstantiated or if an

[30] Not all Licensing Inspection Summaries from this time period provided counts for the total number of cases reviewed from all the case record type areas, therefore the total number of cases reviewed is lower than the actual number of cases reviewed for this reported period.

investigation outcome is not reached within 30 days of the report of the fatality/near fatality, the county agency must convene a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) to review the circumstances of the incident and develop recommendations for improvement related to practice at the county and state level.

IL site visits occur annually for all 67 counties in PA. However, there are some counties that do not have youth who meet the criteria to participate in the IL program. The criteria in PA for a youth to qualify for IL services requires the youth to have been in foster care for at least 24 hours after their fourteenth birthday. Through the county and provider IL programs, the site visits process supports the continual assessment and improvement of services for OY. The review of the assessments allows CCYAs to self-report data, engage in discussion related to strengths and challenges with partner agencies at the onsite review, as well as hear from youth regarding their experience with the program and what they see as strengths and challenges related to the services they have received.

Since Round 3 of the CFSR the QSR process has not been utilized and no recent data is available for the qualitative evaluation of cases. This pause in implementation has provided the state with an opportunity to review existing CQI processes and consider how to optimally integrate qualitative case reviews into the CQI/QA system while also considering capacity and successful implementation of CQI efforts. In Round 3 PA relied heavily on QSR's and the data the reviews produced, however since QSR's are on hold, PA will not be going in depth on QSR data. PA is in the process of further expanding the use of the federal OSRI as a case review tool and process. Although CFSRs have also not been fully functioning statewide, concerted efforts have been implemented to expand staffing with the creation of a new CQI Reviews Unit providing dedicated staff with the focused responsibilities of completing CFSR case reviews. The addition of the CQI Reviews Unit includes the expansion of a CQI supervisor and five CQI staff to support and sustain ongoing application of the OSRI.

Since CFSR Round 3, PA has made efforts to expand its CQI/QA system to encompass Family First Title IV-E Prevention Program CQI monitoring. This component of the system focuses on monitoring outcomes for the EBPs included in the state's Title IV-E Five-Year Prevention Plan (Prevention Plan). Outcome monitoring will focus on safety, permanency, and child and adult well-being specific to behavioral and emotional functioning, parenting practices, parent or caregiver mental/emotional health, family functioning, and economic/housing stability. FFPSA CQI monitoring is not fully functioning at this time however ongoing efforts to secure data elements to measure outcomes through collaboration with CCYAs, EBP providers, EBP developers, the OCDEL, as well as various OCYF Bureau partners (including CQI, Data Management, Fiscal and Policy) continue. Ongoing discussions and cross-system collaboration have supported establishing data sharing agreements to facilitate the collection and sharing of data across the county agencies, service providers, developers, and OCYF for the purpose of CQI monitoring.

The SAC provided feedback on identified areas of strength and areas needing improvement related to CQI/QA System performance during a meeting held in March 2025. This meeting elicited perspectives and experiences from professionals and individuals with lived experience from across the child welfare system. The responses received from the group represent a small sample relative to the entire system; however, the first-hand qualitative data is valuable to understanding the experiences that inform performance data. In reviewing statewide functioning of the CQI/QA System, the SAC generated responses speaking to benefits of the system being supported by multiple mechanisms for QA. SAC members also identified ongoing discussions and plans occurring at the state level to enhance the infrastructure and capacity to support QA efforts more consistently across the state. The benefits of participation in CFSR activities and implementation of the OSRI were also shared from the group and align with the state's transition to the ongoing use of the OSRI case review instrument.

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)

PA's CQI/QA system has standards to evaluate the quality of services through a few different mechanisms. At the state level, the PA Child Welfare Practice Model[31] sets the standards for all child welfare system partners working to provide quality services across PA. When the QSR is being implemented, this case review process is designed to measure the implementation of core practice components such as engagement, teaming and assessment and understanding as outlined in PA's Child Welfare Practice Model, in addition to safety, permanency and well-being outcomes. The interruption in QSRs has created a gap in this area of the QA system as recent case review data on practice standards is currently unavailable using the QSR tool. The CFSR OSRI also has established standards for evaluating the quality of services, including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services that protect their health and safety. The expanded use of the OSRI will support the system in increasing collection of data and monitoring standards through the qualitive case review process.

PA's CQI/QA system uses two main qualitative case review processes, the QSR and the CFSR, as part of the state's approach to quality data collection. The QSR is an in-depth case review and practice appraisal process utilized to find out how children, youth and families are benefiting from services received. The state began implementation of the QSR case review instrument in 2011, which helped drive the expansion of CQI processes. As each county joins the statewide CQI effort, they participate in a state supported QSR. The QSR uses a combination of record reviews, interviews, observations, and deductions made from fact patterns gathered and interpreted by trained reviewers regarding children, youth and families receiving services. The QSR Protocol contains qualitative indicators that measure the status of the focus child/youth's safety, permanency and well-being and the child/youth's parents' and/or caregivers' functioning. In a sense, the measures indicate the status of what is working and not working. The QSR Protocol also provides a set of qualitative indicators

[31] https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Resources/PAChildWelfarePracticeModel.pdf

for measuring the quality and consistency of the implementation of core practice functions outlined in the Practice Model. QSR findings are used to provide safe, positive feedback to frontline staff, supervisors and program managers while also identifying systemic strengths and barriers. The QSR is not a tool used for compliance enforcement. Rather, QSR feedback is used to stimulate and support practice development and capacity-building efforts leading to better practice and results for the children, youth and families receiving services.

The QSR results provide a rich array of learning for affirming good practice already in place and for identifying next step actions for practice development and capacity-building efforts. QSR results reveal:

- Detailed stories of practice performance and the impact of that performance on outcomes to greater understand strengths and challenges affecting daily frontline practice in the agencies being reviewed;
- A deeper understanding of contextual factors that are affecting daily frontline practice in the agencies being reviewed;
- Qualitative information that informs potential patterns of themes that impact child/youth and family status and performance results based on key measures;
- Noteworthy accomplishments and success stories that affirm good practice and results found during the review;
- Emerging problems, issues and challenges identified at the local level;
- A way to monitor whether practice improvement efforts are having an impact on outcomes; and
- Opportunities to think critically and learn how to better address CQI efforts for improving program design, practice models and working conditions for frontline practitioners and for the statewide child welfare system as a whole

Upon completion of the on-site QSR, counties are provided with a final report which outlines the findings of the QSR as well as other additional analysis requested by the county. Counties use these findings, in conjunction with other data sources, to identify areas for improvement and then work collaboratively to develop County Improvement Plans (CIPs) which are reviewed and approved by the OCYF Regional Office. QSR County Final Reports and CIPs are made available to the public online through the DHS website.[32] A statewide report is generated after each round to provide a picture of the findings from the aggregate data. These final reports are made available online through the CQI webpage on the CWRC website.[33]

Although the QSR is the state's current case review instrument and has been a mainstay for providing quality data on case practice and performance for over ten years, this process has recently experienced limited implementation. At the time of the submission of the 2025-2029 CFSP, ten rounds of QSRs had been completed with 30

[32] https://www.dhs.pa.gov/docs/Publications/Pages/OCYF-Reports.aspx
[33] http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CQI.htm

counties, or just under half of all PA counties, having participated in a state supported QSR. QSR implementation is on a pause to provide the opportunity to make enhancements to existing QSR processes and to allow for even greater integration of PA's various statewide CQI efforts to ensure it continues functioning optimally. Qualitative case reviews have proven to support the state in effectively reviewing, monitoring and providing oversight.

The planning, development and evaluation of PA's statewide and local CQI process has become the charge of the OCYF and the CWRC CQI project team. During implementation, project team activities include:

- Continued sharing of lessons learned and celebrations of success associated with each of the CQI counties' work;
- QSR training;
- Finalization of tools, forms and templates to be utilized to support the CQI process;
- Recruitment/retention of certified QSR reviewers;
- Enhancements and distribution of the QSR Manual;
- Dissemination of statewide QSR data to community partners;
- Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Practice Model; and
- Brainstorming regarding the capacity for continued rollout of CQI efforts across the state. The CQI project team also provides support to PA's development and ongoing implementation of the CFSP and PA's CFSR process.

As PA explores ways to enhance the QSR process, efforts are also underway to build staffing capacity for sustained use of the federal OSRI as an additional case review method. PA is in the planning phase to expand the case review process to include the use of the federal OSRI and CFSR OMS. Planning efforts are underway to enhance the foundational CQI structure by hiring five CQI staff and a CQI supervisor to expand implementation of case reviews. This effort will provide the capacity to support on-going use of the OSRI and OMS to monitor safety, permanency and well-being outcomes. Expanded internal use of the OSRI and OMS will provide greater collection of data and enhance the CQI system statewide. CQI/QA staff are in the process of reviewing materials with plans for participating in the E-learn trainings and materials provided by the CB in preparation for Round Four. Planned enhancements also include the development and delivery of any state-specific supplemental materials needed to onboard CFSR staff. PA utilizes several different mechanisms to ensure there is not only compliance with law, policy and regulation but assessment of our county and state processes to monitor outcomes for children and families.

PA child welfare laws and regulations set specific standards related to the administration of services to protect the health and safety of children in foster care which are monitored through the annual CCYA licensing process. Key examples of these standards include:

- Safety standards for licensing and approving private foster and adoptive homes and annual review of foster homes
  - 55 PA Code §3700.67[34] (Safety requirements)
  - 55 PA Code §3700.69[35] (Annual re-evaluation)
  - 55 PA Code §3700.70[36] (Temporary and provisional approvals of foster families)
- Requirements for medical/dental care
  - 55 PA Code §3700.51[37] (Medical and dental care)
  - 55 PA Code 3680.51[38] (Health care policies and procedures)
- Caseworker visits
  - 55 PA Code 3490.61[39] (Supervisory review and child contacts)
- Background checks
  - CPSL §6344(d)[40] (relating to prospective adoptive or foster parents)

As part of gathering input from stakeholders' experience with the CQI/QA process, community and system partner focus groups were conducted between October of 2023 to February of 2024. The focus groups supported data collection and gathered insight from system professionals and individuals served by the child welfare system. These meetings provided opportunities for professionals and individuals with lived experience from across the system to share their insights, experiences and perspectives on system functioning. It is important to note that the responses received from the groups represent a small sample relative to the entire system; however, first-hand feedback is valuable in understanding the experiences that inform performance.

Focus group members discussed the use of the statewide annual CCYA licensing inspection process to monitor standards and regulations related to health and safety of children in foster care. One challenge to the CCYA licensing process that was highlighted during focus groups spoke to struggles with consistent application of citations and monitoring of correction plans across the state. It was also noted that more participation of the people served by the system to include children and parents, increasing the voices of people with lived experience, will enhance the licensing process as it pertains to QA. Another challenge that this component of the QA system experiences is a notion of a greater focus on compliance and technical violations than on the quality of services, as noted by members of the SAC in March 2025.

Each year, all 67 counties complete pre-site visit questionnaires as part of the IL services evaluation process. The questionnaires gather self-reported information from counties or their contracted providers to help assess how IL Services are being administered. The focus of the pre-site visit questionnaire and the IL site visit process is

[34] http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3700/s3700.67.html
[35] http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3700/s3700.69.html
[36] http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3700/s3700.70.html
[37] http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3700/s3700.51.html
[38] http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3680/s3680.51.html
[39] http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3490/chap3490toc.html#3490.61.
[40] http://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/LI/CT/HTM/23/00.063..HTM

to understand services and supports delivered to OY (aged 14 to 21 years of age, with aftercare services until age 23) to inform Chafee funding decisions, identify strengths and challenges to IL programs and services. Key areas of focus include: data collection about the OY population; SWAN services; OY services and outcomes (including explorations of special populations served); Education; Employment; Permanency and permanent connections; IL services; Resumption of jurisdiction/Extended Foster Care; Aftercare services; Normalcy; Transition planning; Housing; Credit checks; NYTD data; Discharge and transition; CQI and County specific priorities. The consistent monitoring of these standards is to support ongoing CQI efforts for this target population of OY served in PA.

3. Identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system

The CQI/QA system has multiple methods of identifying strengths and needed improvements of the service delivery system. When implemented, the QSR process utilizes a six-point scale to rate the current status of outcomes and practice performance. This scale breaks out scoring in a manner to better help to identify strength and gap areas on a continuum. The indicator “Intervention Adequacy and Resource Availability” looks specifically at the degree to which planned interventions, services and supports provided to the child/youth and family have sufficient power and beneficial effect to meet the near-term needs and achieve the conditions necessary for safe case closure. This indicator also evaluates the degree to which the resources required to implement current child/youth and family plans are available on a timely, sufficient and convenient basis. Many other indicators such as parent/caregiver functioning, pathway to independence and child/youth and family planning process all require reviewers to take into consideration the provision of services to the child/youth and family as a factor in rating the indicator. Focus groups conducted as part of the QSR also provided opportunities for counties to obtain additional feedback from caseworkers that can be used to assess the service delivery system.

CFSRs are a part of the state’s QA processes providing case-level data to support identification of strengths and needs of the service delivery system. Through the application of the federal OSRI, the CFSR case review process provides meaningful results highlighting system strengths as well as areas of performance that can be improved. Rationale review and analysis support further understanding of what occurs at the case-level, providing insight into how child and family needs are being assessed and how effective services are at meeting their needs. CFSRs also provide data on barriers and shortfalls to the service delivery system, highlighting areas where additional concerted efforts need to occur as well as service availability to inform county and state policy and practices.

In FFY 2023-24 the overall number of youths, aged 14 to 23 years of age, receiving IL services and supports was 10,627. Generally, as reported by the participants, IL programs provide sufficient services to youth in the service areas including needs assessment and case planning, life skills, prevention services,

education services, supportive services, employment services and housing. The county or IL provider completes a pre-site visit questionnaire and participates in the IL Site visit.

- Site visit data over the last three years show that areas of strength related to IL services include:

    - Needs assessment and planning with OY, including their identified support networks and permanent connections;
    - Provision of life skills to eligible OY both in their county and if they reside in another county;
    - Education supports for OY including tutoring, SAT waivers, financial aid assistance;
    - Employment support to OY including mock interviews, purchasing interview clothing, transporting youth to interviews, and assisting youth in working through conflict in the workplace;
    - Supports to youth including financial support through stipends and mentoring services;
    - Supporting youth access to services for physical and mental health services including ensuring they have their insurance cards, assisting with scheduling appointments and providing transportation
    - Youth engagement in IL programming and aftercare services until 23 years of age

- Site visit data over the last three years show that areas for improvement related to IL services include:

    - Affordable housing for OY;
    - Permanency for youth prior to leaving caring or permanent networks to support youth into adulthood;
    - Ensuring normalcy for youth in foster care goes beyond access to activities to a sense of belonging and having social connections. (will have focus group information from 2025 retreat available in the next month).

FFPSA CQI monitoring will support the state's QA processes in identifying strengths and needs of service delivery related to the EBPs in the state's Prevention Plan. Through the collection and analysis of outcome data, PA will gain a deeper more robust understanding of how well child and family needs are being assessed and how well services are being matched to meet the needs of children and families served. In addition, collecting and analyzing data will support the system in identifying any variations in outcomes across counties, providers, and populations in the child welfare system. This data will drive policy and practice adjustments, inform any needed expansion or improvement of service delivery, and help identify barriers to positive outcomes. Although this component is an expansion of the QA system from CFSR Round 3, it is important to note that it is not yet fully functioning as data sharing has

been limited and incomplete; yet there are ongoing efforts to rectify these systemic issues.

The CF/NF review process also provides methods for better understanding strengths and needs of the service delivery system. Through this process, local and state teams are engaged in reviewing cases in an in-depth and thorough manner to identify any service strengths that supported the child and/or their family in meeting their needs, as well as, any service deficit areas in both the local and statewide provision of services that should be taken under evaluation and reviewed in an effort to prevent future occurrences of child fatalities/near fatalities caused by abuse/neglect. In addition, counties also complete an electronic data collection form for every report of a CF/NF as it pertains to child abuse that is received which enhances the ability to review and identify both strengths and deficiencies of the service delivery system to the families. This data that is collected is also utilized within the qualitative review that is conducted and included within the 2024 Annual Child Protective Services Report[41] regarding child fatalities/near fatalities.

PA continues to actively work on enhancing the above processes and data collection, analysis, and reporting through CQI/QA improvement efforts as PA recognizes that there is a substantial need to increase the quality and utilization of this data within the realm of CQI to obtain a more thorough understanding and develop a more holistic approach for the prevention of future child fatalities/near fatalities pertaining to abuse.

Additionally, an Interbranch Workgroup for Child Safety and Stability has been convened which includes the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches within PA to evaluate the effectiveness of the PA CPSL along with the current state of child welfare to identify modern prevention and intervention practices to protect children from abuse and neglect. In tandem with this workgroup, an Executive-only branch initiative consisting of staff from various departments within the state called the PA Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities and Near Fatalities Workgroup, is working together to review a way to identify prevention and intervention efforts to reduce child fatalities/near fatalities.

As part of gathering input from stakeholders' experience with the QA/CQI process, community and system partner focus groups were conducted from October 2023 to February 2024. The focus groups gathered insight from system professionals and individuals served by the child welfare system on how the system identifies strengths and needs related to service delivery. Members of the focus groups spoke to existing methods of gathering system-level feedback that inform policy development, implementation of these policies, and monitoring, and function of the effectiveness of the policies as part of the CQI/QA processes.

One area of input provided by the SAC focus group participants identified OCYF's communication strategies used to inform policy development, implementation,

[41] https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/ocyf/documents/2024-annual-child-abuse-report-final.pdf

monitoring and function as a QA process. Communication strategies implemented to gather feedback from CCYAs, and other community partners are received through polls, surveys, focus groups, discussion time during reoccurring meetings, invitations for suggestions when sharing guidance or deliverables, and insights gathered through informal communications. In addition to collaborating with county-level staff and regional offices to review policies and programs, the OCYF also facilitates formal information sessions and coordinated working groups. While these are positive strategies identified, other focus group participants identified the need to enhance the incorporation of feedback from individuals with lived experience, including listening to their comments/opinions on how services impact their experiences, both positively and negatively. The group also identified the need to improve statewide policy implementation, reducing red tape requirements to secure funding for necessary living expenses, and improving cross-system communication.

4. Provides relevant reports

The CQI/QA system produces various reports to support sharing of information and knowledge learned from data analysis as well as information learned from system and community partners. During the QSR process, counties are provided with a final report which outlines the QSR findings. Additional analysis reports are also prepared, if requested by the county. Counties use these findings, in conjunction with other data sources, to identify areas for improvement and then work collaboratively to develop CIPs which are reviewed and approved by the OCYF Regional Office. QSR County Final Reports and CIPs are also made available to the public, as they can be accessed through the DHS website[42]. A statewide report is also generated after each round to provide aggregate data.

The CQI/QA system makes use of case-specific, site-level, and state-level CFSR reports and data through the OMS. The state has made use of the OMS generated reports to support deep dives into various areas of practice and performance including analysis and utilizing results to inform statewide quality improvement efforts, to include analysis of performance of Item 14, as part of Round 3 PIP monitoring efforts. Data and analysis of the findings are presented to various system and community partner groups as part of the CQI feedback loops that exist in PA. This also includes recent collaboration with the SAC. Through collaboration between OCYF and the CWRC TA staff, CFSR sites are provided with case-specific and site-level reports that inform CQI efforts.

The Annual Licensing Inspection process produces relevant reports at the conclusion of each licensing inspection. Following each licensing inspection an Annual Survey and Evaluation Summary are completed for the county. Along with the licensing inspection summary is a list of any regulatory findings requiring a plan of correction and the county's plan to address the areas of non-compliance. These inspection summaries and required plans of correction are made available to the public online through the

[42] https://www.dhs.pa.gov/docs/Publications/Pages/OCYF-Reports.aspx

Human Services Provider Directory on the DHS website at: https://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/human_service_provider_directory/[43].

PA's CF/NF review process is instrumental in the development of completing and providing reports to inform the public and legislature of the information relating to these incidents that is gathered and analyzed, and most importantly the efforts focused on decreasing the future likelihood of abuse of children resulting in a CF/NF. The state of PA is dedicated to the prevention of child fatalities/near fatalities. As part of the dedication to this prevention, the PA DHS has staff who are devoted to investigating, documenting, monitoring, tracking, and collecting data along with analyzing and reporting the data to inform both the public and policymakers of the rate of occurrence and the circumstances in which child fatalities/near fatalities occur within PA. The DHS also has developed workgroups and MDTs that are dedicated to the improvement of data collection and analysis, completing and providing reports.

Included within the framework of the above, a multidisciplinary CF/NF review is required to be convened by the thirty-first day from the date of receipt of the report at a local level in any county where a child dies or nearly dies as a result of suspected child abuse, as well as, within any county/counties in which the child resided within the previous 16 months if the reported abuse is substantiated or if an investigation outcome is not reached within 30 days of the date of the receipt of the report of the CF/NF. This multidisciplinary review team must consist of at least six individuals who are broadly representative of the county where the review team is established and who have expertise in the prevention and/or treatment of child abuse. The team reviews the circumstances of and surrounding the CF/NF, as well as: current and past services provided to the child and/or family by public, private, and/or community service agencies, strengths and deficiencies in compliance with statues, regulations, and services to children and families; recommendations for changes at the local and state level in regards to reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities/near fatalities; recommendations for changes at the local and state level in regards to monitoring and inspection of county agencies; and recommendations for changes at the local and state level in regards to collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent future child abuse. From these meetings, the county multidisciplinary team produces a CF/NF report that is submitted to OCYF. This report is then reviewed at the state level and subsequently posted to the DHS website once redaction criteria is met.

