

Child and Family Services Reviews Aggregate Report

Round 3: Fiscal Years 2015–2018



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children & Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

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Executive Summary

This federal Child and Family Services Reviews Aggregate Report presents key findings from the analyses of state performance data for the states reviewed across all 4 years of Round 3 of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). This report describes results from an examination of the strengths and areas needing improvement identified across those states.

Overview of the Child and Family Services Reviews

The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA), which were updated in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to review state child and family services programs to monitor conformity with the requirements in titles IV-B (Child and Family Services) and IV-E (Federal Payments for Foster Care and Adoption Assistance) of the SSA. The Children’s Bureau, of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within HHS, implements the CFSRs.¹

The purpose of the CFSRs is to help states improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families who receive services through the child welfare system. The CFSRs are an important tool that enables the Children’s Bureau to: (1) ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements; (2) determine what is actually 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 CFSRs are used to assess state performance on 7 outcomes and 7 systemic factors, comprising the results of an assessment of 36 individual items. The CFSR incorporates two key phases: the statewide assessment and an onsite review of child and family service outcomes and program systems. The CFSR is followed by the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) phase, in which states not in substantial conformity with federal standards respond to findings of the CFSR. Together, this report refers to these activities as the CFSR process.

The first round of CFSRs occurred during federal fiscal years (FYs) 2001–2004. After each state’s first CFSR, states entered into a PIP phase. The second round of CFSRs occurred during FYs 2007–2010. After each state’s second CFSR, states again developed and, upon Children’s Bureau approval,

implemented PIPs. The third round of CFSRs began in FY 2015 and ended in FY 2018. States are currently developing PIPs or implementing their approved Round 3 PIPs.

Round 3 CFSR Process

In FY 2015, in partnership with states, the Children’s Bureau began to conduct the third round of CFSRs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.² During FY 2015, CFSRs were completed for 8 states; during FY 2016, CFSRs were completed for 16 states; during FY 2017, CFSRs were completed for 14 states; and during FY 2018, CFSRs were completed for the remaining states.

In Round 3, each state’s CFSR consisted of a statewide assessment of the state’s child welfare capacities and performance, and a review of a minimum of 65 cases, including foster care and in-home services cases. As part of the case reviews, the review teams examined all case documentation and conducted interviews with case participants. In addition, the review teams conducted interviews and focus groups with a variety of stakeholders. These included, for example, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys. Substantial conformity was determined by state performance on 7 outcomes (composed of 18 items) and 7 systemic factors (composed of 18 items).³

To support ongoing program improvement, the third round of the CFSRs assessed state performance on the same safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and systemic factors as those examined in Rounds 1 and 2. However, because the Children’s Bureau made several changes to the CFSR process and items relevant to performance—based on lessons learned during the second round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field—a state’s performance in the third round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the second round.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau. (n.d.). Children’s Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews fact sheet. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_general_factsheet.pdf

² For purposes of this report, “states” includes all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. The Puerto Rico CFSR was canceled due to the extraordinary demands on Puerto Rico as the result of a hurricane.

³ The Round 3 CFSR Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions (OSRI) (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_r3_osri.pdf) and the Stakeholder Interview Guide (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/round3-cfsr-stakeholder-interview-guide>) refer to resource parents as “foster parents.” Resource parents are defined as related or non-related caregivers who have been given responsibility for care of the child by the agency while the child is under the placement and care responsibility and supervision of the agency. This includes pre-adoptive parents if the adoption has not been finalized. This report uses the two terms, “resource parents” and “foster parents,” interchangeably.

The data from the case review component of the CFSRs conducted during Round 3 encompass 4,067 cases reviewed. Of those, 2,486 are cases in which children were in foster care at some time during the period under review (PUR). There also are 1,581 cases involving families who received in-home services—cases that were opened for child welfare services at some time during the PUR and the child(ren) remained in the home and no children in the family were in foster care during the PUR. Of the 1,581 cases involving families receiving in-home services, 172 were designated as differential/alternative response, an in-home services case type that was included for the first time in Round 3.⁴

In addition, in Round 3, states with established case review processes that meet Children’s Bureau criteria were permitted, upon approval, to participate in a State Conducted Case Review process rather than a Traditional Review. In Round 3, all case reviews, regardless of the type of review, were conducted using the federal case review instrument, the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions (OSRI).

The primary purposes of this report are to (1) provide a broader picture of child welfare performance with respect to achieving the outcomes and systemic factors assessed through the CFSRs in Round 3 and (2) enhance understanding of the practices and procedures associated with achieving these outcomes.

Round 3 Findings

The Children’s Bureau has established very high standards of performance for the CFSRs. The standards are based on the belief that, because child welfare agencies work with our nation’s most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable. Furthermore, high standards ensure ongoing attention to achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being. Although states may not meet these high standards with regard to every measure, all states are engaged in program

improvement to address areas of need and to strengthen practices, programs, and systems.

This report presents the findings for the 51 states reviewed during FYs 2015–2018—all 4 years of Round 3 of the CFSRs. Although the results of all Round 3 reviews are available, variations in the size, structure, and timing of the reviews means that it is inappropriate to compare or generalize about state or national performance.

The 51 states reviewed in Round 3 met few of the performance standards established by the Children’s Bureau for the 7 outcomes. Four states achieved substantial conformity with **Safety Outcome 1**: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. Six states achieved substantial conformity with **Well-Being Outcome 2**: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs. No states achieved substantial conformity with the other five outcomes.

More states were successful in achieving substantial conformity with the 7 systemic factors, with more than half of states achieving substantial conformity with the systemic factors measuring **Agency Responsiveness to the Community** (47 states), **Statewide Information System** (27 states), and **Quality Assurance System** (26 states). Performance on other systemic factors was not as consistently strong across states, including **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention** (14 states), **Staff and Provider Training** (13 states), **Service Array and Resource Development** (3 states), and **Case Review System** (2 states).



⁴ Given the small number of cases identified as differential/alternative response, these cases were combined with other cases involving families receiving in-home services for reporting purposes.



Introduction

This report presents key findings from analyses of state performance during all 4 years of Round 3 of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs), conducted during fiscal years (FYs) 2015–2018. It provides a picture of the strengths and areas needing improvement determined by the CFSRs for the 50 states and the District of Columbia reviewed in Round 3.⁵

⁵ For purposes of this report, “states” includes all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. The Puerto Rico CFSR was canceled due to the extraordinary demands on Puerto Rico as the result of a hurricane.

