

# Child and Family Services Reviews Aggregate Report

### Round 3: FYs 2015–2016



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Administration for Children & Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

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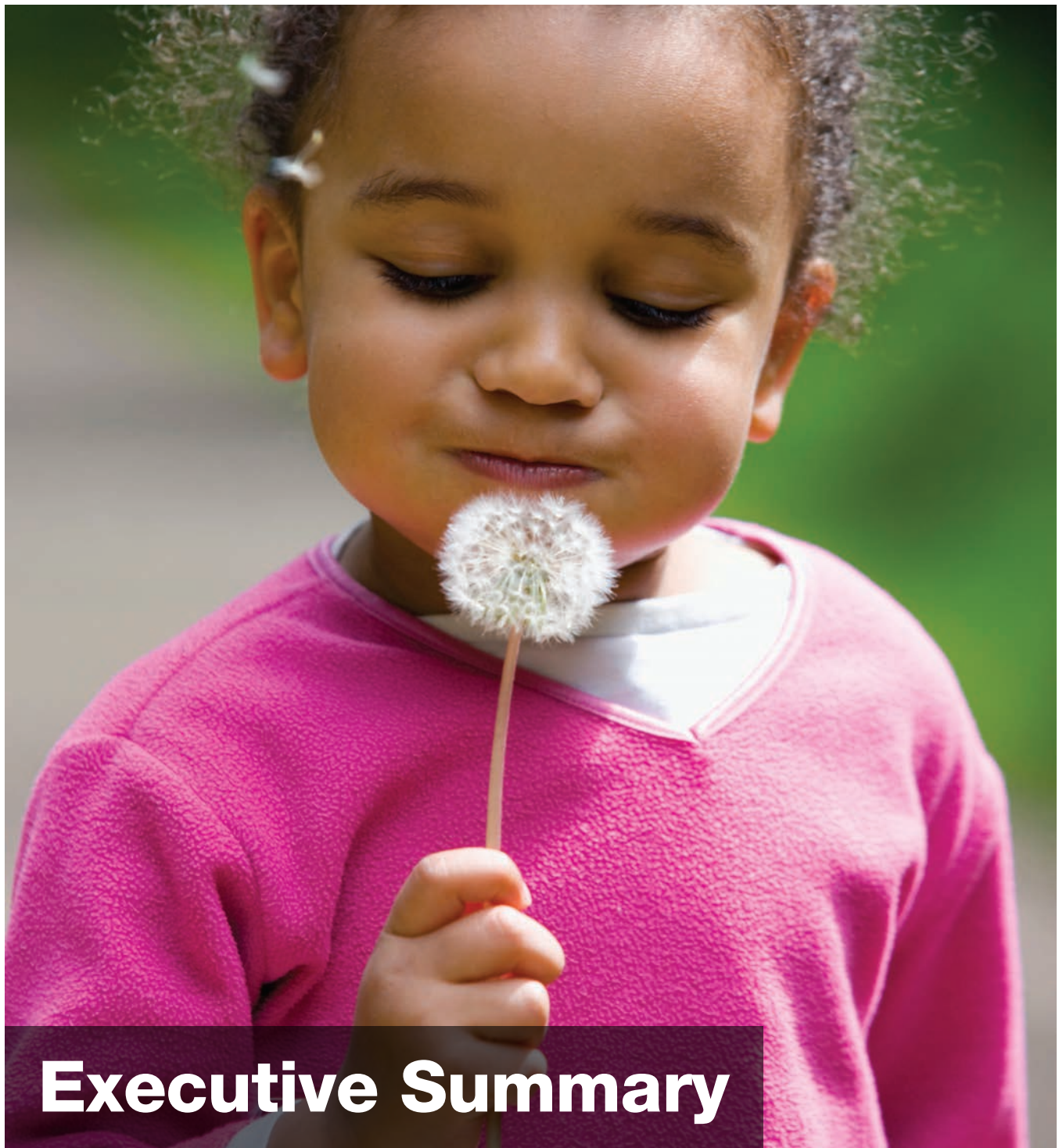
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## Executive Summary

This Federal Child and Family Services Reviews Aggregate Report presents key findings from the analyses of state performance data for the states reviewed during the first 2 years of Round 3 of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). This report describes results of a preliminary examination of the strengths and areas needing improvement identified across those states.



## Overview of the Child and Family Services Reviews

The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA), which were updated in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to review state child and family services programs to monitor conformity with the requirements in titles IV-B (Child and Family Services) and IV-E (Federal Payments for Foster Care and Adoption Assistance) of the SSA. The Children's Bureau, of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within HHS, implements the CFSRs.

The purpose of the CFSRs is to help states improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families who receive services through the child welfare system. The CFSRs are an important tool that enables the Children's Bureau to (1) ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements; (2) determine what is actually happening to children and families receiving child welfare services; and (3) assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes related to safety, permanency, and well-being.<sup>1</sup>

The CFSRs are used to assess state performance on 7 outcomes and 7 systemic factors, comprising the results of an assessment of 36 individual items. The CFSR

incorporates two key phases: the statewide assessment and an onsite review of child and family service outcomes and program systems. The CFSR is followed by the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) phase, in which states not in substantial conformity with federal standards respond to findings of the CFSR. Together, this report refers to these activities as the CFSR process.

The first round of CFSRs occurred during FYs 2001–2004. After each state's first CFSR, states entered into a PIP phase. The second round of CFSRs occurred during FYs 2007–2010. After each state's second CFSR, states again developed and, upon Children's Bureau approval, implemented PIPs. The third round of CFSRs began in FY 2015.

## Round 3 CFSR Process

In FY 2015, in partnership with states, the Children's Bureau began to conduct the third round of CFSRs in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.<sup>2</sup> During FY 2015, CFSRs were completed for 8 states; during FY 2016, CFSRs were completed for 16 states.

In Round 3 each state's CFSR consists of a statewide assessment of the state's child welfare capacities and performance, and a review of a minimum of 65 cases, including foster care and in-home cases. As part of the case reviews, the review teams examine all case documentation and conduct interviews with case participants. In addition, the review teams conduct interviews and focus groups with a variety of stakeholders. These may include, for example, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys. Substantial conformity is determined by state performance on 7 outcomes (composed of 18 items) and 7 systemic factors (composed of 18 items).

To support ongoing program improvement, the third round of the CFSRs assesses state performance on the same safety,

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. (n.d.). *Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Fact sheet*. Retrieved from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr\\_general\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_general_factsheet.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Puerto Rico CFSR was postponed due to the extraordinary demands on Puerto Rico as a result of the hurricane.

**State-level analyses** were conducted to examine performance across states on the various outcomes and items and to compare performance between foster care and in-home services cases.

**Case-level analyses** were conducted to describe the children in the cases examined during these CFSR case reviews. The data from the case review component of the CFSRs conducted during FYs 2015 and 2016 encompass 2,073 cases reviewed. Of those, 1,295 are cases in which children were in foster care at some time during the period under review (PUR). There also are 778 in-home services cases—cases that were opened for child welfare services at some time during the PUR but for which the child remained in the home and no children in the family were in foster care during the PUR. Of the 778 in-home cases, 61 were designated as differential/alternative response, a classification that was included for the first time in Round 3.<sup>3</sup>



permanency, and well-being outcomes and systemic factors as those examined in Rounds 1 and 2. However, because the Children's Bureau made several changes to the CFSR process and items relevant for performance—based on lessons learned during the second round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field—a state's performance in the third round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the second round.

In addition, in Round 3, states with established case review processes that meet Children's Bureau criteria are permitted, upon approval, to participate in a State Conducted Case Review process rather than a Traditional Review. All case reviews, regardless of the type of review, are conducted using the federal case review instrument, the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions (OSRI).



The primary purposes of this report, *Child and Family Services Reviews Aggregate Report, Findings for Round 3 Fiscal Years 2015–2016*, are to (1) provide a broader picture of child welfare performance with respect to achieving the outcomes and systemic factors assessed through the CFSR so far in Round 3 and (2) enhance understanding of the practices and procedures that are associated with achieving these outcomes.

For this report, analyses were conducted at both the state and case levels.

## Round 3 Findings

The Children's Bureau has established very high standards of performance for the CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that, because child welfare agencies work with our nation's most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable. These standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being. Although states may not meet these high standards with regard to every measure, all states are engaged in program improvement to address areas of need and to strengthen program elements.

<sup>3</sup> Given the small number of differential/alternative response cases in the sample, these cases will be combined with other in-home cases for reporting purposes.



The findings reported herein should be considered tentative until analyses based on complete **Round 3 data** are released at the completion of the Round 3 reviews.

This report presents the preliminary findings for 24 states reviewed during FYs 2015 and 2016, the first 2 years of Round 3 of the CFSRs. The performance of these states does not constitute representative performance across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

The findings reported herein should be considered tentative until analyses based on complete Round 3 data are released at the completion of the Round 3 reviews.

The 24 states reviewed in FYs 2015 and 2016 met few of the performance standards established by the Children's Bureau for the 7 outcomes. Two states achieved substantial conformity for **Safety Outcome 1**: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. Five states achieved substantial conformity for **Well-Being Outcome 2**: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

More states were successful in achieving substantial conformity on the 7 systemic factors, with more than half of states achieving substantial conformity for the systemic factors measuring **Statewide Information System** (15 states) and **Agency Responsiveness to the Community** (22 states). Performance on other systemic factors was not as consistently strong across states, including **Quality Assurance System** (10 states), **Staff and Provider Training** (6 states), **Service Array and Resource Development** (2 states), and **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention** (6 states). No states were in compliance with the **Case Review System** systemic factor.

### Additional Areas of Exploration

Finally, we conducted preliminary analyses for two topics of particular interest:

### Identification of Indian Children, Tribal Notification, and Placement Preference

In nearly three-quarters (73.4%;  $n = 102$ ) of applicable cases ( $n = 139$ ), federally recognized Tribes received timely notification of their right to intervene in court proceedings. The child was placed in accordance with Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) requirements in over two-thirds (67.5%;  $n = 81$ ) of applicable cases ( $n = 120$ ). Nearly 30% of the cases involved children who were not identified on the OSRI Face Sheet as having American Indian or Alaska Native heritage, but who reviewers discovered could possibly have such heritage through document review and interviews with family members.

### Oversight of Prescription Medications for Mental/Behavioral Health

About 70% of the children (70.1%;  $n = 269$ ) in foster care cases identified as having applicable mental/behavioral health needs ( $n = 384$ ) received appropriate oversight of psychotropic medications. The most common reasons cited by reviewers for inadequate oversight included lack of regular and appropriate communication with the prescribing physician, caregivers, and/or child.

### Implications of Findings

As noted above, this report summarizes findings from reviews conducted during FYs 2015 and 2016, the first 2 years of Round 3 of the CFSRs. The report presents findings from only 24 out of 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, DC, and thus should not be considered representative of all states. As more states complete their Round 3 CFSRs and additional analyses become possible, the data will yield a deeper understanding of the status of child welfare practice at the national level.





In this report, we present key findings from analyses of state performance during the first 2 years of Round 3 of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs), conducted during fiscal years (FYs) 2015 and 2016. This report provides a preliminary picture of the strengths and areas needing improvement determined by the CFSRs for the first 24 states reviewed in Round 3 and explores the practices associated with achieving outcomes and systemic factors.

This report explains the CFSR, describes findings for the outcomes and systemic factors, explores relationships between findings for different aspects of performance, and describes the demographic characteristics of the cases reviewed. The report also explores findings to date about several topical areas, including services to children covered by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and psychotropic medication.

## History and Purpose of the Child and Family Services Reviews

The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA), which were updated in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (§ 203 of P.L. 105–89), authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to review state child and family services programs to monitor conformity with the requirements in titles IV-B (Child and Family Services) and IV-E (Federal Payments for Foster Care and Adoption Assistance) of the SSA.<sup>4</sup> The Children’s Bureau, of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within HHS, implements the CFSRs with the goal of helping states improve their child welfare services to best achieve the outcomes of safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. The CFSRs are used to assess state performance on 7 outcomes and 7 systemic factors resulting from an assessment of 36 individual items.

<sup>4</sup> The regulations specifically pertaining to the CFSRs are detailed in title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Public Welfare, Parts 1355 (CFSRs and Program Improvement Plans), 1356 (title IV-E requirements), and 1357 (title IV-B requirements) and lay out the elements, procedures, and timetables for the CFSRs. Amendments to the SSA were updated in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which referenced the Annual Reports on State Performance (see § 203(a) of Pub. L. No. 105–89).

The CFSR reflects the basic purposes of publicly supported child and family services: to assure the safety of all children; to assure permanent, nurturing homes for children; and to enhance the well-being of children and their families. The CFSR focuses on results and determining whether child welfare practices, procedures, and requirements are achieving desired outcomes for children and families who receive services through the child welfare system. In addition, the CFSR assists states in improving their systems and enhancing their capacity to serve children and families.

**The CFSRs are an important tool that enables the Children's Bureau to:**

- **Ensure** conformity with federal child welfare requirements;
- **Determine** what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and
- **Assist** states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

The CFSRs were designed to promote collaboration between the Children's Bureau and state agencies and among child and family service providers within the state. The CFSRs are conducted in partnership to ensure that broader perspectives are integrated into program development, review, and improvement. The first round of CFSRs occurred during FYs 2001–2004. The second round of the CFSRs occurred during FYs 2007–2010 and assessed each state's level of performance on the same outcomes and systemic factors, using consistent, comprehensive case review methodology. Each state, after both CFSRs, entered into a Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

For Round 2, several changes were made in the CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field. The key changes

to the CFSR case review process that affected the ability to compare performance between Rounds 1 and 2 included:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas
- A higher threshold for substantial conformity with outcomes; i.e., 95% of cases, increased from 90%, rated substantially achieved

Changes were also made in the CFSR process for Round 3. The changes are described later in this report. The third round of CFSRs runs from 2015 to 2018.

## Methodology and Scope of This Report

This report presents the state-level and case-level findings for the 24 states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016. The section on state-level findings on outcomes and items is followed by a description of the case-level data with regard to case characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and case type. This is followed by an item-by-item breakdown of the findings at both the state and case levels. Where available, qualitative information from case rating narratives and/or stakeholder interviews is included to illuminate performance, common themes, and challenges.

Due to the number of states reviewed so far in Round 3, it is too early to draw any broad conclusions about the effectiveness of child welfare practice as a whole. Additionally, even when all Round 3 reviews are finished, the size and structure of the state case samples may limit the confidence with which we can generalize from CFSR performance to state or national performance.

These findings should be considered in the following context:

**Findings presented here represent performance at a single point in time.** Findings encompass CFSR data from a single review for each of the states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016. The period under review (PUR) for each state's CFSR includes a finite period of time concluding with the onsite review. Thus,

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau (n.d.), Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews fact sheet. Retrieved from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr\\_general\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_general_factsheet.pdf)

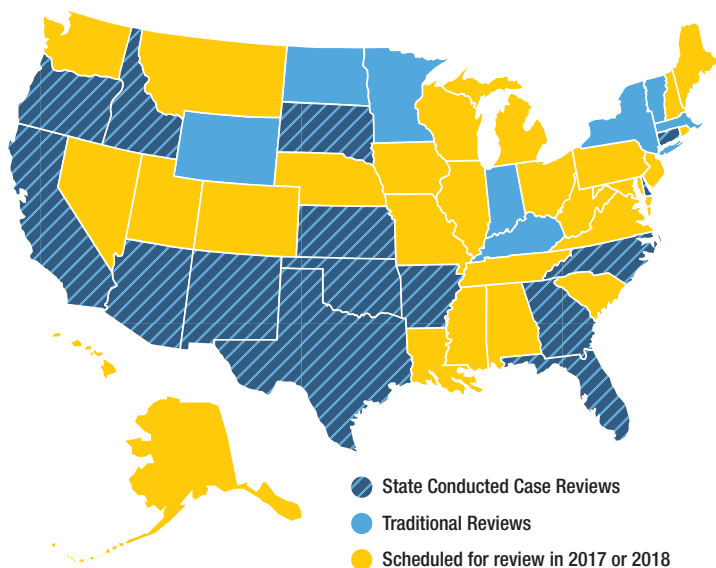
these findings are based on a “snapshot” of performance in a sample of cases during a single period of time for each state.

**State sample size may be affected by the type of review.**

Traditional Reviews are conducted using a sample of 65 cases originating from 3 sites in the state, including 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home services cases. State Conducted Case Reviews may review a larger number of cases (e.g., the Delaware review examined 86 cases) across at least 3 sites, as long as the cases reflect a proportional mix of foster care and in-home services cases (with a minimum of 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home services cases).

**Implementation of case reviews is structured differently based on the type of review.** In Traditional Reviews, a team of federal, state, and, if needed, agile staff conduct case reviews over a 1-week period. State staff conduct State Conducted Case Reviews over a time period of up to 6 months. Federal staff members provide support to ensure quality assurance in both types of reviews.

**Figure 1:** States Reviewed in FYs 2015 & 2016  
Participating in Traditional and State Conducted Case  
Reviews



**Findings typically represent performance on a small sample of cases from each state.** Although State Conducted Case Reviews allow flexibility to examine larger samples if state capacity is sufficient, for both Traditional

and State Conducted Case Reviews the review sample size is typically small in comparison to the overall number of child welfare cases in the state. Consequently, due to the small number of cases reviewed, findings should not be viewed as fully representative of statewide performance. Similarly, due to variations among state systems, findings resulting from an analysis of aggregate data should not be considered fully representative of the national characteristics of the child welfare system in the United States.

**Differences in performance among items, outcomes, and systemic factors cannot be compared.** Both within and across states, there are differences in performance across the items, outcomes, and systemic factors assessed. Some items are rated based on the absence of negative outcomes, whereas others are rated based on specific actions taken by state agencies. As a result, performance on the different items cannot be compared.

## CFSR Process and Findings for Round 3

This section describes the CFSR process for Round 3, including the development of the statewide assessment and the onsite review, and how these components determine state performance on the CFSR and subsequent requirements regarding the preparation of a PIP.

## The Review Process

The CFSR process is a results-oriented, comprehensive monitoring review system designed to assist states in improving outcomes for children and families who come into contact with the nation's public child welfare systems. HHS developed and implemented this process in response to the mandate of the Social Security Amendments of 1994 that required reviews of the states' child and family services.

