

# Children's Bureau

## Round 4 Child and Family Services Reviews

### Fact Sheet



### Background and History

The Children's Bureau, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, administers the review process known as the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The reviews were established by the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act. In 2000, the Children's Bureau published a final rule in the Federal Register to establish a process for monitoring state child welfare programs. The review process is designed to meet statutory and regulatory requirements to provide oversight of states' compliance with the requirements in titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. Under the rule, states are assessed for substantial conformity with federal requirements for child welfare services. The CFSR process enables the CB to (1) ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements; (2) determine what is 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.

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 CFSR Process

In the CFSR, the Children's Bureau, along with the state, considers states' performance in 3 areas or domains that are specified in the law and regulation: Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being.

Through the CFSRs, the Children's Bureau also determines states' performance on 7 systemic factors. The systemic factors, specified in regulation, are associated with federal Child and Family Services Plan

(CFSP) requirements. All states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico are required to complete and submit a CFSP every 5 years along with annual updates on the progress and services covered in the plan.

The systemic factors refer to systems within a state that should promote – if routinely functioning statewide – positive child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The systemic factors include (1) the statewide information system; (2) the case review

system; (3) the quality assurance system; (4) staff and provider training; (5) the service array and resource development; (6) agency responsiveness to the community; and (7) foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention.

States develop and implement Program Improvement Plans after each review to address those areas not found in substantial conformity.

The domains include **7 outcomes:**

#### Safety

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

#### Permanency

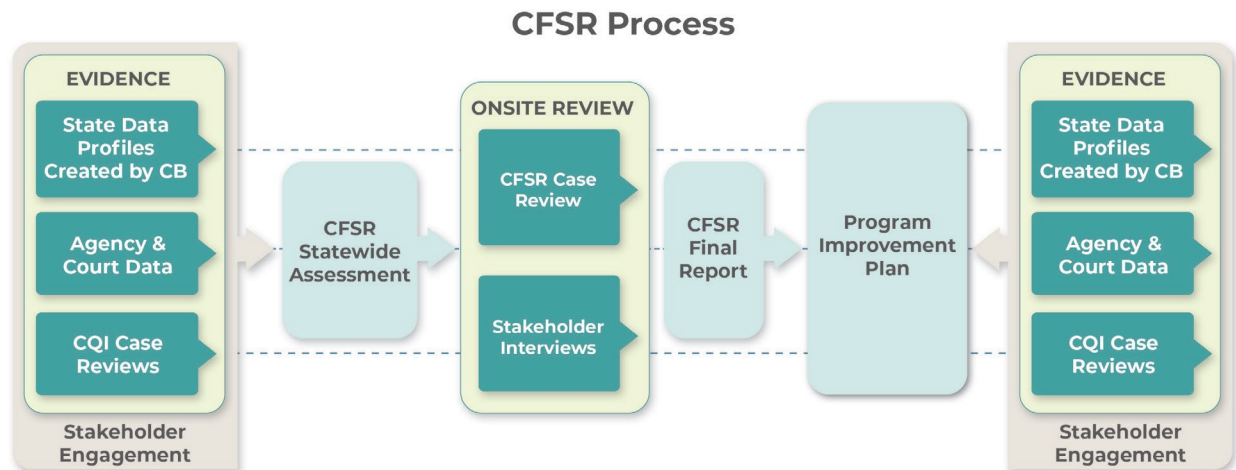
- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

#### Well-Being

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

## The CFSR Process

The CFSRs are a partnership between federal and state staff. The process is explained below.



**Statewide Assessment.** The statewide assessment provides an opportunity for states to gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data and evidence to evaluate their child welfare programs and practices. The statewide assessment begins with the consideration of the state's performance on the CFSR data profile. The Children's Bureau creates the data profile using the states' administrative data (from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System [AFCARS] and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System [NCANDS]) and sends it to the state. In addition to the CFSR data profile, states use their own qualitative and administrative data along with relevant data from agency partners and stakeholders to examine performance and systemic factor functioning. The statewide assessment is written by the state in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders, including those with lived experience, to demonstrate how well

the systems are functioning. The information captured in the statewide assessment informs the Children's Bureau's substantial conformity determinations and is used to inform subsequent phases of the CFSR.

**Onsite Review.** A joint federal-state team conducts an onsite review of the state child welfare program. The onsite review phase of the CFSR includes (1) case reviews, which include interviews with key case participants, and (2) interviews with child welfare system stakeholders and partners, such as courts, community agencies, foster families, caseworkers, service providers, and parents and youth served by the child welfare system. The extent of stakeholder interviews varies depending on the information provided in the statewide assessment.

States meeting certain criteria may conduct their own case reviews and case-specific interviews using the federal Onsite Review

Instrument and Instructions and submit the results to the Children's Bureau in lieu of a Children's Bureau-led review conducted in a 1-week timeframe.

### Get Involved

Successful systemic improvement begins with accurately assessing child welfare systems' performance and identifying challenges and root causes. This is foundational for identifying and implementing the best solutions. The CB encourages the involvement of a wide range of individuals in the review process. Actively engaging those who work in and experience the child welfare system is essential for gathering the best information for making assessments and identifying, implementing, and monitoring effective strategies.

State child welfare agency staff, agency partners, and stakeholders involved in the CFSR process:

- Child welfare agency director, county directors, and program managers
- Youth and parents served by the agency
- Court Improvement Program directors
- Judges
- Attorneys for the agency and for parents
- Guardians ad litem and attorneys for children
- Members of administrative review bodies
- Supervisors and caseworkers from the public child welfare agency and private agencies
- Relative caregivers, and foster and adoptive parents
- Tribal leaders and Tribal child welfare staff, including program administrators, caseworkers, and supervisors
- Law enforcement representatives
- Representatives of Kinship Navigator Programs
- Major service providers

**Program Improvement Plan.** After the onsite review, states determined not to be in substantial conformity with one or more of the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors are required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address all areas of nonconformity. The PIP provides an opportunity for the state child welfare agency, partners, and stakeholders to use information from the statewide assessment and the onsite review to develop, implement, and monitor a state-specific plan to strengthen the functioning of the systemic factors and improve outcomes for the children and families served. Stakeholders, partners, and youth and parents served by the child welfare system should be involved in improvement planning efforts and can assist the agency in developing, supporting, and monitoring the PIPs. States must successfully complete their plans to avoid financial penalties for nonconformity.

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#### **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> or from the CFSR Information Portal at <https://www.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/resources>. Information about the CFSR in your state and opportunities for your involvement may be available on the state child welfare agency's website. A list of state child welfare agency websites is at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS\\_ID= 16](https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=16)

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