History and Purpose of the Child and Family Services Reviews

The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA), which were updated in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (§ 203 of P.L. 105–89), authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to review state child and family services programs to monitor conformity with the requirements in titles IV-B (Child and Family Services) and IV-E (Federal Payments for Foster Care and Adoption Assistance) of the SSA.⁶ The Children’s Bureau, of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within HHS, implements the CFSRs with the goal of helping states improve their child welfare services to best achieve the outcomes of safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. The CFSRs are used to assess state performance on 7 outcomes and 7 systemic factors resulting from an assessment of 36 individual items.

The CFSR reflects the basic purposes of publicly supported child and family services: to assure the safety of all children; to assure permanent, nurturing homes for children; and to enhance the well-being of children and their families. The CFSR focuses on results and determining whether child welfare practices, procedures, and requirements are achieving desired outcomes for children and families who receive services through the child welfare system. In addition, the CFSR assists states in improving their systems and enhancing their capacity to serve children and families.

The CFSRs were designed to promote collaboration among the Children’s Bureau, state agencies, the legal and judicial community, child and family service providers, and the children and families receiving services within each state. The CFSRs are conducted in partnership to ensure that broader perspectives are integrated into program development, review, and improvement. The first round of CFSRs occurred during FYs 2001–2004. The second round of the CFSRs occurred during FYs 2007–2010 and assessed each state’s level of performance on the same outcomes and systemic factors, using consistent, comprehensive case review methodology. Each state, after both CFSRs, entered into a Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

The CFSRs are an important tool that enables the Children’s Bureau to:

- **Ensure** conformity with federal child welfare requirements;
- **Determine** what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and
- **Assist** states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.⁷

For Round 2, several changes were made to the CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field. The key changes to the CFSR case review process that affected the ability to compare performance between Rounds 1 and 2 included:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases
- Stratification to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas
- A higher threshold for substantial conformity with outcomes; i.e., 95% of cases, increased from 90%, rated substantially achieved⁸

Changes were also made in the CFSR process for Round 3. The changes are described later in this report. The third round of CFSRs ran from FYs 2015 to 2018. States are developing PIPs or implementing their Round 3 PIPs as of FY 2020.

Round 3 Changes

The Children’s Bureau has refined the process for federally monitoring titles IV-B and IV-E program requirements for states. Between Rounds 1 and 2 of the CFSRs, the Children’s Bureau instituted a number of changes based on feedback from state administrators. During Round 2, the Children’s Bureau gathered informal feedback from administrators and others involved in the CFSRs, and then issued a Federal

⁶ The regulations specifically pertaining to the CFSRs are detailed in title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Public Welfare, Parts 1355 (CFSRs and Program Improvement Plans), 1356 (title IV-E requirements), and 1357 (title IV-B requirements) and lay out the elements, procedures, and timetables for the CFSRs. Amendments to the SSA were updated in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which referenced the Annual Reports on State Performance (see § 203(a) of Pub. L. No. 105–89).

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau (n.d.), Children’s Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews fact sheet. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_general_factsheet.pdf

⁸ This was required by regulation. See 45 CFR § 1355.34 for the criteria determining substantial conformity.

Register request for public comment (April 5, 2011) about proposed improvements to the process for reviewing titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the CFSR (76 FR 18677). Subsequently, the Children’s Bureau made the following improvements:

- More fully integrated the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) with the CFSR statewide assessment process
- Focused the Statewide Assessment Instrument on particular assessment questions needed for substantial conformity decisions and other regulatory requirements
- Revised the extent or scope of stakeholder interviews conducted during the onsite review, based on the level to which the state demonstrates in the statewide assessment its functioning on each of the systemic factors
- Revised and updated the federal CFSR Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions (OSRI) to address a number of issues, such as by eliminating or combining some items. Examples of such issues include:
 - The low number of applicable cases for a single item in past rounds
 - Similar areas of practice reviewed in multiple items in past rounds
 - Instrument revisions needed to reflect current laws
- In lieu of conducting case reviews during the traditional 1-week timeframe, approved some states meeting Children’s Bureau criteria to conduct their own case reviews using the revised OSRI

Methodology and Scope of This Report

This report presents the state-level and case-level findings for the 51 states reviewed in Round 3. The section on state-level findings on outcomes and items is followed by a description of the case-level data with regard to case characteristics, such as child race/ethnicity, gender, and case type. This is followed by item-by-item breakdowns of the findings. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, some of the figures may not total to 100%. The CFSR requires qualitative information to support case ratings. This information provides useful detail that illuminates performance and highlights common strengths and challenges. In this report, qualitative information is used to illustrate “Practice Strengths” associated with “Strength” ratings, and

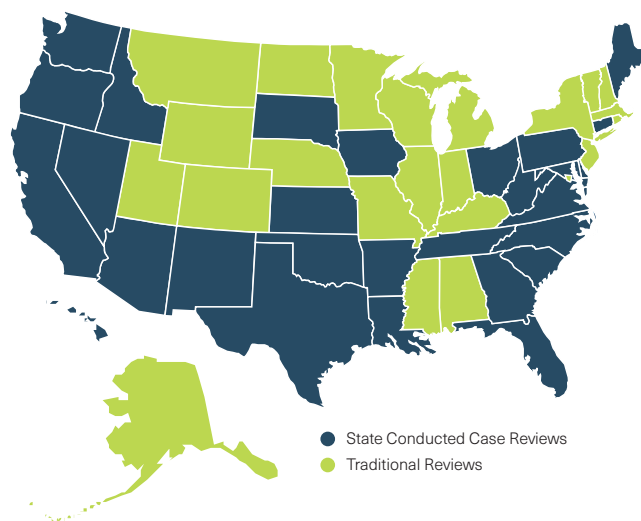
“Practice Concerns” associated with items rated as an Area Needing Improvement (ANI). The most salient explanations of performance are recorded in this report as practice strengths or practice concerns.

Even though all Round 3 reviews are finished, the variations in size, structure, and timing of the reviews mean that it is inappropriate to compare or generalize about state or national performance. These findings should be considered in the following context:

Findings presented here represent performance at a single point in time. Findings encompass CFSR data from a single review for each of the states reviewed in Round 3. The period under review (PUR) for each state’s CFSR includes a finite period of time concluding with the onsite review. States participating in State Conducted Case Reviews may have more than one PUR. Thus, these findings are based on a “snapshot” or “snapshots” of performance for each state.