A second review is also conducted at the state level which includes the OCYF Bureau of Children and Family Services and the OCYF Bureau of Policy, Programs and Operations, regardless of whether the report of the CF/NF abuse was substantiated. This additional review includes goals for improving data collection on child fatalities/near fatalities that occur, reviewing areas of statutory and regulatory non-compliance by the county agency, and monitoring county specific system change plans and recommendations at the local and state level for change. From this review, a report is completed and issued for all CF/NF cases. Copies of these reports are then redacted and made available to the public online via the PA DHS website at:

[43] https://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/human_service_provider_directory/

PA Child Fatality and Near Fatality Reports[44] in an effort to promote transparency; unless there is a certification for the stay of the report from the District Attorney's Office preventing it's release

Through the completion of these detailed reviews of child fatalities/near fatalities and by conducting an analysis of related trends from the information gathered, such as a review of the contributing factors and indicators that led to the abuse resulting in a CF/NF, they serve as a tool to better ascertain both the strengths and challenges, as well as, to be able to work on developing resolutions to address the service needs of the children and families served both within the child welfare system, as well as through other public, private, and community providers in order to prevent future occurrences and to enhance the protection of children.

In addition, the PA DHS also completes a quarterly summary report with non-identifying information, which is compiled for all the CF/NF abuse reports that are substantiated during the quarter being reported on for dissemination to the Governor and the General Assembly. This quarterly report is made available to the public online via the PA DHS website at: https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/data-reports/quarterly-summaries-child-abuse[45] in an effort to promote transparency.

As part of the Annual Child Protective Services Report[46], an analysis is provided around data of PA's child fatalities/near fatalities from the previous calendar year. In the table below, taken from the APSR, illustrates the number of substantiated fatalities and near fatalities that have occurred in PA over the last five years. PA continues to work on strengthening this data analysis and reporting. A report is also issued for each child's fatality/near fatality that identifies the basic circumstances contributing to the fatality/near fatality, history of family's involvement with the agency and county and state level recommendations related to the case. Redacted copies of the reports are made available to the public online through the DHS website at: Child Fatality & Near Fatality Reports | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania[47]

Table 51. Annual Number of Substantiated Fatalities and Near Fatalities

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Substantiated Fatalities	74	58	60	57	60
Substantiated Near Fatalities	112	136	138	119	82

Source [Annual Child Protective Services Report], [May 2025]

[44] https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/data-reports/child-fatality-near-fatality-reports
[45] https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/data-reports/quarterly-summaries-child-abuse
[46] https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/newsroom/2024-annual-child-protective-services-report
[47] https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/data-reports/child-fatality-near-fatality-reports#sortCriteria=%40copapwpdate%20descending

Additionally, the IL site visit process is a key component to PA's QA system. IL site visits provide an in-person insight into the needs of the youth who are in transition to adulthood, and how we can prepare them during this critical time of their lives. These visits include a facilitated discussion with the CCYA, private provider agencies, OCYF, OY receiving services and system partners providing services to them. Prior to the onsite visit, the CCYA completes an electronic pre-site visit questionnaire that aligns with the state's NBPB. In addition to the pre-site visit questionnaire, the CWRC staff conduct visits utilizing the previous year's IL report and the pre-site visit questionnaire to prepare for the visit and evaluate the quality of IL services.

The CWRC staff, along with OCYF staff, have worked to align the pre-site visit questionnaire with the information requested through CCYA's NBPB and other OY priorities. The goal is to reduce the collection of redundant information and to improve the quality of the data CCYAs are reporting as it relates to services for OY. The CWRC continues to work closely with OCYF to monitor the information collected through the site visit process and review and update the electronic pre-site visit form and onsite meeting tool as necessary each year.

The IL site visit process encourages the continuous evaluation and improvement of services offered to OY through county and provider IL programs. The review allows CCYAs to self-report data, engage in discussion related to strengths and challenges with partner agencies at the onsite review, as well as hear from youth regarding their experience with the program and what they see as strengths and challenges related to the services they have received. The visit also allows CCYAs the opportunity to participate in TA discussions with collaborative partners, to better coordinate services and ensure positive youth outcomes. Additionally, independent living reports, which summarize discussions from the IL site visit, offer an added method for evaluating services by integrating youth voice.

CCYAs strengths and challenges related to the provision of IL services are identified through the review of data collected in the pre-site visit questionnaire, information gathered during the onsite visit discussion and through youth feedback. Identifying and addressing strengths and gaps are a large part of the IL site visit discussion. The onsite review looks specifically at strengths and challenges related to overall program administration, needs assessment and planning, life skills, transition/permanency planning, education, supportive services (SWAN, stipends, mentoring, etc.), employment, housing, prevention/wellness, youth engagement and After Care (AC) services. These reports also highlight promising and innovative practices in providing services to OY. Each year, Practice Improvement Specialists (PIs) review the pre-site visit questionnaire and then conduct site visits to assess IL Services, identify strengths and challenges in county practice and provide TA when needed.

The site visit process includes interviews with the CCYA staff, IL coordinators, private providers contracted by the county to provide IL services, if applicable, SWAN Regional Technical Assistants, and program participants. Representatives from the four OCYF Regional offices are also invited to attend. During the interviews, several

domains that assist youth in their transition to adulthood are discussed, such as permanency, education, employment, life skills, prevention and wellness, and housing. The PI then prepares a written report containing the findings and recommendations from the visit and submits it to the state IL Coordinator at OCYF for review, feedback and approval prior to the 90-day follow-up visit. If an IL site visit report cannot be approved during the initial review, the State IL Coordinator collaborates with the county and the PI to resolve data discrepancies, provide recommendations for strengthening data collection, and support IL policy development to ensure OY receive the services and supports they need. This process allows PIs to gain an understanding of how each county's IL program is functioning and connect counties who may be facing similar struggles or pair counties together to help overcome obstacles that they are facing

The expectation is that each IL report covers the strengths, gaps, and challenges of each practice area identified in the report template and that recommendations are provided for all areas identified as challenges. TA support is offered during the site visit and discussion around next steps to address noted challenges. Additionally, 90-day follow-up visits are conducted with the CCYA to present the approved IL report and to formally share findings, provide recommendations and offer TA to address those areas of need identified during the IL site visit.

FFPSA CQI activities will generate reports in the future including, but not limited to safety, permanency, and wellbeing outcomes of the children and families involved in FFPSA EBPs. Visioning for those CQI efforts will include aggregate reports as well as county level and program specific reports.

5. Evaluates implemented program improvement measures

When QSRs are implemented, the process supports the QA system in evaluating program improvement measures through the implementation of CIP. Following the completion of a QSR, CCYAs are supported in the development and monitoring of a CIP designed to outline county goals, strategies, and action steps to improve practice and outcomes for children, youth, and families. Counties can request additional analysis of QSR results to target key indicators that may be related specifically to county improvement efforts or priorities.

CFSR program improvement measures have centered around the PIP monitoring efforts as part of federal CFSR implementation. PA was successful in completing PIP strategies and successfully achieved all PIP benchmarks for Round 3. OCYF and CWRC CQI staff have also continued to work together to discuss lessons learned from Round 3 PIP development, implementation and monitoring efforts to further enhance the program and practice improvement efforts for Round 4 CFSR.

and the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), all of whom are directly responsible or work in parallel with the child welfare system.

Another example of the CQI/QA system's evaluation of implemented program improvement measures is centered on the IL site visit process. The CWRC employs four PIs, who continue to provide TA, conduct IL site visits, and offer regional support through IL networking sessions where CCYAs have an opportunity to collaborate with one another. PIs work diligently to ensure that youth voice is included in all IL site visit reports through focus group facilitation or individual outreach to youth via phone or email. This direct engagement ensures that the voices of youth are not only heard but are instrumental in shaping the recommendations and improvements outlined in the IL reports. By incorporating firsthand accounts and suggestions from youth, PIs can provide more targeted and intentional recommendations to CCYAs and OCYF. Additionally, this approach fosters a collaborative environment where youth are active participants in the continuous improvement of services designed to support their transition to adulthood.

Improvements are made to the IL site visit process each year, based on observations and recommendations from the previous year's review process. The pre-site visit questionnaire is reviewed, annually. Questions can be added or removed based on trends, regulation changes, etc. that have occurred in the fiscal year. If changes are needed, they are made, based on the assessed needs of the state and federal identified focus. This ensures that information requested and collected is up to date and relevant. Over this past year an IL site visit Dashboard was developed to assist CCYAs in collection and review of county specific data, which serves as an example of an improvement that was made from CFSR Round 3 findings. The Dashboard provides CCYAs with the ability to analyze data from their pre-site visit questionnaires, compare current practices and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, the CWRC PIs can use the dashboard to deliver targeted TA and support, enhancing program success and outcomes.

Qualitative data was gathered from system and community partners to better understand their experiences with the QA system. Data gathered from system and community partner focus groups identified challenges related to the current use of the CCYA licensing process as it pertains to evaluating plans of correction. It was noted that improvements can be made in making the QA process more concrete in being able to evaluate corrections based on the specifics of each citation. Focus group participants described how monitoring licensing plans of correction has challenges, including: limitations due to time frame, lofty plans of correction that are unrealistic, inconsistencies in review and acceptance of plans of correction. Additionally, participants in the focus groups expressed challenges in the ability to apply county wide practice improvements when citations issued during Annual Licensing Inspection were not pertaining to a systemic issue. Citations issued because of non-compliance of a particular situation or individuals' concerns still require corrective action which can be tough on the county to implement when the noncompliance is isolated. These experiences voiced by members of the group speak to some observed gaps in being able to effectively evaluate implemented program improvement measures as it pertains to the current CCYA licensing approach. Gathering perspectives, experiences, and insights from system and community partners demonstrates a system strength in better

understanding areas for growth and potential root causes for improvement for the CQI process, and a critical component of the case review system.

D. Staff and Provider Training

Item 26: Initial Staff Training State Response

- Item 26: 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.

The CFSR systemic factor regarding staff and provider training considers whether the state has in place a training system to ensure initial and ongoing training is provided for all staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties regarding services included in the CFSP. There are three items included in this systemic factor: initial staff training, ongoing staff training and foster and adoptive parent training. The individuals who would be included in the assessment of this item are all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of CPS, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services and IL services, as well as their supervisors. The foster and adoptive parent training item combines all current and prospective foster parents licensed through either the county agency or private agencies, adoptive parents and the director and all staff of state licensed and approved facilities who have direct contact with children.

Training provision

Foundations of PA Child Welfare Practice: Building Competency, Confidence, and Compassion (Foundations) is designed to provide child welfare professionals with the fundamental knowledge and skills they need to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children and to achieve their direct service worker certification as required by PA law and regulation. The entire **Foundations** series consists of 124 credit hours delivered entirely in a Team-Based Learning™ (TBL) format allowing the participants, together with their team, to solve realistic problems related to child welfare practice. Foundations also includes simulations with Standardized Clients (SC) and Standardized Attorneys (SA) as opportunities for caseworkers to apply their learning in a real-world environment. The training consists of 40 hours of online modules which prepares the learner for 72 hours (8 modules) of in-person application sessions. Transfer of

Learning (TOL) activities are delivered through an additional 12 hours of field work whereby the learner works with an "advisor" at their county agency on structured assignments that include discussion questions and practice scenarios. Post-work activities allow the caseworker to practice their new skills and knowledge with oversight and reflection with a supervisor or training staff. Themes from Community Partner Focus Groups for CFSP Systemic Factor Items, a qualitative analysis of responses shared by participants who attended voluntary virtual focus groups from October 2023 to February 2024, noted that the post-work is challenging but essential for the caseworker to integrate their classroom learning into practice.

Under DHS regulations, all child welfare caseworkers in PA are required to complete the initial certification training within 18 months of their hire date. Foundations meets the certification requirement and provides standardized curriculum topics including safety, permanency, well-being, engagement, personal safety, child development and self-care to staff from all jurisdictions across the state. Over the past three SFYs (SFY 2022-23 through SFY 2024-25), new caseworkers completed Foundations training and received their full certification in less than 4.5 months (134 days) on average, surpassing the required 18-month timeline requirement. This is in comparison to CFSR Round 3, when new caseworkers completed Charting the Course and were certified, on average, in less than six months. Although this was rated as a strength in CFSR Round 3, the CWRC made efforts to ensure that new caseworkers can start the Foundations series within three weeks of their hire to further support the training and staffing needs of counties. Table 52 below, maps out how many Foundations series have been offered to new staff and how many new staff have become certified across SFY's 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25.

Table 52. Number of Foundations Series modules offered and new staff that were certified.

Foundations	SFY 22-23	SFY 23-24	SFY 24/25
Series modules offered	105	100	105
Certified	637	767	668

Source [CWRC Bridge Foundations (2019, 2020 Certified SFY22-23, 23-24, 24-25], [September 2025]

When caseworkers complete the 124 hours of Foundations training including all coursework and supervisory advisement, a Direct Service Worker Certification is presented to them, signed by the county administrator. Caseworkers are not permitted to carry a caseload until the training requirements up to Module 5 are met. All 67 counties have their own practices and methodology of how they assign cases to new staff. Once the new staff has completed up to Module 5 of Foundations, which is safety and risk assessment module, they are allowed to start receiving cases.

Feedback from the SAC meeting on May 14, 2025, and focus group participants highlighted innovative strategies used by counties to supplement the initial certificate training, including virtual reality simulations and field coaches to provide additional

support for transfer of learning. Some counties have a training specialist or a seasoned staff member on site that shadows the new staff member to home visits and interventions until the newly certified staff demonstrate skills to be on their own in the field. Other counties respond to reports of child abuse and neglect in teams based on the allegations, while other counties impacted by the staffing crisis rely on supervisors and administrators to accompany the new staff out in the field. Cases are assigned to the new staff based on these accommodations and the demonstration of the new staff skills and knowledge of the competencies taught during the Foundations courses.

A Qualtrics Survey was sent to CCYA Administrators, Supervisors, and Caseworkers between May 15-June 13, 2024, to gather information directly from the child welfare workforce to rate their experience with the initial trainings. Surveys were emailed based on the individual staff person's role within the agency, as identified in demographics obtained in the Bridge database maintained by the Child Welfare Resource Center in collaboration with CCYAs in all jurisdictions across the state. Response rates are indicated in Table 53.

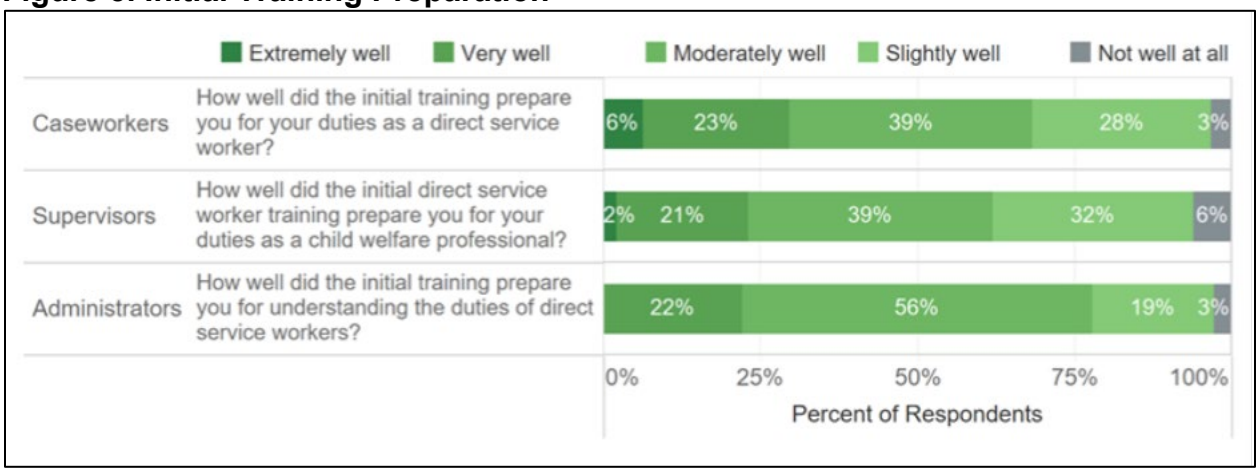
Table 53. Qualtrics Survey Response Rates

System Partner	Audience Size	Surveys Started	Surveys Finished	Response Rate	Completion Rate
Caseworkers – CW	2167	549	510	25%	93%
Supervisors - SUP	1058	268	252	25%	94%
Administrators - ADMIN	86	49	49	57%	100%

Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators], [June 2024]

The survey asked caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators to evaluate their initial training provided by the CWRC, their CCYA, or other organizations. Figure 5 illustrates survey respondents' satisfaction with the initial caseworker training series through the CWRC (i.e., CORE, Charting the Course or Foundations). Results are generally positive, with 77.74% of administrators, 62.72% of supervisors and 69% of caseworkers agreeing that the initial child welfare training series prepared them either moderately, very, or extremely well for their job duties as a caseworker or helped them understand the key responsibilities of a caseworker. Strengths identified from initial training include the ability to team with and learn from workers in other counties, the expertise of instructors, and the thorough explanation of the casework process and legal requirements of child welfare work in PA. Workers who completed the Foundations training also indicated that the simulations were helpful in preparing them for building rapport and working with families.

Figure 5. Initial Training Preparation



Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators], [June 2024]

Feedback from the SAC outlined that the Foundations series is a strong comprehensive training program which has been enhanced to add role play, and the training participants feel confident in their skills at the conclusion of training. Caseworkers reported feeling like they learned what they expected to learn in the course and can utilize that foundational training and concepts within their work. During the redesign of the Foundations course, individuals with lived experience were interviewed to offer potential areas of focus and subject matter experts guided course development. While the initial training is comprehensive in covering necessary caseworker skills, the SAC echoed the need for additional training on complex cases in the child welfare system.

Themes from the Community Partner Focus Groups for CFSP Systemic Factor Items identified that the content of the initial caseworker training provides foundational knowledge of the child welfare system. The training is flexible and has been offered in training centers across the state as well as at the CCYA, when needed. A challenge previously identified for initial caseworker training was to bridge classroom learning into practice; the simulation modules implemented through the Foundations curriculum are especially helpful to address this challenge. While focus group participants indicated that additional training for new staff is needed in the areas of mental health, child development, children with special needs, trauma, substance use and intergenerational CYS involvement, many of these topics are covered in second level courses available to caseworkers through the CWRC.

Quality Assurance

The CWRC is committed to evaluating the effectiveness of training, using data to improve training program products, and contributing to the field of child welfare. The Foundations series was designed to ensure opportunities for evaluation, monitoring and use of data to support continuous improvement efforts. Participants' knowledge, comprehension and application of skills are assessed through online knowledge checks,

Readiness Assurance Tests, application activities, field work and simulation ratings. In addition, the CWRC captures participants' reflections on their intent and ability to transfer their learning to the field.

Annually, since 2020 the CWRC completes an analysis examining the validity and psychometric properties of assessment items associated with two parts of the Foundations modules, the Individualized Readiness Assessment Tests (IRATs) and Check Your Understanding questions. The purpose of these analyses was to help the CWRC better understand how well the questions are assessing learning, how well they are differentiating between learners, content areas where learners may be struggling and if any of the questions are biased against certain groups of trainees. The CWRC is using the results of these analyses to engage in CQI of the Foundations curriculum. In the current CFSP five-year period, the CWRC will focus on evaluating shorter-term learning and will continue to monitor participant and instructor satisfaction with training. Subsequent evaluation efforts will examine transfer of learning, career outcomes and the effect that training has on the safety, permanency and well-being of children in the child welfare system.

To ensure training covers the knowledge and skills needed by child welfare professionals to carry out their duties and the consistent and competent delivery of training sessions and workshops, the CWRC engages in multiple activities and strategies, including but not limited to:

- Partnering with the OCYF in the development and approval of all curricula;
- Conducting an extensive instructor/consultant selection process consisting of an application, reference check, and panel interview;
- Prioritizing the selection of instructors/consultants who are experienced child welfare professionals in PA and have training/facilitation expertise;
- Conducting an extensive Standardized Client selection process consisting of an application, reference check, panel interview and a practice portrayal;
- Hiring Standardized Clients to portray the role of individuals receiving child welfare services in simulation-based trainings and provide feedback to participants from the perspective of the family;
- Providing selected instructors/consultants and SC with foundational training and ongoing professional development;
- Training or mentoring instructors/consultants and SC on curriculum content prior to approving them to deliver/portray in each curriculum;
- Observing instructors/consultants and SC the first time they deliver/portray in a curriculum and on a periodic basis, thereafter, providing them critical feedback on their delivery and skills;
- Providing instructors/consultants and SC with TA;
- Requiring instructors/consultants to obtain a minimum of six professional development hours annually;
- Convening monthly instructor forum calls and regularly scheduled SC practice sessions;
- Conducting level one evaluations of all training sessions;

- Requesting instructors/consultants to provide feedback after every time they train a curriculum; and,
- Utilizing a process to support the equitable assignment of instructors to deliver curriculum

In October 2022, the CWRC completed its work on the INA (Individual Needs Assessment) that is available in the Resource Center's Bridge system. The INA replaced the Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) that was previously in E-Learn. While the ITNA focused on training needs only, the INA includes a broader scope and focus on comprehensive professional development, not limited to training, and can support county TA. There are four versions of the INA, two tailored for direct service workers and two tailored for supervisors. All INAs are completed at designated intervals required by state regulation outlined in the following bullet points:

- Direct Service Workers (DSW)
    - At end of Foundations (new DSW INA);
    - Every three years with their county agency (ongoing DSW INA);
- Supervisors
    - At end of Foundations of Supervision (new Supervisor INA);
    - Every three years with their county agency (ongoing Supervisor INA)

Evaluation Results: Knowledge and Skills

Table 54 illustrates competency results for all newly trained caseworkers from October 2022 to June 2025. This data is collected via the self-reported INA which asks respondents to indicate if they feel prepared to make a series of statements related to tasks. These tasks were developed by a group of subject matter experts and system partners and are directly linked to the PA child welfare competencies and the foundational training series. The INA is designed to be part of a conversation engaging both the respondent and their direct supervisor and the data shown here represents only those INA which have been 'Approved', indicative of a conversation and shared agreement of the assessment between respondent and supervisor.