The CFSR occurs in two distinct phases: (1) the statewide assessment and (2) the onsite review. The CFSR is followed by the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) phase, in which states not in substantial conformity with federal standards respond to findings of the CFSR. Together, this report refers to these activities as the CFSR process, the components of which are discussed below, followed by a detailed discussion of findings from the preliminary analysis of the 24 states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016.



**Information Used to Determine Substantial Conformity in the CFSR Process:**

- Statewide Assessment
- Onsite Case Review
- Stakeholder Interviews

**Statewide Assessment**

In the first phase of the CFSR, each state engages in a comprehensive self-assessment of its child welfare system and submits the findings in a statewide assessment report to HHS for review. Selected state staff and other representatives (jointly agreed upon by the Children’s Bureau and the state) evaluate the state’s performance.

To develop the statewide assessment, the state uses its own qualitative and administrative data, as well as state data profiles provided by the Children’s Bureau. The data profiles provided to states include information about the population of children served by the state’s child welfare system. In contrast to previous rounds, in Round 3, the data profiles are provided for contextual purposes only; data indicators are not used to determine substantial conformity with any outcomes.

**Onsite Review**

The onsite review, the second phase of the CFSR, focuses on local agency practices with regard to a sample of individual cases and interviews with selected stakeholders in order to evaluate state agency performance. As noted above, this may take the form of a Traditional Review, similar to Rounds 1 and 2, or a State Conducted Case Review.

During the onsite review, data are collected through systematic review of a sample of case records and interviews of key case participants, including parents, children (when appropriate), foster parents, and child welfare agency caseworkers. Case review data are collected using the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions (OSRI).

In Round 3, there are two options for the case reviews:

(1) a Traditional Review, which parallels the case review process from previous rounds in which a joint federal and state team (augmented by agile staff if necessary) reviews a selection of cases during a 1-week period at 3 different sites (including the largest metro area) in the state or (2) a State Conducted Case Review, which draws on case reviews conducted by state staff over a 6-month period using the OSRI. States must receive prior approval from the Children’s Bureau to use the State Conducted Case Review process for their CFSR.

All CFSRs also involve stakeholder interviews. Based on their review of the statewide assessment, federal staff may conduct interviews and focus groups with selected stakeholders to gather additional information about a certain systemic factor when it is not possible to determine whether a state is in substantial conformity with that factor based on the information presented in the statewide assessment. Stakeholder interviews are required to evaluate the child welfare agency’s service array (i.e., Systemic Factor 5). These interviews may include, but are not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys. Stakeholder interview data are collected via the Stakeholder Interview Guide.

The onsite review culminates in an assessment of the 7 outcomes (encompassing 18 items) and 7 systemic factors (encompassing 18 items), focused on performance on outcomes during the PUR and performance on systemic factors during the past 2 years.

**Figure 2** below shows the CFSR outcomes, systemic factors, and individual items that comprise each outcome and systemic factor.

### Program Improvement Plans

States determined not to be in substantial conformity with one or more of the 7 outcomes and 7 systemic factors are required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address all areas of nonconformity. The Children’s Bureau provides technical assistance to states to develop, implement, and monitor progress of the PIPs.

States are not required to attain the 95% standard established for the CFSR outcomes by the end of their PIP implementation period. The Children’s Bureau recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often take time to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic.

Instead, the Children’s Bureau works with states to establish a specified target amount of measurable improvement and to determine specific activities for their PIPs. Therefore, a state

**Figure 2:** CFSR Outcomes, Systemic Factors, and Items

| Outcomes and Items  |
|---|
| <b>Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. (S1)</b>                   |
| Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment                                    |
| <b>Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. (S2)</b>      |
| Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care       |
| Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management   |
| <b>Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. (P1)</b>                |
| Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement  |
| Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child   |
| Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement              |
| <b>Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children. (P2)</b> |
| Item 7: Placement With Siblings   |
| Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care   |
| Item 9: Preserving Connections  |
| Item 10: Relative Placement   |
| Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents   |
| <b>Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs. (WB1)</b>           |
| Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents   |
| Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning  |
| Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child   |
| Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents   |

## Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs. (WB2)

Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child

## Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. (WB3)

Item 17: Physical Health of the Child

Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

## Systemic Factors and Items

### Statewide Information System

Item 19: Statewide Information System

### Case Review System

Item 20: Written Case Plan

Item 21: Periodic Reviews

Item 22: Permanency Hearings

Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights

Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers

### Quality Assurance System

Item 25: Quality Assurance System

### Staff and Provider Training

Item 26: Initial Staff Training

Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training

Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

### Service Array and Resource Development

Item 29: Array of Services

Item 30: Individualizing Services

### Agency Responsiveness to the Community

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

Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs

### Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Item 33: Standards Applied Equally

Item 34: Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

Item 35: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

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



can meet the requirements of its PIP and its improvement goal and still not perform at the 95% level established for CFSR outcomes. For each outcome and systemic factor that is not in substantial conformity, each state (working in conjunction with the Children’s Bureau) specifies:

(1) Goals and the strategies or interventions that will be used to make improvement for each goal, (2) key activities the state will implement to achieve the goals and implement the strategies and interventions, and (3) the state’s measurement approach and plan for items requiring a quantifiable measure of improvement.

### Determining Substantial Conformity

To determine substantial conformity in an outcome area for Round 3 of the CFSRs, 95% of applicable cases reviewed for that outcome must have been rated as having Substantially Achieved the outcome. The level of outcome achievement (Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, or Not Achieved) is dependent upon the item ratings within each outcome.

For a state to receive an overall rating of Strength for an individual item, 90% of the applicable cases must have been rated as a Strength on the item.<sup>6</sup> If this threshold is not reached, the state receives an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for that item. To rate an individual item, case reviewers assess the case and record their findings in the OSRI. Reviewer findings are documented in answers to supporting questions within each item that determine the rating. Conditions for applicability vary from item to item. For example, the individual items within the permanency outcomes are applicable only to foster care cases.



**Figure 3** details how a state may achieve substantial conformity with the different outcomes. In contrast to previous rounds, determinations of substantial conformity for all outcomes are based on performance in the case reviews. Specifically, for a state to be considered in substantial conformity, at least 95% of the applicable cases reviewed for each outcome must be rated as Substantially Achieved.

**Figure 3:** Determining Substantial Conformity With Outcomes

| Outcome      | Data Source                      | Criteria  |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---|
| All outcomes | Data collected from case reviews | At least 95% of the applicable cases reviewed for those outcomes must be rated as Substantially Achieved. |

<sup>6</sup> However, Item 1 and Item 16 must have 95% of applicable cases rated as a Strength because Item 1 is the only item for **Safety Outcome 1**, and Item 16 is the only item for **Well-Being Outcome 2**.

## Performance

The Children’s Bureau has established very high standards of performance for the CFSRs. The standards are based on the belief that, because child welfare agencies work with our nation’s most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable. These standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being.

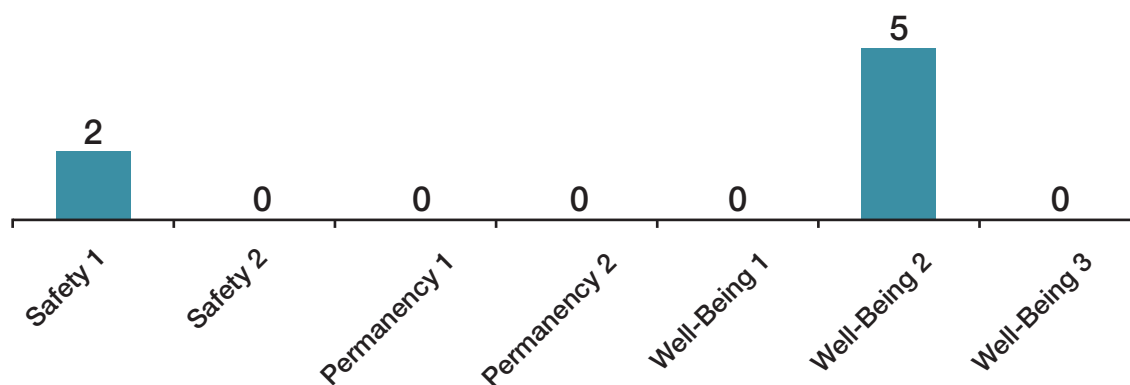
Given these high standards and the commitment to continuous improvement, few of the 24 states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016 achieved substantial conformity with the 7 outcomes. Across all 7 outcomes, states achieved substantial conformity with 2 outcomes: Two states were found to have substantially achieved **Safety Outcome 1** (*Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect*), and 5 states were found to have substantially achieved **Well-Being Outcome 2** (*Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs*). (See **Figure 4** below).

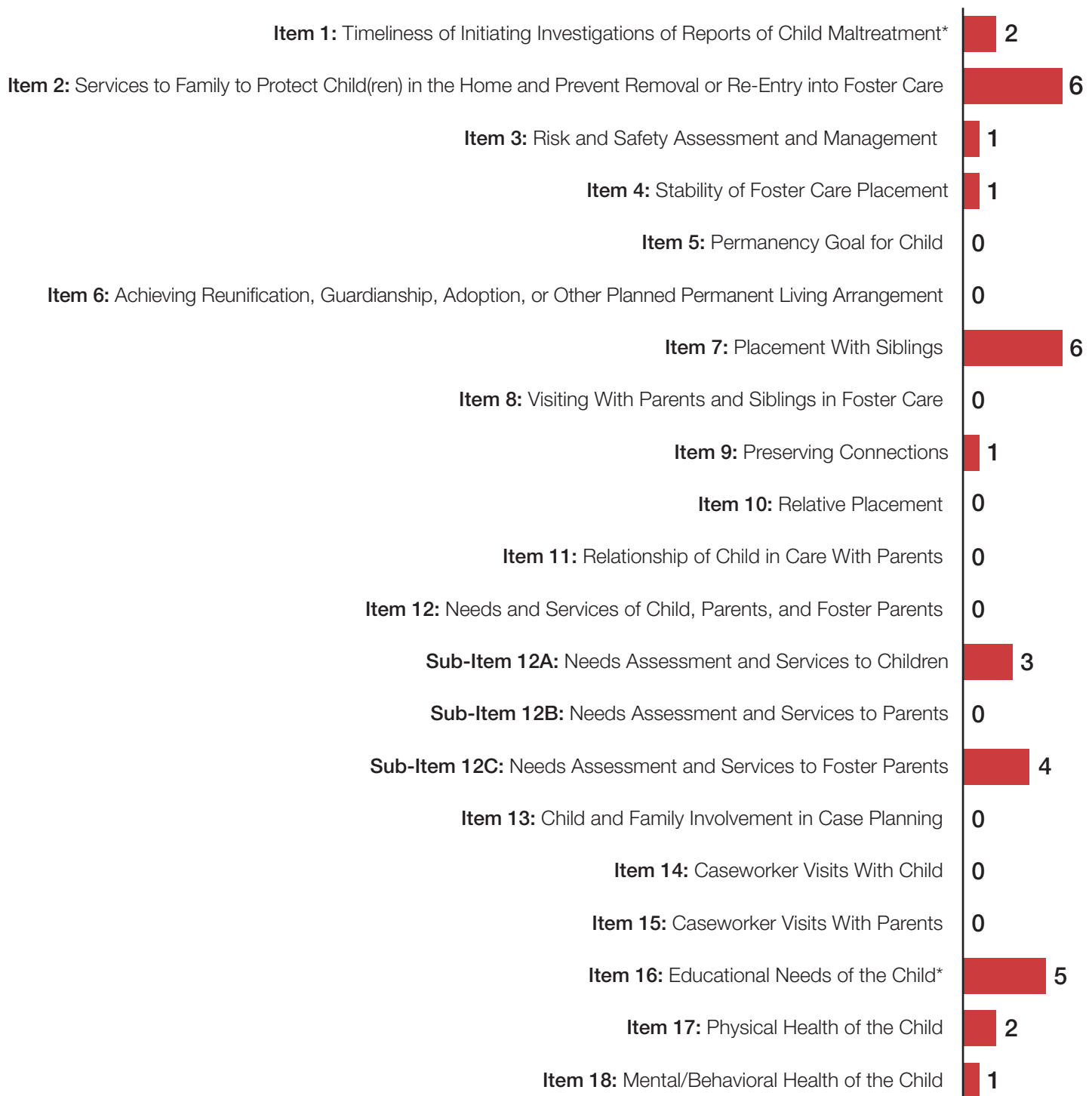
**Figure 5** presents the findings on the number of states receiving an overall rating of Strength on each of the 18 items comprising these 7 outcomes.

**Figure 6** illustrates that, across these 24 states, there was a wide range in the percentage of applicable cases rated as Substantially Achieved for each outcome.



**Figure 4:** States Achieving Substantial Conformity With Outcomes (n=24)

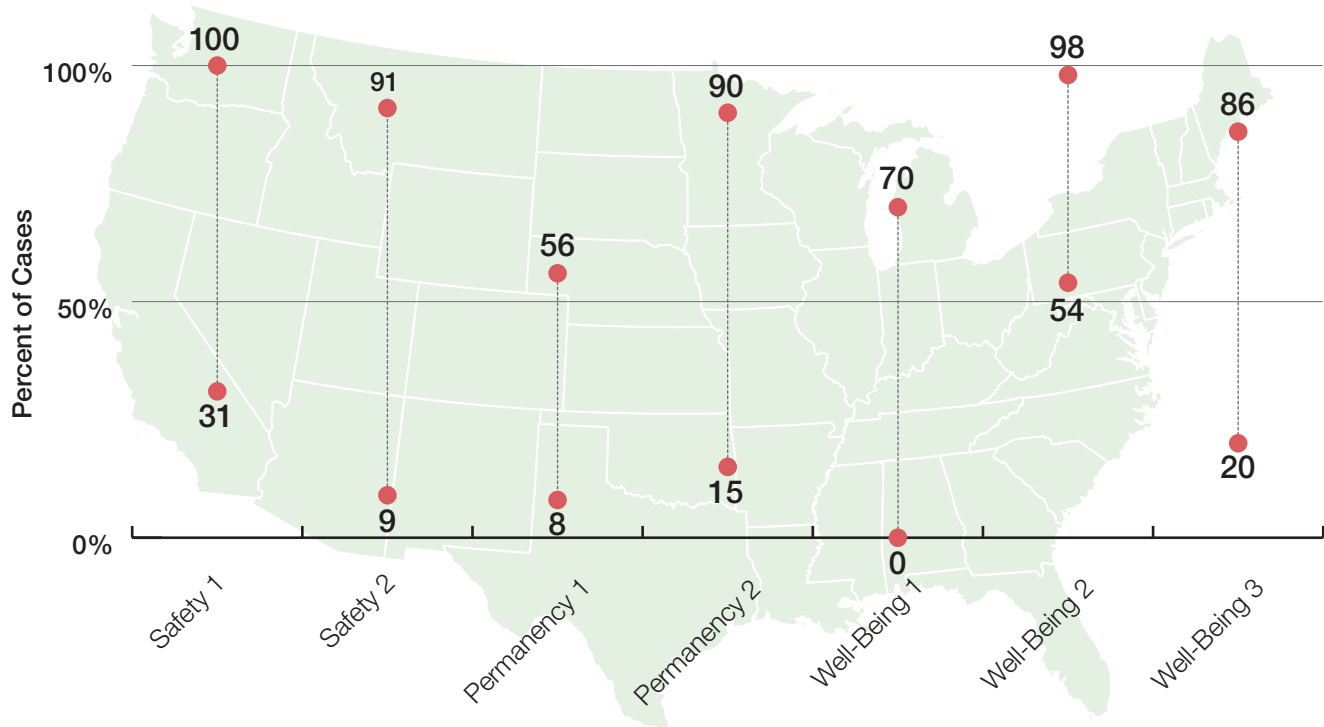


**Figure 5:** Number of States Achieving Strength Ratings on Items Comprising Outcomes (n=24)

\* For most items, 90% of cases must be rated as a Strength for the state to receive a Strength rating on the item.  
 However, for Items 1 and 16, 95% of cases must be rated as a Strength for the state to receive a Strength rating.



**Figure 6:** Performance of States Reviewed in FYs 2015 & 2016 (n = 24 states): Range of Percent of Applicable Cases Substantially Achieving Outcomes



### Case-Level Characteristics

This section presents an analysis of case-level data collected during FYs 2015–2016 in Round 3. These reviews encompassed 2,073 cases reviewed in 24 states. In this section, we present an analysis of the characteristics of these cases, including the reason for case opening, race/ethnicity, age, gender, and permanency goal.

### Data Considerations

Before addressing the overall analysis, it is important to review several salient characteristics of the CFSR data.

**Case type**—This report presents demographic data only for foster care cases because, while foster care cases focus on services to a single target child, in-home cases address all children in the family (i.e., different children

with different demographic characteristics). Thus, findings based on child race, gender, and age are reflective of foster care cases only.

**State characteristics**—This report analyzes the data for the 24 states that conducted CFSRs in FYs 2015–2016. Thus, findings may be influenced by the child welfare practices common in a particular state or the unique demographic characteristics of the state’s child welfare population.

**Key case participants**—In addition to case records, findings are based on interviews with key case participants. Of these, caseworkers, supervisors, and foster parents were more likely to be interviewed while mothers and fathers were less likely to be interviewed. Most notably, fewer than half of the fathers were interviewed about their child’s case.



Finally, it is important to remember that the goal of the CFSRs is to evaluate child welfare practice in the states rather than to conduct scholarly research into the dynamics of the child welfare system. While there is much to be learned from a deeper analysis of the review findings at the case level, it is important to recognize that the reviews are systematic and thorough but are not designed to address specific scholarly hypotheses.