State sample size may be affected by the type of review. Traditional Reviews are conducted using a sample of 65 cases originating from 3 sites in the state, including 40 children in foster care and 25 families receiving in-home services. State Conducted Case Reviews may include a larger number of cases (i.e., the states participating examined between 65 and 180 cases) across at least 3 sites (with a minimum of 40 children in foster care and 25 families receiving in-home services).

Figure 1: States Reviewed in Round 3 Participating in Traditional and State Conducted Case Reviews





Findings typically represent performance on a small sample of cases from each state. For both Traditional and State Conducted Case Reviews, the review sample size is small in comparison to the overall number of children in care in the state and the number of families receiving in-home services. Consequently, findings should not be viewed as fully representative of statewide performance. Similarly, due to variation among and across state systems, findings resulting from an analysis of CFSR data from all 51 states should not be considered fully representative of the national characteristics of the child welfare system in the United States.

Differences in performance among items, outcomes, and systemic factors cannot be compared. Both within and across states, there are differences in performance across the items, outcomes, and systemic factors assessed. Some items are rated based on the absence of negative outcomes, whereas others are rated based on specific actions taken by state agencies and, in some instances, state agency partners, such as the courts. As a result, performance on the different items cannot be compared. Further, due to variabilities in the data collection and sampling frameworks used to gather information, this report does not compare findings from previous rounds and does not assess links between case-level outcomes/items and state agency-level systemic factors.

CFSR Process and Findings for Round 3

This section describes the CFSR process for Round 3, including the calculation of statewide data indicators, the development of the statewide assessment, and the onsite review, and how these components factor into a determination of state performance on the CFSR and subsequent requirements regarding the preparation of a PIP.

The CFSR Process

The CFSR process is a results-oriented, comprehensive monitoring review system designed to assist states in improving outcomes for children and families who come into contact with the nation's public child welfare systems. HHS developed and implemented this process in response to the mandate of the Social Security Act Amendments of 1994 that required reviews of the states' child and family services.

Information Used to Determine Substantial Conformity in the CFSR Process:

- Statewide Assessment
- Onsite Review of Cases
- Stakeholder Interviews

The CFSR occurs in two distinct phases: (1) the statewide assessment and (2) the onsite review. The CFSR is followed by the PIP, in which states not in substantial conformity with federal requirements respond to findings of the CFSR. Together, this report refers to these activities as the CFSR process, the components of which are discussed below, followed by a detailed discussion of findings from analysis of the CFSR results from 51 states reviewed in Round 3.

Statewide Assessment

In the first phase of the CFSR, each state engages in a comprehensive self-assessment of its child welfare system and submits the findings in a statewide assessment report to ACF for review.

To develop the statewide assessment, the state uses its own qualitative and administrative data, as well as state data profiles provided by the Children's Bureau. The assessment is due to be completed and submitted to ACF within 4 months of the date ACF transmitted information for the statewide assessment to the state. The data profiles provide indicators of performance on safety and permanency outcomes of children served by the state's child welfare system. In Round 3, the data profiles were provided for contextual purposes only; a state's performance on the data indicators was not used to determine substantial conformity with any outcomes.⁹

⁹ See CFSR Technical Bulletin #9, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cfsr-technical-bulletin-9>.

Onsite Review

The onsite review, the second phase of the CFSR, focuses on reviews of individual cases and interviews with selected case participants to assess the state child welfare system’s performance. As noted above, this may take the form of a Traditional Review, similar to Rounds 1 and 2, or a State Conducted Case Review.

In Round 3, there were two options for the case reviews:

- (1) A Traditional Review, which paralleled the case review process from previous rounds in which a joint federal and state team (augmented by “agile staff”) used the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions (OSRI) to review a selection of cases during a 1-week period at 3 different sites (including the largest metro area) in the state; or
- (2) A State Conducted Case Review conducted by state staff for up to a 6-month period using the OSRI. States needed prior approval from the Children’s Bureau to use the State Conducted Case Review process for their CFSRs.

During the onsite review, data are collected through systematic review of a limited number of case records and interviews of key case participants, including but not limited to parents, children (when appropriate), resource parents, and child welfare agency caseworkers. Case review data are collected using the OSRI.

All CFSRs also involve stakeholder interviews. Federal staff conduct interviews with selected stakeholders to gather additional information about routine statewide functioning of systemic factors when there is not adequate information in the statewide assessment to determine systemic factor item ratings or when the state requests assistance in collecting information about challenges affecting systemic factor functioning. Stakeholder interviews are required by regulation to assess the state’s service array (i.e., the Service Array and Resource Development systemic factor). These interviews may include, but are not limited to, youth, parents, resource and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, the legal and judicial community, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys. Stakeholder interview data are collected using the Stakeholder Interview Guide.

The onsite review culminates in an assessment of the 7 outcomes (encompassing 18 case review items) and 7 systemic factors (encompassing 18 systemic factor items).

Figures 2A and 2B below show the CFSR outcomes, systemic factors, and individual items that comprise each outcome and systemic factor.

Figure 2A: CFSR Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Items
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. (S1)
Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. (S2)
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. (P1)
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement
Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child
Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children. (P2)
Item 7: Placement With Siblings

Outcomes and Items
Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care
Item 9: Preserving Connections
Item 10: Relative Placement
Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs. (WB1)
Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning
Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child
Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs. (WB2)
Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. (WB3)
Item 17: Physical Health of the Child
Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

Figure 2B: CFSR Systemic Factors and Items

Systemic Factors and Items
Statewide Information System
Item 19: Statewide Information System
Case Review System
Item 20: Written Case Plan
Item 21: Periodic Reviews
Item 22: Permanency Hearings
Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights
Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers
Quality Assurance System
Item 25: Quality Assurance System
Staff and Provider Training
Item 26: Initial Staff Training
Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training
Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

Systemic Factors and Items

Service Array and Resource Development

Item 29: Array of Services

Item 30: Individualizing Services

Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Item 31: State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR

Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Item 33: Standards Applied Equally

Item 34: Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

Item 35: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

Item 36: State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements

Statewide Data Indicators

There are seven statewide data indicators, two for Safety Outcome 1 and five for Permanency Outcome 1. Statewide data indicators are aggregate measures, calculated using data from states' submissions to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). In Round 3, the Children's Bureau limited the use of performance on the CFSR statewide data indicators to context information and suspended use of the indicators in determinations of substantial conformity and as a basis for imposing potential financial penalties.¹⁰

CFSR state data profiles provide performance information on the statewide data indicators. Data quality checks are performed on state data submissions, and if a state exceeds data quality limits, the Children's Bureau does not calculate performance on affected statewide data indicator(s) for the corresponding data periods.

