



# Connections Between the Court Improvement Program and the Child and Family Services Review

## What are the Child and Family Services Reviews?

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs)<sup>1</sup> are designed to ensure that state child welfare systems provide quality services to children and families. These reviews identify practice strengths and challenges in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. They also examine identified systemic factors that affect the child welfare systems' ability to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

The CFSR has two phases: (1) the statewide assessment, where states self-assess child welfare programs and practices; and (2) the onsite review, which includes case reviews and interviews with child welfare system stakeholders and partners. After the onsite review, states determined not to be in substantial conformity are required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address areas needing improvement. This structure is embedded in a continuous quality improvement framework.



### Why Get Involved?

Legal and judicial communities are an integral part of every state's child welfare system. The information judges receive, and the decisions they make, affect how cases progress and, ultimately, how children's safety and permanency and families' well-being are achieved. This is why the Children's Bureau encourages the involvement of a wide range of legal and judicial professionals early and throughout the CFSR and PIP processes.

Meaningful input from a broad array of legal and judicial stakeholders, and collaboration with other system partners, are useful not only for the CFSR and PIP processes, but also for Court Improvement Program (CIP) projects. CIPs across the nation have projects in areas the CFSR examines. The data and evidence collected during the CFSR can be used to support any of the required (or other) CIP projects. Below are common goals, associated CIP projects, and potential overlap with outcomes and systemic factors that are the focus of the CFSR.

## Common Goals of Child Welfare Agencies and Legal and Judicial Communities



*CIP Project Areas<sup>2</sup>*

*Corresponding CFSR Items/Systemic Factors<sup>3</sup>*

### Keeping Families Together

**32 CIPs** have projects on preventing child maltreatment.

**34 CIPs** have projects on safety decision-making (practices in substantiation, removal/return, and decisions about safety in out-of-home placements).



**CFSR Items 2** (preventing foster care entry/re-entry) **and 3** (safety and risk assessments and services).

**Staff and Provider Training Systemic Factor** (caseworkers provided with quality training).

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the CFSR and how legal and judicial professionals can participate in all phases, see Round 4 [CFSR Fact Sheet for Legal and Judicial Communities](#).

<sup>2</sup> Capacity Building Center for Courts, National Report on Court Improvement Programs Projects and Initiatives FY 2022 (2022).

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the outcomes and systemic factors, see [CFSR Quick Reference Items List](#).

## Achieving Timely Permanency

**50 CIPs** have projects to improve timeliness of hearings or achievement of timely permanency.

**53 CIPs** have projects to improve the timeliness or quality of court hearings, including court observation, specialty or pilot courts, and appeals.



**CFSR Items 4** (placement stability), **5** (timely and appropriate permanency), **and 6** (achieving permanency goal).

**Case Review System** (timeliness of court hearings), **Service Array and Resource Development** (availability of services for children and families), **and Staff and Provider Training Systemic Factors**.

## Promoting and Maintaining Family Relationships and Connections

**3 CIPs** have projects on social network supports.

**7 CIPs** have projects on family time/visitation.



**CFSR Items 7** (placing siblings together), **8** (family time), **9** (preserving connections), **10** (placement with relatives), **and 11** (maintaining family relationships).

## Meaningfully Engaging Families

**6 CIPs** have projects on engagement and participation of parties—most projects focus on parent, youth, foster family, and caregiver engagement.

**1 CIP** has a project on notice to relatives.



**CFSR Items 12** (assessing and providing services to children, parents, and foster parents), **13** (case planning with parents and children), **14** (caseworker visits with children), **and 15** (caseworker visits with parents).

**Case Review System** (engaging parents in a written case plan and notices sent to relatives, caregivers, and foster parents of court hearings), **Service Array and Resource Development, and Staff and Provider Training Systemic Factors**.