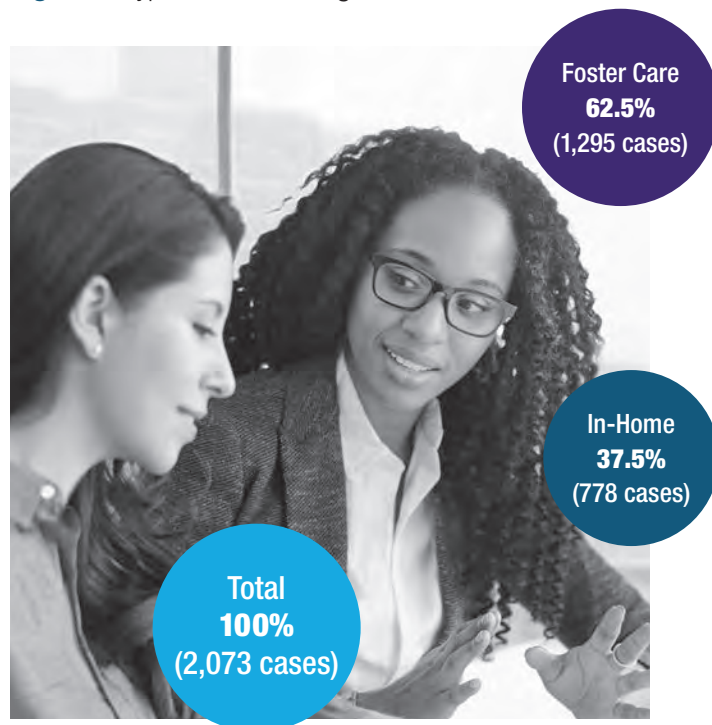
## Characteristics of Cases Reviewed in the First Two Years of Round 3 CFSRs

### Type of Case

Of the 2,073 cases reviewed during the Round 3 onsite reviews, 62.5% (n = 1,295) were cases in which children were in foster care at some time during the PUR, and 37.5% (n = 778) were in-home cases (see **Figure 7**). Because the number of in-home cases designated as differential/alternative response was small and limited to a few states, these cases were combined with other in-home services cases for reporting purposes.

**Figure 8** displays the percentage of foster care and in-home cases that were rated as substantially achieved for the 5

**Figure 7:** Type of Case During PUR



outcomes relevant to both case types and the percentage of cases rated as a Strength on 13 items relevant to both case types. The following chi-square results should be considered recognizing that the foster care and in-home groups are different in more ways than just case type. The foster care and in-home cases comprise different sample groups as there are unequal numbers of foster care and in-home cases in the sample and there were differences in sampling methodology. However, the Chi-square analysis can provide useful, preliminary information that might suggest interesting patterns in the data that warrant further investigation using data where the foster care and in-home cases are drawn from a single sample framework.

An analysis comparing performance across case types for these 24 states indicates that, for the 4 outcomes and 9 items where statistically significant differences were found, foster care cases were more likely than in-home services cases to have substantially achieved outcomes or received Strength ratings on items. This was evident for **Safety Outcome 1, Safety Outcome 2, Well-Being Outcome 1, and Well-Being Outcome 2**.

**Figure 8:** Percentage (Number) of Cases Rated Strength/Substantially Achieved by Case Type

| Outcomes and Items   | Foster Care | In-Home <sup>†</sup> | Total       | Statistical Significance for Chi-Square |
|--|-------------|----------------------|-------------|---|
| <b>Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect</b>                          | 76% (403)   | 67% (324)            | 71% (727)   | <b>p&lt;.01</b>                         |
| <b>Item 1:</b> Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment                              | 76% (403)   | 67% (324)            | 71% (727)   | <b>p&lt;.01</b>                         |
| <b>Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</b>            | 68% (875)   | 46% (361)            | 60% (1,236) | <b>p&lt;.001</b>                        |
| <b>Item 2:</b> Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Foster Care | 76% (313)   | 64% (266)            | 70% (579)   | <b>p&lt;.001</b>                        |
| <b>Item 3:</b> Risk and Safety Assessment and Management   | 68% (884)   | 49% (378)            | 61% (1,262) | <b>p&lt;.001</b>                        |
| <b>Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.</b>                  | 41% (529)   | 35% (272)            | 39% (801)   | <b>p&lt;.01</b>                         |
| <b>Item 12:</b> Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents   | 44% (563)   | 40% (304)            | 42% (867)   | ns                                      |
| <b>Sub-Item 12A:</b> Needs Assessment and Services to Children   | 78% (1,009) | 65% (496)            | 73% (1,505) | <b>p&lt;.001</b>                        |
| <b>Sub-Item 12B:</b> Needs Assessment and Services to Parents  | 44% (438)   | 43% (330)            | 43% (768)   | ns                                      |
| <b>Sub-Item 12C:</b> Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents   | 74% (872)   | NA                   | 74% (872)   | NA                                      |
| <b>Item 13:</b> Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning  | 56% (684)   | 46% (352)            | 52% (1,036) | <b>p&lt;.001</b>                        |
| <b>Item 14:</b> Caseworker Visits With Child   | 77% (993)   | 54% (422)            | 68% (1,415) | <b>p&lt;.001</b>                        |
| <b>Item 15:</b> Caseworker Visits With Parents   | 42% (415)   | 43% (336)            | 43% (751)   | ns                                      |
| <b>Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.</b>                  | 86% (955)   | 67% (171)            | 82% (1,126) | <b>p&lt;.001</b>                        |
| <b>Item 16:</b> Educational Needs of the Child   | 86% (955)   | 67% (171)            | 82% (1,126) | <b>p&lt;.001</b>                        |
| <b>Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</b>      | 61% (783)   | 56% (318)            | 59% (1,101) | ns                                      |
| <b>Item 17:</b> Physical Health of the Child   | 73% (949)   | 64% (175)            | 72% (1,124) | <b>p&lt;.01</b>                         |
| <b>Item 18:</b> Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child  | 65% (590)   | 56% (256)            | 62% (846)   | <b>p&lt;.01</b>                         |

ns: Not Significant; NA: Not Applicable

<sup>†</sup> Combines in-home cases with in-home differential/alternative response cases



## Race/Ethnicity of Child in Foster Care

**Figure 9** provides information pertaining to the race/ethnicity of children in the foster care cases reviewed.<sup>7</sup> This information is available for foster care cases only; there is no specified target child for in-home services cases because they are rated on the basis of all children in the family.

As **Figure 9** shows, the two largest racial/ethnic groups in the CFSR sample are White, non-Hispanic (40.2%) and Black/African American, non-Hispanic (24.8%).

**Figure 9:** Race/Ethnicity of Target Children in Foster Care

| Race and Ethnicity                        | Percent (Number)    |
|---|---------------------|
| White                                     | 40.2% (521)         |
| Black/African American                    | 24.8% (321)         |
| Hispanic (of any race)                    | 21.0% (272)         |
| American Indian or Alaska Native          | 6.2% (80)           |
| Two or more races                         | 6.1% (79)           |
| Unknown/Unable to determine               | 0.8% (10)           |
| Asian                                     | 0.6% (8)            |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0.3% (4)            |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>100% (1,295)</b> |

**NOTE:** All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

## Age of Child in Foster Care

We considered two possibilities for examining performance in relation to the age of children in foster care: (1) age at the date of entry into the most recent episode of foster care (see **Figure 10**) and (2) age at the start of the PUR (see **Figure 11**).

Age at the date of entry into foster care is useful because it is likely to be closer to the actual age of the child when the reasons for opening the case were identified, or the permanency goal was chosen. However, given the different

**Figure 10:** Age of Target Children in Foster Care (Age at Entry Into Foster Care)

| Age at Entry Into Foster Care | Percent (Number)    |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| < 6 years old                 | 49.5% (641)         |
| 6–12 years old                | 32.0% (414)         |
| 13–15 years old               | 13.5% (175)         |
| > 16 years old                | 5.0% (65)           |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>100% (1,295)</b> |

**Figure 11:** Age of Target Children in Foster Care (Age at Start of PUR)

| Age at Start of PUR | Percent (Number)    |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| < 6 years old       | 42.9% (555)         |
| 6–12 years old      | 31.2% (404)         |
| 13–15 years old     | 15.1% (196)         |
| > 16 years old      | 10.8% (140)         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>100% (1,295)</b> |

lengths of time in which children are in foster care, older children may have entered foster care years before the PUR. Thus, while age at the date of entry may be useful for items related to removal or initial permanency goals, age at the start of the PUR may be a more appropriate metric to relate to items and outcomes focused on case practice during the review period. Future analyses will apply the age variable that is most appropriate to the specific measure.



<sup>7</sup> During the review, the target child is classified separately by race and ethnicity. For example, a child may be considered Black and Hispanic. For consistency with AFCARS reporting, in this report, all children designated as having Hispanic ethnicity are counted in a Hispanic category as part of a single race/ethnicity variable. Children of other racial groups may be assumed to be non-Hispanic.

Both measures of age indicate that the large majority of target children in foster care in the samples to date were **12** or younger while much smaller percentages were **13** or older.

Although the two measures of age are somewhat different, in general they reveal similar patterns: both measures indicate that the large majority of foster care target children in the samples to date were 12 or younger while much smaller percentages were 13 or older.

### Gender of Child in Foster Care

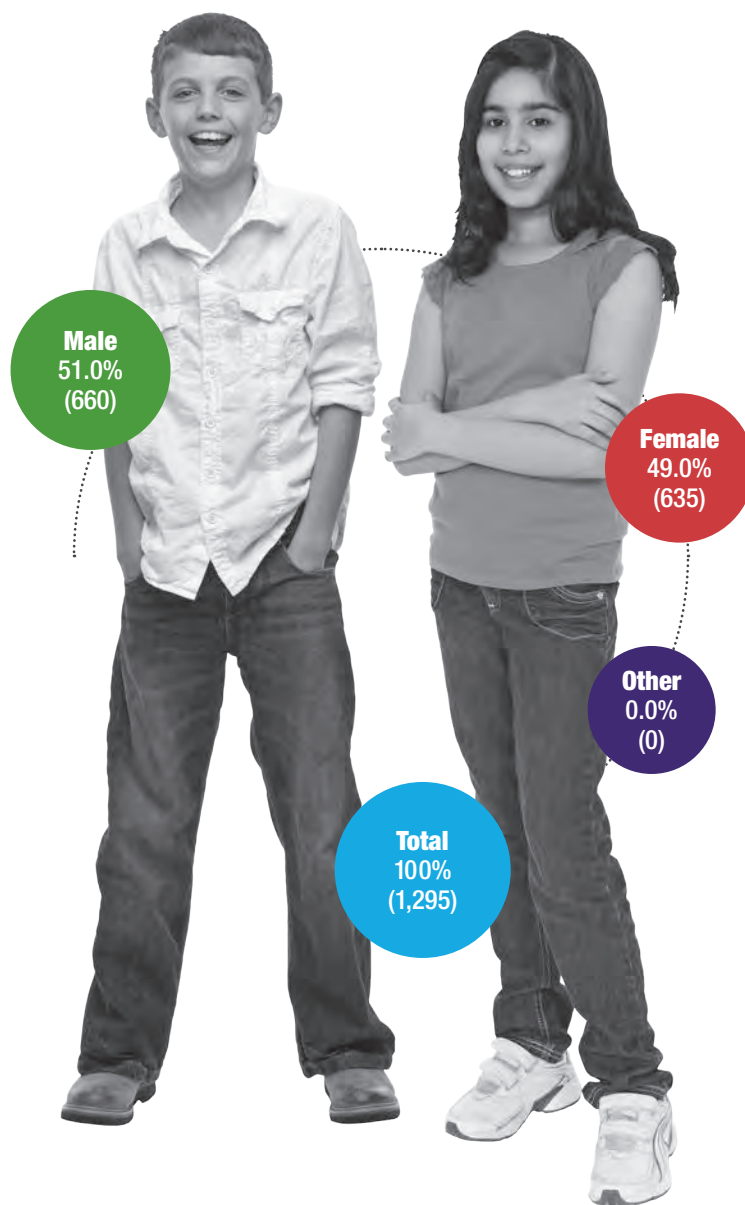
The foster care cases were evenly divided between females and males. As shown in **Figure 12**, males accounted for slightly more than half the cases (51.0%; n = 660). For the first time, in Round 3, reviewers had the option of choosing a gender of “Other”; however, there were no cases with a child’s gender designated as “Other” among the states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016.

### Reason for Case Opening

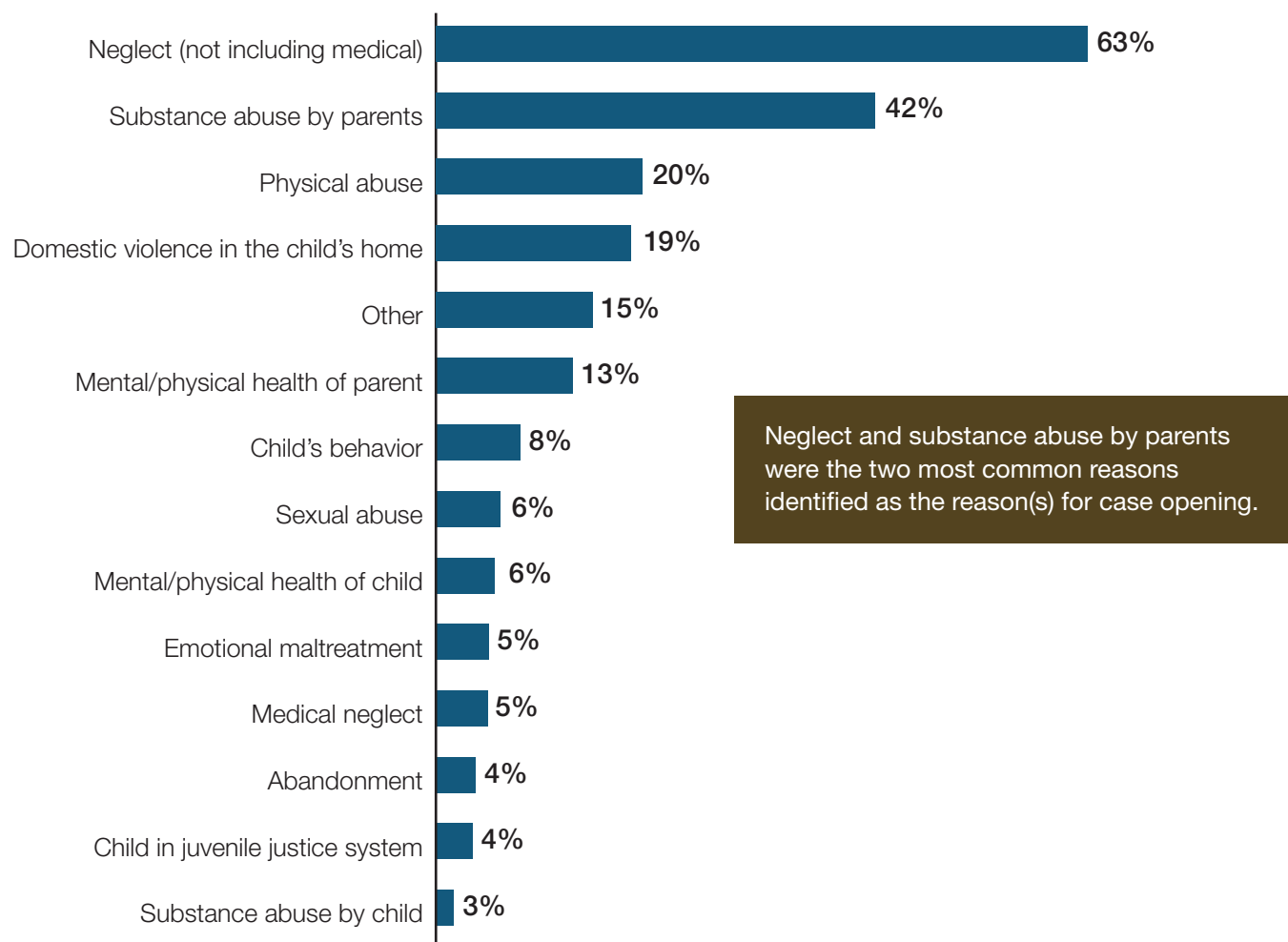
For each case, reviewers were asked to note all reasons relevant to the family’s involvement with the child welfare agency.<sup>8</sup> **Figure 13** shows the percentage of total cases that were opened for each reason. Cases may have been opened for more than one reason, and, therefore, the percentages sum to more than 100%. The most frequently cited reasons for case opening included neglect (62.9% of cases), substance abuse by parents (42.4%), and physical abuse (19.9%).

When analyzed by case type, foster care cases were more likely to be opened for reasons of neglect, substance abuse by parents, mental/physical health of the parent, sexual abuse, and abandonment based on statistical significance of chi-square (see **Figure 14**). There were no statistically significant differences for the other reasons based on case type.

**Figure 12:** Gender of Target Child in Foster Care



<sup>8</sup> This differs from Round 2, in which reviewers were asked to identify the primary reason for opening the case. Round 3 reviewers were not asked to make this determination due to the difficulty in identifying a primary reason through case records. As a result, we are unable to combine reasons into broader categories as was done in the Round 2 aggregate report.

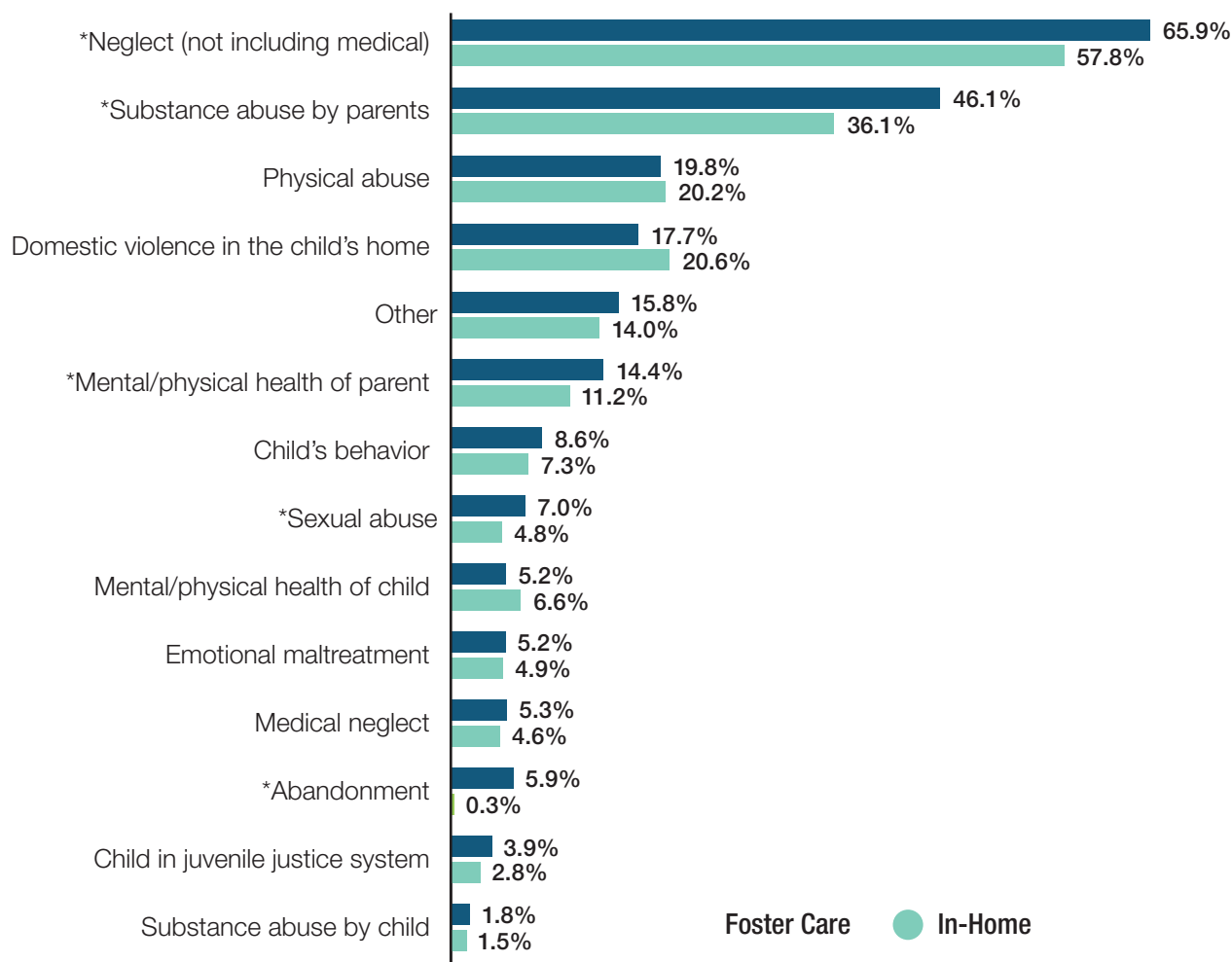
**Figure 13:** Reason(s) for Case Opening, All Case Types (n=2,073)

**NOTE:** Cases may have more than one reason for opening and so may be counted in more than one category.

### Detailed Findings for Outcomes and Items

The following section reviews specific findings for each outcome and item, as well as subquestions used to determine conformity for each item. For ease of reference, the location of each subquestion (e.g., 1B) in the OSRI is also noted.