Table 54. Average Percentage of Workers Who Feel Prepared to Carry Out Tasks Associated with Competency

Competency	New Caseworker %
Engagement	87%
Assessment	86%
Teaming	86%
Planning	83%
Implementation	85%
Monitoring and Adjusting	85%
Professionalism	90%

Competency	New Caseworker %
Cultural Awareness and Responsiveness	89%
Law and Policy	81%
Advocacy	85%

Source [CWRC Approved INA Submissions from October 19, 2022, to June 30, 2025], [August 2025]

In CFSR Round 3, the training evaluation data demonstrated that initial training provided the basic skills and knowledge new staff need for their positions. Data from the last three SFYs show similar positive results. During SFY 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25, Foundations participants consistently provided positive feedback regarding the knowledge and skills they gained from participating in the certification series. Most of the responses that the CWRC received from participants indicated agreement or strong agreement with the following items after completing the instructor-led modules:

1. I learned what I expected to learn in this course (95.0%);
2. I will be able to use what I learned in this course in my work (95.5%);
3. I understand the concepts presented in this course (94.9%).;
4. I feel more confident in my skills after participating in this course (93.1%)

Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training State Response

- Item 27: 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.

Training Provision

Following initial caseworker certification, caseworkers must complete 20 training hours annually. There are multiple training series available to tenured child welfare staff through the CWRC as well as individual standalone courses. According to participants in the SAC, there are several new courses currently in development for team-based application and simulation focusing on substance use, supervisor workforce development, the impact of poverty and neglect in child welfare, and de-escalation and engagement, which are directly in response to identified needs. Teams will be able to

apply concepts to case scenarios, and some courses will also include a simulation component. In addition to these courses in development, the CWRC offers an array of instructor-led and asynchronous training for staff on specialized topics of child welfare practice. Some training topics include:

- Child Sexual Abuse Series;
- Family Engagement (including Family Finding and FGDM);
- Youth Engagement and Outcomes;
- Drug & Alcohol;
- Mental Health;
- Supporting families with disabilities;
- Resource Parent related topics;
- Concurrent Planning;
- Recognizing & Reporting CA/N;
- Trauma-Informed Care (TIC);
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children;
- Child Welfare Fiscal topics;
- Intimate Partner Violence; and,
- Leadership Academy/Foundations of Leadership

Foundations of Supervision (FOS) is PA's training and certification series for new child welfare supervisors to develop supervisory skills aligned with the PA Child Welfare Practice Model and Child Welfare Competencies. The series includes eight modules covering professional boundaries, teaming within the agency and with external partners, how agencies fit into the larger child welfare system, using child welfare data, workforce development, coaching and performance management, and implementing and coping with change. FOS was enhanced and relaunched in August 2021, to include team-based learning and simulation activities. The series is successful in training supervisors, with participants identifying strengths of building the critical thinking skills needed to supervise others, having difficult conversations with staff, coaching and supportive supervision. See Table 55 below for the number of FOS series offered and supervisors certified over the past three SFYs.

Table 55. Number of Foundations of Supervision Series modules offered and staff that were certified.

Foundations of Supervision	SFY 22-23	SFY 23-24	SFY 24/25
Series modules offered	17	35	30
Certified	102	146	130

Source [CWRC Bridge Foundations (2019, 2020, Allegheny) Certified SFY22-23, 23-24, 24-25], [September 2025]

Trauma Training

To support the goal of helping licensed County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYAs), foster care/adoption agencies, and OCYF licensed residential settings to become trauma-aware, trauma sensitive, trauma-informed, and healing-centered, respectively, focus groups were held with staff for OCYF and the CCYAs in the summer of 2023 to determine causes of secondary traumatic stress and burnout, revealed that many caseworkers feel discouraged by systemic barriers to helping families.

Additionally, a June 2024 study conducted by PFM Group Consulting LLC, for the purposes of assessing workforce recruitment and retention within the PA child welfare community among staff in the County and Children and Youth Agencies (CCYA). Information and statistics relating to trauma and its impact on their job were gathered from the following:

- OCYF NBB personnel summaries from FY2018-2023;
- Feedback from a Steering Committee of County Children and Youth Agency (CCYA) representatives and child welfare stakeholders across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Steering Committee met eight times between July 2023 and February of 2024.
- On-site focus groups with CCYA employees, including caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators;
- A survey of current employees administered through an online survey platform; a total of 332 survey responses were received with a response rate of approximately 37 percent.
- Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics program) and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), as well as the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (O*NET).
- A review of academic, government, and think tank resources on caseworker recruitment/retention, as well as publicly available media reports.

As a result of this study the information that was collected determined that staff turnover was impacted by traumatic working conditions. Most caseworkers surveyed (77.5%) in the PFM study, characterized “my safety” as “very influential” or “influential” in whether they choose to remain with their agency. 39.4% of caseworkers surveyed reported that in the prior 6 months, that they encountered a situation where they felt physically unsafe 56.8% of caseworkers reported witnessing or experiencing a situation with a client that was personally traumatic. Additionally, job related trauma plays a substantial role in caseworkers choosing to stay at their agency. Over half of caseworkers reported that they had witnessed or experienced a situation with a client that they felt was personally traumatic. Respondents of the PFM survey also indicated that support for employees dealing with stress and trauma ranked 8 out of 11 agency strength factors indicating there is a definite need for this type of support.

Caseworkers recognized the benefits of having more resources relating to trauma informed care available to them. In the PFM survey, 39% of the respondents indicated that specialized training in trauma would help them feel more comfortable in their job. Respondents of the PFM survey also indicated that caseworkers recognized

that they could benefit from trauma-informed therapy because of the secondary traumatic stress they experience through their daily work.

In 2023, OCYF joined forces with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to provide financial resources to Lakeside Global Institute (LGI) LLC, to support trauma-informed care training opportunities for all child welfare professionals in PA. This trauma training was free to any child welfare professional and included workshops and intensive courses.

During 2023 – 2024 period, 3,831 participants completed the Lakeside Global Institute trauma workshops geared towards child welfare professionals that need basic skills and knowledge of providing trauma-informed care required for their position, aligning with the Staff and Provider Training Systemic Factor. Trauma workshops included but were not limited to the following topics:

- An Overview of Trauma
- Trauma for First Responders
- Grief and Trauma
- Introduction to Trauma for Parents & Caregivers
- Trauma for Youth
- Trauma in Pandemic
- The Impact of Social Media

LGI facilitated 33 intensive course trainings for 439 participants. These intensive courses give child welfare organizations the opportunity to have internal sustainability of service delivery pertaining to trauma-informed care and provide opportunities for ongoing training within an organization that expands beyond the basic skills and knowledge needed to serve children, youth and families. Intensive courses that were available included the following:

- Enhancing Trauma Awareness (15-hours course)
- Deepening Trauma Awareness (30-hours course)
- Applying Trauma Principles (30-hours course)
- Group Facilitation (15-hours course)
- Processing Pain, Facilitating Healing (22.5-hours course)

Additionally, LGI offered a Train the Trainer curriculum which is a 25-hours course which gives participants an opportunity to become certified Adjunct Trainer with authorization to license and present LGI workshops within their organization. Adjunct Trainers are also equipped to facilitate small group discussions. During the reporting period, 36 individuals completed the Train the Trainer intensive course.

Evidence shows that staff who participated in trauma-informed care related training felt that they benefited from this vital. Feedback in the PFM focus groups indicated that trauma training was highly praised as useful and informative. Respondents in the PFM survey indicated that many caseworkers were trained in the

techniques of trauma-informed respond to support their clients through traumatic situations.

Although there has been an increase in trauma-informed professional development, there are areas that need to be improved. Multiple focus group attendees also noted that these services were no longer available because of lack of funding, or an inability to find a qualified professional to provide the service. Many caseworkers reported they were unable to attend the counseling sessions-in large part because of their existing caseload demands. Financial resources to support the ongoing development of staff remain a concern. Trauma training that supports an organization to become trauma-informed and healing centered is expensive and time-consuming. The organization must be able to dedicate time and money to sustain the ability to provide trauma-informed services with fidelity.

The accessibility of trauma training and the benefits resulting from this professional development are believed to have improved since the CFSR Round 3 time period. Although PA was found to be in substantial conformity with staff and provider training, the PA child welfare community did not have the availability to obtain free trauma training from LGI during this time. In 2023, Pennsylvania dedicated over $800,000 to allow child welfare professionals access to free trauma-informed professional development. These trauma training opportunities were available to any current or prospective foster and adoptive parents, CCYA staff including caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators, staff of state and licensed and approved facilities who have direct contact with children.

CWRC Trauma Courses

To supplement the already robust second level training available in PA, the CWRC launched five trauma-focused courses over the last three SFYs:

- Raising Trauma Awareness in Child Welfare Casework Practice in PA - Launched June 2022
    - This two-hour course introduces child welfare professionals to a model of care that seeks to prevent trauma for youth, families, caregivers and communities. Participants will gain an awareness of trauma, its prevalence, and its impact on children, youth, families and child welfare professionals. This module is the first in a series designed to transition PA's Child Welfare organizations into being Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered.
- Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Therapeutic Foster Care - Launched August 2023
    - This three-hour course explores child welfare practice, specifically relating to therapeutic foster care, through a trauma-sensitive lens. This module is designed for foster care staff and foster parents and is the second module in a series designed to transition PA's Child

Welfare organizations into being Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered.

- Developing Trauma Sensitivity for the OCYF- Launched March 2024
    - This three-and-a-half-hour course explores what it means to be trauma-sensitive towards yourself and in support of others. The sections within this module focus on fundamentals of trauma sensitivity; attachment, relationships, and the brain; signs and symptoms of trauma; implementing trauma-informed principles to respond to trauma; self-care; and resources. This module is the second in a series designed to transition PA's Child Welfare organizations into being Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered. This training is for staff of the OCYF to increase their trauma sensitivity as they provide direct or indirect support to PA's children, families, caregivers, child welfare professionals and each other.
- Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Congregate Care - Launched October 2024
    - This three-hour course explores what it means to be trauma sensitive towards yourself and in support of others, including others who work in congregate care, professional partners, and youth in care. The sections within this module focus on the fundamentals of trauma sensitivity; the interplay of trauma on youth; trauma, relationships, and behavior; implementing trauma-informed principles to respond to trauma; self-care; and resources. This module is the second in a series designed to transition PA's Child Welfare organizations into being Trauma-Informed.
- Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Child Welfare Professionals - Launched August 2025
    - This three-hour course explores what it means to be trauma sensitive. The sections within this module focus on fundamentals of trauma sensitivity; attachment, relationships, and the brain; signs and symptoms of trauma; implementing trauma-informed principles and responding to trauma; self-care; and resources. This module is the second in a series designed to transition PA's Child Welfare organizations into being Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered. This training is designed for child welfare professionals including but not limited to intake, ongoing, family services, independent living, and other private and public providers such as adoption and foster agency staff including caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators.

Throughout each trauma course, participants respond to “Check Your Understanding” questions after completing individual modules. These questions serve as a check-in and means of reinforcing key learning points. Table 56 displays the average scores across all modules according to trauma training course. These scores are based on all the data collected since the launch of each training course through August 2025. Among the CWRC trauma courses, most participants answered the various Check Your Understanding assessment questions correctly, with average

scores ranging from 64.1% - 67.6%. When participants answer a question incorrectly, they are provided with the correct answer and brief information to clarify the correct response and reinforce the key learning point. While the average scores may not be as high as expected, Check Your Understanding questions are meant as a check-in and to reinforce learning. These questions are not meant to serve as a summative assessment of knowledge.

Table 56. Average Scores of Check Your Understanding Questions Across All Modules According to Trauma Course

CWRC Trauma Course	Average Score %
Raising Trauma Awareness in Child Welfare Casework Practice in PA	67.2%
Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Therapeutic Foster Care	64.1%
Developing Trauma Sensitivity for OCYF	65.4%
Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Congregate Care Staff	66.8%
Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Child Welfare Professionals	67.6%

Source [CWRC Check Your Understanding Data for Trauma Courses Since the Launch of Each Course – Various Times from June 2022 to August 2025], [August 2025]

A 2024 Qualtrics survey of caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators asked respondents about ongoing training opportunities. Leadership Academy participants highlighted the high quality of the training covering relevant topics taught by experts in the field, the ability to network and learn from other administrators, and the convenience of incorporating trainings into the first day of the PA Children and Youth Administrator (PCYA) meetings. Of the other second level courses available, the most common feedback is that respondents appreciate the wide variety of topic areas and the ability to select training to meet their individual training needs and interests. Caseworkers did indicate a desire for more in-depth training on substance use disorders and mental health. Some focus group participants identified barriers to accessing ongoing training opportunities, including CCYA turnover, high workloads, too much flexibility in the requirements for continuing education, and concerns that many counties do not have the funding or access to other training opportunities beyond those offered by the CWRC.

Information obtained through Annual CCYA Licensing Inspections indicates that staff are generally fulfilling requirements related to initial and ongoing training hours across the state. For Annual CCYA Licensing Inspections that occurred during calendar year 2024, one fully licensed county was cited for failure to ensure six direct care workers completed their annual 20 hours of training within the licensing year. The county submitted a plan of correction to remedy this issue which is being monitored by the OCYF Regional Office. It is important to note, when comparing the Rate of Compliance from Round 3 in 2016, to the Rate of Compliance going into Round 4 in 2024, PA has improved by 11.33 percentage points. As a result, PA’s current Rate of Compliance for initial and ongoing staff training is at 99.6% compliance.

Table 57. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Initial and Ongoing Staff Training (Comparing Round 3 to Round 4)[48]

	Total Number of Cases Cited 2016	Total Number of Cases Cited Calendar Year 2024
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	192 cases (1 county)	0 cases (0 counties)
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	47 cases (6 counties)	6 cases (1 County)
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Total Records Cited	**239**	**6**
Total Staff Records Reviewed	**2048**	**1,816**
New Staff	**1223**	**414**
Tenured Staff	**825**	**1,402**
Total Counties without Citation	**54**	**64**
Rate of Compliance	**88.33 %**	**99.66%**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [September 2025]

Quality Assurance

All CWRC trainings, products and services are rooted in the ten Pennsylvania Child Welfare Competencies[49] and the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice Model[50]. The INA is an opportunity for all direct service caseworkers and supervisors to check in on their understanding and ability to apply the ten competencies in practice with children and families. Additionally, the INA is a time for caseworkers and supervisors to identify a professional development plan in collaboration with their direct supervisor on the competencies where an increase of knowledge/skills is needed over the next three years.

The CWRC is conducting evaluation of FOS, beginning with examining the validity and psychometric properties of assessment items and using the results to adjust assessment items and the curriculum as needed. An evaluation activity that is exclusive to FOS is the collection of data to examine the efficacy of Team-Based Learning (TBL™) to build collaborative relationships among team members over the course of the series. Similar to Foundations, in the current five-year period, the CWRC is evaluating shorter-term learning and will continue to monitor participant and instructor satisfaction with FOS. Subsequent evaluation efforts will examine transfer of learning, career

[48] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.
[49] https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/pcwc/Competencies.htm
[50] https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/PracticeModel.htm

outcomes and the effect that training has on the safety, permanency and well-being of children in the child welfare system.

In addition to informing continuous improvement efforts related to training products, Foundations and FOS assessment data help to identify opportunities to support CCYAs to improve practice through TA, TOL activities and other products and services across the CWRC continuum.

Evaluation Results: Knowledge and Skills

During the past three SFYs (2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25), the Foundations for Supervisors certification series (FOS) participants consistently provided positive feedback regarding the knowledge and skills they gained from participating in the certification series. Most of the responses that the CWRC received from participants indicated agreement or strong agreement with the following items after completing the instructor-led modules:

1. I learned what I expected to learn in this course (93.5%);
2. I will be able to use what I learned in this course in my work (94.1%);
3. I understand the concepts presented in this course (95.1%);
4. I feel more confident in my skills after participating in this course (91.3%)

As previously noted, the CCYAs are required to complete the INA administered by the CWRC to help monitor ongoing training needs to monitor ongoing training needs and to ensure the individual training needs of staff are met. New supervisors complete an INA during the final online module of FOS, and existing caseworkers and existing supervisors complete an INA every three years after completing their certification series. Table 58 shows results for all caseworkers and supervisors who have been in their role at least two years (i.e., “Ongoing Caseworker” and “Ongoing Supervisor”). This data is collected via the self-reported INA which asks respondents to indicate if they feel prepared to do a series of statements related to tasks. These tasks were developed by a group of SMEs and system partners and are directly linked to the PA child welfare competencies and the foundational training series. The INA is designed to be part of a conversation engaging both the respondent and their direct supervisor and the data shown here represents only those INA which have been ‘Approved’, indicative of a conversation and shared agreement of the assessment between respondent and supervisor.

The data for ongoing workers is collected on a three-year cycle and indicates topics of strength and need. At an individual level, a professional development plan is developed from these results, while local and state jurisdictions can use the results to plan for larger scale professional development opportunities.

Table 58. Average Percentage of Workers Who Feel Prepared to Carry out Tasks Associated with Competency

Competency	Ongoing Caseworker %	Ongoing Supervisor %
Engagement	80%	76%
Assessment	81%	76%
Teaming	73%	74%
Planning	72%	75%
Implementation	74%	75%
Monitoring and Adjusting	74%	75%
Professionalism	83%	79%
Cultural Awareness and Responsiveness	77%	75%
Law and Policy	69%	76%
Advocacy	73%	76%

Source [CWRC Approved INA Submissions from 10/19/2022 – 6/30/2025], [August 2025]

The CWRC conducts evaluation of knowledge and skills for the trauma courses as well. At the end of each trauma course, participants complete a course evaluation to provide feedback about their experience with the course. Since the launch of each course through August 2025, (launches occurring at various times from June 2022 to August 2025), participants have consistently reported positive feedback regarding the knowledge and skills they gained from participating in the trainings. As illustrated in Table 59 most participants agreed or strongly agreed to the following items for each training course:

1. I learned what I expected to learn in this course;
2. I will be able to use what I learned in this course in my work;
3. I understand the concepts presented in this course;
4. I feel more confident in my skills after participating in this course

Table 59. Participants' Perspectives on Knowledge and Skills Gained from CWRC's Trauma Courses

CWRC Trauma Training	I learned what I expected to learn in this course. % Agree/strongly agree	I will be able to use what I learned in this course in my work. % Agree/strongly agree	I understood the concepts presented in this course. % Agree/strongly agree	I feel more confident in my skills after participating in the course. % Agree/strongly agree
Raising Trauma Awareness in Child Welfare Casework Practice in PA	89.4%	90.9%	92.7%	83.5%
Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Therapeutic Foster Care	92.0%	93.4%	93.6%	90.0%
Developing Trauma Sensitivity for OCYF	91.3%	92.2%	93.2%	86.4%
Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Congregate Care Staff	89.2%	91.6%	93.6%	86.2%
Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Child Welfare Professionals	93.4%	94.1%	95.6%	91.9%

Source [CWRC Course Evaluation Data for Trauma Courses Since the Launch of Each Course – Various Times Between June 2022 and August 2025], [August 2025]

Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training State Response

- Item 28: 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 with regard to foster and adopted children?

Regulations outlining training requirements for the staff of state licensed and approved facilities require 30 hours of training prior to working alone with children and within 120 days of hire, as well as 40 hours of mandatory annual training. The initial 30 hours of training must cover the topics of mandated reporting of child abuse, fire safety, first aid, the Heimlich maneuver, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), crisis intervention, behavior management, suicide prevention, health and other special issues affecting the population. Each agency is responsible for providing training to their own staff and tracking training hours, which are then reviewed by OCYF during Annual Licensing Inspections. Based on the outcome of licensing inspections, complaint investigation, incident reports or CPS investigations, the OCYF Regional Office may work with the facility to identify additional training needs and may link the facility to resources or provide TA as necessary to support improving the knowledge and skills of facility staff.

Foster parents are required to complete six hours of training annually per regulations under 55 Pa Code, Chapter 3700. They are required to complete mandated reporter training within 90 days of approval and every five years thereafter. Foster parents are also required to complete training on reasonable and prudent parenting standards as required through OCYF Bulletin 3130-18-04, Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards[51].

During a foster parent's orientation, foster care agencies are required to provide information about the family foster care philosophy, practices, roles of the foster family, discipline procedures, first aid, and applicable laws and regulations regarding foster care. For each agency, this information may look a little different and may be paired with trainings that the agency has identified as required for licensure above and beyond the Commonwealth's regulatory requirements. The individual foster care provider agencies are responsible for tracking the foster parent training hours reviewed during the Annual Licensing Inspections by OCYF.

