

Children's Bureau

Round 4 Child and Family Services Reviews

Fact Sheet for Youth



What Are the Child and Family Services Reviews?

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) seek to learn about, and ultimately improve, the experiences of children, youth, and families receiving services in the child welfare system. The CFSR is an opportunity for jurisdictions to generate data and evidence that helps identify strengths and challenges in their performance. In all stages, states can use program and administrative data to identify areas that might benefit from innovations or interventions that would improve practice, services, and outcomes, and address nonconformity.

The child welfare system includes, but is not limited to, each state's child welfare agency, courts, community agencies, foster families, service providers, parents, and youth. A team of people from the federal government (Children's Bureau) and each state works together through the CFSRs to improve services and outcomes. During the review, the Children's Bureau works with the state to look at specific cases and talks with people involved in those cases (for example, youth, parents, caseworkers).

Outcomes: The CFSR examines whether children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system have positive outcomes in three areas: safety, permanency, and well-being. Some of the questions asked to assess these outcomes include:

Safety

- Is the state supporting families to protect children from abuse and neglect?
- Is the state working to keep children with their families?
- Are readily accessible services available to families to help them acquire the skills and resources needed to safely reunify with and care for their children?

Permanency

- If children and youth come into foster care, has the state helped them maintain contact with people who are important to them (family members, friends, people in their communities)?
- While in foster care, have children and youth been moved to different homes only when it is in their best interests (for example, safer, closer to home, more appropriate)?

Well-Being

- Have services provided to families improved their ability to care for their children?
- Are children and youth getting the services they need to be healthy and successful? What about physical health, mental health, and educational services?

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

1. Statewide Information System

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

2. Case Review System

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

3. Quality Assurance System

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

4. Staff and Provider Training

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

5. Service Array and Resource Development

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

6. Agency Responsiveness to the Community

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

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

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

The CFSR Process

The CFSR begins with a statewide assessment. The statewide assessment provides an opportunity for states to gather and analyze information to determine how the state is doing in meeting outcomes and systemic factors requirements. Next is the onsite review, where a team of people from the Children's Bureau, child welfare agency staff, and other system partners review the practices within a state to look at how the system is working. The onsite review process includes:

- Case reviews: Reviews of all documentation associated with specific children/youth or families' child welfare cases
- Case-related interviews: One-on-one interviews with people from the cases reviewed to talk about their experiences
- Stakeholder interviews: Group interviews with people who interact with or work within the child welfare system to talk about how the child welfare system is working

After reviewing all the information received, the Children's Bureau determines how well the state is meeting the needs of children and families and documents the results in a Final Report. If necessary, the Children's Bureau requires states to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address areas needing improvement.

Here are some things you may be asked about during case-related interviews or stakeholder interviews:

- Communication with your caseworker (for example, quality, frequency)
- Whether your important connections (such as with siblings, other family members, teachers, and coaches) were supported
- Resources, services, and supports that the state did or did not provide to you or your family

Get Involved

The CFSRs bring people together who can make a difference in the state child welfare system. Hearing from youth about their experience is crucial. Youth with lived experience often understand how the system works (or doesn't work) and have ideas about how to improve it because they have experienced the child welfare system first-hand.

You can be involved in the CFSRs in several ways:

Statewide Assessment



You can work with people from the child welfare agency, courts, service providers, and foster parents to develop the statewide assessment by providing information about your experiences with child welfare services.

PIPs and Other Ways to Get Involved



- You can help develop your state's PIP by sharing your ideas about changes you would like to see made in the child welfare system and whether improvements are making a difference
- You can talk with other youth in foster care about the CFSRs and how they can get involved.
- You can help the state and federal team select youth to be a part of group interviews.
- You can work with your state's Youth Advisory Group and look for ways that the group can provide information during the CFSRs about suggestions for improvement.
- You can be a reviewer or participate in case reviews.

Onsite Review



You can participate in interviews to share your perspective on how well the agency provided services to you and how you may have been affected.

Your Voice Matters

The voice of youth is critical to the CFSR process. Making positive changes that help children and youth in the child welfare system starts with understanding what you have experienced. States can best do this by engaging with and listening to you to learn about what is or is not working. Additionally, if you would like to make your voice heard, you can email cw@jbsinternational.com to get connected with your state's CFSR contact to be a part of this work. You can also consider working with your state youth engagement opportunity groups if your state has any (e.g., youth advisory boards, councils).



More Information

Additional information on the reviews is available on the Children's Bureau's website at <https://acf.gov/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews> and the CFSR Information Portal at <https://www.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/>

Information about the CFSR in your state and opportunities for your involvement may be available on the state child welfare agency's website. A list of state child welfare agency websites is at https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=16