**Figure 14:** Percentage of Cases With Specific Reason for Case Opening by Case Type

\* Chi-square is statistically significant.

NOTE: Cases may have more than one reason for opening and so may be counted in more than one category.

## Safety

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

Two states achieved substantial conformity with **Safety Outcome 1**. At the case level, across all 24 states reviewed, 71% of the applicable 1,019 cases substantially achieved this outcome (see **Figure 15**).

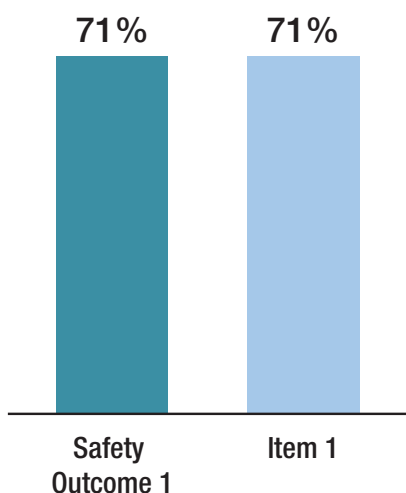
There is one item associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, this item must be rated as a Strength.

### Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

Cases were applicable for this item if an accepted child maltreatment report on any child in the family was received during the PUR. For applicable cases, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the PUR had been initiated within the time frames specified in the state child welfare agency policy requirements.



**Figure 15:** Performance on Safety Outcome 1 and Supporting Item



In **84%** of the 1,019 applicable cases, reports of child maltreatment were initiated timely and in **68%** of the applicable cases, face-to-face contact was made in accordance with state time frames.

**Item 1 Rating:** 71% of all 1,019 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 1.

**1A:** Reviewers indicated that all reports for over four-fifths of cases (84%) were initiated in accordance with state time frames while 14% of the 1,019 applicable cases had 1 report where the investigation or assessment was not initiated in accordance with state time frames. Two percent had 2 such reports.

**1B:** For over two-thirds (68%) of applicable cases, face-to-face contact was made in accordance with state time frames. Twenty-seven percent of the 1,019 applicable cases had 1 report where face-to-face contact was not made in accordance with state time frames. Additionally, 4% of applicable cases had 2 such reports and 1% had 3 or more reports.

**1C:** The reasons for delay in the cases above were due to circumstances beyond the control of the agency in 12% of the 331 applicable cases.

#### Practice Concerns

The following practice concerns were identified with regard to **timely initiation of investigations**:

- Efforts to locate family diminish after initial unsuccessful attempts
- Not all alleged child victims in the family are seen timely

#### Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

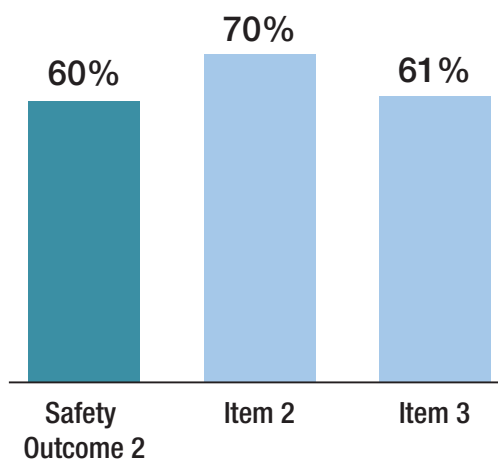
No state achieved substantial conformity with **Safety Outcome 2**. At the case level, across the 24 states, 60% of the applicable 2,073 cases substantially achieved this outcome (see **Figure 16**).

There are 2 items associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, both items must be rated as a Strength, or Item 3 may be rated as a Strength while Item 2 is rated Not Applicable.

#### Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

Foster care and in-home cases were applicable for this item unless (1) the children entered foster care prior to the PUR,

**Figure 16:** Performance on Safety Outcome 2 and Supporting Items



In **22%** of the **828** applicable cases, safety-related services were **not provided** and children were left in homes with unaddressed safety concerns.

remained in care throughout the PUR, and there were no other children in the home, or (2) there were no concerns regarding the safety of any of the children in the home during the PUR. For applicable cases, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to families that would prevent placement of children in foster care and at the same time ensure their safety.

**Item 2 Rating:** 70% of the 828 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 2.

**2A:** In 50% of the 828 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to provide appropriate services to the family to prevent children's entry or re-entry into foster care.

**2B:** In cases where a child was removed from home without providing services during the PUR, this was necessary to ensure the child's safety in 76% of the 270 applicable cases.

### Practice Concerns

The following practice concerns were identified with regard to **preventing removal from the home or preventing re-entry into foster care**:

- Appropriate services not provided to address the existing safety concern due to inadequate assessment of safety or lack of available services
- Delays in providing safety services
- Failure to ensure that parents engaged in, or successfully accessed, services

### Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management

All cases were applicable for this item. In assessing Item 3, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to children involved in each case.

### Practice Concerns

The following practice concerns were identified with regard to **risk and safety assessment**:

- Not including all relevant household members in assessments
- Not reassessing based on changes in circumstances
- Not reassessing children remaining in the home
- Lack of frequent and quality visits with children

**Item 3 Rating:** 61% of all cases (2,073) were rated as a Strength for Item 3.

**3A:** For cases opened during the PUR, the agency conducted an initial assessment that accurately assessed all risk and safety concerns for 73.0% of the 740 applicable cases.

**3B:** The agency conducted ongoing assessments that accurately assessed all risk and safety concerns for 67.4% of the 2,046 applicable cases.

**3C:** If safety concerns were present during the PUR, the agency developed an appropriate safety plan with the family and continually monitored and updated it as needed for 54.1% of the 773 applicable cases.

**3D:** During the PUR, there were safety concerns pertaining to children remaining in the home that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency in 31.6% of the 874 applicable cases.

**3E:** During the PUR, there was a safety concern related to the target child in foster care during visitation with parents/ caretakers or other family members in 7.9% of the 1,039 applicable cases.

**3F:** For foster care cases during the PUR, there was a concern for the target child's safety related to the foster home that was not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency in 6.4% of the 1,295 applicable cases.

**Practice Concerns**

The following practice concerns were identified with regard to **safety plans**:

- Plans did not address all the safety concerns identified
- Plans relied on parental promises
- Plans were not monitored
- Plans were not updated when circumstances changed
- Individuals involved were not clear on expectations or able/willing to implement the plan
- Alternative caregivers were not utilized appropriately

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

No state achieved substantial conformity with **Permanency Outcome 1**. At the case level, across these 24 states, 29% of the 1,295 applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome (see **Figure 17**).

There are 3 items associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, Items 4 and 6 must be rated as a Strength, and Item 5 must be rated as a Strength or Not Applicable.

**Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement**

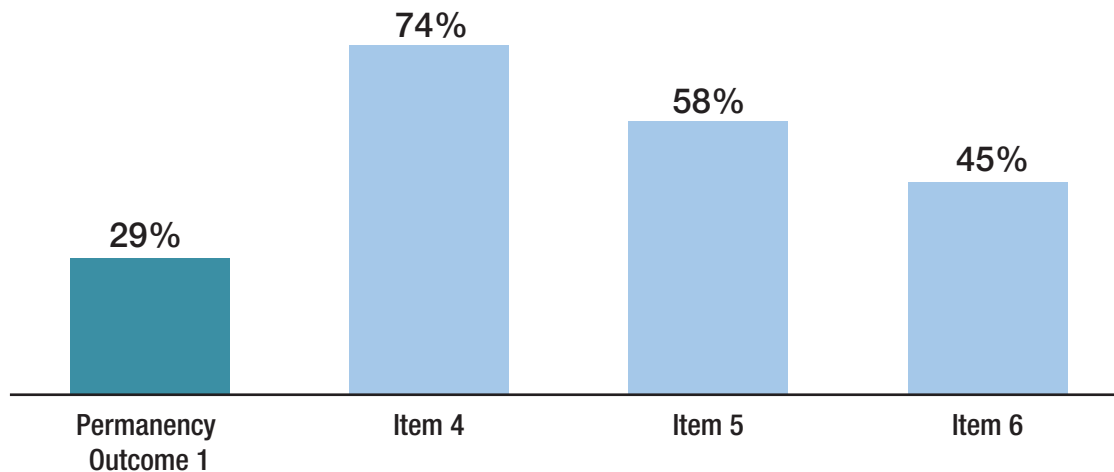
All foster care cases were applicable for Item 4. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the PUR and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or to meet the child's service needs. Reviewers also assessed the stability of the child's most recent placement setting.

**Item 4 Rating:** 74% of all 1,295 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 4.

**4A:** The target children in the 1,295 applicable foster care cases experienced between 0<sup>9</sup> and 12 placement settings during the PUR, with 59.8% having 1 placement setting. The average number of placement settings was 1.7.

**40%** of the target children had more than 1 placement setting during the PUR.

**Figure 17:** Performance on Permanency Outcome 1 and Supporting Items



<sup>9</sup> Two cases were identified as having 0 placements because the child was in an institution, such as a hospital, which is not considered a foster care placement.

**Practice Concerns**

The following practice concerns were identified with regard to **placement stability**:

- Child's behavior affected stability
- Lack of appropriate foster homes
- Lack of agency responsiveness in addressing concerns
- Allegations of child maltreatment in the foster home

**4B:** Placement changes for 44.8% of the 518 applicable cases were planned by the agency in an effort to achieve the child's case goals or to meet the child's needs.

**4C:** The child's current placement setting (or most recent if no longer in care) was stable in 90.1% of the 1,295 applicable cases.

**Age and Placement Stability**

Children 5 years and under were more likely to have placement stability than children of the age of 6 and older. Teenagers of the age 13 and older were less likely to have placement stability than children under 13 (see **Figure 18**).

**Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child**

All foster care cases were applicable for Item 5 unless the child had not been in foster care long enough (at least 60 days) for the state to have developed a case plan and

Children **5** years and under were more likely to have placement stability while children **13** years of age and older were less likely to have placement stability.

established a permanency goal. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established a permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and whether the most current permanency goal was appropriate. Reviewers also were to determine whether the agency had sought termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with ASFA requirements.

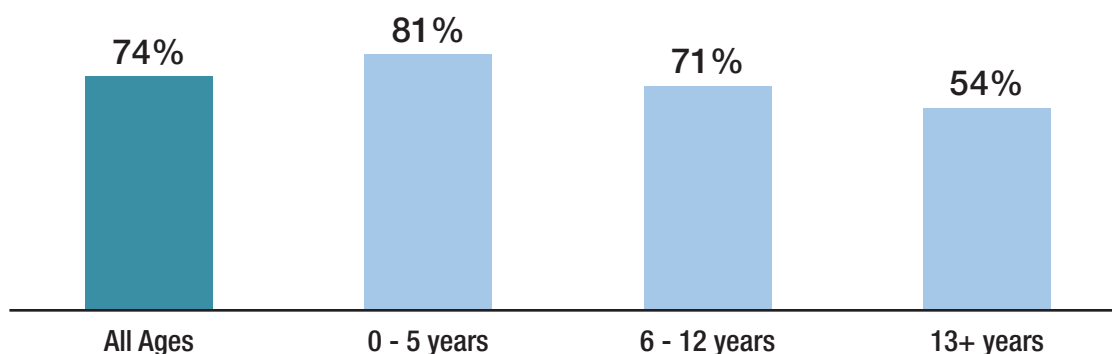
**Item 5 Rating:** 58% of the 1,281 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 5.

**5A3:** The child's permanency goal was specified in the case file for 99.0% of the 1,281 applicable cases.

**5B:** The permanency goals that were in effect during the PUR were established in a timely manner in 76.6% of the 1,281 applicable cases.

**5C:** The permanency goals in effect during the PUR were appropriate to the child's needs for permanency and to the circumstances of the case in 79.2% of the 1,281 applicable cases.

**Figure 18:** Percentage of Cases With a Strength for Item 4 (Placement Stability) by Age at Start of the PUR





**Practice Concerns**

The following practice concerns were identified regarding the **establishment of timely and appropriate permanency goals**:

- Reunification plans kept in place too long
- Inappropriate goals based on child's age, case circumstances, and need for permanency:
  - Guardianship rather than adoption for very young children
  - OPPLA goal for children under the age of 16
- Selecting OPPLA without adequate consideration of other goals

**5D:** The child had been in foster care at least 15 of the most recent 22 months in 56.0% of the 1,281 applicable cases.

**5E:** When the child had not been in foster care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months, 10 (1.8%) of the 563 applicable cases met other ASFA criteria for TPR.

**5F:** The agency filed or joined a TPR petition before the PUR or in a timely manner during the PUR in 50.5% of the 711 applicable cases.

**5G:** An exception to the ASFA requirement to file or join a TPR petition when a child has been in foster care for 15 of

For children in care **15** of the most recent **22** months, agencies did not file for termination of parental rights and no exception to the requirement existed in almost **27%** of the applicable cases.

**79%** of permanency goals in effect during the PUR were determined to be appropriate for children in foster care.

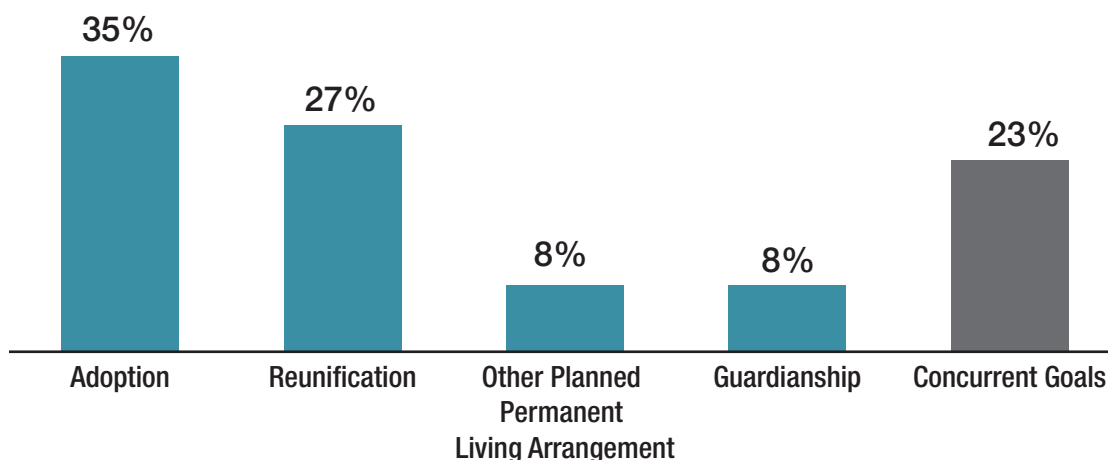
the most recent 22 months or meets other ASFA criteria for TPR existed in 44.9% of the 352 applicable cases.

Overall, of the 711 cases, the agency did not file or join a TPR petition before the PUR or in a timely manner during the PUR or document an exception to the requirement to file TPR in 27.3% of the cases (n=194).

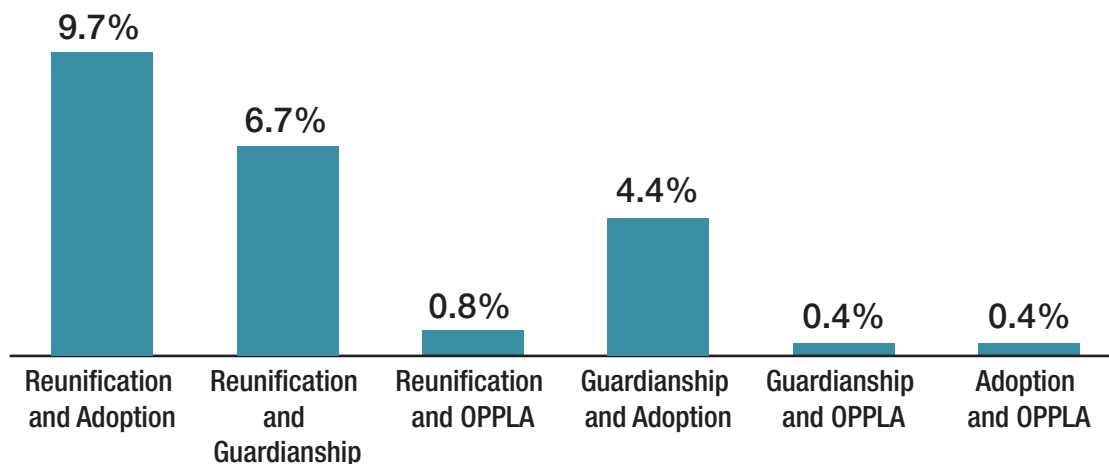
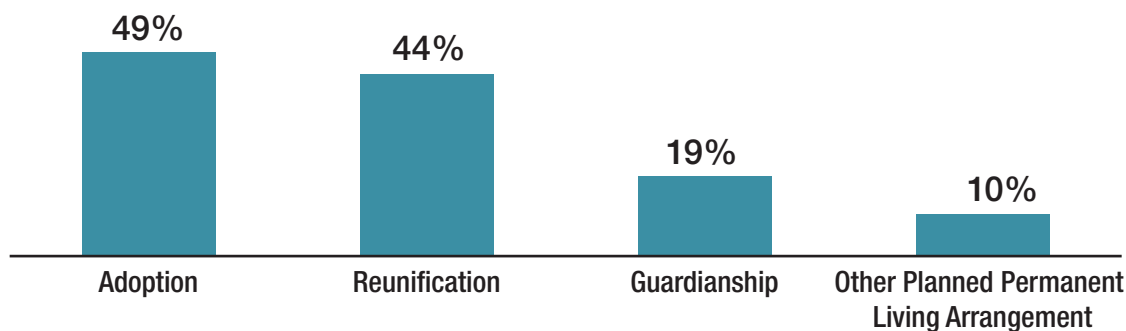
### Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

All 1,295 foster care cases were applicable for Item 6. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made or was making concerted efforts during the PUR to achieve the goals.