While there is no regulation requiring that adoptive parents complete a certain number of training hours, prospective adoptive parents must complete a home study, which includes interviews and assessments of physical and mental health, as well as social, cultural, and economic status. As part of the adoption process, SWAN provides Family Profiles of potential adoptive families. The Family Profile process includes on-going training throughout the process and is designed to train families in the reality of becoming an adoptive family; it is not simply a home study. Family Profile referral data from the SWAN Portal was used to inform state observations related to resource parent training. The family profile service requires 24 hours of initial training that directly relates to the knowledge needed to care for adopted children. In addition, the following eight training topics need to be delivered:

[51] https://swantoolkit.org/wp-content/uploads/OCYF-Bulletin-_-3130-18-04-3700-18-03-3800-18-01-Reasonable-and-Prudent-Parenting-Standards_issued-092620182.pdf

- How the system works;
- Attachment;
- Grief and Loss;
- Who the permanency parents are (to include “Reasonable and prudent parent standard/Normalcy for children/youth”);
- Who the children are;
- Child development;
- Parenting;
- Resources, including SWAN Post-permanency Services, which include:
  - Case Advocacy (to help families navigate services in their local communities);
  - Support Groups;
  - Respite

The Family Profile Approval document requires affiliates to document that family preparation was provided. Please see Table 60 for the SWAN Portal Service Report which includes an estimate of the number of families who received pre-service adoption training based on the number of SWAN family profile referrals made during each SFY noted.

Table 60: Number of Family Profile (County and Affiliate Referred Family Profile) Referrals

State Fiscal Year	# of Family Profile Referrals
2022-2023	1885
2023-2024	1743
2024-2025	1746

Source: [SWAN Portal Service Report], [September 2025]

PA acknowledges the importance of preparation and on-going training for resource parents and has outlined guidelines for initial and on-going training that are enforced by the state and/or their designee (SWAN Prime Contractor). The state participated in the research study for the CORE Teen training that was conducted by Spaulding for Children. In response to the positive findings about the curriculum the state provided free access to the full curriculum to all public and private agencies.

The voice of foster and adoptive parents was represented throughout the assessment of this systemic factor item by the PSRFA and child welfare professionals who work with foster and adoptive parents. A consistent need for more individualized and overall training was identified. Focus group participants and SAC members would like to see standardized training across the state, as the current requirements cannot guarantee the quality or extent resource parents have been trained. Foster and adoptive parents would also benefit from a connection with other parents for support, and many agencies offer support groups where this can occur. Additionally, children in foster care have higher rates of identification for special education, lack of education stability, and insufficient support in the academic setting, which can be a tremendous stressor impacting placement stability. Community partners identified a need for

system-wide improvements for training staff and foster and adoptive parents on how to advocate for children to receive correct accommodation services, and support in schools to meet these special needs.

Strengths of the foster and adoptive parent training identified during focus groups included assessment that more established provider agencies offered training with "consistency" and had "strong supports," or a team behind them that helped them navigate their roles after the foundational training. Strong relationships with state approved and licensed facilities were identified as beneficial. PA has a strong network of partner agencies who collaborate in training and supporting foster, relative and kinship families. DHS, SWAN prime contractor, PSRFA, and the CWRC develop and provide training opportunities for foster and adoptive parents. The Annual PSRFA Conference provides training for resource families. SWAN provides training to prospective adoptive, formal kinship families and permanent legal custodianship families who are interested in providing permanency to children in PA's child welfare system. DHS sponsors the Annual Permanency Conference, which is managed by the SWAN prime contractor. The Annual Permanency Conference is attended by child welfare professionals, advocates, and families (foster, adoptive, kinship and custodianship), including their children and offers more than 40 workshops on topics related to permanency for foster and adoptive children and youth. Every year, the CWRC and the SWAN prime contractor are responsible for delivering courses at the Annual PSRFA and Annual Permanency conferences. Those courses and others are available to be delivered throughout the state and at the request of other entities.

Private Foster Family Care Agencies and CCYAs that provide foster care services must track foster parent training to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. OCYF's regional offices assess compliance with foster parent training requirements during the annual licensure of private foster family care agencies and CCYAs that provide foster care. Table 61 indicates the results of CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations related to resource family training.

able 61. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Agency Resource Family Training[52]

	Total Number of Cases Cited in Calendar Year 2024
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	0 cases (0 counties)
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	7 cases (2 counties)
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Total Records Cited	**7**
Total Resource Family Records Reviewed	**670**

Source [Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection Summaries], [September 2025]

[52] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

During Annual CCYA Licensing Inspection, OCYF Regional Office representatives conduct visits and interviews with agency resource homes. During these interviews, resource families are asked specifically how training is offered and if it meets the needs of the resource family. Review of the findings from these interviews as reported in the licensing inspection summaries provides evidence to suggest there are not any systemic issues of concern with regards to agency resource family training.

E. Service Array and Resource Development

Item 29: Array of Services State Response

- CFSR Item 29: How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that the following array of services is accessible in all political jurisdictions covered by the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)?
    1. Services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs;
    2. Services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment;
    3. Services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable; and
    4. Services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

PA offers an array of child and family programs and services to prevent child abuse and neglect in conjunction with promoting safety, permanency and well-being. OCYF regulations require that a comprehensive array of services be available in each county to support children, either being maintained safely with their own families or if children require placement they should remain within their own community, whenever possible. As a state supervised, county administered system, PA allows each county to select their services based on the specific needs of the children and families they serve. OCYF encourages counties to prioritize EBPs that have proven positive outcomes. Counties use their NBPB process to identify, request, and allocate funding for services that align with their priorities; at times, multiple counties may enter into a contract with a provider to share a service if their county need is on a smaller scale.

PA's NBPB process is the mechanism by which county child welfare agencies assess local needs and request funding for the resources and programming most relevant to their communities. Because PA operates a county-administered system, counties lead the decision-making, using administrative data and stakeholder input—to identify priorities that reflect the unique safety risks, permanency challenges, and well-being needs of children and families in their jurisdiction. The Department reviews these proposed budget plans for consistency and compliance, and this NBPB process ensures that funding requests are locally driven, data-informed, and directly tied to improving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes in alignment with federal CFSR measures. The proposed budget plans must demonstrate how requested resources will meet statutory objectives under the Juvenile Act, the CPSL, and federal

mandates. Submissions include both narrative analysis and standardized data files in the form of budget forms, indicator files, and AFCARS/NCANDS-linked data.

Counties develop their plans by conducting cross-system assessments of need in collaboration with courts, juvenile probation, schools, behavioral health, housing, and community partners. The NBPB integrates multiple sources of administrative and case-level data to guide decision-making, including:

- AFCARS – placement entries, exits, stability; and permanency timelines and re-entries;
- CWIS – child abuse investigations, protective service referrals/assessments and outcomes;
- County General Indicator Files– service trends, program outcomes, fiscal trends and demographic breakdowns;
- Local case review and stakeholder input– qualitative data on practice strengths, challenges and areas for improvement

Data from these sources are used both to forecast fiscal/resource needs and to monitor county performance on key outcome indicators. As such, the NBPB process is designed to drive improvements in the same domains that the federal CFSR evaluates, which include:

- *Safety:* Data on child abuse/neglect reports, risk assessments, and AFCARS removal reasons inform strategies to prevent maltreatment, reduce child fatalities/near-fatalities, and enhance trauma-informed practice.
- *Permanency:* Placement data (entries, exits, re-entries, time to permanency) are central to budget justifications and program strategies. Counties must demonstrate efforts to safely reduce out-of-home care, expand kinship and foster family options, and improve adoption/legal permanency outcomes.
- *Well-Being:* Counties assess service array adequacy, workforce stability, trauma-informed practices, and cross-system coordination (behavioral health, substance use, housing, education). These factors are tied directly to child and family functioning, service engagement, and long-term stability.

At its core, the NBPB is PA's primary tool for aligning resources, data, and practice improvements with federal CFSR expectations for safety, permanency, and well-being. By grounding county requests in both quantitative data and qualitative assessment, the process creates a direct accountability framework that parallels and supports the goals of the CFSR. The process of coordinating CCYA's service needs listed below provides some highlights of the collaboration between the counties and the state in identifying and meeting service needs:

- PA values CCYAs using EBPs for children and families, in so much that it provides 95% coverage to the counties when utilizing these types of programing.
- PA provides the counties with the funding they need to implement these practices.

- Smaller, rural counties sometimes lack access to EBPs. Those counties often utilize local programs that are effective at meeting the needs of the community and are reimbursed as a Promising Practice (PaPP) in the Special Grants of the NBPB.

Table 62 below summarizes common budget-impact themes across counties, grouped by OCYF region, based on NBPB submissions for calendar years 2021-2024. It highlights recurring issues and helps visualize which themes are most widespread. This table is a synthesis of recurring themes identified in county NBPB narratives; it is not exhaustive.

Table 62. CCYA Budget Impact Themes

	Workforce	Placement Shortages	Service Gaps	Fiscal Pressures	Juvenile Justice Needs
Southeast	High caseloads, turnover, bilingual staff needs	Older youth, sibling groups, reliance on congregate care	Equity-focused, bilingual services, limited trauma-informed placements	Adoption subsidies, provider rate hikes, inflation	Detention shortages, secure placement delays
Western	Severe turnover in rural counties, staff retention issues	Foster home shortages, reliance on costly congregate care	Autism-capable placements, rural MH/SUD treatment gaps	High provider rates, specialized placements, inflation	Detention shortages, high reliance on state youth development centers , complex MH/SUD cases
Northeast	Small staff sizes, high turnover, heavy caseloads	Kinship reliance, few traditional foster homes	MH/IBHS shortages, autism services, truancy, homelessness	Adoption subsidies, transportation costs (rural burden)	Detention shortages, outpatient/secure treatment gaps
Central	Turnover, mentoring/QA efforts improving stability	Severe shortages in specialized placements (autism, sexualized behaviors)	Housing instability, lack of psychiatric beds, trauma-informed care gaps	Adoption subsidies, housing programs, provider rate hikes	Detention shortages, MH/SUD and sexualized behavior cases

Source [CCYA NBPB's], [September 2025]

A key strength of the service array is the ability to enhance caregivers' protective capacities to maintain safe home environments. Annual Licensing Inspections further reinforce safety by monitoring services provided through CCYAs and by identifying service gaps at the local and state level. Additionally, special grant initiatives (EPB, PAPP, Alternatives to Truancy and Prevention and Housing Initiative) from the OCYF offer counties flexibility to select EBPs or promising practices, supported by higher state reimbursement rates. These initiatives allow counties to tailor services to local needs with a focus on strengthening families and promoting child safety at home whenever possible. In addition to expanding services within the CCYAs, the state has continued to implement a robust safety and risk assessment process and is rolling out a UAT and process that will further assist staff in identifying the needs of children and families served. A list of examples of EBP and PAPP services utilized by some CCYAs in PA :

- ACT Raising Safe Kids;
- Aggression Replacement Training;
- Cognitive Processing Therapy;
- Incredible Years Basic-Parent Training Program (School Age Basic and Toddler Basic);
- On the Way Home;
- Parents As Teachers (PAT);
- Positive Parenting Program (Triple P);
- Trusted Based Relational Intervention;
- YV Lifeset

FGDM is a family engagement model that engages families in the development of FSPs and CPPs. The plans developed during FGDM conferences are intended to "ensure children and cared for and protected from future harm in ways which fit their culture and situation" (PA Family Group Decision Making Toolkit, 2008: FGDM Toolkit). FGDM is utilized with both in-home service and out-of-home placement cases. There are currently 53 counties that utilize FGDM to develop FSPs and CPPs. A review of Needs-Based Budget Narrative submissions for SFY 2025-26, identified 53 counties utilizing FGDM, indicating that this service is available in a majority of the counties. While the number of counties utilizing FGDM decreased slightly from SFY 2023-24, when 59 counties reported using in their Needs-Based submissions, utilization still represents more than three-quarters of the counties in PA. FGDM Statewide Evaluation data regarding children and families' access to follow-up conferences is described in the section regarding Well-Being Outcomes.

Family Centers have long been recognized as a key strength within PA's prevention and safety service array, serving as a model for community-based services that are tailored to meet the unique needs of each family while incorporating EBPs. The number of Family Centers has grown from 32 in the Round 3 report to 38, reflecting their increasing importance in supporting children and families in their communities throughout PA.

Family Reunification services are currently provided by all CCYAs. OCDEL's Family Support and Family Center programs deliver a range of effective services across the Commonwealth to support families. These services are designed to:

- Assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs;
- Address the needs of families in addition to individual children to create a safe home environment;
- Enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable; and
- Help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency

PA offers a wide range of programs to support families with diverse needs. Family Support programs aim to help parents and caregivers strengthen their skills and address challenges to promote optimal child development. Currently, 45 FS grantees deliver eight Evidence Based Home Visiting models across 60 counties. As shown in Table 63 below, the state is performing well and has the capacity to serve additional families. OCDEL is preparing to release applications for Family Center grantees and additional data and reports detailing the number of children and families served by funding type, location, and program, can be located at Education Family Support Program[53]

Table 63. Available Services to families through OCDEL Family Centers

SFY 2022 - 23	Sum of Total Funded Family Slots	Sum of Yearly Goal Number of Families	Sum of Cumulative Families Served* not incl. suppressed data	Sum of Cumulative Children Served* not incl. suppressed data
Children's Trust Fund (State)		509	324	314
Community Based Child Abuse Prevention - American Rescue Plan (CBCAP ARP) (Federal)	437	115	463	370
Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) (Federal)	82	288	174	107

[53] https://data.pa.gov/Early-Education/Family-Support-Programs-Current-Quarterly-County-H/yaq8-ek94/about_data

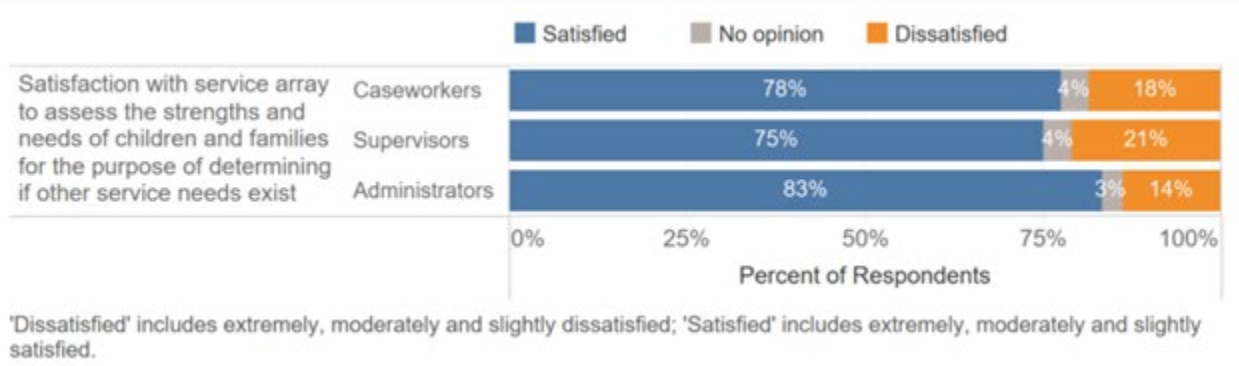
SFY 2022 - 23	Sum of Total Funded Family Slots	Sum of Yearly Goal Number of Families	Sum of Cumulative Families Served* not incl. suppressed data	Sum of Cumulative Children Served* not incl. suppressed data
Family Center (Includes both State and Federal PSSF) (24% PSSF / 77% State)	2,048	84	2,251	3,193
Family Support (State)	3,537	642	3,558	2,796
Health Enterprise Zone (HEZ) (State)	351		195	178
MIECHV (Federal)	1,414		1,155	1,285
OCDEL NFP (State)	2,005		2,112	1,547
Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) (Federal)	166		98	132

Source [Commonwealth Data Collection through the Office of Child Development and Early Learning for Family Preservation and Family Support], [September 2025]

Through ongoing assessment of services and system and community partner feedback, OCYF has identified a need to continue efforts to strengthen the overall network of services to promote primary, secondary and tertiary child abuse prevention in PA, with a focus on building from a cross-systems, public health approach. OCYF views the implementation of the Title IV-E Prevention Services Program under Family First as an opportunity to expand the use of evidence-based prevention services, with the goal of improving safety outcomes for children and supporting their ability to remain safely at home and within their communities, surrounded by family. The CQI efforts implemented to monitor services provided under the Title IV-E Prevention Services Program will provide an opportunity for PA to strengthen the data and information available to support assessment of safety service needs across the state. Further detail on the work related to the specific strategies identified for prevention services are outlined in PA's 2025-2029 CFSP.

Survey respondents of PA's child welfare workforce revealed that 78% of caseworkers, 75% of supervisors and 83% of administrators were either extremely, moderately or slightly satisfied with the array of services available. Please see Figure 6 for more information.

Figure 6. Workforce Satisfaction with Service Array to Assess Strengths and Needs

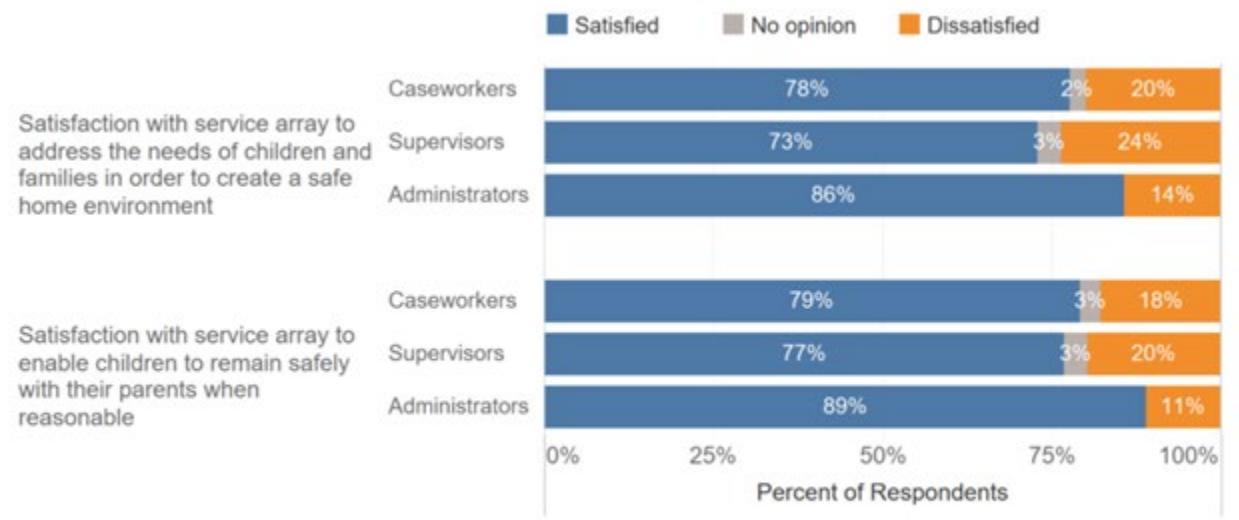


'Dissatisfied' includes extremely, moderately and slightly dissatisfied; 'Satisfied' includes extremely, moderately and slightly satisfied.

Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators], [June 2024]

Survey respondents of PA's child welfare workforce revealed that 78% of caseworkers, 73% of supervisors and 86% of administrators were either extremely, moderately or slightly satisfied with the array of services to address the needs of children and families to create a safe home environment. In taking a deeper dive into the survey responses, 79% of caseworkers, 77% of supervisors and 89% of administrators reported being extremely, moderately or slightly satisfied with the service array that is offered across the state. Please see Figure 7 for more information.

Figure 7. Workforce Satisfaction with Safety Service Array



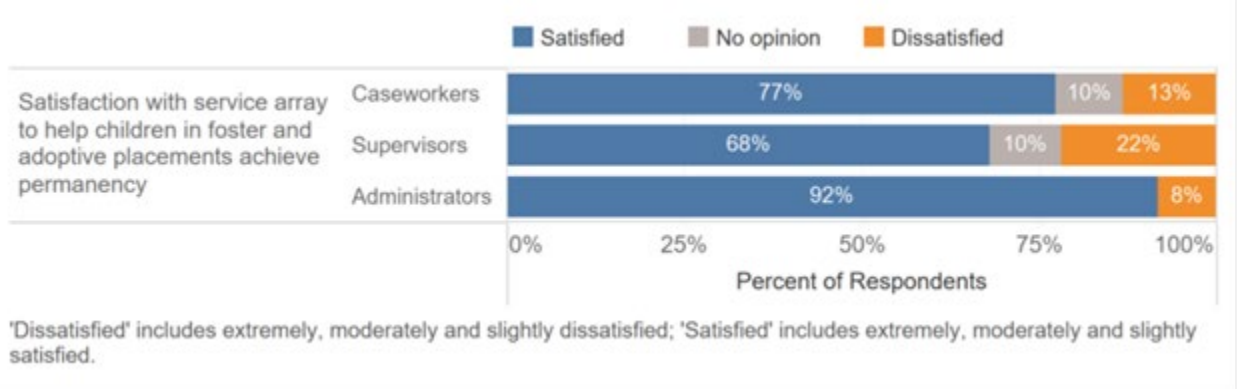
'Dissatisfied' includes extremely, moderately and slightly dissatisfied; 'Satisfied' includes extremely, moderately and slightly satisfied.

Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators], [June 2024]

Survey respondents of PA's child welfare workforce revealed that 77% of caseworkers, 68% of supervisors and 92% of administrators were either extremely,

moderately or slightly satisfied with the array of services to help children in foster or adoptive placements achieve permanency. See Figure 8 for more information.

