

State of New Jersey
Child and Family Services Review Round 4
***A Home for Every Child* Performance Improvement Plan**

In Summer and Fall 2025, the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) Children's Bureau (CB) administered Round Four of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in New Jersey. In July 2025, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) submitted New Jersey's Statewide Assessment to CB. In September 2025, DCF and other child welfare stakeholders and system partners, including children and families and representatives from sister state agencies and DCF-contracted providers, participated in a CB-led onsite review. The onsite review consisted of case record reviews and stakeholder interviews. On March 17, 2026, CB transmitted its Final Report to DCF, summarizing CB's findings about the strengths and areas needing improvement of New Jersey's child welfare system.

While New Jersey's Final Report was pending, ACF published Technical Bulletin #14, providing states with an opportunity to center their CFSR program improvement efforts around the federal *A Home for Every Child* initiative, rather than participating in the traditional Program Improvement Plan (PIP) development and measurement process set forth in Technical Bulletin #13A. ACF's *A Home for Every Child* initiative aims to "orient improvement efforts around outcomes that matter most: ensuring every child has access to a safe, stable, and loving home, and that states are supported in building the capacity and systems to make that possible."¹ It focuses on "prevention, expanding foster care capacity and improving permanency outcomes."

New Jersey reviewed Technical Bulletin #14 and elected to opt-in to the PIP pilot set forth. In Table 1, below, DCF outlines the objectives and strategies New Jersey will employ to bring about meaningful improvement to practices and outcomes through the *A Home for Every Child* initiative framework. Objectives are organized to align with the *A Home for Every Child* ratio (numerator: number of children in out-of-home placement; denominator: number of resource homes) and include associated lead measures to support New Jersey in achieving those objectives.

Table 1. Round 4 CFSR Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Lead Measures

Goal 1. Denominator: Reduce the number of children in out-of-home placement in New Jersey.	
Objective 1. Prevent children from entering out-of-home placement.	
Strategies:	Expanded and improved prevention programming. DCF will continue efforts towards full implementation of recently launched prevention services, including the services included within DCF's Family First Prevention Services Act prevention program (Brief Strategic Family Therapy, Intercept, Positive Parenting Program, Family Preservation Services with Motivational Interviewing, and Keeping Families Together with Motivational Interviewing) and Family Connects, the state's universal home visiting program.
Lead Measures:	Percent of children with a finding of maltreatment within 12 months of no finding of maltreatment (unsubstantiated to substantiated.)
Objective 2. Improve timeliness of permanency and stability for children in out-of-home placement.	
Strategies:	Identification and enhanced support for children at risk of delayed permanency. DCF will develop a predictive analytics model to support decision making related to children in out-of-home placement that are most at risk for delayed permanency. Family Engagement. DCF will identify national best practices, training and other resources on family engagement. National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC). DCF will implement the NTDC for resource parents. NTDC includes updated trauma informed content and is more receptive to child/family connections. Research shows NTDC resource families have greater confidence in parenting children with challenging behaviors; children placed with NTDC caregivers were 2.9x more likely to achieve permanency through adoption and KLG.

¹ Technical Bulletin #14, pg. 2.

	Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)/DCF Joint Court Improvement Program (CIP) Efforts. DCF will collaborate with the AOC to develop the AOC/DCF Joint CIP Project aimed at reducing time to permanency. This continuous quality improvement project is required for the CIP grant.
Lead Measures:	Percent of children who remain stable in their placement. Number of children in placement 36+ months.
Goal 2. Numerator: Increase the number of appropriate resource homes in New Jersey.	
Objective 1. Increase the number of resource homes that meet the needs of the children entering out-of-home placement in New Jersey.	
Strategies:	Resource home data dashboard. DCF will develop and make available a dashboard for real-time resource home and recruitment data. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping to support foster home recruitment. DCF will develop a GIS model to more strategically recruit foster families through analysis of spatial data. The mapping will inform decisions throughout the Department's recruitment and licensing processes, e.g., targeted recruitment.
Lead Measures:	Number of newly licensed homes. Number of resource applications approved. Percent of resource homes with at least one child.
Objective 2. Promote safety and well-being in out-of-home settings through strengthened resource care.	
Strategies:	Kin licensing regulations. DCF will continue efforts to increase kinship placements across the state by reducing the burden to license kin and decreasing the amount of time it takes to license kin. DCF will implement the recently published revised kin licensing regulations via policy and practice updates. Enhanced assessment and action planning of resource parent needs. DCF will enhance engagement with existing resource parents, e.g., maintain Resource Parent Council, undertake periodic resource parent surveys, host bi-annual resource parent town halls, and facilitate a resource parent symposium. DCF will use learnings from these processes to improve support for resource family caregivers.
Lead Measures:	Percent of children placed with kin caregivers within 30 days of removal. Number of children in out-of-home placements who are victims of child abuse and/or neglect. Percent of kinship homes licensed within 90 days.