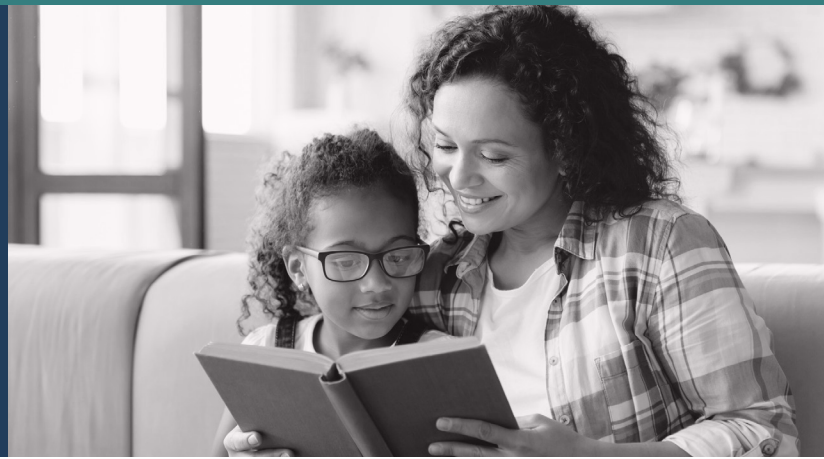


Children's Bureau

Round 4 Child and Family Services Reviews

Fact Sheet for Parents and Caregivers



What Are the Child and Family Services Reviews?

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) enable the Children's Bureau to: (1) determine conformity with federal child welfare requirements; (2) learn about the experiences of children, youth, and families receiving child welfare services; and (3) assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

The reviews help states use the data and information collected to identify strengths and areas that need improvement within their agencies and programs. The reviews also provide states an opportunity to consider and critically analyze evidence of disparities in decision-making processes, programs, and policies that may contribute to inequity in services and outcomes for people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality in the child welfare system.

The goal of the reviews is to help states improve child welfare services and achieve the following seven outcomes for families and children who receive services:

Safety

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

Some of the questions asked to assess Safety include:

- Are children and youth safe in their homes?
- Can they stay with their families?
- If they are not safe, can their families receive the help they need to take care of their children?

Permanency

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

Some of the questions asked to assess Permanency include:

- If children and youth come into foster care, have they stayed in contact with the people who are important to them (for example, family members, 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, culturally appropriate)?

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.

Some of the questions asked to assess Well-Being include:

- Have the services and supports provided to families improved their ability to care for their children?

- How were parents involved in the development of their case plan?
- Are children and youth getting the services they need to be healthy and successful? What about physical health, mental health, and educational services?

Through the CFSRs, the Children's Bureau also determines states' performance on seven systemic factors. The systemic factors refer to systems within a state that should be in place to promote positive child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The seven systemic factors reviewed are:

1. Statewide Information System

- Examines whether states collect data about all children and youth in foster care (i.e., 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 agencies listen to and include input from people involved in the child welfare system (for example, parents and caregivers, 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

Parents and caregivers include but are not limited to:

- Birth parents
- Grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives
- Stepparents

The CFSR Process

The CFSR begins with a statewide assessment. The statewide assessment provides information on how the state is doing on the safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and systemic factors. Next is the onsite review, where a joint federal-state team reviews the practices within a state. The onsite review process includes:

- Reviewing case files and interviewing the children, parents, caseworker, and other people involved in the case (case-related interviews)
- Interviewing people involved in the larger child welfare system to look at how the system is working (stakeholder interviews)

After reviewing all the data and information received, the Children's Bureau determines how well the state is doing in meeting federal requirements, including providing services and meeting the needs of children and families. 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.

Get Involved

Hearing from parents and caregivers throughout the CFSR and PIP processes about their experiences is crucial for making the child welfare system better. Families who share their experiences can help child welfare systems learn more about how helpful the system is or is not, the challenges parents and caregivers face when trying to get services, and ways in which the child welfare system can improve how agencies work with children and families.

As a parent or caregiver, you can help improve the child welfare system in a number of ways:

Statewide Assessment



You can help develop the statewide assessment and provide information about your experience with child welfare services.

Onsite Review



You can participate in case-related interviews or stakeholder interviews to share your perspective on how well the agency provided services to your family and how you may have been affected.

Program Improvement Plan



You can help develop your state's Program Improvement Plan. You can share your ideas about changes you would like to see made in the child welfare system.

Here are some things that parents and caregivers may be asked about during case-related interviews or stakeholder interviews:

- The development of your case plan (for example, were you able to provide input and whether the plan addressed your needs)
- Communication with your caseworker (for example, quality, frequency)
- The services provided to you and your family and whether they were helpful and met your needs
- Visitation with your child(ren)

Your Voice Matters

The voices of parents and caregivers are important to the CFSR and PIP processes. Parents and caregivers can share experiences and recommend changes to the child welfare system that lead to improvements. The CFSRs and PIPs provide an opportunity for you to be heard and provide valuable input on critical child welfare agency policies and programs and the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of services that affect the lives of children and families involved in the child welfare system. Your experience and viewpoints about the child welfare system can make a difference for other children and families. The Children’s Bureau encourages the involvement of a wide range of individuals in the review process. Parents and caregivers with lived experience provide an important perspective. Meaningful partnerships with parents, caregivers, the child welfare agency, and other child welfare system stakeholders and partners can inform system-level improvements and support a systemic approach toward assessing disparities and promoting equity throughout the child welfare system and the outcomes achieved.



More Information

Additional information on the reviews is available on the Children’s Bureau’s website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews> and 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/?CWIGFunction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=16