Figure 8. Workforce Satisfaction with Permanency Service Array



Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers, Supervisors and Administrators], [June 2024]

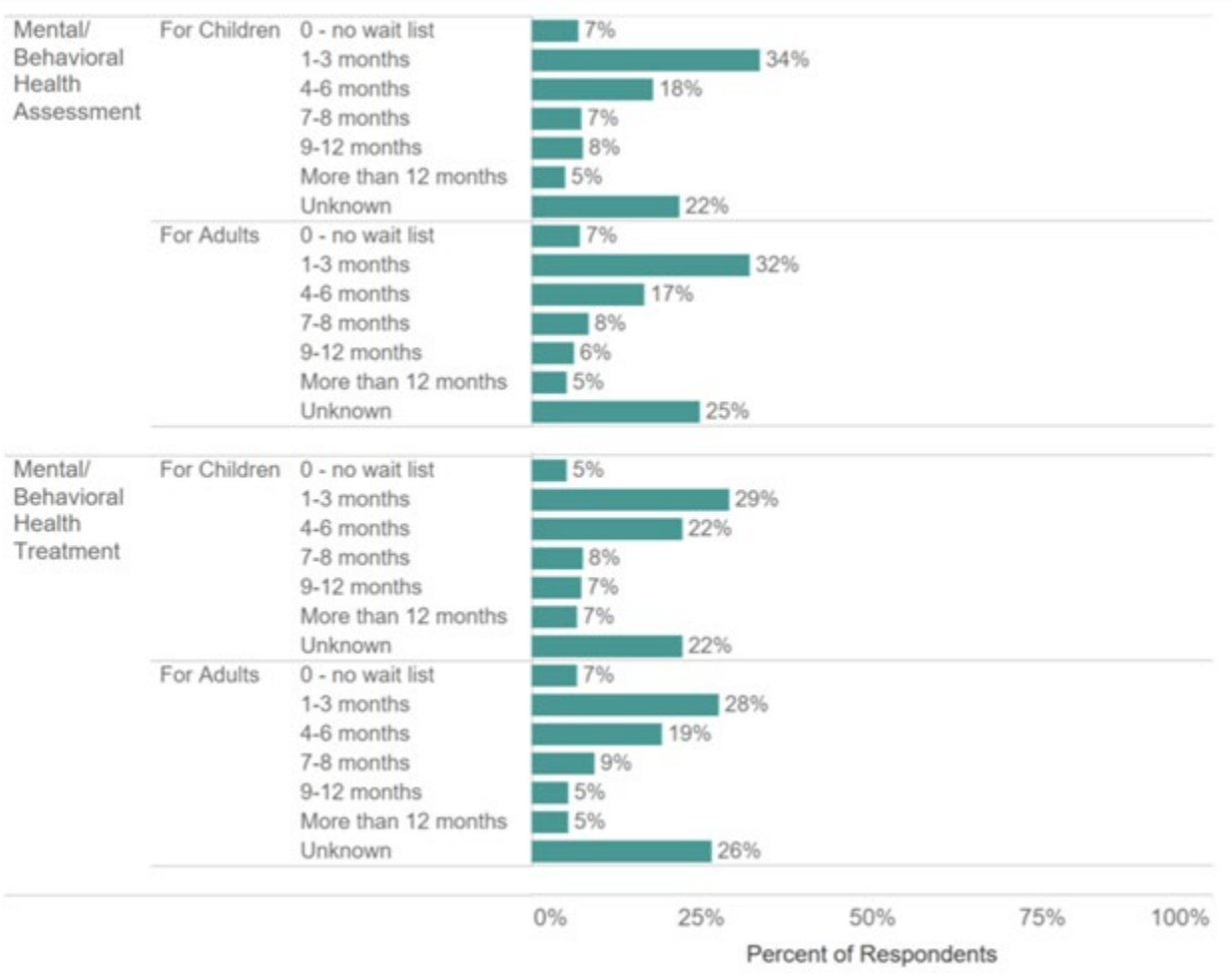
Permanency services are strengthened by the PA SWAN, which continues to expand programs and supports for adoption and guardianship. These efforts have led to more timely permanency outcomes and provide essential resources to foster, kinship and adoptive families. The discussion amongst SAC members noted that quality assessment processes are particularly valuable for OY transitioning to adulthood, as it informs service planning and delivery.

Despite these strengths, SAC members, focus group participants, and survey respondents report PA's child welfare system faces persistent challenges that make it difficult to provide equitable service delivery across the state. Mental health services, particularly for youth, are strained by long wait times and a limited pool of providers, which discourages engagement and diminishes the perceived value of care. With regard to children in care, agencies have difficulty keeping siblings together and identifying placements for children five years of age or older. Additionally, kinship caregivers of children in care lack respite resources. Provider staff shortages increase these delays, creating additional barriers to timely and effective support.

Basic supports such as accessible childcare or affordable dental care remain difficult because of high demand. Caseworkers were surveyed about the wait lists for mental/behavioral health assessments and treatment for children and adults. The majority of caseworker respondents reported that wait lists for both children and adults for mental health assessment and treatment is usually between one to three months. See Figure 9 for more information. Focus group participants noted gaps in mental health services, including those that address substance use, due to lack of available services and long wait times. Additional reflections on gaps in mental health services shared during focus groups included:

- Wait times are longest for therapy (often three to six months) but medication management with psychiatrists seems to be more readily available;
- Wait times are exacerbated by relying on a few providers instead of widening the net;
- Shortages in mental health staff also contribute to wait times;
- If youth miss appointments, they may have to "start over" on the wait list; and
- Long wait times diminish youth's interest in mental health services

Figure 9. Caseworkers' Estimations on the Length of Time for Mental/Behavioral Health Assessment/Treatment for Children and Adults



Source [Qualtrics Survey of Caseworkers], [June 2024]

SAC participants reported that substance use treatment options are also limited and lack comprehensive, family-centered and preventative approaches. Gaps in the service array identified by focus group participants include dental and housing services. Gaps in services for specific populations were identified by participants in multiple focus groups, including the following:

- Child/Youth experiencing trafficking;
- Youth with truancy and behavioral issues; and
- Children and youth on the Autism spectrum

Efforts to alleviate some of the identified gaps for this population continue to occur and some of the key work in this area is reflected as part of PA's 2025-2029 CFSP.

CCYAs NBPB provides the opportunity for each county to map out their current service array, service gaps and how they plan to address those gaps. There are limitations to this process, with PA being a county administered, state supervised system, each county has the freedom to implement specific to the needs of the children and families they serve; however, these needs can be vastly different across counties. Enhancements have been made by OCYF to the NBPB to elicit more accurate data and information from the counties on their service array.

CQI efforts during PIP implementation and beyond have focused on a revised Complex Case process that was established to assist in identifying gaps in service delivery. Key elements identified included promoting the system of care approach with cross-trained staff, early identification, and county integrated planning and supports. Complex case work continues to include efforts such as the Blueprint Workgroup.

One of the strategies identified in the 2025-2029 CFSP was improving expected outcomes for children, youth and families by strengthening early identification assessment practices through the Complex Case process.

In 2021, DHS released Bulletin 14-Bul-109 titled *Complex Case Planning for Children and Youth Under Age 21*. The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance to all child-serving state and county agencies, family, and youth advocacy organizations, and both physical and behavioral managed care organizations that are involved in case planning for children and youth with complex needs under 21 years of age. This bulletin further established the process by which counties could request state-level assistance and coordination of services. This enhanced process created a mechanism for gathering data related to the identifying need and level of service being sought for these children and youth to help inform service array need. Between October 2020-March 2024, DHS received 189 referrals through the complex case process and provided TA and support through areas such as licensing, funding, sharing strategies across counties, facilitating planning meetings, and providing guidance and assistance with referrals to clinical resources.

Complex needs planning is a process to support efforts to improve outcomes for children, youth and young adults (ages 0-21) with complex needs and their families and/or caregivers. Each child, youth or young adult with complex needs and their families are unique. The needs of each child receiving support through this initiative can greatly vary as they are specific to the child and family experiencing them. It is difficult to identify a consistent clinical presentation or diagnosis(es) as this is highly individualized. The following are the most encountered characteristics of children, youth

and young adults with complex needs; the combinations and acuity of these characteristics can vary significantly:

- Complex trauma including abuse, neglect, developmental and institutional trauma;
- Multiple and complex diagnoses across the developmental, physical, behavioral and /or mental health domains;
- Complex communication needs;
- Inconsistent presentation of behaviors and symptoms across settings;
- Diagnostic overshadowing due to an intellectual disability and/or autism diagnosis;
- Lack of diagnostic clarity;
- Disrupted education;
- Limited, strained, or no natural supports;
- Multiple system involvement including justice systems; or
- An extensive history of out-of-home care-including multiple disrupted placements

CCYAs have identified successful strategies that have been implemented into practice which have yielded positive outcomes for youth with complex case needs. Below is a list of strategies, interventions and transition strategies that CCYAs have utilized:

Successful Strategies for Children and Families with Complex Needs

Creating Positive Presentations of the Child and Family

- Create a child profile with the things that the child likes and would like others to know as well as effective ways to support the child. Engage the child and family in this process.
- Create a communication profile that provides information for the child to share about best ways to communicate with the child, sensory needs etc.
- Develop a strengths-based letter from family and/or providers that highlight the positive with each child and family.
- Provide data and progress that the child has made
- Encourage strengths-based evaluations
- Model and use respectful language in meetings and with and about the child and family

Interventions

- Name skills to be learned;
    - Positively worded goals focused on increased skills, positive behaviors and engagement
- Explore Alternative Modalities;
    - Art therapy, equine therapy, etc.
- Teach/Encourage Communication Access;

    - Ensure communication needs are addressed, and the child can effectively access and use communication in all environments
    - Encourage multimodal communication if needed
- Family Engagement;
    - Recognize the strengths of the family and honor their experience;
    - Value and encourage their voice in the process
    - Ensure a complete history of the child and family to provide context and understand them
    - Meet the family where they are
- Environmental Recognition and Modifications;
- Encourage exploration of accurate diagnoses;
- Encourage further exploration and understanding;
- Explore additional support or specialized clinical support;
- Individualization of planning and treatment

Transition Strategies

- Engage all systems and funding options for support;
- Promote regular team meetings and effective communication;
- Support the assignment of action steps and accountability;
- Support individualized planning;
- Encourage face to face meetings with child and family when exploring treatment options or looking for providers;
- Adapt meetings and topic areas when needed- ad hoc groups, smaller team meetings etc;
- Encourage, support and model creative thinking

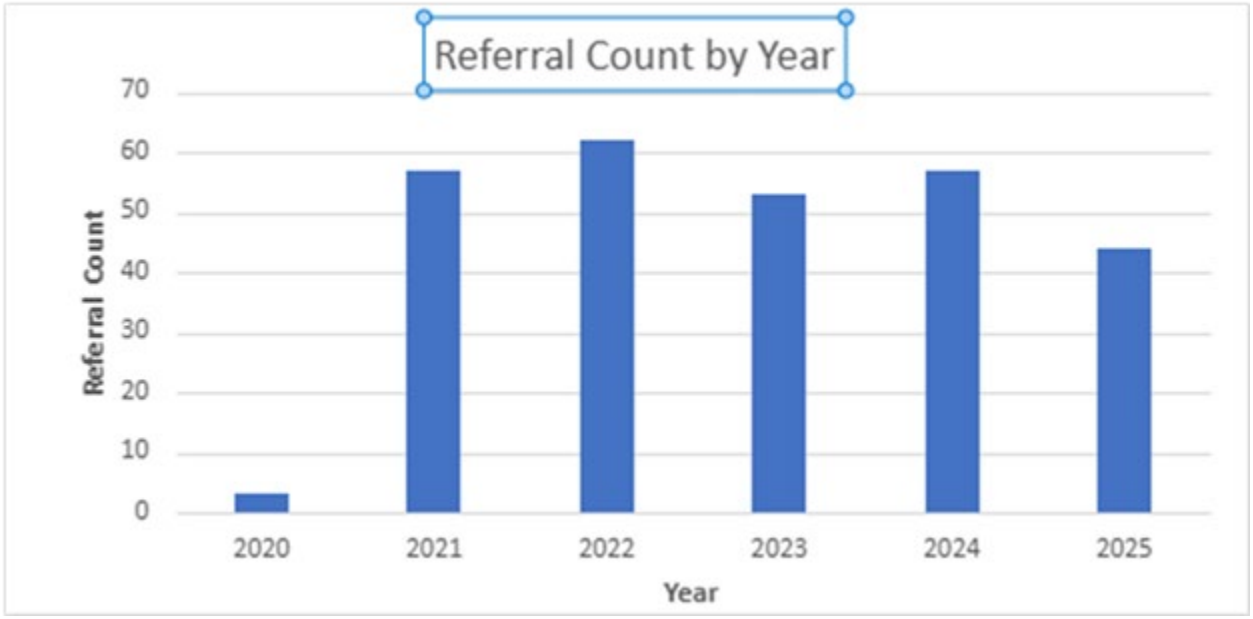
Table 64 below illustrates the number of referrals that have been made since the inception of the Complex Case Review Process. Table 64 below, shows a snapshot of 276 referrals made between October 2020 – October 2025. Figure 10 breaks down how many referrals occurred each year, with 2022 showing the highest number of referrals. Lastly, Figure 11 illustrates the age range of children that are being served in these referrals being made to the Complex Case Needs Planning Team. It reveals that youth who are 14-17 years of age appear to be the most common ages of youth with referrals to the Complex Case Needs Planning Team.

Table 64. Complex Needs Planning Referral Data, October 2020-October 2025

Referral Status	Totals
Closed	214
Active	62
Total	276

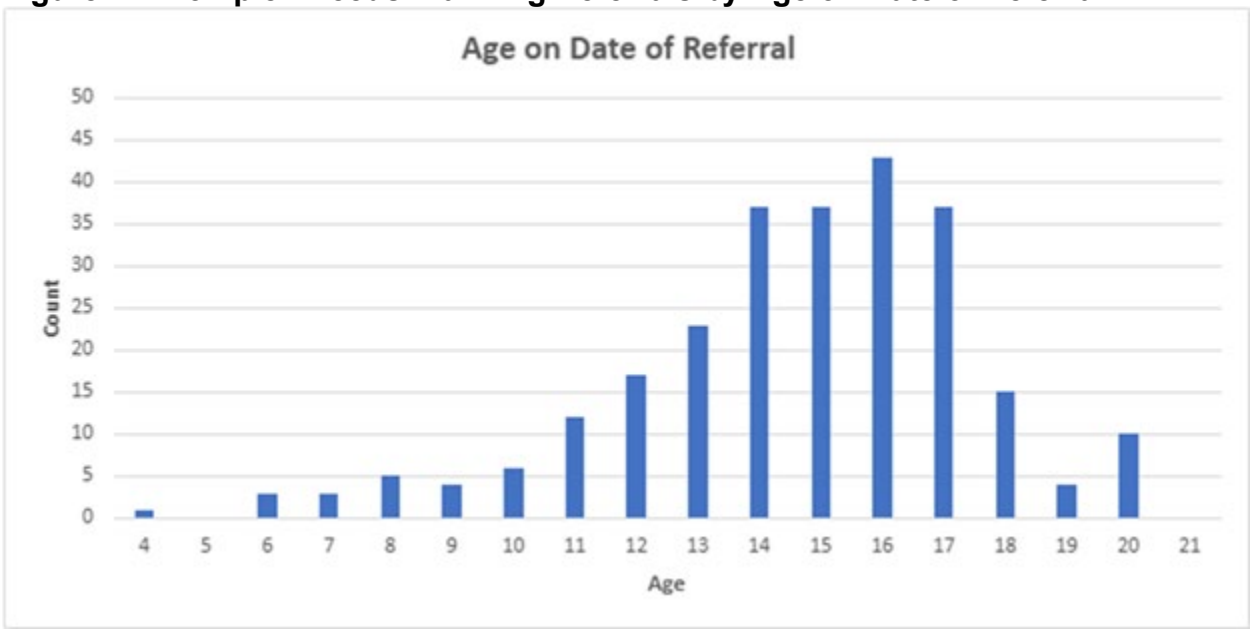
Source [Manual Referral Tracking- Office of Administration], [October 2025]

Figure 10. Complex Needs Planning Referrals by County, October 2020- October 2025



Source [Manual Referral Tracking- Office of Administration], [October 2025]

Figure 11. Complex Needs Planning Referrals by Age on Date of Referral



Source [Manual Referral Tracking- Office of Administration], [October 2025]

DHS gathered direct experiences from youth, their families and the systems who served them and between December 2022-May 2023 and conducted a series of focus groups and surveys. These focus groups and surveys were designed to identify needed resources and strategies for youth and their families. The main themes because of this outreach included communication, services and programs, resource navigation, staffing/workforce and trauma-informed supports. Family engagement was noted to be ingrained throughout each of these themes. The themes became the framework of a department led workgroup known as the Blueprint Workgroup, that was convened to develop recommendations to improve systems serving youth with complex needs. `

The Blueprint Workgroup identified a desired future state in which all youth with complex needs and their families will have the opportunity to access timely support and services that are individualized, trauma-informed, holistic, respectful of race and culture, family and youth driven, and available in their own communities. This will be evidenced by:

- A focus on youth and family engagement while honoring their voice and choice;
- Establishing and maintaining a well-supported and qualified workforce;
- Collaboration and shared understanding across systems to support planning and shared goals;
- Systems which prioritize early identification, proactive intervention, and service options that support family stability, safety, and the youth's healthy development and meaningful relationships which support life-long connections.
- Teams engage in ongoing and integrated planning that supports the everyday needs of a family and youth (housing, education, transportation, scheduling, access to medical care, etc.).
- Service delivery is coordinated, accessible, timely and includes support throughout the process.

The workgroup met from July 2023 to November 2023, and issued 22 recommendations as outlined in the workgroup's final report which can be found at Youth-with-Complex-Needs-A-Blueprint-Workgroup-Report[54].

The County Commissioners Association of PA also convened a workgroup that focused on the youth with complex needs in the custody of the county and defined the population as: "Minors who are in the custody of the county for whom there is not a level of care sufficient to meet their mental, behavioral, or physical needs. This includes dependent and/or delinquent youth for whom there is not an appropriate level of care available, such as those sleeping in a CYS office or hotel. This also includes those for whom a higher level of care is recommended, but for whom that level of care cannot be located, is unavailable, or simply does not exist." The workgroup began meeting in July

[54] https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Children/Complex-Medical-Conditions/Documents/Youth-with-Complex-Needs-A-Blueprint-Workgroup-Report.pdf

2023, and their work culminated in the issuance of a report released in February 2024. The recommendations set forth from that workgroup can be found at County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania CCAP - Complex Case Task Force[55].

DHS established a Steering Team as of May 2024, to begin the work toward implementation of the recommendations because of the CCAP workgroup. This team will also be aligning and incorporating the recommendations from both workgroups toward identification of priority actions of both a short-term considering the impact on the immediate challenges facing the youth and their families and the child serving systems as well as those of a long-term nature that will impact service delivery systems in both structure and capacity.

PA received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 29 in Round 3. While there are several strengths in PA's service array, such as post-adoption services and independent living services, there are also many challenges. Barriers to service availability and accessibility included waiting lists; lack of transportation and housing; high provider staff turnover; and a lack of providers in rural areas. Additionally, stakeholders reported a lack of high-quality, trauma-informed services.

SAC conversations denoted that service delivery is often compliance-driven and lacks flexibility to meet the unique needs of families. In addition, there is an overreliance on a narrow network of providers, rather than expanding access across a broader network of services. As a result, interventions tend to be crisis-oriented, often addressing only immediate concerns without assessing the systemic or root causes of agency involvement. Long waitlists for essential services including mental health care, substance use treatment and supports for basic needs such as housing further exacerbate these challenges. SAC participants also noted a need for more trauma informed services to assist families and staff with more complex needs, in addition to addressing trauma that they have sustained by the system itself.

A key strategy in the 2025-2029 CFSP is, "Building a Trauma-Informed Care System," which denotes that OCYF will continue to partner with the CWRC to support the development and implementation of trauma trainings to PA child welfare agencies, providers, youth and families.

The SWA highlights both the strengths and limitations of PA's child welfare system. While the state has made meaningful strides in promoting safety and permanency, continued investment in service accessibility, workforce capacity, and tailored interventions remain essential to ensure that all children and families receive the supports they need.

[55] https://www.pacounties.org/advocacy/reports-and-resources/complex-case-task-force-579256fd033ac7f5db8486d87adaa943

Item 30: Individualizing Services State Response

- CFSR Item 30: 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?

The philosophy of the child welfare system is based on the premise that children should be maintained safely within their own families and that if children require placement they should remain within their own community whenever possible. OCYF regulations require that a comprehensive array of services be available in each county to support these efforts. The availability of services is reviewed each year during the Annual Licensing Inspection through case record review. Additionally, each county must sign an assurance of compliance with this requirement as part of the annual NBPB submission and identify in the plan how it will arrange for any needed service that is not provided in the county. Through the NBPB process, counties assess and identify service needs specific to the families and children in their community, outline strategies to institute those services, and develop a supporting budget.

Under PA regulations at § 3130.34, CCYAs are required to provide or arrange for the provision of:

(1) Placement prevention and reunification services;
(2) Adoption services;
(3) Emergency and planned temporary placement services;
(4) Other required services, including services or care ordered by the court

Placement prevention and reunification services include all the following:

(1) *Counseling service.* Supportive and therapeutic activities provided to a child or a child's family and directed at preventing or alleviating conditions, including crisis conditions, which present a risk to the safety or well-being of the child by improving problem-solving and coping skills, interpersonal functioning, the stability of the family, or the capacity of the family to function independently.
(2) *Parent education.* Practical education and training for parents in child care, child development, parent-child relationships and the experience and responsibilities of parenthood.
(3) *Homemaker/caretaker service.* Home help, home care skills instruction and/or child care and supervision provided to a child and the child's family in the child's home by a trained homemaker or caretaker.
(4) *Part day service.* Care and supervision for a child for less than 24 hours per day provided under a family service plan to enable the child to remain in or return to the child's own home.