State performance is risk-adjusted based on the age of the child (depending on the indicator, it is the child's age at entry, first day of the reporting period, or initial victimization), the state's foster care entry rate (per 1,000 children in the general child population), and the risk of a child in the state experiencing the outcome for the specified indicator. Risk-adjusted performance is referred to as Risk-Standardized Performance (RSP) and is derived from a multi-level statistical model.¹¹ This is done to minimize differences in outcomes due to factors over which states have little control and provides a more fair comparison of state performance to national performance.¹² A 95% confidence interval estimate is used to account for the amount of uncertainty associated with RSP values. State RSP intervals for each indicator and 12-month period may be statistically above, below, or no different than the national performance.

Appendix A of this report shows states' RSP on the 7 statewide data indicators for the most recent period included in CFSR

¹⁰ In October 2016, the Children's Bureau (CB) issued CFSR Technical Bulletin #9 (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cfsr-technical-bulletin-9>), which alerted states of CB's decision to limit use of state performance on the statewide data indicators to context due to the discovery of technical errors in the syntax used to calculate performance information and time needed to complete a comprehensive review and validation process. CFSR Technical Bulletin #10 (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cfsr-technical-bulletin-10>) was issued in August 2019 in response to the November 2018 Federal Register Notice (83 FR 60874) to communicate CB's confidence that the revised syntax calculates reliable indicators of performance and a renewed commitment to use the data as context for the remainder of CFSR Round 3.

¹¹ See CFSR Technical Bulletin #8A (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cfsr-technical-bulletin-8a>, amended May 2015) for a description of the statistical model used to derive RSP.

¹² National performance is how the nation as a whole performed on a given data indicator. It was calculated and fixed with data at the time the measures were developed. See the CFSR Round 3 Statewide Data Indicators Data Dictionary (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cfsr-round3-sdi-data-dictionary-2020>) for data periods used to calculate national performance.

Figure 3: CFSR Statewide Data Indicators

Outcome	Indicator	Data Source(s)	Description
Safety 1	Maltreatment in foster care	AFCARS; NCANDS; U.S. Census	Of all children in foster care during a 12-month period, what is the rate of victimization per 100,000 days of foster care?
Safety 1	Recurrence of maltreatment	NCANDS; U.S. Census	Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment during a 12-month period, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment within 12 months of their initial report?
Permanency 1	Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care	AFCARS; U.S. Census	Of all children who entered foster care in a 12-month period, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering care?
Permanency 1	Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12–23 months	AFCARS	Of all children in foster care on the first day of a 12-month period who had been in care continuously between 12 and 23 months, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of the first day of the 12-month period?
Permanency 1	Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 24 months or more	AFCARS	Of all children in foster care on the first day of a 12-month period who had been in care continuously for 24 months or more, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of the first day of the 12-month period?
Permanency 1	Re-entry to foster care in 12 months	AFCARS; U.S. Census	Of all children who entered foster care in a 12-month period who discharged within 12 months to reunification, live with relative, or guardianship, what percent re-entered care within 12 months of their discharge?
Permanency 1	Placement stability	AFCARS	Of all children who entered foster care in a 12-month period, what is the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care?

data profiles that were transmitted to states in August 2019. The RSP interval estimate for each state is shown and used in the comparison of state to national performance.

Figure 3 below provides a description of each statewide data indicator, the data source, and the associated outcome.

Determining Substantial Conformity

To determine substantial conformity on outcomes for Round 3 of the CFSRs, 95% of applicable cases reviewed for that outcome must have been rated as having Substantially Achieved the outcome. The level of outcome achievement (Substantially Achieved, or Not Achieved) is dependent upon the item ratings within each outcome.

For a state to receive an overall rating of Strength for an individual item, 90% of the applicable cases must have been rated as a Strength on the item.¹³ If this threshold is not reached, the state receives an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for that item. To rate an individual item, case reviewers assess the case and record their findings in the OSRI. Reviewer findings are documented in answers to supporting questions within each item that determine the rating. Conditions for applicability vary from item to item.¹⁴ For example, the individual items within the permanency outcomes are applicable only to cases involving children in foster care.

¹³ However, Items 1 and 16 must have 95% of applicable cases rated as a Strength because Item 1 is the only item for **Safety Outcome 1**, and Item 16 is the only item for **Well-Being Outcome 2**.

¹⁴ For each case, once the reviewer has answered the questions within the items and entered the relevant information, the instrument provides the logic for rating each item as a Strength, an Area Needing Improvement, or Not Applicable.

Figure 4: Determining Substantial Conformity With Outcomes

Outcome	Items and Ratings
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.	In 95% of the applicable cases, Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment is rated as a Strength.
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.	In 95% of the applicable cases, there are Strength ratings for both Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care AND Item 3: Risk Assessment and Safety Management, OR Item 2 is Not Applicable and Item 3 is rated as a Strength.
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.	In 95% of the applicable cases, there are Strength ratings for Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement, Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child, and Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement, OR there are Strength ratings for Items 4 and 6, and Item 5 is Not Applicable.
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	In 95% of the applicable cases, there is a Strength rating for at least one of the following items AND there is an Area Needing Improvement in no more than one of the following items: Item 7: Placement With Siblings, Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care, Item 9: Preserving Connections, Item 10: Relative Placement, or Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents.
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	In 95% of the applicable cases, there is a Strength rating for Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents AND there is an area needing improvement in no more than one of the following items: Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning, Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child, or Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parent(s).
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	In 95% of the applicable cases, there is a Strength rating for Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child.
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	In 95% of the applicable cases, there are Strength ratings for both Item 17: Physical Health of the Child AND Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child.

Figure 4 details how a state achieves substantial conformity for the 7 outcomes. Determinations of substantial conformity for all outcomes are based on case review performance.

Program Improvement Plans

States determined not to be in substantial conformity with one or more of the 7 outcomes and 7 systemic factors are required to develop a PIP to address all areas of nonconformity. The Children’s Bureau provides technical assistance to states to develop, implement, and monitor PIP progress.

The Children’s Bureau establishes measurable improvement goals for items identified as Areas Needing Improvement for **Safety Outcomes 1 and 2**, **Permanency Outcome 1**, and **Well-Being Outcome 1**. For outcomes and systemic factors not in substantial conformity, each state (working in conjunction with the Children’s Bureau) specifies: (1) goals and the strategies or



interventions that will be used to drive improvement toward each goal, (2) key activities the state will implement to achieve the goals and implement the strategies and interventions, and (3) the state’s measurement approach and plan for items requiring a quantifiable measure of improvement.



