

Children's Bureau

Round 4 Child and Family Services Reviews

Fact Sheet for Community Providers



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.

As part of this work, the reviews 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 reviews help states identify strengths and areas needing improvement within their agencies and programs. Community providers help inform child welfare agencies what services are available, accessible, and can be individualized to meet the needs of children and families. They can also help child welfare agencies learn about how well

resources and services are being coordinated with federally funded organizations to address the needs of mutual populations being served. In the CFSR, the Children's Bureau encourages states to consider the experiences of populations within the state that may encounter bias, inequities, or underservice either in their communities or by the systems seeking to serve them with a focus on variations in treatment and outcomes for members of those populations, and how their child welfare system processes, practices, and procedures may either exacerbate or seek to ameliorate inequities.

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.

Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for families.

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.

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

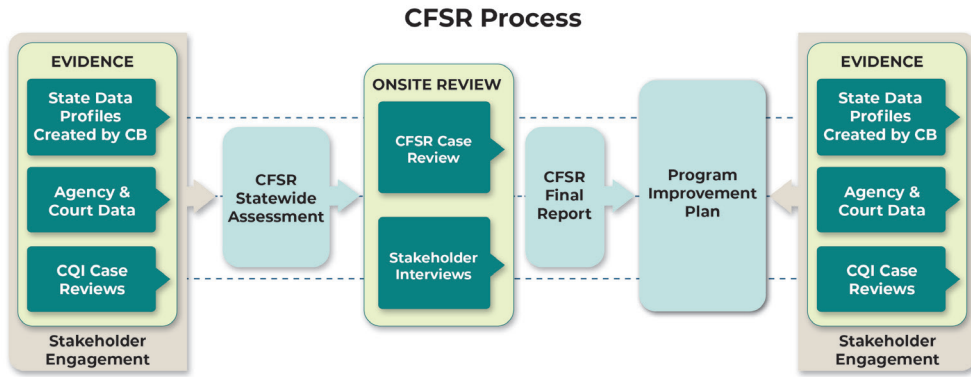
1. Statewide Information System
2. Case Review System
3. Quality Assurance System
4. Staff and Provider Training
5. Service Array and Resource Development
6. Agency Responsiveness to the Community
7. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

As a community provider, your participation in the CFSRs is important. The CFSRs provide an opportunity for you to be heard and provide your valuable input on how well the child welfare system is meeting the needs of children and families in your community. Community providers can share their understanding of the families being served. They can describe what has worked well, and the challenges experienced while serving families and children.

¹ For more information on the outcomes and systemic factors, see the CFSR Quick Reference Items List at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cfsr_quick_reference_list.pdf

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 states' performance on the CFSR data profile. The Children's Bureau creates the data profile using the state's 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 to achieve child and family safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. 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 the 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 community providers, courts, foster families, caseworkers, 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 revised 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.

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 specified in the state's CFSR Final Report. 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.

Findings From the CFSRs

Round 3 of the CFSRs found that many states had challenges with providing an available and accessible array of services and individualizing those services for children and families. In 45% of approximately 1,500 applicable cases, children and families received appropriate services to prevent children's entry or re-entry into foster care. States were most challenged in providing the following services to children and families:

- Substance abuse treatment
- Domestic violence services
- Behavioral/mental health treatment
- Trauma-informed services

Community providers include a wide range of public, nonprofit, private and faith-based, and community-based organizations serving children and families in the state. Examples include:

- Mental and physical health and substance abuse treatment providers
- Family support, family prevention and early intervention and prevention service providers, domestic violence providers and shelters
- Child placement agencies
- Independent living and youth services providers
- Child and family advocates
- The Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) lead agency and other prevention partners such as Children's Trust Funds, and the Children's Justice Act grantee
- Representatives from federal programs serving the same population of children and families served by the child welfare agency, e.g., Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Social Security, child care, and housing

The reviews assess state efforts to improve safety, permanency, and well-being through exploration of questions such as:

- Did the agency conduct an assessment of the parents' and children's mental/behavioral health needs initially and on an ongoing basis to inform case planning decisions?
- Did the agency provide appropriate services to address the parents' and children's mental/behavioral health needs?
- How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that services are available and accessible in all jurisdictions that assess and address child and family needs for a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents, and help children achieve permanency?
- How well is the service array and resource development system functioning statewide to ensure that such services can be individualized (i.e., linguistic, cultural, developmental) to meet child and family needs?

Initial and ongoing assessments that accurately assessed children's needs occurred in a little over 70% of cases, allowing children to get the services they need in approximately 60% of cases. The agency provided appropriate services during the period under review for parents' needs in 40% of cases. When appropriate and relevant services were provided to families, it helped to prevent child(ren)'s entry or re-entry into foster care.

Get Involved

Successful systemic improvement begins with accurately assessing child welfare systems' performance and identifying challenges and root causes, including the causes of inequities and disparities in services and outcomes. This assessment is foundational for identifying and implementing the best solutions. 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. Community providers understand the unique needs of the children and families they serve. Therefore, the involvement of community providers is critical throughout the entire CFSR and PIP processes.

States work with a variety of community providers to ensure positive outcomes for children. As a community provider, you can help improve the child welfare system in a number of ways:

Statewide Assessment



Community providers can participate in the development of the statewide assessment by reviewing and analyzing the agency's data and information, providing additional data and information, and/or assisting with data collection to determine how well the child welfare system is meeting the needs of children and families. They can also encourage other providers to get involved and can support persons with lived experience to be involved in the statewide assessment.

Onsite Review



Community providers can participate in stakeholder interviews to assess systemic factor functioning and help their state review team recruit and prepare other stakeholders to participate in the interviews. They could serve on the review team and review cases or help families prepare for case-related interviews. Community providers may also be asked to participate in case-related interviews.

Program Improvement Plan



Community providers can participate in the development of their state's Program Improvement Plan. They can help identify and develop strategies to improve outcomes for children and families and tailor those strategies for their communities and the populations they serve. Later, they can help implement those strategies and provide feedback to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies.



More Information

Community providers can learn about the review process by becoming familiar with the outcomes of their state's last review. 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