

# Child and Family Services Reviews

## STATE LEGAL-JUDICIAL SPECIALIST



### What is the State Legal-Judicial Specialist?

The state's selected Legal-Judicial Specialist will join the state's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) team to assist and support an elevated understanding of how legal and judicial policies and practices contribute to the outcomes achieved as part of the CFSR's review of the state's child welfare system.

State Legal-Judicial Specialists are experts in state child welfare laws and legal and judicial practices. They will assist in providing context and explanation for performance on specific items within cases in the state's foster care sample related to legal and judicial policies and practices arising during the CFSR. They will also answer questions regarding legal and judicial policies and practices. Adding this time-limited role to the state's CFSR team is encouraged but not mandatory.<sup>1</sup>

The role of the State Legal-Judicial Specialist will be discussed during CFSR planning calls between the Children's Bureau and the state. Once the child welfare agency and Court Improvement Program (CIP) have jointly decided to add this role to the state's CFSR team, the individual(s) to serve as the State Legal-Judicial Specialist(s) should be identified no later than 6 months before the onsite review.

#### Who:

A person with a legal background chosen by the CIP and child welfare agency in consultation with the federal team. They are able to take on this time-limited assignment and:

- Have in-depth knowledge of legal and judicial policies, practices, and systems within the state;
- Understand federal and state child welfare laws;
- Have direct child welfare practice experience (do not need to be in current practice); and
- Have CFSR experience (preferred).
- Suggested individuals:
  - CIP Director or staff
  - Director of state agency/organization that represents parents
  - Director of state agency/organization that represents children
  - Retired judge or jurist in residence
  - Other court personnel with relevant background and experience

#### Responsibilities:

- Participate in state training on the CFSR Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions and case review process.
- Work with the CFSR Unit Legal-Judicial Specialist to develop legal and judicial practice considerations for reviewers.
- Provide consultation to reviewers, quality assurance staff, and the federal team regarding any legal or judicial-related questions. (Will not give case ratings or provide opinions on how to rate case review items.)
- During a state's onsite review, examine specific items within the foster care cases to support the relevant inclusion of legal and judicial practices and policies, offer clarifying questions, and/or provide information to ensure that those practices and policies are accurately understood and captured.
- In the absence of the CIP Director and with the consent of the child welfare agency, participate in legal and judicial stakeholder interviews, as requested.
- For CB-Led Reviews, attend the onsite review with the review team for the designated week.
- For State-Led Reviews, work with the child welfare agency to determine the cadence and logistics of the State Legal-Judicial Specialist's review.

<sup>1</sup> The time commitment for this role includes up to 3 days for training on the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions, and reviewing a minimum of 40 foster care cases during the onsite review, which should each take no more than 1 hour to review.