Performance

The Children’s Bureau has established very high standards of performance for the CFSRs. The standards, which are set in regulation, are based on the belief that, because child welfare agencies work with our nation’s most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable. These standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being.

Given these high standards and the commitment to continuous improvement, few of the 51 states reviewed in Round 3 achieved substantial conformity with the 7 outcomes. Across all 7 outcomes, states achieved substantial conformity with 2 outcomes: Four states were found to have substantially achieved **Safety Outcome 1** (*Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect*), and six states were found to have substantially achieved **Well-Being Outcome 2** (*Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs*). (See **Figure 5** below.)

Figure 5: States Achieving Substantial Conformity With Outcomes (n=51)

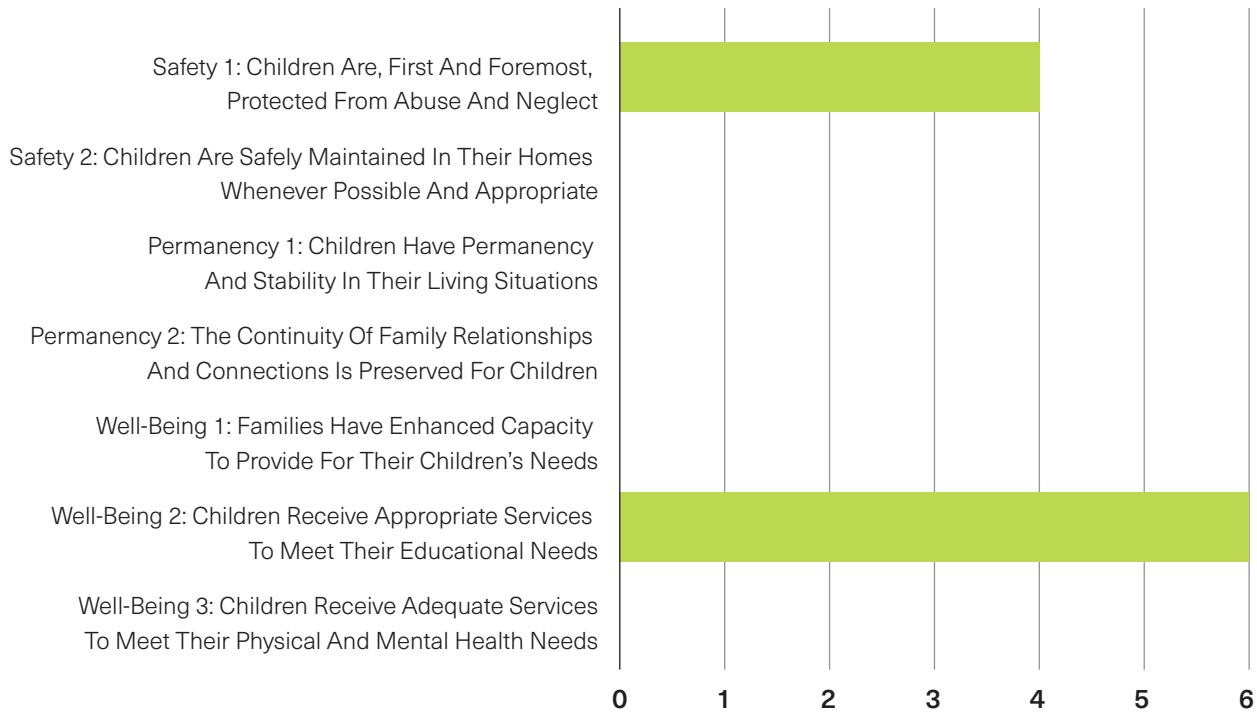
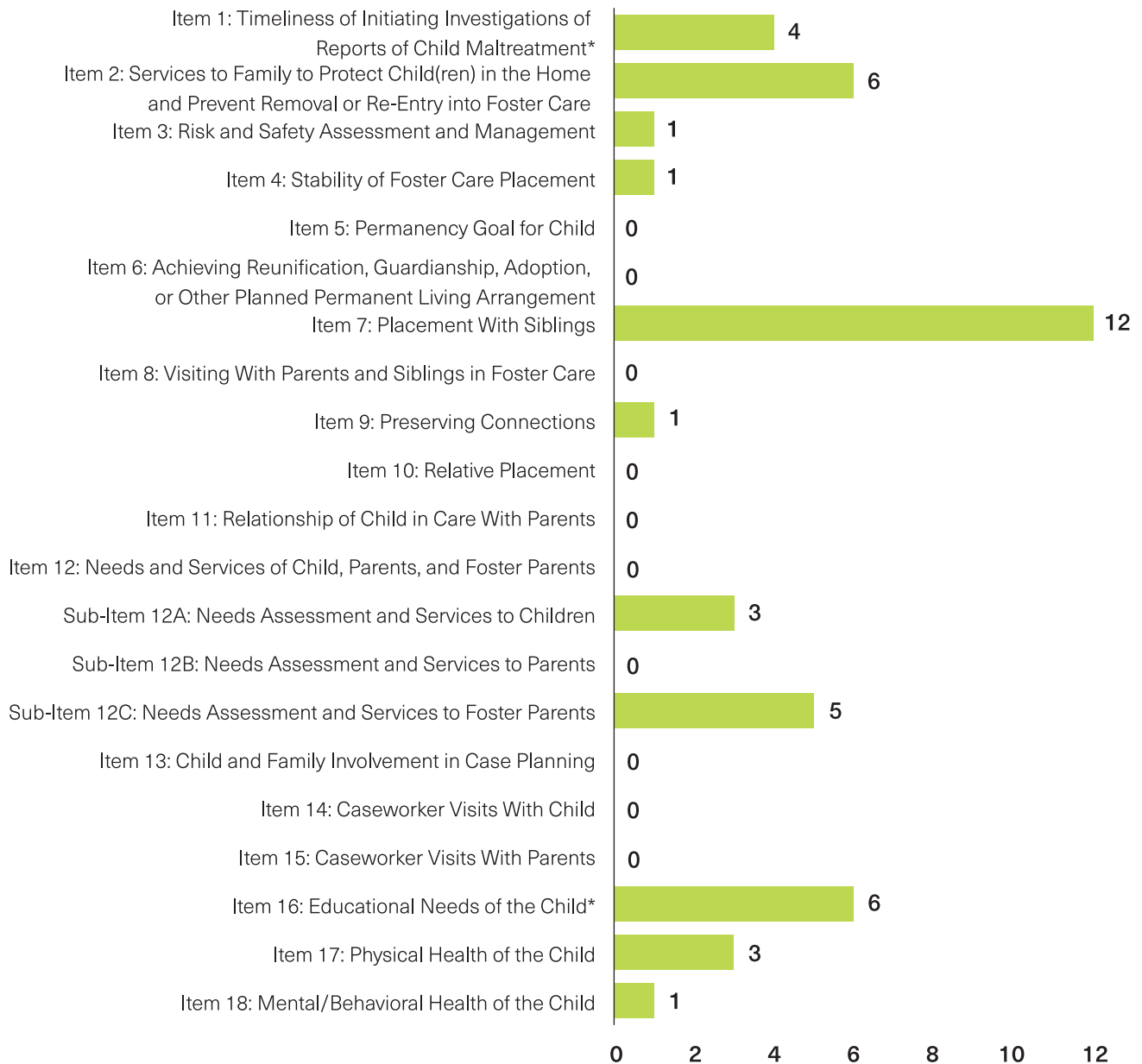