**Figure 19:** Percentage of Cases With Either Single or Concurrent Permanency Goals



**NOTE:** Total does not add up to 100 because of rounding.

**Figure 20:** Foster Care Cases with Concurrent Goals (23% of Total Cases)**Figure 21:** Percentage of Cases With Each Permanency Goal

**NOTE:** 23% of all foster care cases had concurrent goals, so individual cases may be counted under multiple permanency goals; therefore, total exceeds 100%.

**Item 6 Rating:** 45% of the 1,295 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 6.

### Permanency Goals

Approximately three-quarters of the cases (77.5%,  $n = 1,004$ ) had a single permanency goal, while 22.5% ( $n = 291$ ) of cases had concurrent permanency goals.

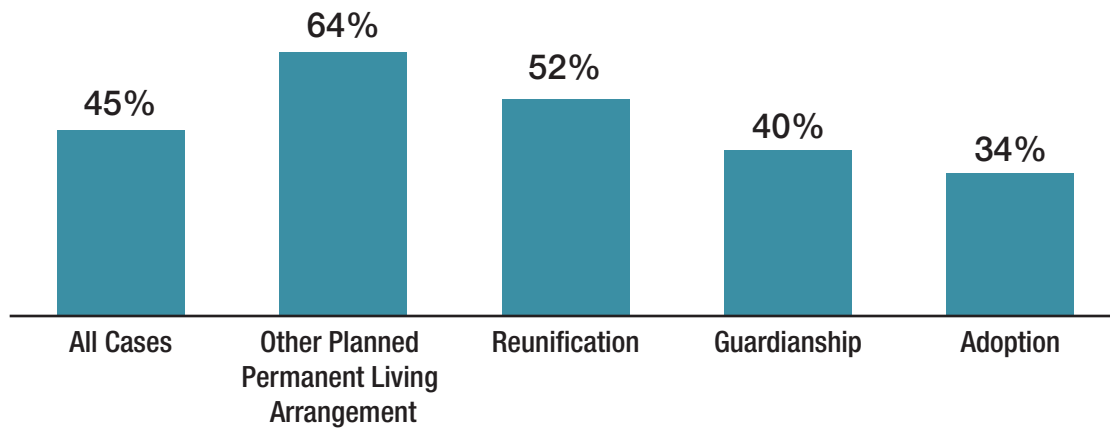
**Figure 19** shows an unduplicated percent of cases, by goal, having either a single permanency goal or having concurrent goals. Colored bars represent cases with a single permanency goal. The gray bar represents cases with concurrent goals. As shown in **Figure 19**, adoption

was the most common permanency goal across all cases, as 34.7% of all cases had adoption as a sole permanency goal. The second most common goal across all cases was reunification, as 26.6 % of all cases had reunification as a single permanency goal. Next most common, 22.5% of all cases had two concurrent permanency goals.

The breakdown of cases with concurrent permanency goals is shown in **Figure 20**. Of these cases, the combination of reunification and adoption is the largest group (9.7%) followed by reunification and guardianship (6.7%).

**Figure 21** shows the percent of cases with each permanency goal, regardless of whether the case had single

**Figure 22:** Percentage of Cases With Each Permanency Goal That Received a Strength on Item 6 (Cases May Have More Than One Goal)



or concurrent permanency goals. This chart counts cases with concurrent goals under every permanency goal that applies, so it totals to over 100%. As **Figure 21** shows, even when accounting for all permanency goals, whether single or concurrent, the highest percentage of all foster care cases had adoption (49.2%,  $n = 637$ ) as a permanency goal compared to reunification (43.9%,  $n = 569$ ).

While the group of cases with Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement as a permanency goal was quite small ( $n = 130$ ), these cases were more likely on the whole (63.8%) to be rated a Strength for Item 6 (concerted efforts to achieve a permanency goal). Cases with adoption as a permanency goal ( $n = 637$ ) were least likely (34.5%) to be rated a Strength for Item 6 (see **Figure 22**).

**6B:** The agency and court made concerted efforts during the PUR to achieve permanency in a timely manner in 42.7% of the 1,185 applicable cases.<sup>10</sup>

**6C:** For a child with a goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement during the PUR, the agency and the court made concerted efforts to place the child in a living arrangement that can be considered permanent until discharge from foster care in 65.0% of the 117 applicable cases.

### Practice Concerns

The following practice concerns were identified regarding **permanency goal achievement**:

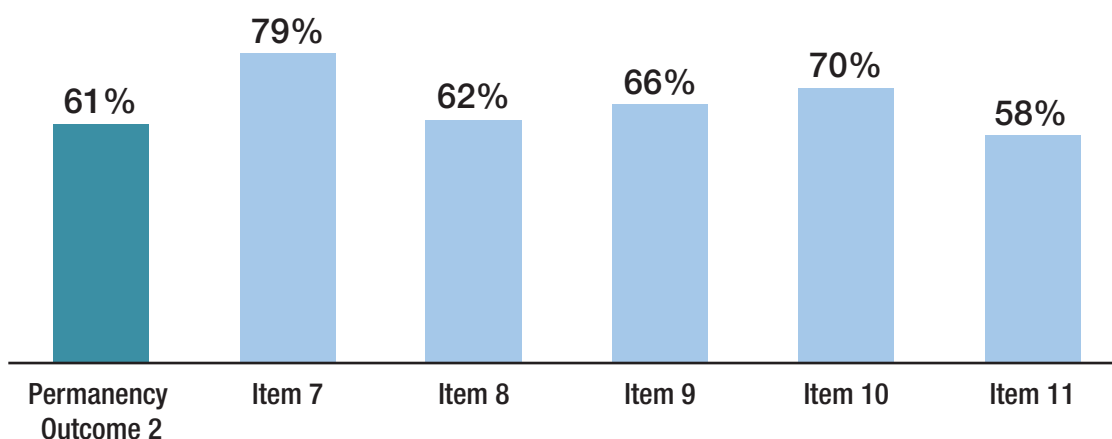
- Delays in completing the paperwork and filing TPRs
- Children and parents not receiving needed services
- Caseworker/attorney high caseloads and turnover
- Delays in scheduling hearings
- Multiple court continuances
- Contested TPRs and lengthy appeals processes

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

No state achieved substantial conformity with **Permanency Outcome 2**. At the case level, across these states, 61% of the 1,293<sup>11</sup> applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome (see **Figure 23**).

<sup>10</sup> Subquestion 6B is not applicable for cases with a single permanency goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.

<sup>11</sup> Two cases were rated Not Applicable for Permanency Outcome 2 because the children were abandoned at hospitals and their family and community connections were unknown.

**Figure 23:** Performance on Permanency Outcome 2 and Supporting Items**Practice Concerns**

The following practice concerns were identified regarding **sibling placement**:

- Lack of placement resources able to accept sibling groups
- Failure to reconsider placement of siblings together after initial separation

In **54%** of the applicable cases, the target children were not placed with their siblings.

**Item 7: Placement With Siblings**

Cases were applicable for this item if the child had a sibling in foster care at any time during the PUR. In assessing Item 7, reviewers were to determine whether, during the PUR, concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in foster care were placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings.

**Item 7 Rating:** 79% of all 795 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 7.

**7A:** During the entire PUR, the child was placed with all siblings who were also in foster care in 45.7% of the 795 applicable cases.

**7B:** If the child was not placed with all siblings also in foster care, there was a valid reason for the child's separation from the siblings in 60.6% of the 432 applicable cases.



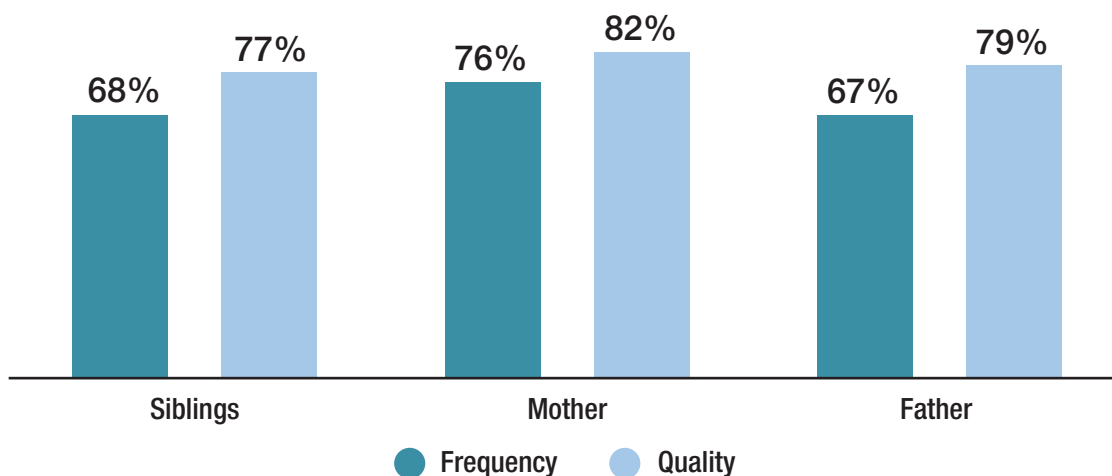
There are 5 items associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, no more than 1 of the applicable items for this outcome may be rated as an Area Needing Improvement, and 1 item must be rated as a Strength.

**Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care**

Regarding siblings, cases were applicable for this item if the child had siblings in foster care in a different placement setting. Regarding parents, cases were applicable for this item unless the parental rights of both parents remained terminated during the



**Figure 24:** Percentage of Cases With Concerted Efforts to Ensure Frequent and Quality Visitation Between Target Child, Parents, and Siblings in Foster Care



entire PUR, the parents were deceased during the entire PUR, it was documented in the case file that contact with the parents was not in the best interests of the child, the whereabouts of both parents were unknown despite concerted agency efforts to locate them, or the only parent(s) being assessed in this item did not meet the definition of Mother/Father for this item.

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her parents and siblings in other foster care placement settings was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationship with these family members.

**Item 8 Rating:** 62% of all 968 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 8.

Concerted efforts were made during the PUR to ensure that:

- **8A:** Visitation between the child and his or her mother was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the relationship in 76.0% of the 805 applicable cases.
- **8B:** Visitation between the child and his or her father was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the relationship in 67.5% of the 471 applicable cases.
- **8C:** The quality of the visitation between the child and the mother was sufficient to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship in 82.2% of the 741 applicable cases.

- **8D:** The quality of visitation between the child and the father was sufficient to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship in 79.0% of the 405 applicable cases.
- **8E:** Visitation (or other forms of contact) between the child and his or her sibling(s) was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship in 67.6% of the 417 applicable cases.
- **8F:** The quality of visitation between the child and his or her sibling(s) was sufficient to promote the continuity of their relationships in 77.2% of the 386 applicable cases.

On the whole, the percent of cases in compliance on frequency and quality of visits with the target child in foster care was somewhat similar for siblings, mothers, and fathers (see **Figure 24**).

### Item 9: Preserving Connections

Almost all foster care cases were applicable for this item unless, for example, the child was an abandoned infant and the agency had no information about the child's extended family or connections. In assessing Item 9, reviewers were to determine whether, during the PUR, concerted efforts were made to maintain the child's connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care.



**Item 9 Rating:** 66% of all 1,279 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 9.

**9A:** Concerted efforts were made during the PUR to maintain the child's important connections in 68.0% of the 1,280 applicable cases.

**9B:** Sufficient inquiry was conducted with the parent, child, custodian, or other interested party to determine whether the child was a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Tribe in 89.8% of the 1,280 applicable cases.<sup>12</sup>

**9C:** If the child *may* have been a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Tribe during the PUR, the Tribe was provided timely notification of its right to intervene in state court proceedings seeking an involuntary foster care placement or TPR in 73.4% of the 139 applicable cases.<sup>13</sup>

**9D:** If the child was a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Tribe, concerted efforts were made to place the child in foster care in accordance with ICWA placement preferences in 67.5% of the 120 applicable cases.

## Item 10: Relative Placement

Cases were applicable for this item unless relative placement was not an option during the PUR because the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement or due to specific situations, such as abandonment, in which the identity of the parents and all relatives remained unknown despite concerted efforts to find them. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether, during the PUR, the agency made concerted efforts to place the child with relatives when appropriate.

**Item 10 Rating:** 70% of all 1,231 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 10.

**10A1:** The child's current or most recent placement during the PUR was with a relative in 34.4% of the 1,231 applicable cases.

**10A2:** Among this group of children whose current or most recent placement was with relatives, 93.1% of the 423 applicable cases were in a stable and appropriate placement.

**10B:** The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate maternal relatives as potential placements for the child in 57.2% of the 678 applicable cases.

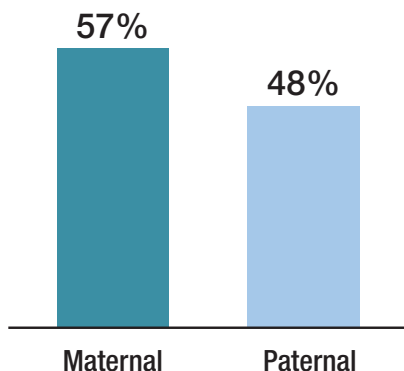
**10C:** The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate paternal relatives as potential placements for the child in 47.8% of the 619 applicable cases.

The target child's current or most recent placement was with a relative in approximately **34%** of the applicable cases and over **90%** of those placements were stable and assessed to meet the needs of the child.

<sup>12</sup> Subquestion 9B is not used to determine the item rating but is included here for informational purposes.

<sup>13</sup> The number of cases considered applicable for 9C (n = 139) and 9D (n = 120) is higher than the reported number of American Indian children (n = 80) in foster care for several reasons. Some children whose cases were considered in 9C did not have American Indian heritage listed in their case records but reviewers determined through interviews that these children may have had Tribal connections. Others were either categorized as More Than One Race or were of Hispanic ethnicity and thus categorized as Hispanic.

**Figure 25:** Percentage of Cases Where Agency Made Concerted Efforts to Identify, Locate, Inform, and Evaluate Maternal and Paternal Relatives



Cases were more likely to be in compliance for efforts to identify, locate, inform and evaluate maternal relatives than paternal relatives (see **Figure 25**).

### Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents

All foster care cases were applicable for this item unless, during the entire PUR, parental rights remained terminated; the child was abandoned, and parents could not be located; the whereabouts of the parents were not known despite documented concerted efforts to find them; it was documented that contact with the parents was not considered in the child's best interests; both parents were deceased; or the only parent(s) being assessed in this item did not meet the definition of Mother/Father for this item.

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made 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 caregiver(s) through activities other than arranging visitation.

Mothers were more likely than fathers to receive encouragement to participate in their children's school activities, medical appointments and afterschool programs.

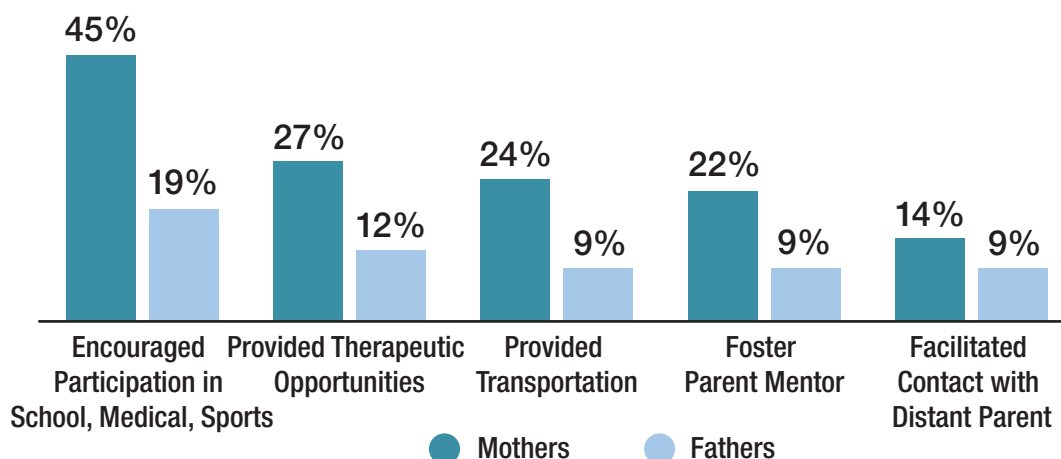


**Item 11 Rating:** 58% of all 845 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 11.

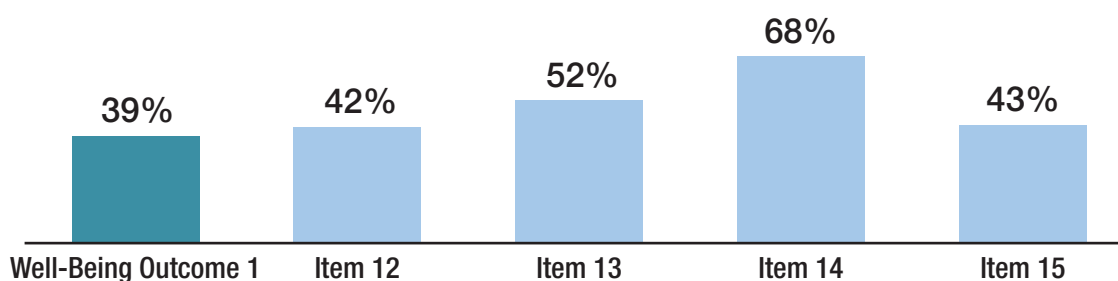
**11A:** Concerted efforts were made during the PUR to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her mother in 65.8% of the 806 applicable cases.