Other required services may include any of the following:

(a) *Court-ordered services.* The county agency shall provide or arrange for the provision of service and care ordered by the court;
(b) *Child protective services.* Other services required by §3490 (relating to protective services);
(c) *Family service plans.* Other services required by the service plan and service plan reviews.

Adoption services are agency activities designed to culminate in legal adoption.

These activities include, but are not limited to:

(1) Adoptive home recruitment;
(2) Study of the child and natural parents;
(3) Study of the adoptive applicants;
(4) Placement and supervision of the child in the adoptive home;
(5) Preparation and presentation of material for the adoption hearing;
(6) Assuring provision of adoption subsidies when needed.

In addition to those services required in regulation at §3130 (relating to administration of county children and youth social service programs) the county agencies must also arrange or otherwise make available the following services for the prevention and treatment of child abuse:

(1) Emergency medical services which include appropriate emergency medical care for examination, evaluation, and treatment of children suspected of being abused.
(2) Self-help groups to encourage self-treatment of present and potential abusers.
(3) Multidisciplinary teams composed of professionals from a variety of disciplines who are consultants to the county agency in their case management responsibilities as required by Chapter 3130 who perform one of the following functions:

    (a) Pool their knowledge and skills to assist the county agency in diagnosing child abuse.
    (b) Provide or recommend comprehensive coordinated treatment.
    (c) Periodically assess the relevance of the treatment and the progress of the family.
    (d) Participate in the state or local child fatality review team convened by a professional organization and the county agency for the purpose of investigating a child fatality or the development and promotion of strategies to prevent child fatality.

The county agencies are also required to provide, arrange or otherwise make available the same services for children in need of general protective services as for abused children.

In the development of the NBPB, CCYAs are required to consult with a number of stakeholders in the local community and identify strengths and challenges that shape the agency's funding requests. The NBPB submissions are examined annually for details within the county strengths and challenges section of the plan template to identify any noted service strengths or gaps. It should be noted that this review is preliminary and does not comprehensively address all aspects of the NBPB submission; additionally, not all counties identified service gap areas.

Counties that identified service gaps commonly reported a shortage of resource homes, as well as a specific need for homes capable of supporting children and youth with highly complex behavioral or mental health challenges. SAC members and focus group participants highlighted barriers and challenges to access mental health services some of the factors include: however, turnover among staff providing these services and long waiting lists were noted to be barriers that made accessibility of these services limited for some children and families.

The UA effort is the continuation of a strategy that was initiated as part of PA's CFSR Round 3 PIP, and the continuing work was integrated into the 2019-2024 CFSP and 2025-2029 CFSP. PA currently requires that CCYAs utilize separate state-approved safety and risk assessment tools to assess the strengths and needs of children and families. Through the work of the Safety Subcommittee of the PA Child Welfare Council, it was determined PA would benefit from utilization of a single assessment tool that will reduce documentation and duplication of effort, while strengthening assessment practices overall. The Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) was selected as the Universal Assessment Tool (UAT) that will be implemented across all 67 counties in PA. The FAST was selected for many reasons, including the following:

- The FAST acknowledges, respects and functions across the diverse and varied cultures of all children, youth and families.
- The FAST will support the paradigm shift from allegation driven to holistic family assessment, allowing for better identification of strengths and needs and the identification and provision of appropriate services to meet identified needs.
- The use of the FAST statewide will support enhanced consistency amongst counties and supports fidelity and accuracy for child welfare professionals when assessing families.
- Use of the FAST will support partnerships with cross-system and community-based partners utilizing similar family assessment models.

Implementation of the UA process in PA is a significant change effort. The UA Sponsor Team was convened and includes leaders from CCYAs, a private provider

association, OCYF, and the CWRC to provide leadership and management for the project. PA collaborated with the Praed Foundation and internal and external partners to develop a PA-specific UAT based on the FAST. The PA specific tool was tested on a limited basis on approximately 30 cases in the winter of 2024, to determine if the risk and safety outcome decision support model that was developed as part of the tool is providing the expected outputs. In 2026, the UA will be piloted in 18 counties across PA over the course of the year to evaluate various components that will inform the final training, policies and procedures and TA that will be used to support full statewide implementation. Once fully implemented, the UAT will support individualization of services based on the unique needs of each child and family.

The qualitative data gathered from the *Themes from the Community Partner Focus Groups* for CFSP Systemic Factor Item 30, Data Sheets on the Service Array and Resource Development Systemic Factor, and Feedback from the SAC focused on System Factor Item 30 offered insight into PA's child welfare system, revealing areas of strength and ongoing challenges in individualizing services for children and families. One of the services highlighted as a strength was the individualization of services for complex cases. County Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) Coordinators, who serve as facilitators of service coordination across multiple systems, are resources for both families and providers and help to bridge gaps and streamline access to care. This coordination is helpful in ensuring tailored services are available to children, with the CASSP coordinator facilitating access to services within and outside of each county jurisdiction.

Focus group participants emphasized the importance of thorough and accurate assessments, especially for OY who are transitioning to adulthood. When assessments are conducted, they provide support for obtaining services to meet the unique needs of the youth. The information gathered also provided insight on the role of Family Centers and Family Support programs, which are designed to be flexible and responsive components of PA's prevention and safety services array. These programs aim to tailor services to the unique needs of individual families. While special grants provide counties with the flexibility to implement effective programs that assist with ensuring safety in the home, they may not always be individualized or readily available.

The information gathered during focus groups and SAC meetings highlighted the efforts of the PA SWAN, which supports county agencies in addressing and achieving timely permanency for children. SWAN's initiatives include a growing number of programs that provide placement services, reunification efforts, and the recruitment of adoptive and foster families. SAC members report that based on the data sheets provided around CFSR Items 29, and 30 on achieving timely permanency revealed PA's child welfare system demonstrates efforts and promising initiatives to individualize services; however, gaps in community-based training, quality assessments, and uneven resource distribution remain factors inhibiting individualization of services.

According to community partner feedback in focus groups and the SAC, PA's child welfare system lacks a formalized process for assessing every family's strength

and need across all counties, which limits the ability to tailor services effectively. The SAC reviewed data sheets related to CFSR Items 29 and 30 the Service Array and Resource Development Systemic Factor, which revealed significant challenges in individualized services. One major concern is the limited capacity of CCYAs. Long waitlists often force families to accept the first available service rather than the one most tailored to their needs, which impacts the quality of care and restricts access for others. The issue is especially true in complex cases, where evidence-based programs lack the flexibility to adapt to unique family circumstances. As a result, providers struggle to personalize care, and families are left without individualized support.

Another barrier to individualized service delivery is the differing levels of awareness among caseworkers regarding the resources available to meet individualized needs. The utilization of individualized services in PA is largely dependent on caseworkers' understanding of what is available to children and families with unique needs, which varies significantly by county. Many caseworkers lack adequate community-based training to make referrals that address root causes, are culturally competent, and meet families' specific needs. This inconsistency makes it difficult to achieve positive outcomes.

PA was not found to be in substantial conformity with this systemic factor during Round 3 CFSR. While root cause analysis led to the recognition that county level dynamics play a large determinant in the strengths and challenges related to individualizing services, it was also recognized that county requests for funding in the annual county NBPB requests did not necessarily reflect the level of need evidenced through case review data and stakeholder feedback. Therefore, a systems level strategy was identified to better educate counties on the funding opportunities available through the NBPB process to support implementation of programs or practices to expand these specific service areas. Utilizing state and local data, counties select specific measures to track progress, report results, and guide subsequent NBPB funding requests.

The UA effort evolved from the findings of the Round 3 CFSR and the effort to develop and pilot the UA was identified as addressing multiple areas needing improvement. The Round 3 PIP goal 4 outlined, "Pennsylvania's child welfare system will improve county specific and statewide collection and analysis of quality data to inform use of a CQI cycle when planning and monitoring efforts to improve case practice and systemic factors." Additional relevant strategies connected to individualizing services included:

- Enhance CQI efforts to utilize data to inform analysis when evaluating county practice to support the development and implementation of TA strategies.
- Enhance collaboration with system partners to improve behavioral health, intellectual/developmental disability, and substance use disorder services array and facilitate access to services across the state.
- Enhance CQI efforts to inform evaluation of local and systemic gaps related to housing, transportation, and service coordination as part of each counties' submission and OCYF review of the NBPB.

F. Agency Responsiveness to the Community

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

- CFSR Item 31: How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that, in implementing the provisions of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and developing related Annual Progress and Services Reports (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?

Collaboration is the cornerstone of PA's Child Welfare Practice Model and is valued at every level of decision making. PA has developed several structures to ensure a responsive and inclusive system and community engagement effort that supports the development, implementation and monitoring of the CFSP and the development of APSRs, as well as ongoing CQI efforts.

Through ongoing consultation with various system and community partners, the state ensures that their concerns are reflected in the CFSP's goals, objectives, and annual updates. The infrastructure supporting these engagement and consultation efforts is largely facilitated through OCYF's partnership with the CWRC to support these ongoing collaborative efforts. Partnership also exists with the AOPC who assist in coordinating roundtable discussions at both local and state levels, administrative case reviews and collaborative workgroups. Evidence of this infrastructure and how these partnerships further support ongoing CQI efforts to improve outcomes as well as systemic factor functioning are outlined below.

As the fourth CRP in PA, the YAB continues its vital role in amplifying youth voices. Recognizing the importance of youth representation in decision-making, especially on issues directly affecting them, PA prioritizes their inclusion to receive their input and ensuring there is also a feedback loop about how their input shaped strategies to address their issues of concern. The YAB structure guarantees diverse representation of youth from across the state, ensuring their voices are heard on both statewide and regional/local levels. State representatives involved in the YAB ensure that youth concerns and feedback are being addressed.

The YAB's work within the CRP structure underscores the Commonwealth's dedication to ensuring that youth perspectives are not only heard but valued. PA strives to ensure that children and youth who are identified as underserved, or our most vulnerable populations are included in the YAB participants. As part of their duties, youth leaders are encouraged to participate in the CRP National Conference. Here, they

engage in workshops, networking and skill-building sessions to enrich their projects and enhance CRP recommendations statewide. To facilitate their attendance, all expenses related to accommodation and travel are covered, eliminating financial barriers. Additionally, stipends are provided upfront to address any incidental expenses incurred before and during the conference. Collaboration with both internal and external community partners secures funding and support for youth attendees, ensuring their meaningful participation in the conference.

The collaboration between YABs, counties and community partners spans across a wide spectrum. YAB leadership consistently engages in presentations at numerous events, seizing the chance to educate both professionals and the community about the pressing issues concerning OY in care. They also share insights into best practices aimed at bolstering engagement and support for this demographic. YAB has a rich history of hosting and participating in two significant events. The Youth Leadership Summit stands out as a prime example. This even spans two days and draws youth from all corners of the state. Here, youth engage in diverse activities such as training sessions, workshops and professional development opportunities. It serves as a crucial platform for educating and empowering young individuals, equipping them with tools to advocate for themselves while fostering connections with like-minded peers.

In addition, the YAB plays a pivotal role in facilitating the CWRC SC retreat. The CWRC's SCs play a vital role in enhancing the training of child welfare case workers by portraying realistic client scenarios. YAB leaders actively contribute to this process by incorporating real-life experiences and perspectives of youth into the portrayal of OY during caseworker simulation training. Through various activities and discussions, YAB leaders shed light on the challenges, decisions, and emotions faced by youth entering care, thereby offering invaluable insight to the CWRC's SCs, and enhancing their understanding of the youth perspective.

Finally, the YAB commits to supporting the Commonwealth's endeavors in establishing a speaker's bureau. This platform provides an opportunity for youth and young adults with lived experience in the child welfare system to help inform policies and practices affecting children, youth and families.

The state's broader approach to gathering input from each entity is both ongoing and intentional but does vary somewhat based on the needs of each. OCYF participates in the CRPs' all-panel meetings each Fall when the regional panels share their recommendations for DHS, along with the data and information reviewed and used as a basis in forming those recommendations. Each Spring, OCYF representatives share OCYF's responses to those recommendations with the regional CRPs. OCYF also engages in other communications and meeting attendance with the regional CRPs, as needed or requested. An OCYF representative attends each of the Statewide YAB's bi-monthly meetings, which also include a formal sharing of YAB recommendations and OCYF responses.

The state also elicits formal written input from system and community partner groups on an ongoing basis. Each regional CRP and the Statewide YAB prepare self-generated recommendations that are submitted to OCYF annually, and OCYF provides a written response to each recommendation, all of which are included in the PA CRPs Annual Report, which may be accessed at: CRP Annual Report[56]. The OCYF contact for CRPs and the CWRC project lead maintain a tracking document of all CRP recommendations to monitor OCYF responses and progress on each recommendation. This tracking and monitoring are a testament to the volume and the value of the input provided by the CRPs.

The three regional CRPs operate on a five-year rotation to ensure representation across 67 counties. PA has met all state and federal mandates, as outlined in the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(c), and PA's state statute, 23 Pa. C.S. § 6343.1. These mandates include providing formal written responses to the CRP recommendations. The recommendations and responses are issued as part of a formal annual CRP Report and distributed to community partners and legislators. In many ways, PA has exceeded the mandates outlined in legislation by convening regular meetings to discuss OCYF's work multiple times throughout the year..

The CJA Task Force is comprised of representatives from 14 selected disciplines involved in the handling of child abuse and neglect cases. These disciplines include: law enforcement; civil court judge; criminal court judge; prosecuting attorney; defense attorney; attorney for children; CASA; health professional; mental health professional; CPS; individual experienced in working with children with disabilities; parent ambassador; adult former victim of child abuse and neglect; individual experienced in working with homeless children and youth. PA's CJA Task Force serves as a central mechanism for bringing together an MDT to solicit formal written input and conducting a comprehensive three-year assessment. Over the last three years, the CJA Task Force has maintained its membership of the required disciplines and successfully gathered input from the members to submit applications for CJA funding based off the members' feedback and in alignment with the state's priority areas. The evidence indicates that PA's approach is intentional, inclusive, and effective in integrating stakeholder concerns into the goals, objectives, and updates of the CFSP. Project leads from OCYF and the CWRC co-facilitate the CJA Task Force's quarterly meetings, ensuring an OCYF representative attends all meetings.

In Round 3, PA received an overall rating of Strength for Item 31. To further enhance this strength rating, CQI efforts were implemented during Round 3 PIP implementation through 2025-2029 CFSP and SWA development to further enhance the use of both qualitative and quantitative data from surveys and focus groups to further inform ongoing monitoring of CFSP/APSR as part of PA's commitment to CQI. Intentional efforts were made to identify gaps in data/information and/or further need for

[56] https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/publications/documents/child-abuse-reports/2024-citizen-review-panel-annual-report-final.pdf

stakeholder input to inform PA's ongoing assessment of outcomes and systemic factor functioning.

Modifications were made to disband some stakeholder groups such as the PA Child Welfare Council; yet, other stakeholder forums were established to include the SAC whose charter outlined a focused effort to share data/information with system and community partners as well as those with lived experience, with the intention creating spaces for them to share their voice and input to further enhance data driven CQI efforts. Based on the successes of the SAC, there are ongoing discussions about establishing a charter to continue to engage many of the same system and community partners in the ongoing monitoring of PA's CQI, as reported on in APSRs as well as future Round 4 CFSR improvement efforts.

The SAC does provide a diverse forum of system and community partners, including those with lived experience, to provide an opportunity to gain input about system strengths and challenges by reviewing quantitative and qualitative data/information to continue to evaluate the seven systemic factors and seven outcomes that are monitored as part of PA's ongoing CQI efforts. Representatives that have been assessing these key outcome and systemic factor elements, as outlined in the CFSP/APSRs, include: youth and parents with lived experience; the Tribes contact from OCYF; staff from both the in-home and foster care service provider community; members of the Juvenile Court as well as other public and private child and family serving agencies.

In addition, there was targeted inquiry and the meaningful engagement of various system and community partners via surveys sent to members of the child welfare workforce, Judges and Hearing Officers as well as focus groups with key system and community partners as part of the enhancement of PA's QA/CQI system. This survey was distributed to Judges, Hearing Officers and AOPC staff to elicit input and feedback from the Courts regarding performance on outcomes as well as systemic factor functioning. Fifty-five percent of the jurisdictions in PA responded to the survey. In addition to the opportunity for the Courts to weigh in via survey, the AOPC continues to play a vital role in maintaining dialogue between the courts and child welfare agencies, contributing to a unified approach to system improvement. Leadership from the Deputy Secretary and a Supreme Court Justice has further enhanced the effectiveness of these efforts, particularly in advancing court improvement initiatives. The OCYF Deputy Secretary, as co-chair, also attends annual meetings of the State Roundtable.

The ongoing assessment of Item 31 draws on several sources of evidence, including feedback from the SAC during a meeting held on May 29, 2025, as well as qualitative data from voluntary virtual focus groups conducted between October 2023 and February 2024. The focus groups provided a platform for community partners to share their experiences and perspectives on the consultation process. Participants expressed appreciation for being included and noted the usefulness of follow-up surveys in reinforcing their contributions and a way to monitor their feedback. Participants also noted that a variety of feedback loops exist currently between the

OCYF and various initiatives being implemented within the community. Specifically, participants in the OCYF Policy focus group shared about their various methods for soliciting feedback from county agencies and other partners within the community. Participants described utilizing polls and surveys, conducting focus groups, utilizing space within regular, re-occurring meetings, welcoming suggestions and questions when sharing guidance or other deliverables, and listening to perspectives from more informal communication.

The Commonwealth's demonstration of effective collaboration with system and community partners features a variety of strengths. Ardent statewide efforts have continued and expanded in regard to gathering input from system and community partners for the development of the SWA. Continued efforts involve the state's longstanding structures of system and community partner groups through the CRPs and CJA Task Force, beginning with a strong partnership between OCYF and the CWRC, and continuing with effective project management, support and annual report preparation. Recent focus groups and surveys featured strategic question development specifically intended to assess statewide needs and inform the SWA development. The input gathered through these efforts was incorporated throughout this assessment. Regarding representation, the rotation of the regional CRPs ensures that citizen voices across the state are amplified.

Despite strong evidence confirming successful engagement and consultation with these key stakeholders, PA's commitment to CQI includes identification of opportunities for additional enhancement. For example, participation by parents with lived experience was limited in focus groups that were conducted, which may have led to an underrepresentation of parents' perspectives. The Parent Leadership[57] work is one of the strategies being employed to address this identified area for improvement. Additionally, it was recognized that not all system partners are able to be present or participate in sessions offered to provide input, which could affect the representativeness, completeness and accuracy of the findings. Some youth participants indicated challenges related to scheduling as well as compensation for their involvement, and others felt that the duration of focus groups was insufficient for in-depth discussion. The speaker's bureau (also referenced above) is a strategy that has been developed to further support youth's involvement in these consultation efforts. Judges and Hearing Officers noted their openness to being further engaged by receiving updates on CFSP/APSR activities via newsletter, email or website as well as being engaged via survey or focus group, with a newsletter receiving the highest number of respondents showing interest. Ongoing CQI discussions continue to consider how information pertaining to the CFSP/APSRs can continue to be shared with system and community partners, including members of the judicial system.

Overall, PA has seen evidence of benefits of the ongoing efforts to engage system and community partners, including those with lived experience. Community partners have consistently indicated that they value being included in the consultation process and expressed interest in continuing their involvement. This feedback reflects

[57] https://www.parentleadership.pitt.edu/

the state's commitment to maintaining open, inclusive, and responsive communication channels to continue with a strong unity of effort. While there are areas for improvement, such as enhancing parent engagement and providing better support for those with lived experience, the overall system is functioning well and continues to evolve in response to community partner input.

Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services with Other Federal Programs State Response

- CFSR Item 32: How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that the state's services under the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population?

PA works with systems partners to ensure that services outlined in the CFSP are coordinated with other federal programs serving the same population. OCYF works with Office of Medical Assistance Program (OMAP), the state Medicaid Office, and the Office of Income Maintenance (OIM), At the county level, local CCYAs and the Medicaid physical health managed care organizations are encouraged to develop health service coordination agreements to ensure the coordination of care to children in foster care, which includes working cooperatively to ensure children have timely access to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) screening. County agencies also work with their local County Assistance Office to coordinate assisting families in accessing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), housing assistance, heating assistance, and other available benefits.

PA's OCDEL administer Part C and Part B, Section 619 of the federal law Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004. OCDEL oversees the provision of PA's Early Intervention (EI) Program which consists of services and supports designed to help families with children who have developmental delays and disabilities. CCYAs work closely with local Early Intervention (EI) providers to ensure that all eligible children from birth to five in the child welfare system receive appropriate developmental screening through use of the Ages and Stages (ASQ™) and Ages and Stages: Social Emotional (ASQ:SE™) tools and when eligible receive services and supports that help promote healthy early child development.

OCYF also coordinates with various other governmental entities through the use of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or interagency agreements to assist in the coordination of services to similarly served populations. Some examples of existing MOUs and interagency agreements include the following:

PA Department of Education (PDE), Department of Human Services (DHS), Labor and Industry (L&I), Department of Health (DOH)	The IDEA MOU provides the foundation for the work of the PA Community on Transition (PACT) Secondary Leadership Team (SLT). The SLT is comprised of key agency representatives and implements the MOU to improve coordination of services to children across PA. The PA IL Coordinator is a member of this team.