Figure 6 presents the findings on the number of states receiving Strength ratings on each of the 18 items.

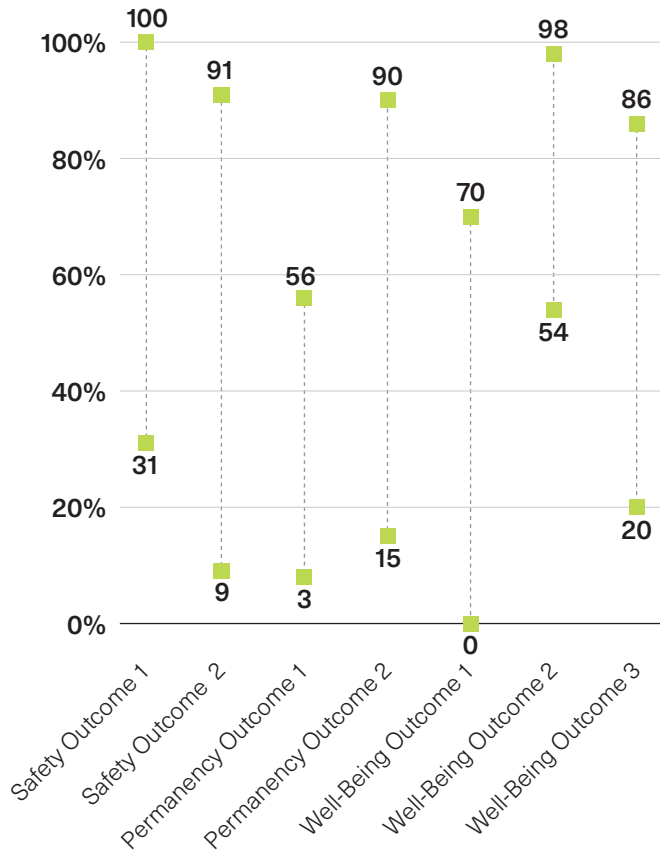
Figure 7 illustrates that, across the 51 states, there was a wide range in the percentage of applicable cases rated as Substantially Achieved for each outcome.

Figure 6: Number of States Achieving Strength Ratings on Items (n=51)



* For most items, 90% of cases must be rated as a Strength for the state to receive a Strength rating on the item. However, for Items 1 and 16, 95% of cases must be rated as a Strength for the state to receive a Strength rating.

Figure 7: Performance of States Reviewed in Round 3 (n=51 states): Range of Percentages of Applicable Cases Substantially Achieving Outcomes



Case-Level Characteristics

This section presents an analysis of case-level data collected during FYs 2015–2018 in Round 3. These reviews encompassed 4,067 cases reviewed in the 51 states. In this section, we present an analysis of the characteristics of these cases, including the reason for case opening, race/ethnicity, age, gender, and permanency goal.

Data Considerations

It is important to note several salient characteristics of the CFSR data that should be considered when reviewing results:

Case type—This report presents demographic data only for cases involving children in foster care because, while cases

involving children in foster care focus on services to a single child, cases involving families receiving in-home services address all children in the family (i.e., different children with different demographic characteristics). Thus, findings based on child race/ethnicity, gender, and age are reflective of cases involving children in foster care only.

State characteristics—This report analyzes the data for all 51 states from CFSRs conducted for Round 3 during FYs 2015–2018. Thus, findings may be influenced by the time period the review was conducted, periods under review (PURs), sample frame parameters, sample size, demographic characteristics of state child welfare populations, and child welfare practices that vary across states.

Key case participants—In addition to case records, findings are based on interviews with key case participants. The following individuals related to a case must be interviewed unless they are unavailable or unwilling to participate:¹⁵

- The child (school-age)
- The child’s parent(s) and/or caregivers
- The child’s resource parent(s), pre-adoptive parent(s), or other caregiver(s), such as a relative caregiver or group home staff, if the child is in foster care
- The family’s caseworker (when the caseworker has left the agency or is no longer available for interview, it is necessary to schedule interviews with the supervisor who was responsible for the caseworker assigned to the family)

As needed, on a case-by-case basis, other individuals who have relevant information about the case also may be interviewed, such as the child’s guardian ad litem or advocate, a parent’s significant other, or other family members.

Finally, it is important to remember that the goal of the CFSRs is to assess child welfare practice in the states rather than to conduct research into the dynamics of the child welfare system. While there is much to be learned from a deeper analysis of the review findings at the case level, it is important to recognize that the reviews are systematic and thorough but are not designed to address specific research hypotheses.

¹⁵ Caseworkers, supervisors, and resource parents were interviewed more frequently than mothers and fathers.

Characteristics of Cases Reviewed in Round 3 CFSRs

The following section describes the characteristics of the children whose cases were reviewed for Round 3 of the CFSRs. This information helps to contextualize the results of the report by describing the cases included in Round 3.

Type of Case

Of the 4,067 cases reviewed during the Round 3 onsite reviews, 61% (n=2,486) were cases in which children were in foster care at some time during the PUR, and 39% (n=1,581) were cases involving families who received in-home services. (See **Figure 8**.)