## Well-Being: Education and Psychotropic Medication

**9 CIPs** have projects on education.

**1 CIP** has a project on psychotropic medication.



**CFSR Items 16** (assessing and addressing educational needs) **and 18** (addressing mental health/behavioral needs).

## Quality Legal Representation

**Newly required CIP Project**—most CIP projects focus on training, attorney practice standards, multidisciplinary models of representation, and pre-petition legal representation.



The CFSR can help examine the quality of legal representation for parents, children, and the child welfare agency in the state. High-quality legal representation can be standalone or part of strategies in a PIP to improve systemic factors or outcomes.

# Collaboration among system partners to improve outcomes for children and families

**14 CIPs** have projects on sharing data with child welfare agencies.

**2 CIPs** have projects on collaborating with other agencies around normalcy/reasonable prudent parent standards/practices.

**24 CIPs** have projects on Tribal collaboration.



**Agency Responsiveness to the Community Systemic Factor** (state child welfare agency listening to and including input from people involved in the child welfare system).

## Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance (JCAMP)

The CFSR focuses heavily on child welfare agency practices in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being for children and is complementary to the [Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance](#) (JCAMP). Implementation of the JCAMP measures will assist states in more deeply understanding how the operations and practices of the legal and judicial systems fit into the overall outcomes children and families experience. When examining CFSR findings and PIP needs, consider whether JCAMP measures would help provide additional and meaningful data from the legal-judicial perspective to determine contributing factors and root causes.

### For more information about the CFSR and how it relates to Court Improvement Program projects:

Contact [CB Regional Program Managers](#) or [Christine Kiesel](#), Legal-Judicial Child Welfare Specialist/Contractor in CFSR Unit, and [Bridget Koza](#), Legal-Judicial Child Welfare Specialist/Contractor in CFSR Unit. CIPs can also contact their [CBCC liaison](#) or the CBCC Center Director, [Jennifer Renne](#), for support with legal and judicial engagement in the CFSRs.

**To get involved in your state's CFSR, contact your state's CIP personnel.**

## More Resources:

[State Legal-Judicial Specialist](#) is a new recommended role for Round 4 of the CFSRs 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. A CIP director or staff member could fill this role, or the CIP can assist with supporting this role within the state's CFSR team.

States can now claim title IV-E administrative costs for attorneys and support staff providing independent legal representation to children and parents as well as legal representation of Tribes in child welfare proceedings. States can also use title IV-E funds for children who are candidates for title IV-E foster care and their parents when court involvement is not required, which includes pre-petition/pre-removal legal representation for parents. As of December 2022, 27 states and 4 Tribes have received IV-E reimbursement funds for legal representation of parents or children in child welfare cases. See also:

- [High Quality Legal Representation for All Parties in Child Welfare Proceedings](#), ACYF-CB-IM-17-02.
- [Utilizing Title IV-E Funding to Support High Quality Legal Representation for Children and Youth who are in Foster Care, Candidates for Foster Care and their Parents and to Promote Child and Family Well-being](#), ACYF-CB-IM-21-06.

- ["Technical Bulletin Frequently Asked Questions: Independent Legal Representation,"](#) Children's Bureau, July 20, 2020.

Additionally, robust, ongoing training for judges; attorneys for parents, children, and youth; and title IV-B/IV-E agency attorneys can be claimed as professional partner training under title IV-E training plans.

- In fiscal year 2022, CIPs held an average of 22 training events per year and trained an average of 398 judges and attorneys annually. Also, 18 CIPs reported that the child welfare agency offers professional partner trainings to judges, attorneys, and court personnel as part of their Title IV-E Training Plans.
- [Utilizing Title IV-E Funding to Support High Quality Legal Representation for Children and Youth who are in Foster Care, Candidates for Foster Care and their Parents and to Promote Child and Family Well-being](#), ACYF-CB-IM-21-06.
- ["Technical Bulletin Frequently Asked Questions: Independent Legal Representation,"](#) Children's Bureau, July 20, 2020.



### 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> or from the CFSR Information Portal at <https://www.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/resources>. Additional information about the Court Improvement Program is available on the Children's Bureau website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/grant-funding/court-improvement-program>