Administrative Office of PA Courts (AOPC)	Development of a strategic plan focused on reducing entry into foster care, shortening lengths of stay for children who enter care and preventing re-entries into care for children who leave the system (Interagency Agreement)

PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)	This Notice of Subgrant allows federal CJA grant funds to be transferred to PCCD and ultimately disseminated through the PA District Attorney's Institute for the establishment, improvement and support of Multi-Disciplinary Investigative Teams and Children's Advocacy Centers.

PA Coalition Against Rape (PCAR)	The OCYF Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services developed a MOU for providing services as required for the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Juvenile Facility Standards between our YDCs/YFCs for compliance to outside resource for services. This agreement provides options and coordinates access to outside resources for juvenile residents to receive services for sexual assault and/or sexual harassment. The following sites have a MOU which are Loysville Youth Development Center, North Central Secure Treatment Unit, South Mountain Secure Treatment Unit, North East Secure Treatment Unit, Western Secure Treatment Unit, Southeast Youth Development Center, and Youth Forestry Camp #3.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)	The Department of Human Services and PennDOT have developed a program that can provide residents in the YDC/YFC system with a valid Pennsylvania Photo Identification Card prior to their release. This MOU is in the final stages and is beginning to go through the signature process.

PDE	The MOU between the PDE and DHS outlines how educational programming will be conducted throughout the YDC/YFC. In addition, OCYF has a data sharing agreement with PDE to exchange data to support educational outcomes for children.

Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)	Interagency Agreement between OCYF and PHEAA to administer the Chafee Education and Training Grant Program and FosterEd Program to provide financial assistance to youth aging out of foster care.

Through the statutorily required child abuse fatality and near-fatality reviews, OCYF receives findings and recommendations from the multi-disciplinary county level review teams, as well as from OCYF Regional Office staff who conduct a review of these incidents. Analysis of these recommendations revealed that continuing enhancement to the array of preventative services available to families in their communities remains an area of need to address these severe forms of abuse and neglect. It was recognized that to advance these recommendations into concrete action at the state level, there was a need to bring together intergovernmental partners to identify pathways for strengthening the coordination and delivery at the state level.

In July of 2025, the DHS, OCYF, worked with contractor Deloitte Consulting to begin convening the PA F/NF WG. This workgroup is a subset of a larger PA Child Welfare Reform Initiative that is underway.

The PA F/NF WG seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of child abuse and neglect fatality and near fatality reviews to better identify areas that require systemic change to improve the delivery of services to children and families and prevent similar future occurrences. Examples include, but are not limited to, EI, developmental services, education and early childhood home visiting. The goals of the F/NF WG include recommending potential changes to state statute and/or OCYF policy, identifying prevention approaches, and communicating data trends and prevention practices across the Commonwealth.

Many of the entities engaged in the workgroup represent other state partners who oversee or administer programs that involve federal benefits or federal assisted programs. The workgroup is currently comprised of representatives from the following Commonwealth entities:

- Department of Human Services;
    - Office of Children, Youth and Families;
    - Office of Developmental Programs;
    - Office of Administration;
    - Office of Policy Development;
    - Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services;
    - Office of Child Development and Early Learning;
- Department of Health;
    - Bureau of Family Health;
    - Bureau of Medical Marijuana;
- Department of Education;
    - Office of School Climate and Well-Being;
- Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs;
    - Bureau of Administration

PA continues to focus CQI efforts on efforts to ensure that services under the CFSP are consistently coordinated with other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population. PA received an overall rating of Strength for Item 32 in

Round 3. There were three main PIP strategies that focused on ensuring that the state's services under the CFSP were coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population. Those strategies and an update on these efforts are outlined below.

- Goal 4, Strategy 2 - Enhancing collaboration with system partners to improve the behavioral health, intellectual/developmental disability and substance use disorder services array.
    - CQI efforts during PIP implementation and beyond have focused on a revised Complex Case process that was established to assist in identifying gaps in service delivery. Promotion of the system of care approach with cross trained staff, early identification and county integrated planning and support were identified as key. Complex case work continues to include efforts such as the Blueprint Workgroup. process that was established to assist in identifying gaps in service delivery. Promotion of the system of care approach with cross trained staff, early identification and county integrated planning and support were identified as key. Complex case work continues to include efforts such as the Blueprint Workgroup.

- Goal 4, Strategy 3 - Facilitating access to services across the state as well as the utilization of service mapping at the county level to improve service coordination across the state.
    - It was determined that this would be put on hold until greater connections could be made with the implementation of the UA, as it is believed having a standardized assessment tool will provide a more consistent structure from which to build a service mapping tool that can be utilized across all 67 counties. UA has not yet been implemented in PA but is moving towards pilot.

- Enhancing CQI efforts to inform evaluation of local and systemic gaps related to housing, transportation, and service coordination as part of each counties' submission and OCYF review of the NBPB.
    - During PIP implementation, three counties were selected for participation in the PO (SHIFT). SHIFT was an initiative focused on further developing the child welfare system's ability to resolve housing situations without removing children from their parent's care solely due to housing instability.
    - OCYF has been conducting analysis of information submitted by CCYAs through the annual NBPB process to identify any requests related to transportation and housing or descriptions of innovative practices that could be shared across counties.

Analysis of more recent qualitative data from community partner focus groups conducted between October 2023 and February 2024, along with feedback from the SAC meeting held on May 29, 2025, reveals a mixed picture of this item's functioning

across the state. The evidence shows that coordination efforts vary significantly from county to county, largely due to PA's county-administered child welfare system. This variability has resulted in inconsistent access to and utilization of Title IV-E prevention services and funding. While some counties demonstrate strong collaboration and innovation in service delivery, others struggle to claim available federal funding, at times limiting their ability to provide comprehensive prevention support to children and families.

Despite these challenges, several strengths were identified. Community partners highlighted the depth of knowledge among some families regarding insurance systems and how to navigate them; however, limitations such as transportation barriers, lack of digital access, and other socioeconomic factors continue to hinder families' ability to benefit from these services. Innovation in caseworker response and county-specific tailoring of services were also cited as emerging strengths supporting coordination of services and benefits of such programs. Some counties voiced potential with beginning to explore new approaches to service coordination, but these efforts are county-driven and are not yet standardized or widely implemented across the state.

Areas for potential improvement include the lack of consistent communication between program and fiscal teams within CCYAs and limited education around eligibility for prevention services. The absence of a statewide case management system further complicates coordination efforts and workforce monitoring. Community partners emphasized the need for improved cross-county collaboration, which could further facilitate shared funding models and the implementation of specialized programs. Additionally, there is a call for more standardized policy guidance that still allows counties to tailor services to their unique community needs. Children and families' experiences with service coordination are shaped by this variability that exists across the state. While some benefit from well-coordinated services and knowledgeable caseworkers, others face significant barriers due to inconsistent practices and limited access to resources. This disparity underscores the importance of statewide efforts to improve consistency, infrastructure, and communication to ensure equitable service delivery across all counties.

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

Item 33: Standards Applied Equally State Response

- CFSR Item 33: 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?

OCYF ensures that county agencies maintain compliance with regulations and provide necessary support to improve their operations and services. This has been

critical in enhancing the counties' practice to improve outcomes for children and families. PA's licensing protocol has strengthened the licensing process by establishing procedures that are implemented statewide in a standardized fashion. Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapter 3700 (relating to Foster Family Care Agency) provides the regulatory base for approval of foster parents. Annual Licensing Inspections are conducted by DHS to review agency records to determine compliance with statutory, regulatory and policy requirements. Any licensing inspection violations and required plans of correction for Foster Family Care Agencies are posted online through the DHS Human Services Provider Directory[58] to increase the transparency of the licensing history of these providers to the public.

In 2007, OCYF adopted the licensing protocol for managing agencies where a provisional license is warranted. In PA, county agencies may receive provisional licenses from OCYF to address specific deficiencies. These provisional licenses are issued to keep agencies accountable and ensure they are in compliance with state and federal laws. The provisional license process involves developing a Plan of Correction (POC) to address deficiencies and may include ongoing monitoring and TA. The provisional license is temporary and will be extended for a specified period, after which a regular or provisional certificate of compliance may be issued.

Provisional approval of a foster family may be authorized when a previously approved foster family is determined, in a re-evaluation, not to meet one of more of the requirements outlined in regulations §3700.62-§3700.67. A provisional approval may be authorized only if the identified areas of regulatory non-compliance will not result in an immediate threat to the health or safety of foster children placed with foster families. During a period of provisional approval, no additional children may be placed with the foster family. A provisional approval may not exceed 12 months. If a foster family is unable to achieve compliance within 12 months, the foster home will be closed and the children living with the foster family will need to be removed. A written notice is given to the applicant of the decision to approve, disapprove or provisionally approve the foster family, and is provided to the family once their inspection has occurred and the county agency has been able to review the foster home study. The written notice also includes information pertaining to appeal rights in the case that the Department disapproves or provisionally approves the foster family.

To help promote and facilitate greater use of kinship caregivers, OCYF implemented an emergency caregiver policy in 2003, which was revised in 2004 based on feedback from CCYAs issued via OCYF Bulletin 3140-04-05/3490-04-01. This bulletin gives guidance indicating that emergency caregivers must meet the necessary clearance and home inspection requirements, and must have satisfactory physical, social, and emotional characteristics assessment completed before being approved as emergency caregivers. An on-site visit to the caregiver's home must be completed by the county or private agency before placement can occur. The on-site visit must occur regardless of the time of day or night. During the on-site visit, an inspection of the

[58] https://www.humanservices.dhs.pa.gov/HUMAN_SERVICE_PROVIDER_DIRECTORY/Home/ReturnSearchScreen

caregiver's home must be completed by the county or private agency and the emergency caregiver's home must meet the requirements listed at §3700.66 (relating to foster family residence requirements). The Emergency Caregiver's Bulletin promotes and facilitates greater use of kinship caregivers which helps improve outcomes for children who are placed with relatives.

During Annual Licensing Inspections, the OCYF Regional Office pulls a random sample of resource family homes to inspect and to ensure state standards are being applied to licensed foster family homes and emergency caregivers. Records for all new agency resource homes are also reviewed during the Annual Licensing Inspection process. A total of 670 resource home records were reviewed as part of the CCYA Annual Licensing Inspections conducted in the calendar year 2024. As seen in Table 65, a total of 21 counties received citations because of non-compliance of requirements for agency resource family homes. Of the 61 violations noted, examples of common citations included missing documentation related to requirements such as medical appraisals, failure to register the family with the Resource Family Registry (RFR) within the required time frame, or ten-year income verification.

Table 65. Resource Home Annual Licensure Violations SFYs 2019 - 23, Calendar Year 2024[59]

	SFY 2019-20	SFY 2020-21	SFY 2021-22	SFY 2022-23	Calendar Year 2024
Resource Homes Reviewed	457 homes	208 homes	531 homes	558 homes	670 homes
Citations on Resource Homes	106 citations	11 citations	28 citations	32 citations	61 Citations
Cases Cited	106 cases	11 cases	28 cases	61 cases	122 cases
Counties who received citation	14 counties	6 counties	15 counties	17 counties	21 Counties

Source [OCYF Annual Licensing Inspections], [May 2025]

OCYF has been working over the last five years to update our Chapter 3800 regulations, Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities, which were last promulgated in 1999. Over the past 25 years there have been multiple statutory changes on the federal and state level that impact child welfare and juvenile justice that

[59] During annual licensing inspections of the 67 counites, some counties inspections occur more or less frequently due to provisional licenses or occurring right at the end of the calendar year, these inspections may not make it into the sample when this data is pulled.

are not reflected in regulation. The proposed regulations will require facilities to adopt a trauma-informed approach to better support children who often have experienced significant amounts of trauma. Additionally, the enhanced staffing requirements will decrease risks to children by increasing levels of supervision and accessibility. The updated regulations also account for a number of recommendations from the Juvenile Justice Task Force and a Grand Jury report on the Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center.

The 3800 regulations will be split into five chapters including: Child and Youth Facility Requirements, Child Residential Facilities, Day Treatment, Secure Residential and Secure Detention Facilities for Youth, and Transitional Living Sites for Youth. Currently we have drafted the following:

Chapter 3900- Child and Youth Facility Requirements

Chapter 3910- Child and Youth Residential Facilities

Chapter 3920 – Secure Care and Secure Detention Facilities for Children and Youth

Key themes reflected in all chapters include:

- Trauma-informed approach
- Search of person and property requirements
- Detailed program descriptions
- Specific training requirements for staff and youth
- Restrictive Procedures
- FFPSA Specialized Settings requirements
- Youth and family voice and engagement
- Juvenile justice language and requirements
- Focus on what is in the realm of authority of provider

BCFS conducted information sessions for all partners in September of 2025 to review the key changes being proposed. The sessions included DHS, providers, payers and Counties. Next steps will be the publication in the PA Bulletin as PROPOSED regulation. The Publication will establish a 60-day public comment period. OCYF anticipates this occurring in the beginning of 2026.

Review of data/information from Themes from Community Partner Focus Groups for CFSP Systemic Factor Items, Data Sheets on the Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention Systemic Factor and feedback from the SAC meeting on July 24, 2025, reveal that there are varied perspectives on systemic functioning of Item 33. Most OCYF Regional participants agreed that standards are applied equally within and across regions. Consistency is achieved using a robust process including the following:

- Use of checklists developed by representatives from all four regions;

- Clarification Sheets so counties have the chance to address any issues identified;
- Adherence to regulations;
- Issuing citations as warranted;
- Availability of supervisors to confirm citations (and sometimes be on-site),
- Within-team discussion;
- Intentional distribution of workload to reduce the chance of oversights; and
- Practices applied to counties and private providers alike

Pennsylvania utilizes a waiver process that provides flexibility in meeting regulatory standards and tracking procedures without jeopardizing the safety of children.

Examples of waivers available for review and approval include: allowing children of the opposite sex in the same room and approving a caregiver with a communicable disease (HIV) when medical professional documentation confirms manageability. Some examples discussed at the SAC meeting include: looking at medical evidence submitted by a doctor; making sure children will have necessities; and granting time-limited waivers until elements of concern, while not impacting child safety, are remedied. The OCYF Policy Division tracks waivers and they are engaged in a strategy to enhance their existing tracking system to a resource clearing house project, which will be an opportunity to ensure all documents are in one place and accessible for reference. In Table 66 below illustrates how many waivers the OCYF Division of Policy has received in the last three years. The waiver process is examined on a regular basis to determine if changes to the process are warranted. The Waiver Bulletin (3130-24-01,3140-24-02,3150-24-01,3170-24-01, 3350-24-02, 3490-24-02, 3680-24-01, 3700-24-01, 3800-24-01) has been updated twice since its original issuance.

Table 66. Waivers received in calendar years 2022-2024

Calendar Year	Number of Waivers
2022	172
2023	171
2024	193
Total	**536**

Source [Division of Policy Tracking Database], [October 2025]

The consensus among focus group participants was that licensing standards are applied equally, though the process for licensing may vary depending on the region. However, several responses to the post-focus group survey raised concerns that standards are not equally applied across regions, including the following:

- Some regions have developed their own licensing checklists.
- There may be inconsistency in interpretation of the child welfare laws and regulations and issuing of citations across representatives and regions.

Focus group participants described an informal process in which a region will update and share the checklists across all four regions as needed, but the checklists have not been systematically updated and disseminated in several years, creating the potential for inconsistency. Focus group participants shared by utilizing one consistent licensing checklist, it is their belief that regional directors would be better able to evaluate consistency in application of standards across all regions.

Beyond the required regulatory standards, agencies may elect to implement additional requirements that are stricter than the regulatory requirements. Counties can choose to implement additional requirements through their own policies and procedures that fit their specific needs. For example, some counties have prospective foster parents undergo a psychological evaluation before they can be approved as a licensed foster parent even though this psychological evaluation is not required for approval. These added requirements can discourage individuals from completing the process of becoming a foster parent and may lead to inequities, particularly when the requirements exceed what is necessary for ensuring safety and well-being. The difference of perception in situations and individuals can create issues with consistency and accountability.

Item 34: Requirements for Criminal Background Checks State Response

❖ CFSR Item 34: 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 Child and Family Services Reviews Quick Reference Items List 4 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?

The PA CPSL requires certain individuals to submit child abuse history and criminal background checks for employment, fostering or adopting children and youth, residing in a foster or adoptive home, or volunteering with children. The information gathered from an individual's child abuse history and criminal background checks is to be used as part of a larger decision-making process when determining if that individual can work or volunteer in a childcare position as defined in the CPSL. This law for foster care and adoptive placements is in place to protect the safety and well-being of children in out-of-home placements. Additional safeguards for children in foster care and adoptive placements, relating to child abuse history and criminal background checks, include the following:

- In addition to foster and prospective adoptive parents, household members 18 years of age or older residing in a foster or adoptive home for more than

30 days in a calendar year must also submit child abuse history and criminal background checks.
    - If a household member over 18 years of age has resided outside of PA within the previous five-year period, they must also submit a child abuse history background check obtained within the previous one-year period from each state they have resided within the previous five-year period.
    - A prospective foster or adoptive home cannot be approved if a household member over 18 years of age is disqualified.
- Changes in an individual's background check status must be reported to the foster care or adoption agency within 72 hours.
- Removal of the foster child or children in accordance with the PA Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure when:
    - There is a change in household composition where the individual has a background check that prohibits approval and does not cease residing in the home immediately; or
    - The foster parent knowingly fails to submit the required information such that it would disqualify them as foster parents.
- At a minimum, background checks must be renewed every 60 months.
- If the background checks reveal the applicant is disqualified from approval, the applicant shall be immediately dismissed from approval as a foster or prospective adoptive parent.

PA Act 73 of 2007 requires individuals working with children and individuals residing in resource family homes to obtain fingerprint-based federal criminal background checks bringing PA into compliance with the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006. Legislation passed in 2014 amended the PA CPSL to raise the age of those individuals requiring background check clearances who reside in the home of a prospective foster parent or adoptive parent for at least 30 days in a calendar year to 18 years of age. Additional amendments relating to clearances for foster parents have included:

- Foster parents must report changes in clearance status within 72 hours.
- Removal of foster child or children in accordance with PA Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure when there is a:
    - Change in household composition where the person has a clearance that prohibits approval; or
    - Failure of foster parent to submit required information;
- Clearances for foster parents must be renewed every 60 months rather than the previously required 24 months.

Amendments as they relate to clearances for foster and adoptive parents also included:

- Clarifying that a prospective foster or adoptive home cannot be approved if a household member over 18 years of age is disqualified based on the background check results:
- Failure to require the applicant to submit documentation prior to employment results in a misdemeanor of the third degree.
- If PA State Police, ChildLine or FBI clearances reveal the applicant is disqualified from employment or approval, the applicant shall be immediately dismissed from:
    - Employment;
    - Approval.

In calendar year 2024, DHS processed 11,012 child abuse history clearances for foster families and 6,828 child abuse history clearances for adoptive families. Additionally, FBI record requests were made for 8,308 foster parents and 4,121 prospective adoptive parents. Compared to trends over previous years, there continues to be a trending decrease in child abuse history clearances and FBI record requests for foster and adoptive parents in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Additional information about PA requirements for criminal background clearances for foster and adoptive parents can be found on Keep Kids Safe | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of PA[60]. Annual criminal background clearance data is available through the Annual CPS Report available on the Child Abuse Reports | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania[61].

During Annual Licensing Inspections for CCYAs, OCYF reviews for compliance with these requirements and that background checks and clearances for foster parents are obtained and up to date. Review of information reported from annual CCYA licensing inspections during calendar year 2024 suggest that county agencies are largely in compliance with regards to background check and clearance requirements for agency resource homes.

Table 67. CCYA Annual Licensing Inspection Violations: Background Checks and Clearances for Agency Resource Homes and Emergency Caregivers

	Total Number of Cases Cited for Calendar Year 2024
Provisionally Licensed Counties Cited	**3 cases (1 county)**
Fully Licensed Counties Cited	**4 cases (4 counties)**
Total Cases Cited	**7**
Total Resource Family Cases Reviewed	**670**
Rate of Compliance (%)	**98.95**

Source [OCYF Annual Licensing Inspections], [May 2025]

[60] https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/keep-kids-safe.html
[61] https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/data-reports/child-abuse-reports.html

Community partner feedback obtained from Themes from Community Partner Focus Groups for CFSP Systemic Factor Items, Data Sheets on the Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention Systemic Factor and feedback from the SAC meeting on July 24, 2025, reveal that there are varied perspectives on systemic functioning of Item 34. Focus group participants felt that the system is working well in ensuring the requirements for criminal background checks are being met. During Annual CCYA Licensing Inspections, agency foster home and adoption records are reviewed to monitor compliance with background check requirements.

During SAC meetings, members shared county-level examples where staff conducted certain background checks through their local 911 Center, in addition to using J-Net when needed. Pennsylvania Justice Network, also known as J-Net, is a collaborative initiative among 16 state agencies aimed at enhancing the public safety and criminal justice system in Pennsylvania. It serves as a primary public safety and criminal justice information broker, providing a unified online platform for authorized users to access crucial information from various municipal, county, state, and federal agencies. J-Net facilitates information sharing and data integration, allowing law enforcement and public safety officials to conduct investigations securely and efficiently across the state. This method of obtaining information is used often when caseworkers are out in the field and do not have access to the internet or an approved J-Net user is not available. This easy access provides an opportunity for CCYAs to collaborate with their local 911 centers that can perform necessary background checks when they are in crisis situations.