Differential/alternative response refers to an agency’s approach to addressing child maltreatment reports that meet the agency criteria for acceptance but that, at the

Figure 8: Type of Case During PUR

Type of Case During PUR	Percent (Number)
Foster Care	61% (2,486)
In-Home Services	39% (1,581)
Total	100% (4,067)

initial screening, do not meet the agency’s requirements for a mandated investigation. Because the number of families who received in-home services designated as differential/alternative response was small and limited to a few states, these cases were combined with other cases involving families who received in-home services for reporting purposes.

Figure 9 displays the percentage of cases involving children in foster care and cases involving families who received in-home

Figure 9: Percentage (Number) of Cases Rated Strength/Substantially Achieved by Case Type

Outcomes and Items	Foster Care	In-Home Services	Total
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.	76% (752)	70% (698)	73% (1,450)
Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment	76% (752)	70% (698)	73% (1,450)
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.	63% (1,562)	42% (671)	55% (2,233)
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Foster Care	73% (575)	57% (427)	65% (1,002)
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management	64% (1,579)	44% (690)	56% (2,269)
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.	39% (958)	32% (500)	36% (1,458)
Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents	42% (1,031)	36% (557)	39% (1,588)
<i>Sub-Item 12A: Needs Assessment and Services to Children</i>	76% (1,900)	61% (954)	71% (2,854)
<i>Sub-Item 12B: Needs Assessment and Services to Parents</i>	42% (808)	39% (610)	40% (1,418)
<i>Sub-Item 12C: Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents</i>	73% (1,628)	NA	73% (1,628)
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	55% (1,266)	43% (667)	50% (1,933)
Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child	75% (1,854)	52% (827)	66% (2,681)
Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents	41% (773)	40% (629)	40% (1,402)
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	86% (1,801)	65% (321)	82% (2,122)
Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child	86% (1,801)	65% (321)	82% (2,122)
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	58% (1,448)	54% (622)	57% (2,070)
Item 17: Physical Health of the Child	71% (1,763)	63% (358)	69% (2,121)
Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child	64% (1,089)	53% (469)	60% (1,558)

services that were rated as substantially achieved for the 5 outcomes relevant to both case types and the percentage of cases rated as a Strength on 13 items relevant to both case types.



Race/Ethnicity of Children in Foster Care

Figure 10 provides information pertaining to the race/ethnicity of children in the foster care cases reviewed.¹⁶ This information is available for cases involving children in foster care only; there is no specified child for cases involving families who received in-home services because they are rated on the basis of all children in the family.

As Figure 10 shows, the two largest racial/ethnic groups in the CFSR are (1) White, non-Hispanic (44%) and (2) Black/African American, non-Hispanic (24%).

About half of children whose cases were reviewed were **5 years old** or younger when they entered foster care.

Age of Children in Foster Care

We considered two possibilities for examining performance in relation to the age of children in foster care: (1) age at the date of entry into the most recent episode of foster care (see Figure 11) and (2) age at the start of the PUR (see Figure 12).

Age at the date of entry into foster care is useful because it is likely to be closer to the actual age of the child when the

reasons for opening the case were identified. However, given the different lengths of time in which children are in foster care, older children may have entered foster care years before the PUR. Thus, while age at the date of entry may be useful

Figure 10: Race/Ethnicity of Target Children in Foster Care

Race and Ethnicity	Percent (Number)
White	44% (1,101)
Black/African American	24% (594)
Hispanic (of any race)	18% (443)
American Indian or Alaska Native	5% (123)
Two or more races	7% (172)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1% (25)
Unknown/Unable to determine	1% (13)
Asian	1% (15)
Total	100% (2,486)

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Figure 11: Age of Target Children in Foster Care (Age at Entry Into Foster Care)

Age at Entry Into Foster Care	Percent (Number)
< 6 years old	50% (1,239)
6–12 years old	32% (784)
13–15 years old	14% (345)
≥ 16 years old	5% (118)
Total	100% (2,486)

Figure 12: Age of Target Children in Foster Care (Age at Start of PUR)

Age at Start of PUR	Percent (Number)
< 6 years old	44% (1,087)
6–12 years old	30% (756)
13–15 years old	15% (372)
≥ 16 years old	11% (271)
Total	100% (2,486)

¹⁶ During the review, the child is classified separately by race and ethnicity. For example, a child may be considered Black and Hispanic. For consistency with AFCARS reporting, in this report, all children designated as having Hispanic ethnicity are counted in a Hispanic category as part of a single race/ethnicity variable. Children of other racial groups may be assumed to be non-Hispanic.

for items related to removal, age at the start of the PUR may be a more appropriate metric to relate to items and outcomes focused on case practice during the review period. Analyses below apply the age variable that is most appropriate to the specific outcome or item measure.

Although the two measures of age are somewhat different, in general they reveal similar patterns: both measures indicate that the large majority of children in foster care in Round 3 cases were 12 years old or younger, while much smaller percentages were 13 years or older.

Gender of Children in Foster Care

The children in foster care were almost evenly divided between females and males. As shown in **Figure 13**, males accounted for slightly more than half (52%; n=1,280). For the first time, in Round 3, reviewers had the option of choosing a gender of “Other” (<1%, n=2).

Figure 13: Gender of Target Children in Foster Care

Gender	Percent (Number)
Male	52% (1,280)
Female	49% (1,204)
Other	<1% (2)
Total	100% (2,486)