**11B:** Concerted efforts were made during the PUR to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her father in 56.4% of the 468 applicable cases.

The review asked what concerted efforts were made to support the parent-child relationship, such as encouraging participation in the child's school activities, medical appointments, and afterschool sports; providing transportation so the parent could attend the child's activities; providing therapeutic opportunities; encouraging foster parents to mentor biological parents; or facilitating contact with a parent who is not living in close proximity to the child. Mothers and fathers were both most likely to

**Figure 26:** Specific Methods Used by Caseworkers to Support Parent-Child Relationship

**NOTE:** Cases could be represented in more than one category.

**Figure 27:** Performance on Well-Being Outcome 1 and Supporting Items

receive encouragement to participate in school activities, medical appointments, and afterschool sports. However, for every example, mothers were more likely than fathers to receive encouragement (see **Figure 26**).

## Well-Being

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

No state achieved substantial conformity with **Well-Being Outcome 1**. At the case level, across these 24 states, 39% of the 2,073 applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome (see **Figure 27**).

There are 4 items associated with this outcome. For a case to substantially achieve this outcome, Item 12 must be rated as a Strength or Not Applicable (NA), and no more than 1 of the remaining applicable items may be rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

### Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents

Most cases were applicable for Item 12. There is only a very narrow set of circumstances in in-home cases when Item 12 is not applicable for assessment. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made concerted efforts to assess the needs



Agencies did better assessing children's, parent's, and foster parent's needs than providing services to meet the identified needs.

of children, parents, and foster parents and to provide the services necessary to meet those needs. This item excludes the assessment of children's (but not parents') needs pertaining to education, physical health, and mental health. These areas are addressed in later items. Safety-related services are not captured in this item; they are captured in Item 2.

**Item 12 Overall Rating:** 42% of all 2,063 applicable cases<sup>14</sup> were rated as a Strength for Item 12.

For this item to be rated as a Strength overall, Sub-Item 12A (pertaining to the child) must be rated as a Strength, and 12B (pertaining to the parents) and 12C (pertaining to the foster parents) must be rated as either a Strength or Not Applicable.

**12A1:** The agency conducted initial and/or ongoing assessments during the PUR that accurately assessed the child's needs in 79.0% of the 2,065 applicable cases.

**12A2:** The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to meet the child's identified needs in 66.7% of the 1,431 applicable cases.

**Sub-Item 12A Rating:** 73% of the 2,063 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Sub-Item 12A (children's needs and services).

**12B1:** The agency conducted initial and/or ongoing assessments during the PUR that accurately assessed the mother's needs in 65.7% of the 1,706 applicable cases.

**12B2:** The agency conducted initial and/or ongoing assessments during the PUR that accurately assessed the father's needs in 49.1% of the 1,374 applicable cases.

**12B3:** The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to meet the mother's identified needs in 61.0% of the 1,614 applicable cases.

**12B4:** The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to meet the father's identified needs in 45.9% of the 1,224 applicable cases.

**Sub-Item 12B Rating:** 43% of the 1,771 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Sub-Item 12B (parents' needs and services).

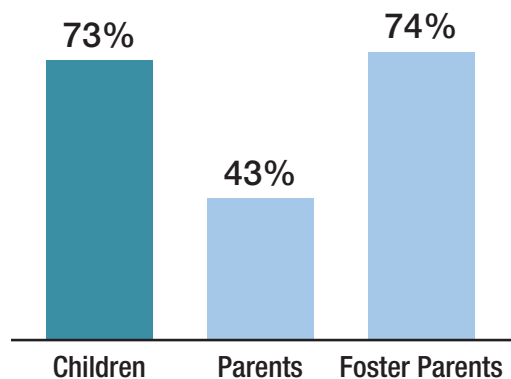
**12C1:** The agency conducted ongoing assessments during the PUR that accurately assessed the needs of the foster or pre-adoptive parents in 79.9% of the 1,174 applicable cases.

**12C2:** The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to meet the identified needs of the foster or pre-adoptive parents in 70.6% of the 925 applicable cases.



<sup>14</sup> Although all cases were considered applicable for this item, ratings for 10 cases were Not Applicable for Item 12. These cases reflect circumstances where there was a comprehensive initial assessment of safety and risk, no substantiated or indicated child maltreatment, and no identified risk or safety concerns that necessitated provision of ongoing assessment and services.

**Figure 28:** Percentage of Cases Where Agency Made Concerted Efforts To Assess Needs and Provide Services to Children, Parents, and Foster Parents



**Sub-Item 12C Rating:** 74% of the 1,174 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Sub-Item 12C (foster parents' needs and services).

Overall, cases were much more likely to be in compliance for children's needs and services (Sub-Item 12A) and foster parents' needs and services (Sub-Item 12C) than for parents' needs and services (Sub-Item 12B) (see **Figure 28**).

### Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

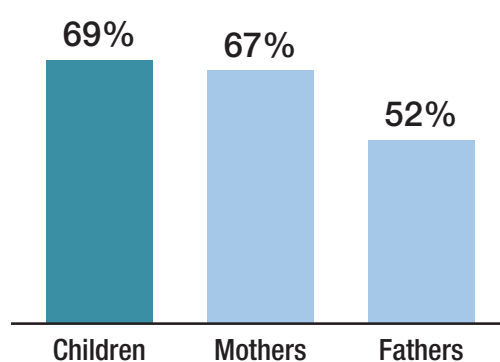
All cases were applicable for this item unless, during the entire PUR, parental rights remained terminated, the whereabouts of the parents were not known despite documented concerted efforts to find them, contact with the parents was not considered in the child's best interests, the parents indicated they did not want to be involved in the child's life, or the parents were deceased.

**Item 13 Rating:** 52% of all 1,977 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 13.

**13A:** The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to actively involve the child in the case planning process in 69% of the 1,326 applicable cases.

**13B:** The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to actively involve the mother in the case planning process in 67% of the 1,680 applicable cases.

**Figure 29:** Percentage of Cases Where Agency Made Concerted Efforts To Involve Children and Parents in Case Planning



**13C:** The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to actively involve the father in the case planning process in 52% of the 1,278 applicable cases.

Overall, cases were more likely to be in compliance for efforts to involve children and mothers in case planning than fathers (see **Figure 29**).

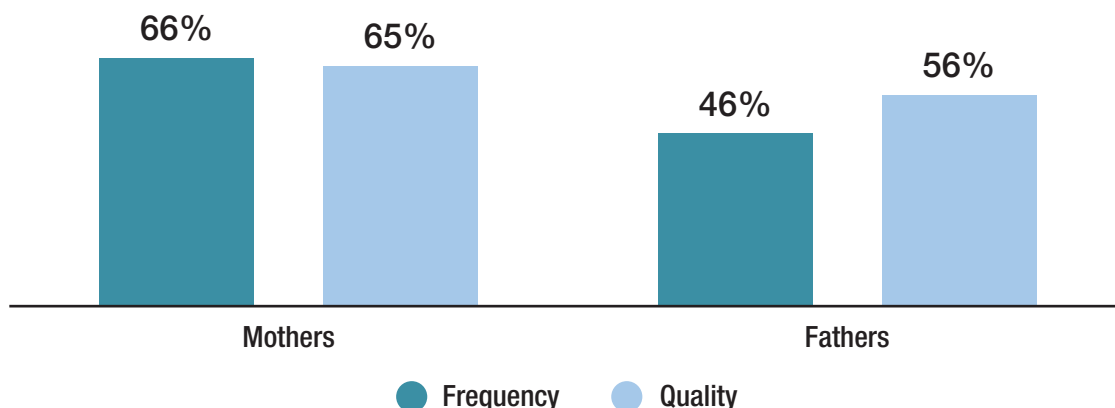
### Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child

All cases were applicable for Item 14. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and to promote achievement of case goals.

**Item 14 Rating:** 68% of all 2,073 cases were rated as a Strength for Item 14.

**14A:** In 86% of the 2,073 applicable cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with the child(ren). The frequency of the visits between the caseworker and the child during the PUR was sufficient in 81.6% of the 2,073 applicable cases.

In **86%** of applicable cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with the child in foster care.

**Figure 30:** Percentage of Cases Where Caseworker Visits With Parents Were of Sufficient Frequency and Quality

**14B:** The quality of the visits between the caseworker and the child during the PUR was sufficient in 72.8% of the 2,054 applicable cases.

#### Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents

All cases were applicable for this item unless, during the entire PUR, parental rights remained terminated, the whereabouts of the parents were not known despite documented concerted efforts to find them, contact with the parents was not considered in the child's best interests, the parents indicated they did not want to be involved in the child's life, or the parents were deceased.

Reviewers were to assess whether, during the PUR, the caseworker's face-to-face contact with the child's mother and father was of sufficient frequency and quality to ensure the child's safety, permanency, and well-being and to promote achievement of case goals.

**Item 15 Rating:** 43% of all 1,763 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 15.

**15A2:** In 61% of the applicable 1,687 cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with the mother. The frequency of visits between the caseworker and the mother during the PUR were sufficient in 65.7% of the 1,687 applicable cases.

**15B2:** In 37% of the 1,282 applicable cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with the father. The frequency of visits between the caseworker and the father during the PUR were sufficient in 46.1% of the 1,282 applicable cases.

**15C:** The quality of the visits between the caseworker and the mother during the PUR was sufficient in 64.8% of the 1,598 applicable cases.

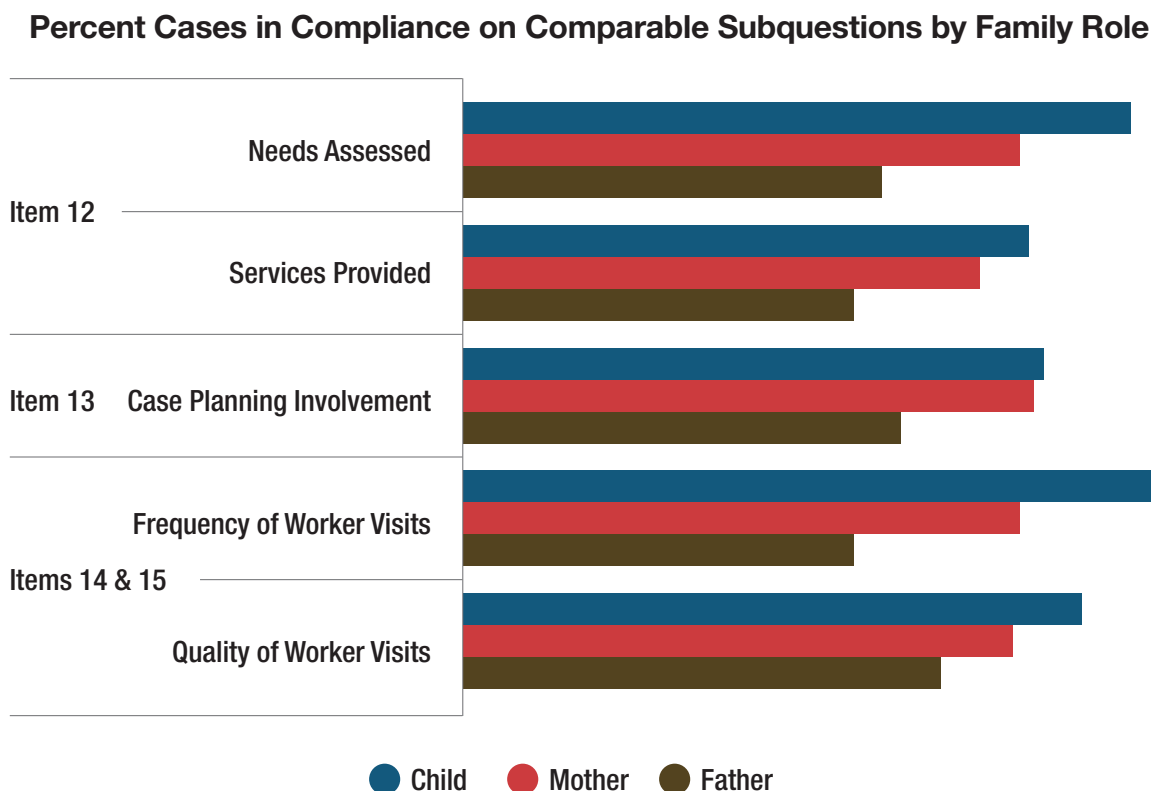
**15D:** The quality of the visits between the caseworker and the father during the PUR was sufficient in 56.4% of the 1,050 applicable cases.

Cases were more likely to have sufficient frequency and quality of caseworker visits with mothers than with fathers (see **Figure 30**).

#### Comparison by Family Role

When comparing subquestions by family role from the items that make up Well-Being Outcome 1, it becomes apparent that services provided to children are more likely to be rated in compliance than services provided to parents. Additionally, services provided to fathers are much less likely to be rated as in compliance in comparison to mothers. The diminished performance with regard to services provided to fathers is an ongoing pattern in the CFSRs (see **Figure 31**).

In **61%** of the applicable cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with mothers. In **37%** of the applicable cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with fathers.

**Figure 31:** Comparison of Performance by Family Role for Items 12, 13, 14, and 15

**Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.**

Five states achieved substantial conformity with **Well-Being Outcome 2**. At the case level, across the 24 states, 82% of the 1,365 applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome (see **Figure 32**).

There is one item associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, Item 16 must be rated as a Strength.

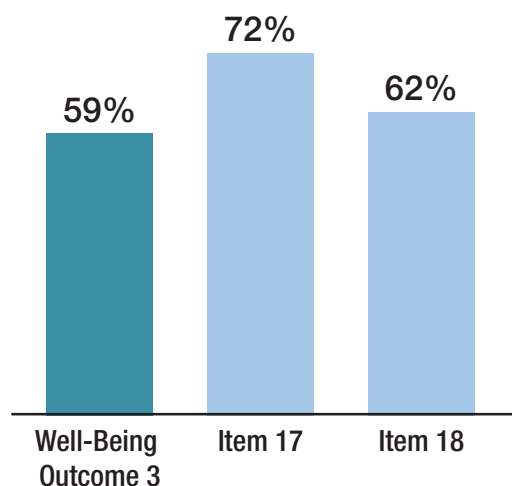
**Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child**

Cases were applicable for this item if one of the following applied: Children in foster care were of school age; or, for in-home cases, educational issues were relevant to the reason for the agency's involvement with the family, or, given the case circumstances, it was reasonable to expect that the agency would address educational issues.

**Figure 32:** Performance on Well-Being Outcome 2 and Supporting Item



**Figure 33:** Percentage of Cases in Compliance With Well-Being Outcome 3 and Supporting Items



Additionally, if a child in foster care was 2 years old or younger and had developmental delays, the case may have been applicable if the developmental delays should have been addressed through an educational approach. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether, during the PUR, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children's educational needs and whether those needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

**Item 16 Rating:** 82% of all 1,365 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 16.

**16A:** The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to accurately assess the child's educational needs in 87.1% of the 1,365 applicable cases.

**16B:** The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to address the child's educational needs through appropriate services in 78.2% of the 1,018 applicable cases.

### **Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**

No state achieved substantial conformity with **Well-Being Outcome 3**. At the case level, across all 24 states, 59% of the 1,863 applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome (see **Figure 33**).

There are 2 items associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, both items must be rated as a Strength, or 1 item may be rated as a Strength while the other is rated as NA.

#### **Item 17: Physical Health of the Child**

All foster care cases were applicable for this item. In-home cases were applicable when there were physical health concerns.<sup>15</sup> In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's physical health needs (including dental needs) had been appropriately addressed.

**Item 17 Rating:** 72% of all 1,570 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 17.

**17A1:** The agency accurately assessed the child's physical health care needs during the PUR in 87.8% of the 1,565 applicable cases.

**17A2:** The agency accurately assessed the child's dental health care needs during the PUR in 84.7% of the 1,329 applicable cases.

**17B1:** The agency provided appropriate oversight of prescription medications for physical health issues during the PUR in 80.8% of the 505 applicable cases.

**17B2:** The agency ensured that appropriate services were provided during the PUR to the child to address all identified physical health needs in 82.6% of the 1,308 applicable cases.

**17B3:** The agency ensured that appropriate services were provided during the PUR to the child to address all identified dental health needs in 78.4% of the 1,044 applicable cases.

<sup>15</sup> Includes cases where physical/dental health issues were relevant to the reason for the agency's involvement with the family, or cases where it is reasonable to expect that the agency would address physical/dental health issues given the circumstances of the case.



### Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

Foster care cases were applicable for this item if the child had existing mental/behavioral health needs during the PUR. In-home services cases were applicable when there were relevant mental/behavioral issues related to the agency's involvement with the family. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether mental health needs had been addressed during the PUR.

**Item 18 Rating:** 62% of all 1,361 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 18.

**18A:** The agency conducted accurate initial and/or ongoing assessments of the child's mental/behavioral health needs to inform case planning decisions in 78.8% of the 1,361 applicable cases.

**18B:** The agency provided appropriate oversight for foster care cases of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health issues in 70.1% of the 384 applicable cases.

**18C:** The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to address the child's mental/behavioral health needs in 65.9% of the 1,281 applicable cases.

### Systemic Factors

This section explains the systemic factors and the items on which they are based.