County staff highlighted that individuals who apply to become foster parents are subject to regulatory background checks, along with internal and supervisor-level checklist reviews, which are also reviewed during the licensing inspection. Some counties have a Foster Care Team that meets once the home study is complete to review all the inspection results, the team then decides collectively if the family can be approved. These Foster Care Teams consist of caseworkers, supervisors, foster care staff, QA and the administrator of the CCYA. The approval documentation that is completed during these meetings is included in the case file that is provided during inspection. County staff described procedures designed to ensure that individuals approaching their 18th birthday obtain the necessary clearances. In some cases, this includes caseworkers contacting Childline directly rather than depending solely on the automated CWIS system.

Participants highlighted the “human aspect” of the process, observing that some providers and counties are more proactive and efficient in initiating requests for the necessary clearances, while some caregivers, particularly kinship caregivers, need additional support to successfully apply for the applicable background checks. Although infrequent, OCYF staff noted some barriers that cause delays in meeting clearance requirements due to FBI backlogs, out of state clearances that are processed by the Clearance Verification Unit and the requirement for an international clearance when an individual has lived in another country within the past five years.

Item 35: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes State Response

- ❖ CFSR Item 35: 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?

Resource family recruitment in PA is provided through the SWAN Prime Contract; PA's Media Contracts, selected through the Commonwealth's procurement process; and by CCYAs, either directly or through private providers with whom they contract for foster and adoption services. OCYF provides mini grants to agencies and coalitions across the state during National Adoption and Nation Foster Care month to showcase the need for foster and adoptive families. Additionally, OCYF contracts with the PA State Resource Family Association for awareness events during National Foster Care month.

All prospective foster and adoptive parents have access to any licensed provider in PA. SWAN supports and enhances timely permanency services for children who are in the custody of a CCYA and provides post-permanency support services to families. Since the SWAN program began in 1992, DHS has required that the SWAN prime contractor ensure that services are provided to children in foster care regardless of their geographic location, gender, gender identity, culture or race, and that families not be denied the opportunity to adopt based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, income, marital status, education, employment status, citizenship, or geography. To ensure equality of service delivery, DHS requires all affiliates to abide by the same contract language to provide services to children in foster care regardless of their demographics and geographical location. There are approximately 74 SWAN affiliate agencies.

Recruitment and awareness strategies include:

- DHS/OCYF has been recruiting foster and adoptive families through a media campaign since 1999. The media campaign consists of television, radio, print and online advertisements. The current campaign, MeetTheKids, features OY from the PA foster care system who need permanent families. PA's media campaign also features adoptive families. DHS/OCYF also funds four Waiting Child segments that air on local television. Philadelphia has a similar Waiting Child segment - Wednesday's Child - that is sponsored by Wendy's Wonderful Kids and the Adoption Center. Radio, Facebook, YouTube and other online media sources are used to both highlight the statewide campaigns for foster and adoptive families and to feature specific children and youth in need of adoptive families.

- DHS has a website, www.adoptpakids.org[62] that is used to feature all children waiting for a permanent family and as an informational resource for prospective and approved foster and adoptive families and a Facebook page[63]. Facebook is also used to advertise events sponsored by agencies across the state.

- DHS/OCYF collaborates with more than 100 professional photographers from across the state. These photographers volunteer their time and talent to take photographs of PA's children and youth who are registered with the PAE. PA has photographers in all 67 counties available to take professional photographs of foster youth that can be used for recruitment purposes.

- DHS/OCYF also sponsors various Matching Events, such as Adoption Parties and Matching Receptions, which occur across the state several times a year. Such events offer prospective adoptive families the opportunity to meet with county and private providers who work directly with the children in need of permanency as well as with the youth themselves. SWAN collaborates with the Adoption Center for matching events that bring together OY in need of an adoptive family with families who are approved to adopt.

- DHS/OCYF supports local public and private foster and adoptive agencies with National Adoption Awareness activities in November and National Foster Care Month Awareness activities in May. DHS/OCYF also supports a weeklong recruitment and awareness event during the PA Farm Show where families can learn more about PA's waiting children and how to become a foster and adoptive resource. Additionally, the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association supports annual event(s) held in May during National Foster Parent Month that aids in the recruitment and retention of resource families.

- SWAN affiliates provide training to prospective adoptive, formal kinship families and PLC families who are interested in providing permanency to children in the PA child welfare system. Families interested in providing foster care to children in the system who they do not know are generally trained by their CCYA or by a private provider contracted with the county agency. All families who complete the SWAN Family Profile Process are provided with approximately 24 hours of training. The training includes information about the children in out-of-home care and the types of on-going supports and services they may need and how to access them.

- The SWAN Family Profile process is designed to train families about the reality of becoming an adoptive family; it is not simply a home study. SWAN

[62] http://www.adoptpakids.org/
[63] https://www.facebook.com/adoptpa

affiliate agencies often provide training, informational sessions and hold matching events in the evenings and on weekends. Public and private agencies have adapted their recruitment and training efforts to include a hybrid approach that includes both virtual and in-person format to accommodate families. Many of the same agencies that provide adoptive family training offer foster family training with many families approved to both foster and provide permanency through either adoption or PLC. Not all foster family training is provided by private agencies. Some CCYAs prefer to train their own foster families, and many use the PSRFA's Parents as Tender Healers Training as part of their on-going training effort. Training is often offered in the evening or on weekends as that is when families are available to attend.

- SWAN affiliate agencies can refer families to the Family Matching Unit. This unit is designed to assist families in the matching process. Through this unit families establish a matching plan and meet with their affiliate agency monthly for case review. This allows families to remain engaged in the process and receive continual education about the availability of children currently in need of permanency.

- The SWAN Helpline responds to questions from the public about foster care and adoption, including assisting OCYF in responding to the SWAN Facebook page and mailing informational packets to prospective foster and adoptive families. In addition, the SWAN Helpline assists out-of-state families registered with the AdoptUSKids program who make inquiries about waiting PA children. The SWAN Helpline is also the designated point of intake for SWAN post-permanency services.

- All foster, adoptive and kinship families must be registered with the RFR, to include information on whether they were approved to foster, adopt or provide kinship care. The RFR is a computerized database listing of all foster, adoptive and kinship families who have been studied to provide care to foster children.

- Child-Specific Recruitment, offered under the SWAN program as a direct service, is requested for children and youth in need of a significant permanent connection or an identified permanent family resource. CSR includes all activities used to identify an individual or family who is interested in adopting or providing permanency to a specific child/youth, whether through adoption, permanent legal custodianship, or formal kinship care. Additionally, this service is beneficial for OY transitioning to adulthood to assist in identification of individuals who, although they may not be willing or able to provide legal permanency, are willing to ensure that the youth receive assistance and guidance as needed/requested when they leave the child welfare system. Matching services utilize computer-generated matches between children who

are waiting for permanent homes and those families who are registered with the RFR.

- SWAN's OCMI is designed to provide intensive child-focused services to teens in need of adoptive homes by matching them with approved families who are registered with PAE who indicated they would adopt OY. Teens are invited to actively engage in recruitment activities and encouraged to participate in selecting a family for themselves. Teens attend numerous matching activities and read family profiles of approved families who have said they are interested in adopting OY.

- PRTs are offered through the SWAN program. A PRT consists of an oral case presentation, a rating of the child's current status and brainstorming by members of the team, both internal and external experts and stakeholders, to identify current barriers to the youth achieving permanency. Once the barriers are identified, the team creates a specific action plan to eliminate the identified barriers to help the youth move closer to permanency whether it be through a return home, adoption, legal custodianship, or placement with a fit and willing relative. The action plan is reviewed on a consistent basis until legal permanency is achieved, or the youth leaves out of home care.

Review of data/information from Themes from Community Partner Focus Groups for CFSP Systemic Factor Items, Data Sheets on the Service Array and Resource Development Systemic Factor and feedback from the SAC meeting in July 2025 revealed that there are varied perspectives on systemic functioning of Item 35. Diligent recruitment and retention of potential foster and adoptive parents who reflect the diversity of the children in need of placement across the state has been a continued priority and focus of DHS/OCYF. Some members of the SAC that represented counties did note that, at times, they are limited in the diversity of existing foster families for children, which can lead to significant travel beyond area to find a family to best meet the children's needs.

For the most updated information related to PA performance regarding how well 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 please refer to the Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan[64] of the 2026 APSR.

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

[64] https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/publications/documents/child-youth-and-family-service-plan/2026-annual-progress-services-report-apsr.pdf

- ❖ CFSR Item 36: 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?

State observations for the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) are based on data from the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE), Reports field, and the NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard. Data in NEICE included “Placements In” and “Placements Out”. Data in the NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard included median days to the placement decision under “ICPC Requests Meeting Safe and Timely Requirements” for Regulation 1 and Regulation 2, and “ICPC Requests Meeting Timeline for Placement Decision” for Regulation 4, Regulation 7, and Regulation 12 cases. Data for each Regulation is broken down by fiscal years from NEICE implementation in PA on November 5, 2020, to June 30, 2025.

ICPC Regulation 1 addresses when a dependent child moves, with their approved placement resource, from one state into another state; the receiving agency in the second state completes a home study and supervises child safety, and the receiving state ICPC office provides a placement decision while the child resides in the second state. ICPC Regulation 2 applies to a public child welfare agency requesting a parent, foster, or adoption home study on a potential resource who resides in another state; the dependent child is not placed with the potential resource until after the receiving state ICPC office provides a placement decision of approval.

ICPC Regulation 4 provides for the protection and safety of adjudicated and non-adjudicated children being placed in a residential facility in another state; the residential facility is already licensed in the receiving state, and the child is not placed in the facility until the receiving state ICPC office provides a placement decision of approval. Regulation 7 expedites ICPC approval or denial by a receiving state for the placement of a dependent child, when the specific criteria outlined in Regulation 7 are met; the child is not placed with the potential resource until after the receiving state ICPC office provides a placement decision of approval. ICPC Regulation 12 provides guidance and ICPC requirements for the processing of private agency or independent adoptions of non-adjudicated children; the receiving agency’s adoption home study is provided in the request packet, and the child is not placed with the potential resource until the receiving state ICPC office provides a placement decision of approval.

NEICE tracks all placements made into and out of PA based on receipt of the ICPC Form 100B, which confirms the date placement was made in the receiving state. Table 68 showed the number of confirmed placements into and out of PA since SFY 2019. These numbers are estimated only and may be artificially low due to OCYF not consistently receiving the appropriate ICPC form 100B from either the sending state ICPC office or from the PA sending agency to show that a child was confirmed placed in the approved ICPC placement.

Table 68. Confirmed Placements Into/Out of Pennsylvania Through ICPC FFYs 2019-2025

	2019[65]	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Placements into PA	354	527	525	628	636	546	463
Placements out of PA	186	351	408	465	458	464	407

Source [NEICE], [July 2025]

The NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard tracks the median number of days it takes to facilitate all placement decisions through ICPC. Cases received under ICPC Regulations One, Two, and Seven routinely require parent, foster, or adoption home studies to be completed by the receiving agency; the median days reflect the home study process. Request packets under ICPC Regulation 4 and ICPC Regulation 12 are reviewed for completeness of required documentation under the specific ICPC Regulation, and the placement decision is made after all required documentation is provided. Table 69 provides the median days to determine a placement decision.

Table 69. Median days from Receiving Packet to Placement Decision at Pennsylvania ICPC Office, by ICPC Regulation, FFYs 2019-2025 (National Data in parenthesis)

Median days to determine response	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023[66]	2024	2025
Regulation One	342 (176.5)	242.5 (158)	272 (153)	230 (135)	*178 (139) and 152.5 (139)	130 (132)	0 (66)
Regulation Two	131 (89)	138 (98)	121 (92)	111 (83)	96 (78)	82 (76)	67 (56)
Regulation Four	2 (4)	4 (3)	4 (4)	2 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Regulation Seven	80 (43)	71 (46)	127.5 (42)	60 (37)	20 (33)	1 (32)	1 (26)
Regulation Twelve	3 (2)	3 (2)	3 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)

[65] *PA implemented NEICE on 11/5/2018, and Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2019 data covers 11/05/2018 to 6/30/2019 only.
**The ICPC Form 100B may not be received by the Interstate Unit until several months after the approved ICPC placement is made and placement numbers in FFY 2025, are affected by the delay in receiving the ICPC Form 100B.
[66] * The NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard provided conflicting data for 2023.

Source [NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard], [July 2025]

The NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard tracks the percentage of ICPC Regulation 1 and Regulation 2 requests with a placement decision made on or before the 60 calendar days Safe and Timely Act due date. This is illustrated in Table 70. The NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard tracks the percentage of ICPC Regulation 7 requests with a placement decision made on or before the Regulation 7 priority/expedited 20 business days due date. These requests routinely require a parent, foster or adoption home study be completed by the PA child welfare agency.

Table 70. Percentage of requests with placement decision/determination response at Pennsylvania ICPC Office meeting home study due date, by ICPC Regulation, FFYs 2019 – 25 (National Data in parenthesis)

Percentage of requests meeting Due Date	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023[67]	2024	2025[68]
Regulation One (60 calendar days per Safe and Timely)	0 (12)	0 (21)	0 (13)	0 (18)	*15 (20) and 33 (24)	15 (24)	**0 (46)
Regulation Two (60 calendar days per Safe and Timely)	16 (28)	15 (25)	17 (27)	20 (34)	29 (37)	38 (39)	42 (55)
Regulation Seven (20 calendar days per Regulation Seven)	0 (17)	8 (15)	14 (17)	6 (23)	50 (27)	81 (28)	71 (32)

Source [NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard], [July 2025]

The NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard tracks the percentage of ICPC Regulation 4 and Regulation 12 cases meeting the 3 business days placement decision due date, highlighted in Table 71. ICPC Regulation 4 and 12 requests are reviewed for completeness of required documentation under the specific ICPC Regulation, and the placement decision is made only after all ICPC Regulation-required documentation is provided.

[67] * The NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard provided conflicting data for 2023, both sets are provided.
[68] **All fields were zero (0) for ICPC Regulation One cases in FFY 2025, including number of requests exceeding the Safe and Timely Act due date.

Table 71. Percentage of requests with placement decision/determination response at Pennsylvania ICPC Office meeting the 3-business day processing due date, by ICPC Regulation, FFYs 2019-2025 (National Data in parenthesis)

Percentage of requests meeting Due Date	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Regulation Four	80 (48)	43 (50)	44 (48)	79 (83)	100 (94)	99 (89)	100 (88)
Regulation Twelve	55 (70)	70 (72)	66 (68)	76 (76)	88 (86)	93 (83)	89 (86)

Source [NEICE ICPC State and National Analytics Dashboard], [July 2025]

NEICE continues to evolve with improvements with updates occurring frequently. Any "pre-update" data may be considered incomplete or inaccurate compared to "post-update" data. An example of this difference would be that in 2018, completion of some NEICE fields was optional and sometimes these fields remained empty, but in 2023, completion of these same fields became mandatory, now the data from those fields is always collected. Empty fields would not have been counted in 2018, and in 2023, those fields were counted because these fields were mandatory and contain data. The PA Interstate Compact Unit routinely meets or exceeds ICPC timeframes for case processing. Under ICPC, effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring.

Review of data/information from Themes from Community Partner Focus Groups for CFSP Systemic Factor Items, Data Sheets on the Service Array and Resource Development Systemic Factor and feedback from the SAC meeting on July 24, 2025, reveal that there are varied perspectives on systemic functioning of Item 36. Focus group participants shared several ICPC success stories, including instances in which children coming into care have an absent parent or relatives in another state who can take custody, sometimes avoiding dependency all together. Participants acknowledged that the contributions of ICPC Specialists in Harrisburg to be quite helpful. It is also noted that all jurisdictions have access to a resource account to contact OCYF directly regarding any inquiries. During the SAC meeting held July 24, 2025, ICPC staff from OCYF denoted the following about performance on regulatory requirements:

- Regulation 1: Intact family movement across state lines, processed within five business days;
- Regulation 2: OCYF processes, to the best of our ability, within five business days;
- Regulation 4: The compact tells OCYF to process within three business days and OCYF's median number of days processing these cases is one day;
- Regulation 7: The median is one day to make a placement decision, mainly because other states ask for relative home studies to be expedited and OCYF does not do relative home studies, either parent home studies or foster home or adoption home studies.

- Regulation 12: OCYF still processes these cases where the mother is a private citizen without agency involvement, and she is making a plan to have a family in another state adopt her child. ICPC states three business days, but OCYF's numbers are better than three days, as they process within a median of one day.

It was also shared that OCYF receives international adoptions, but more often OCYF receives requests from other states through ICPC where the out of state agency coordinated an international adoption and that agency has located a family in PA for that child. OCYF processes these as any other adoption case. If there is tribal affiliation for an Interstate case, OCYF requires documentation that the tribe was notified or that multiple tribes that could possibly be involved were notified and whether they want to be included. OCYF always confirms if there is tribal affiliation or possible affiliation that somebody talked to the tribe and made inquiries as to the tribe's wants. Although PA does not have any federally recognized tribes, OCYF would accept and process a case from a tribe in the same manner as one from any state or county agency. However, OCYF staff report that they are not aware of any such cases being received in PA during their tenure.

Discussion of barriers to cross-jurisdiction placements included the following:

- The ICPC process often takes longer than the expected 60-90 days - it takes 18 months to complete for some states.
- Some states are faster (North Carolina, Florida and Virginia) while others are slower (Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey).
- It was noted that New York has suspended its ICPC process altogether.
- Delays attributed to slow responses from receiving states (e.g., waiting on other agencies for quarterly supervision reports, home studies and courtesy checks to ensure a child can be placed).
- Even the fast-track route is slow;
- Lack of communication on progress

The impact of such issues includes extensive time required for children to be placed with extended family members.

Appendix 1: CFSR State Data Profile

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

Appendix 2: Pennsylvania Acronym List

AAP	American Academy of Pediatrics
AC	After Care
ACF	Administration of Children and Families
AFCARS	Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System
AOPC	Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts
APD	Annual Planning Document
APSR	Annual Progress and Services Report
ASFA	Adoption and Safe Families Act
ASQ™	Ages and Stages Questionnaire
BHMCOS	Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations
CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate
CASSP	Child and Adolescent Service System Program
CB	Children's Bureau
CCYA	County Children and Youth Agency
CF/NF	Child Fatality/Near Fatality
CFSP	Child and Family Service Plan
CFSR	Child and Family Service Review
CIP	County Improvement Plan
CJA	Child Justice Act
CLS	Certification and Licensing Services
CORE	Critical On-going Resource Family Education
CPCMS	Common Pleas Case Management System
CPP	Child Permanency Plan
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
CPS	Child Protective Services
CPSL	Child Protective Services Law
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
CRP	Citizen Review Panel
CSR	Child Specific Recruitment
CW CM	Child Welfare Case Management
CWIS	Child Welfare Information Solution
CWIS	Child Welfare Information System
DDAP	Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
DHS	Department of Human Services
DOH	Department of Health
DQ	Data Quality
DSW	Direct Service Worker
EBP	Evidence Based Program
ECM	Enterprise Case Management

EDW	Enterprise Data Warehouse
EI	Early Intervention
EPSDT	Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment
ETG	Employment and Training Grant
FAST	Family Advocacy and Support Tool
FEI	Family Engagement Initiative
FFPSA	Family First Prevention Services Act
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FGDM	Family Group Decision Making
FosterEd	PA Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program
Foundations	Foundations Training
FSP	Family Service Plan
GAL	Guardian Ad Litem
GPS	General Protective Services
HHSDC	Health and Human Services Delivery Center
ICPC	Interstate Child Placement Compact
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IL	Independent Living
INA	Individual Needs Assessment
IRAT	Individualized Readiness Assessment Test
ITNA	Individual Training Needs Assessment
JCJC	Juvenile Court Judges Commission
JPO	Juvenile Probation Office
L&I	Labor and Industry
LCR	Local Children's Roundtable
LIS	Licensing Inspection Summary
LRT	Leadership Roundtable
LSI	Legal Service Initiative
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
MHWG	Mental Health Workgroup
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NBPB	Needs Based Planning Budget
NCANDS	National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System
NYTD	National Youth in Transition Database
OCDEL	Office of Childhood Development and Early Learning
OCFC	Office of Children and Families in the Court

OCYF	Office of Children, Youth and Families
OIM	Office of Income Maintenance
OMAP	Office of Medical Assistance Program
OMHSAS	Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
OMS	Online Monitoring System
OY	Older Youth
PA	Pennsylvania
PACT	Pennsylvania Community on Transition
PAPP	Promising Practice
PAWS	Pennsylvania Annual Workforce Survey
PCAR	Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
PCCD	Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
PCCYFS	Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services
PCYA	Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators
PDE	Pennsylvania Department of Education
PennDOT	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
PFM	Public Financial Management
PHEAA	Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency
PI	Practice Improvement
PIP	Program Improvement Plan
POC	Plan of Correction
POSC	Plans of Safe Care
PREA	Prison Rape Elimination Act
PSRFA	Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association
QA	Quality Assurance
QSR	Quality Service Review
RFR	Resource Family Registries
RSP	Risk-Standardized Performance
SA	Standardized Attorney
SAC	Statewide Assessment Committee
SAMP	Safety Assessment and Management Process
SC	Standardized Client
SFY	State Fiscal Year
SHIFT	Stable Housing Interventions in Facilitated Teams
SI	System Integrator
SLT	Secondary Leadership Team
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SWA	Statewide Assessment
SWAN	Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network
TA team	Trend Analysis Team
TBL	Team Based Learning

CWRC	The Child Welfare Resource Center
TIC	Trauma Informed Care
ToL	Transfer of Learning
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
UA	Universal Assessment
UAT	Universal Assessment Tool
YAB	Youth Advisory Board
YDC	Youth Development Centers
YFC	Youth Forestry Camps