On the basis of information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews (where necessary) conducted as part of the onsite review, the CFSR determines whether the state is in substantial conformity with federal requirements for each of the following 7 systemic factors:

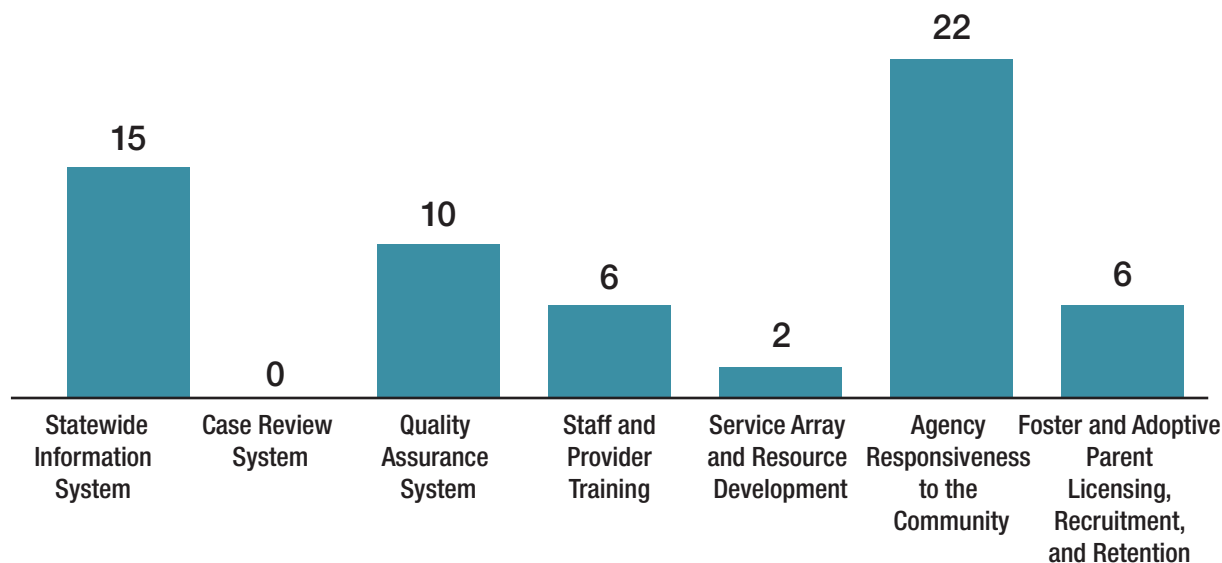
- Statewide Information System
- Case Review System
- Quality Assurance System
- Staff and Provider Training
- Service Array and Resource Development
- Agency Responsiveness to the Community
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

### Determining Substantial Conformity

The ratings for the systemic factors are based on state performance on 18 individual items. Using the information contained in the statewide assessment, a determination is made as to whether the state will receive an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement for each item. If more information is needed to determine the rating, it is collected through stakeholder interviews. However, stakeholder interviews must be conducted to gather information about the **Service Array and Resource Development** systemic factor. The item ratings are then used to determine if the state is in substantial conformity with the systemic factors.

Each individual item included in a systemic factor reflects a key federal title IV-E or IV-B program requirement in federal child welfare laws and regulations. For any given systemic factor, a state is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” or “not in substantial conformity.” In Round 2, states received a rating of 1 to 4 for each systemic factor, with a rating of 3 or 4 required to be in substantial conformity. For Round 3, the state does not receive a numeric rating but is rated as either “in substantial conformity” or “not in substantial conformity.”<sup>16</sup> Five of the

<sup>16</sup> This change in method to determine conformity precludes statistical comparison of state-level performance on outcomes and items with systemic factors as included in the Round 2 aggregate report.

**Figure 34:** Number of States Achieving Substantial Conformity With Systemic Factors (n=24)

7 systemic factors are rated on the basis of multiple items or plan requirements. For a state to be found in substantial conformity with a systemic factor, findings must indicate that no more than one of the required number of items for that systemic factor fails to function as required. **Statewide Information System** and **Quality Assurance System**, are rated on the basis of one item. For these systemic factors, the single item for each must be functioning as required to be in substantial conformity.

### Performance

**Figure 34** shows how many of the 24 states reviewed during FYs 2015–2016 achieved substantial conformity on each of the systemic factors.

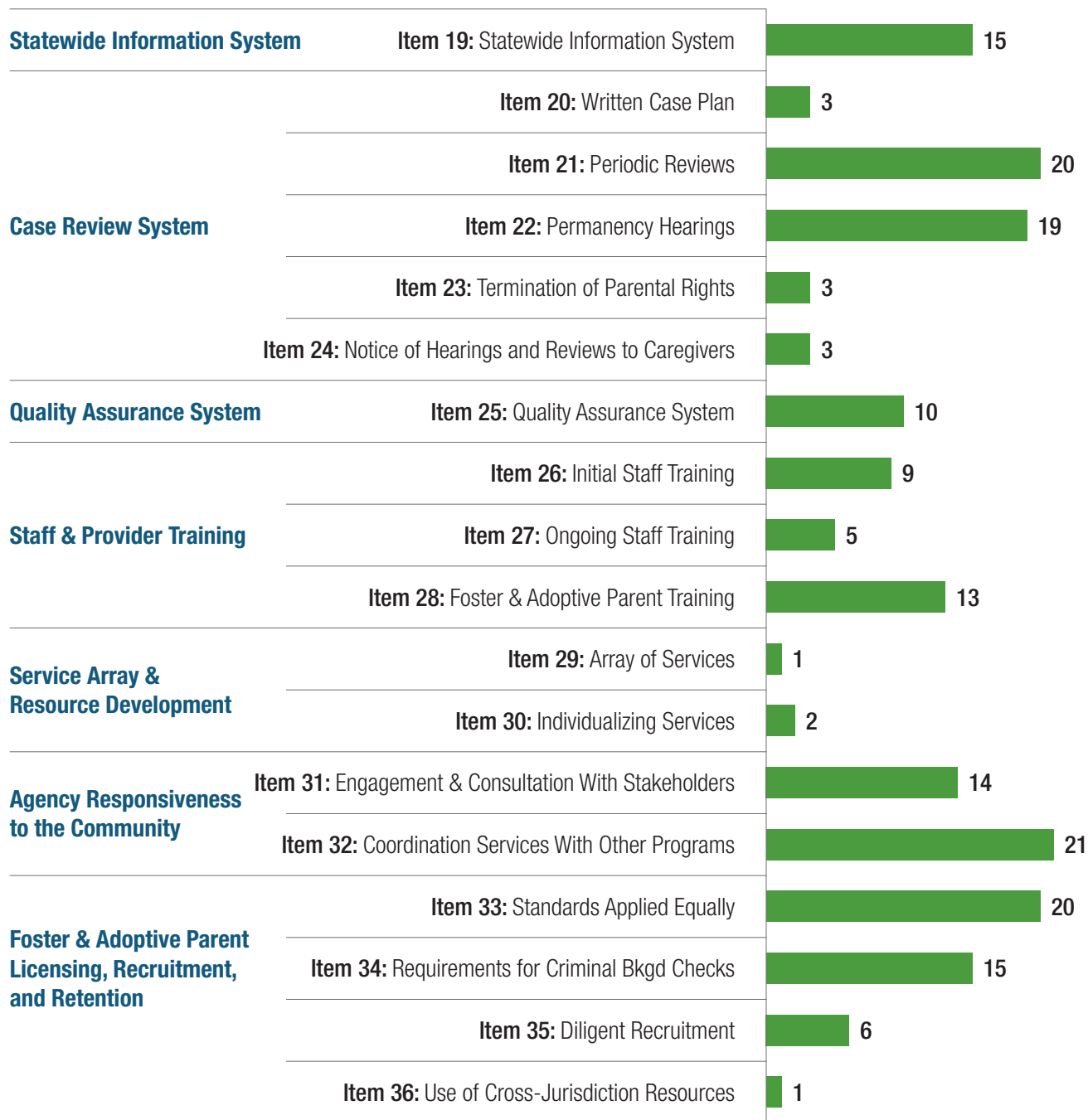
The majority of the 24 states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016 achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factors measuring **Statewide Information System** and **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**. However, 6 or fewer states achieved substantial conformity on 4 systemic factors: **Case Review System** (n = 0), **Staff and Provider Training** (n = 6), **Service Array and Resource Development** (n = 2), and **Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention** (n = 6). Ten of the states achieved substantial conformity on the **Quality**

**Assurance System** systemic factor.



Figure 35 below summarizes state performance on the items comprising each of the systemic factors.

**Figure 35:** States Rated as a Strength on Items Comprising the Systemic Factors, Items 19-36 (n=24 states)





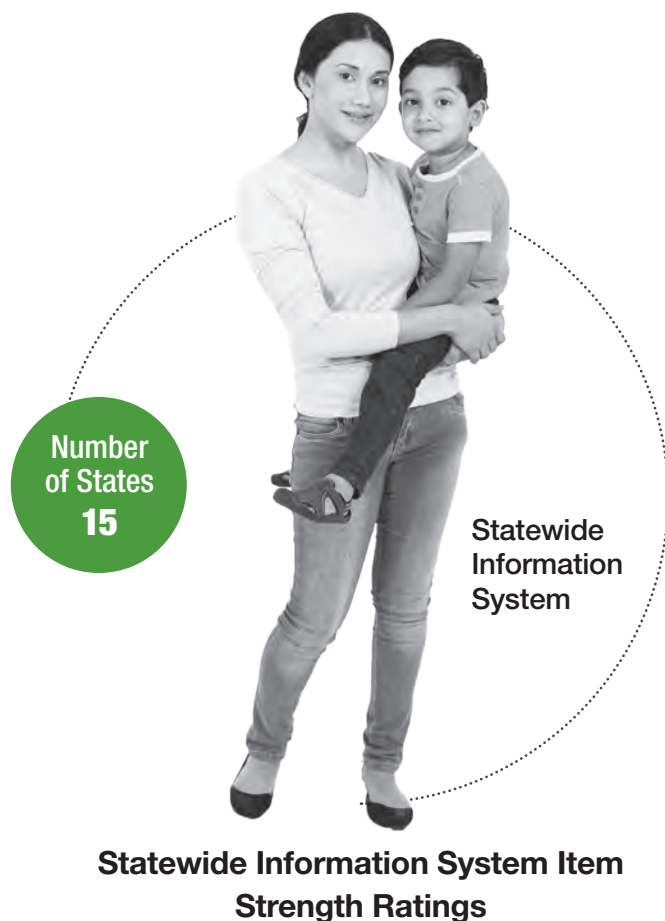
### Statewide Information System

As shown in **Figure 36** below, 15 (62.5%) of the 24 states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016 received a Strength rating for the 1 item associated with the systemic factor of **Statewide Information System**. Because there is only 1 item associated with this systemic factor, the rating for Item 19 determines substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

#### Item 19: Statewide Information System

Fifteen states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and placement goals for every child who is (or, within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

**Figure 36:** Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Statewide Information System Item



### Systemic Factor Issues

The following issues were identified with regard to **Statewide Information Systems**:

- Timeliness of data entry
- Accuracy of the information in the system

### Case Review System

**Figure 37** shows the number of states that received a Strength rating for each of the 5 items within the systemic factor of **Case Review System**. If at least 4 of the individual items were rated as a Strength, a state would have achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor. No states achieved substantial conformity for Case Review System.

The majority of states were rated as a Strength on two items within this systemic factor. Periodic reviews and permanency hearings are the strongest items as reviews/hearings are happening and generally within frequency requirements. Few states were rated as a Strength on Items 20, 23, and 24.

#### Item 20: Written Case Plan

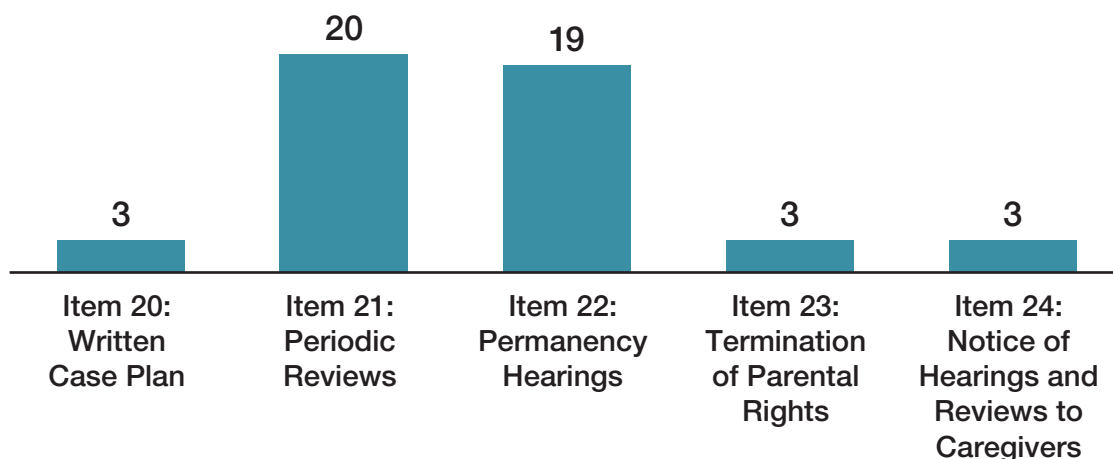
Three states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan, to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s), that includes the required provisions.

#### Item 21: Periodic Reviews

Twenty states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.

#### Item 22: Permanency Hearings

Nineteen states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the state has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

**Figure 37:** Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Case Review System Items**Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights**

Three states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process for termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings in accordance with the required provisions.

**Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers**

Three states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

**Quality Assurance System**

**Figure 38** shows state performance on the one item associated with the systemic factor of **Quality Assurance System**. For a state to achieve substantial conformity with this systemic factor, Item 25 must be rated as a Strength.

**Item 25: Quality Assurance System**

Ten states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions

**Systemic Factor Issues**

The following issues were identified with regard to **Case Review Systems**:

- Case plans: state policy exists but there is a lack of oversight to know that plans are consistently developed on an ongoing basis.
- Parental engagement in case plan development is lacking.
- Crowded court dockets, heavy workloads, and waiting for non-appealable cases delay filing termination of parental rights petitions.
- Notice of hearings to caregivers—states did not have a process in place to ensure notice is routinely provided.

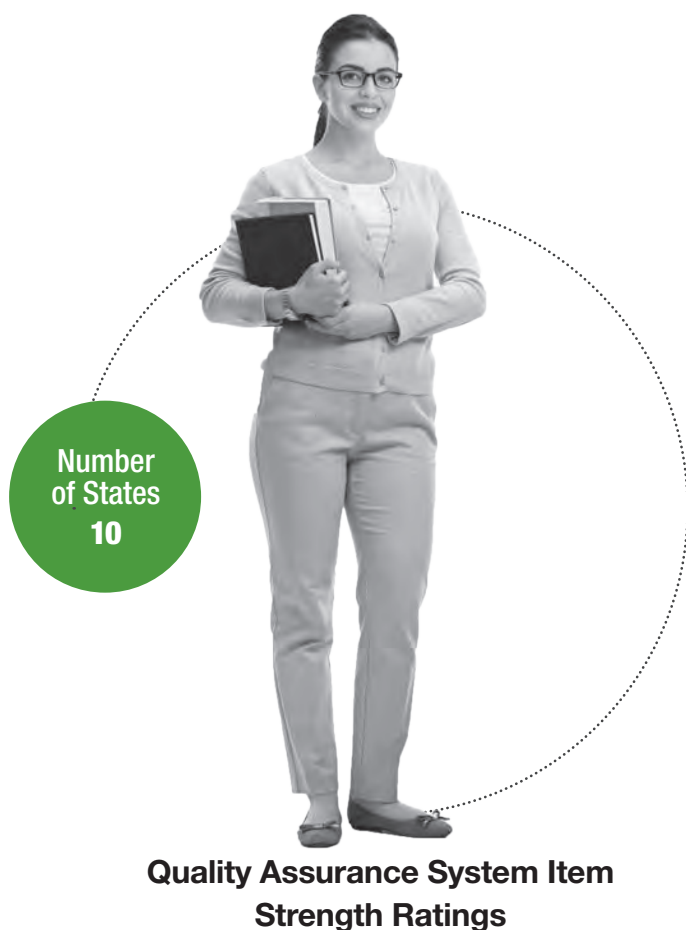
where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

### Staff and Provider Training

**Figure 39** shows state performance on the 3 individual items associated with the systemic factor of **Staff and Provider Training**. If at least 2 of the individual items were rated as a Strength, a state achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor. Six states achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

As **Figure 39** shows, the majority of states received

**Figure 38:** Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Quality Assurance System Item



### Systemic Factor Issues

The following issues were identified with regard to **Quality Assurance Systems**:

Systems often need:

- A process to evaluate planned program improvement
- Standards to evaluate the quality of services
- A process or method for identifying the strengths and needs of the service delivery system

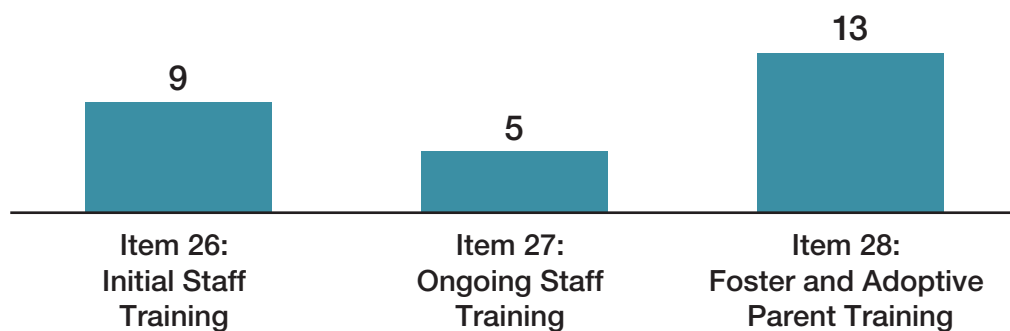
Strength ratings on just one of the items under **Staff and Provider Training** (i.e., Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training).

### Item 26: Initial Staff Training

Nine states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state is operating a staff development and training program that provides initial training to all staff members who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions.

### Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training

Five states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

**Figure 39:** Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Staff and Provider Training Items**Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training**

Thirteen states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff from state-licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

**Service Array and Resource Development**

**Figure 40** shows the number of states that received a rating of Strength for the 2 items within the systemic factor of **Service Array and Resource Development**. If at least

1 of the individual items were rated as a Strength, a state achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

As **Figure 40** indicates, just 2 of the 24 states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016 received a Strength rating for the **Service Array and Resource Development** systemic factor.

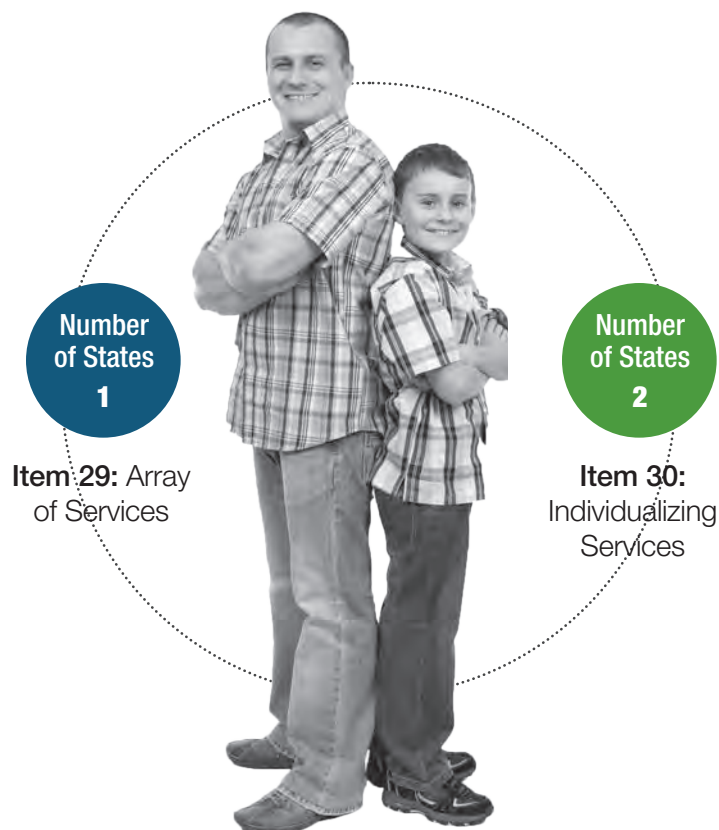
**Systemic Factor Issues**

The following issues were identified with regard to **Staff and Provider Training**:

- New workers were assigned cases before completing training.
- The frequency and location of initial and ongoing training was a barrier to attending.
- Caseloads and workloads were a barrier to attending ongoing training.
- Some agencies did not have ongoing training requirements.
- Caseworkers were not always aware of ongoing training requirements.
- Although many new workers said that initial classroom training was well done, they felt it did not accurately reflect the demands of the position.
- Caseworkers spoke favorably about formal mentoring programs, shadowing experienced workers, and the use of embedded trainers.
- There was inconsistency and some lack of clarity concerning requirements for ongoing foster parent training.



**Figure 40:** Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Service Array and Resource Development Items



### Service Array and Resource Development Item Strength Ratings

#### Item 29: Array of Services

One of the 24 states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order 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.

Services named as often needed but insufficiently available included substance abuse treatment, domestic violence services, mental health services, trauma-informed services, and housing.

#### Systemic Factor Issues

The following issues were identified with regard to **Service Array and Resource Development**:

- Lack of services in rural areas
- Gaps in availability of services and waiting lists
- Difficulty accessing services because of payment-related issues
- Services most often needed but insufficiently available
  - Substance abuse treatment
  - Domestic violence services
  - Mental health services
  - Trauma-informed services
  - Housing
- Challenges with individualizing services
  - Lack of linguistically appropriate services
  - Lack of child psychiatrists
  - Lack of appropriate service providers
  - Inability to meet the cultural needs of the diverse populations served

#### Item 30: Individualizing Services

Two states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the services in Item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

Challenges identified with individualizing services included lack of linguistically appropriate services, lack of child psychiatrists, lack of appropriate service providers, and the inability to meet the cultural needs of the diverse populations served.

#### Agency Responsiveness to the Community

**Figure 41** shows state performance on the 2 individual items associated with the systemic factor of **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**. If at least 1 of the



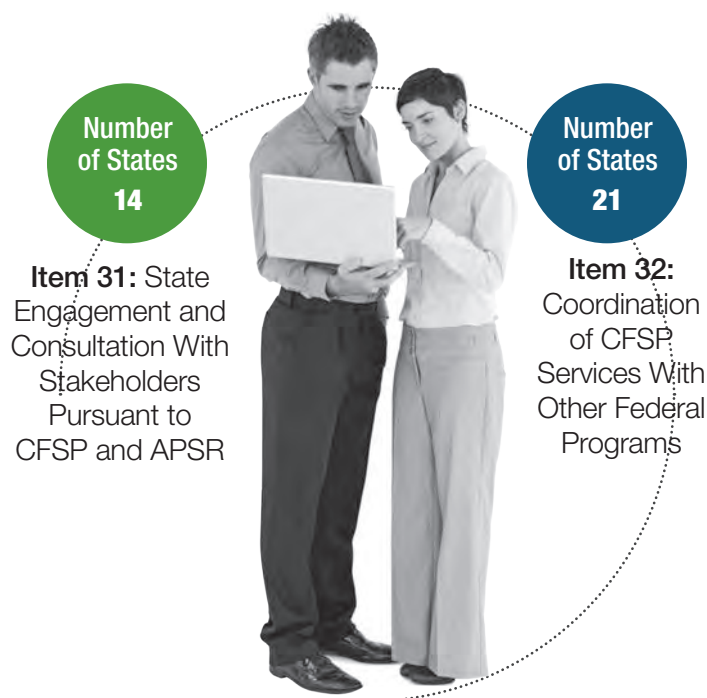
individual items were rated as a Strength, a state achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor. Twenty-two of the 24 states reviewed in FYs 2015–2016 achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

As **Figure 41** shows, more than half of states reviewed received a Strength rating on the items associated with this systemic factor:

#### Item 31: Stakeholder Consultation for the CFSP

Fourteen states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether, in implementing the provisions of the 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

**Figure 41:** Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Agency Responsiveness to the Community Items



#### Agency Responsiveness to Community Item Strength Ratings

includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP.

#### Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs

Twenty-one states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.

#### Systemic Factor Issues

The following issues were identified with regard to **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**:

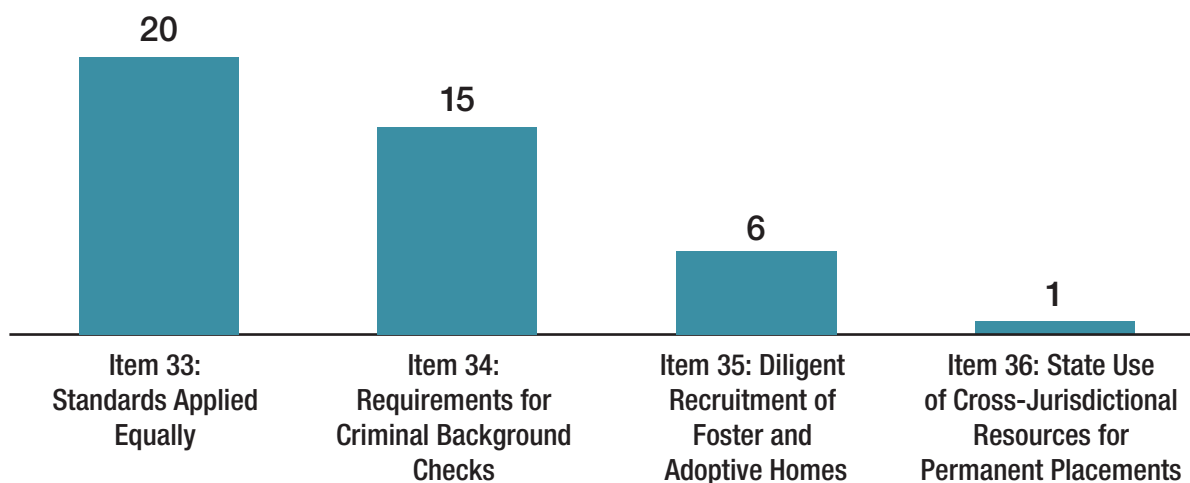
- Failure to engage some key stakeholders, such as parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and Tribes
- Not having a consistent process for engagement, or not engaging stakeholders for the development of the CFSP and not the APSR
- Failure to coordinate with key federal programs, or not having information about those efforts or results of those efforts

#### Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

**Figure 42** shows state performance on the 4 individual items associated with the systemic factor of **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**. If at least 3 of the individual items were rated as a Strength, a state achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

As **Figure 42** shows, items within this systemic factor reflected widely varying state performance, with only 6 states achieving substantial conformity.

**Figure 42:** Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention Items



#### Item 33: Standards Applied Equally

Twenty states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state has ensured that state standards are applied to all state-licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds.

#### Item 34: Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

Fifteen states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements, and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.

#### Item 35: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

Six states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state has in place a 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.

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

One state received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

#### Systemic Factor Issues

The following issues were identified with regard to **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**:

- Not having a statewide recruitment plan
- Not having information to know whether policies requiring criminal background checks were being followed
- Not having case planning processes for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements
- Challenges in administering the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children

## Topics of Particular Interest

This section addresses topics of particular interest, including Tribal notification and placement preferences for Indian children and oversight of prescriptions for mental and behavioral health. Thus, this section focuses more closely on the available data for specific concerns.

### Identification of Indian Children, Tribal Notification, and Placement Preferences

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) regulates state child custody proceedings involving children who are members of or eligible for membership in a federally recognized Tribe. It allows the child's Tribe to intervene in matters regarding the removal and placement of American Indian children in foster or adoptive homes. For this reason, it is important for agencies to determine whether a child entering foster care is eligible under ICWA, to communicate with the relevant Tribe about such a child, and to ensure that any foster placement is made in concurrence with ICWA regulations.

The CFSR addresses these issues in the subquestions for Item 9: Preserving Connections. **Figure 43** shows the responses for these subquestions:

There were 139 cases that were considered for subquestion 9C (Tribal notification) and 120 of those were also considered for subquestion 9D (concerted efforts to place child in accordance with applicable ICWA requirements). The number of cases considered applicable for the four subquestions about preserving connections is greater than the 80 cases reported as

American Indian/Alaska Native under Race/Ethnicity because these subquestions were also applied to target children who (a) were identified as American Indian/Alaska native and another race or Hispanic; and (b) who reviewers discovered could possibly have such heritage through document review and interviews with family members. Of the 139 cases considered for subquestion 9C, 98 involved children who were formally identified in case records as full or part



**Figure 43:** Subquestions for Item 9—Preserving Connections

| Subquestions for Item 9: Preserving Connections  | Yes              | No             |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Subquestion 9B:</b> Sufficient inquiry to determine if the child may be a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe*  | 89.8%<br>(1,149) | 10.2%<br>(131) |
| <b>Subquestion 9C:</b> If the child may be a member of a federally recognized Tribe during the PUR, was the Tribe provided timely notification of its right to intervene in court proceedings? | 73.4%<br>(102)   | 26.6%<br>(37)  |
| <b>Subquestion 9D:</b> If the child may be a member of a federally recognized Tribe, was the child placed in foster care in accordance with ICWA (or were concerted efforts made to do so)?    | 67.5%<br>(81)    | 32.5%<br>(39)  |

\* Subquestion 9B was not used to determine compliance for Item 9.

American Indian/Alaska Native.<sup>17</sup> Forty-one cases involved children who had not been identified as full or part American Indian or Alaska Native in case records.

Cases where the children were previously identified in the case record as having American Indian/Alaska Native heritage were more often found to have met requirements for Tribal notification and placement (see **Figures 44** and **45**). For

some other cases, however, where reviewers learned through interviews or documentation review that family members believed a child not identified in the case file as American Indian/Alaska Native had some type of American Indian/Alaska Native heritage, reviewers then determined that the requirements for Indian children had not been addressed adequately by the agency. This suggests that performance

**Figure 44:** Examination of Rating for Subquestion 9C (If the child may be a member of a federally recognized Tribe during the PUR, was the Tribe provided timely notification of its right to intervene in court proceedings?) Across Children Identified in Different Ways as Having American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage

| Subquestion 9C – Tribe Was Notified | Children with Race Identified as American Indian in Case Records | Children Identified as American Indian By Another Means <sup>18</sup> | Total       |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|-------------|
| Yes                                 | 88.8% (87)   | 36.6% (15)  | 73.4% (102) |
| No                                  | 11.2% (11)   | 63.4% (26)  | 26.6% (37)  |
| Total                               | 100% (98)  | 100% (41)   | 100% (139)  |

**Figure 45:** Examination of Rating for Subquestion 9D (If the child is a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federal recognized Indian Tribe, was the child placed in foster care in accordance with Indian Child Welfare Act placement preferences or were concerted efforts made to place the child in accordance with the Act's placement preferences?) Across Children Identified in Different Ways as Having American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage

| Subquestion 9D – Placement in Accordance with ICWA Placement Preferences | Children with Race Identified as American Indian in Case Records | Children Identified as American Indian By Another Means <sup>19</sup> | Total      |
|--|--|---|------------|
| Yes  | 75.8% (72)   | 36.0% (9)   | 67.5% (81) |
| No   | 24.2% (23)   | 64.0% (16)  | 32.5% (39) |
| Total  | 100% (95)  | 100% (25)   | 100% (120) |

<sup>17</sup> The method of reporting race/ethnicity in the aggregate report (following AFCARS reporting protocol) includes only those reported as American Indian/Alaska Native with no other racial heritage and who are non-Hispanic in the American Indian/Alaska Native race/ethnicity. Children of Hispanic ethnicity are reported as Hispanic, regardless of race. Children with more than one racial heritage are reported as “two or more races”. In FYs 2015–2016 CFSRs, 118 children were identified in case records during the reviews as full or part American Indian/Alaska Native. Of these, 80 children were non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native. Twenty-three children were non-Hispanic and part American Indian/Alaska Native, and thus categorized as More Than One Race. Fifteen children were full (11) or part (4) American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic, and were categorized as Hispanic due to their ethnicity.

<sup>18</sup> Includes children (a) identified as American Indian/Alaska Native and another race or Hispanic in case records; and (b) cases where reviewers discovered the target child could possibly have such heritage through document review and interviews with family members.

<sup>19</sup> Includes children (a) identified as American Indian/Alaska Native and another race or Hispanic in case records; and (b) cases where reviewers discovered the target child could possibly have such heritage through document review and interviews with family members.

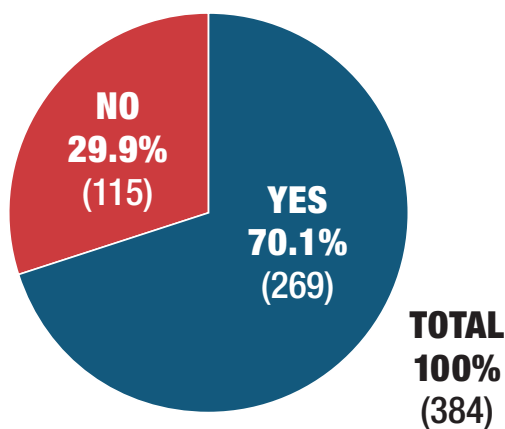
on these items related to preserving connections for Indian children is better for children whose Tribal connection has been established clearly in the case records, and that performance on Item 9 might be improved by focusing assurance efforts on earlier identification of children's American Indian/Alaska Native heritage. If caseworkers are aware of American Indian/Alaska Native heritage, they are more likely to meet relevant requirements for preserving connections.

The CFSR narratives for these cases suggest several potential practice concerns, including whether appropriate communication occurred (i.e., Was the family asked about American Indian heritage, and did the agency follow up with the relevant Tribe to determine whether the child was enrolled or eligible to be enrolled?) The second potential concern is whether the agency has appropriate placement resources (e.g., American Indian/Alaska Native foster parents) available to fulfill the ICWA requirements.

### Oversight of Prescription Medications for Mental/Behavioral Health

For the first time, in Round 3 the CFSR examines oversight of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health

**Figure 46:** Responses to Item 18, Subquestion B: Agency Provided Appropriate Oversight for Prescription Medications for Mental/Behavioral Health Issues, by Percentage (Number)



issues (i.e., psychotropic medications). This is addressed in subquestion 18B of Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child, which asks whether the agency provided appropriate oversight of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health issues for foster care cases during the PUR.

As **Figure 46** shows, 384 cases were applicable for this subquestion, with over two-thirds of the cases (70.1%; n = 269) receiving positive responses.<sup>20</sup>

Reviewer comments for cases receiving “Yes” responses for subquestion 18B (i.e., the agency provided appropriate oversight of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health issues) mentioned the following:

- Prescribing physician and agency
  - The case manager is in touch with and communicates regularly with the physician who prescribes medications.
  - The agency has signed consent forms approving the child's medication regimen on file, and a new form is filed when medications are changed.
- Foster parents/caregivers
  - The caseworker discusses medications with foster parents/caregivers, including how medications are administered and any side effects experienced by the child.
  - Medication is kept locked up.
  - The foster parents/caregivers keep logs of medication administration and share them with the caseworker.
  - Medication logs are uploaded into the appropriate database.
- Child
  - The caseworker discusses medications with the child and their potential side effects in addition to asking how the child is feeling and whether he or she is taking the medication as prescribed.
  - The child receives regular medication management from a professional.

<sup>20</sup> Some of the reasons for both positive or negative responses may be attributed to state protocols related to the appropriate use and monitoring of medications, which is one consideration when determining response to subquestion 18B.



Reviewer comments indicated that cases receiving “No” responses for subquestion 18B (i.e., the agency did not provide appropriate oversight of psychotropic medications) were often characterized by a lack of communication with the relevant parties and/or a lack of documentation of the child’s treatment regimen. Among the issues that were cited for these cases:

- Prescribing physician and agency
  - Caseworker was not communicating regularly with the physician who prescribed medications for the child. This occurred sometimes due to staff changes in caseworkers or prescribing physicians with resulting delays in re-establishing communication.
  - Changes in medication were not approved and documented appropriately at the agency.
- Foster parents/caregivers
  - Caseworker did not meet monthly with foster parents/caregivers to discuss the administration of medication and its side effects. In some cases, reviewers found that caseworkers and caregivers had conflicting information about which drugs the children were taking.
  - In some cases, caregivers arranged for the child to meet with prescribing physicians without keeping the caseworker informed.
  - Caregivers were not always instructed in how to monitor or document prescription medications. In some cases, the foster parents/caregivers may have kept medication logs, but the caseworker did not collect or review them.



- Child

- Caseworkers did not regularly discuss medications and their side effects with the child.
- In some cases, children decided to stop taking their medications without consulting a medical professional or the caseworker.

## Conclusion

The CFSR process is a partnership between the Children’s Bureau and states, between states and partner agencies, and between governments and stakeholders. This report demonstrates the rich information collected during the first 2 years of Round 3 as a result of these partnerships. Sharing a commitment to the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being, the Children’s Bureau continues to focus attention on assisting states in examining and improving their systems and enhancing their capacity to serve children and families.

The Children’s Bureau maintains high standards for services to children and families. Although states may not meet these high standards with regard to every measure, all states are engaged in program improvement to address areas of need and to strengthen program elements.

This report presents findings from only 24 states that conducted CFSRs in FYs 2015–2016, the first 2 years of Round 3, and thus should be considered a preliminary examination. Findings at the case level may be disproportionately influenced by case type and overall state practice for one or more of the 24 states. Nevertheless, using an appropriate level of care, the CFSR data provide a snapshot and an opportunity to reflect on child welfare practice across these 24 states. As more states complete the CFSRs, the data will provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of child welfare practice in Round 3.