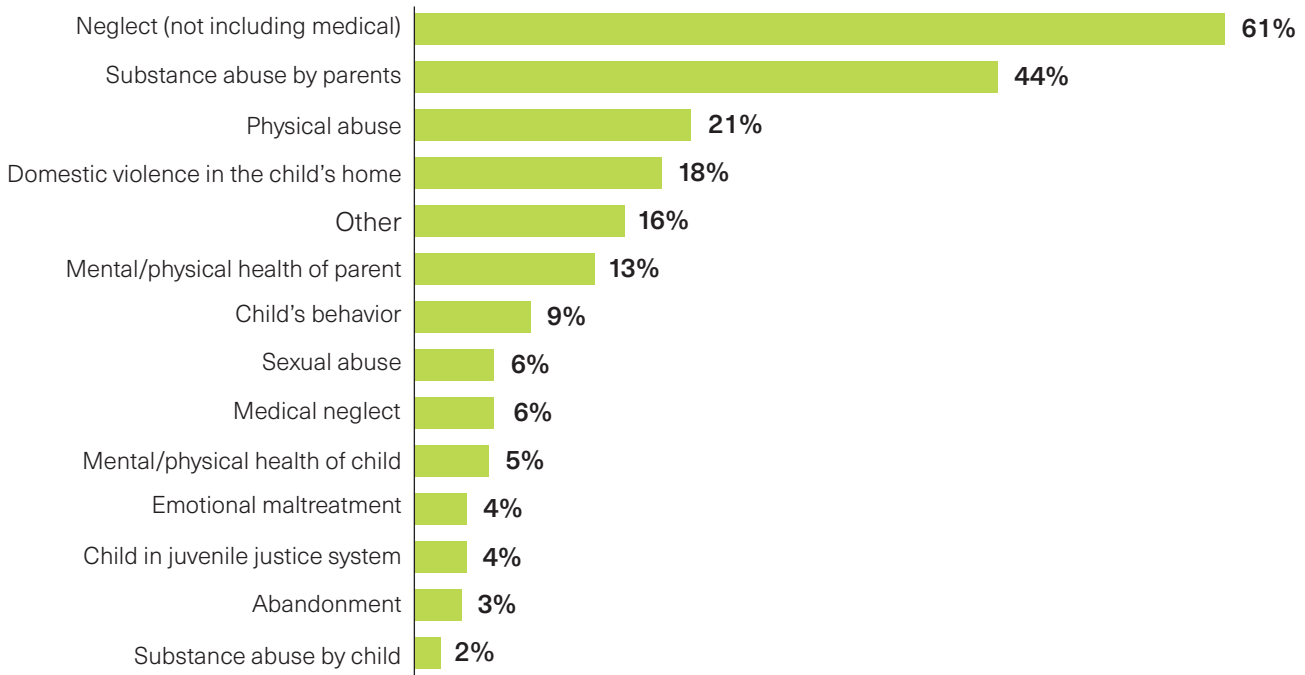
Reason for Case Opening

For each case, reviewers were asked to note all reasons relevant to the family’s involvement with the child welfare agency.¹⁷ As shown in **Figure 14**, neglect, substance abuse by parents, and physical abuse were the most frequent reasons for case opening.

Case Status at the Start of the PUR

Of all the cases reviewed in Round 3, 68% of cases were opened for services prior to the start of the PUR. 32% of cases were opened after the start of the PUR.

Figure 14: Percentage of Cases With Specific Reason for Case Opening



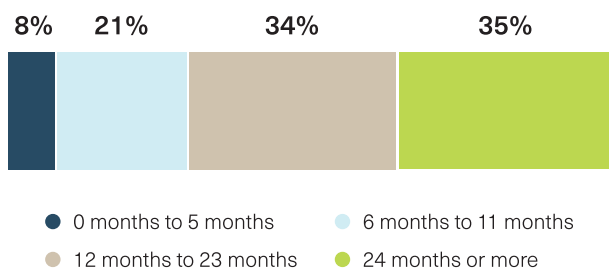
NOTE: Cases may have more than one reason for opening and so may be counted in more than one category.

¹⁷This differs from Round 2, in which reviewers were asked to identify the primary reason for opening the case. Round 3 reviewers were not asked to make this determination due to the difficulty in identifying a primary reason through case records. As a result, we are unable to combine reasons into broader categories as was done in the Round 2 Aggregate Report.

Time in Foster Care

As Figure 15 indicates, 8% of children were in foster care for 0–5 months prior to the start of the PUR; 21% of children were in foster care for 6–11 months prior to the start of the PUR; 34% of children were in foster care for 12–23 months prior to the start of the PUR; and 35% of children were in foster care for 24 months or more prior to the start of the PUR. Children in foster care whose cases were reviewed had been in foster care 25 months on average prior to the start date of the PUR. The median was 18 months and the range was 0 to 186 months.

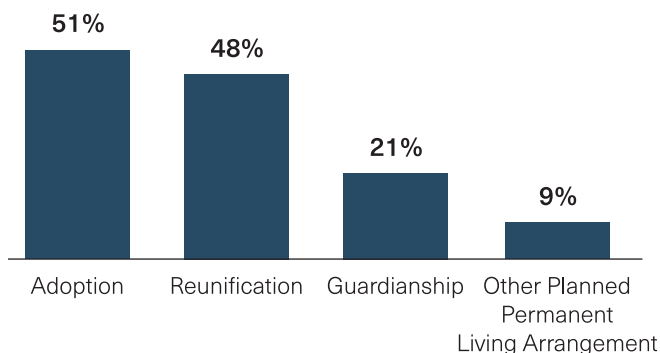
Figure 15: Time in Foster Care



Approximately a third of children had been in foster care less than a year, and two-thirds had been in foster care less than 2 years, prior to the start of the PUR.



Figure 16: Permanency Goals



Permanency Goals

The most common permanency goal¹⁹ for children in the cases reviewed was adoption (51%, n=1,258), followed by reunification (48%, n=1,184). The third most frequent permanency goal was guardianship (21%, n=525), and “other planned permanent living arrangement” (OPPLA) (sometimes called “another planned permanent living arrangement,” or APPLA) was the least frequent (9%, n=225). With the permanency goal of OPPLA, the child welfare agency maintains care and custody of the youth and arranges a living situation in which the youth is expected to remain until adulthood. OPPLA should be a permanency option only when other options such as reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship have been ruled out.

Detailed Findings for Case Review Outcomes and Items

The following section reviews specific findings for each outcome and item, as well as questions used to determine conformity for each item. For ease of reference, the location of each question (e.g., 1B) in the OSRI is also noted.

Safety

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

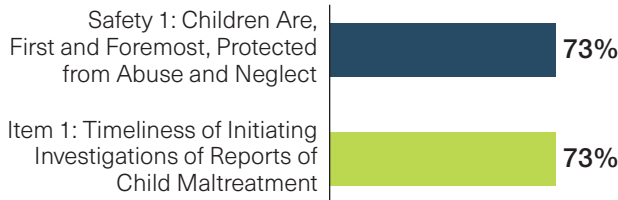
Four states achieved substantial conformity with **Safety Outcome 1**. At the case level, across all 51 states, 73% of the applicable 1,985 cases substantially achieved this outcome. (See Figure 17.)

There is one item associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, this item must be rated as a Strength.

¹⁸ A value of 0 indicated that the child had been in foster care for at least 1 day but not 1 month or more.

¹⁹ Permanency goals are not necessarily mutually exclusive, given that some children had concurrent permanency goals.

Figure 17: Performance on Safety Outcome 1 and Supporting Item



Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

Cases were applicable for this item if an accepted child maltreatment report on any child in the family was received during the PUR. For applicable cases, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the PUR had been initiated within the timeframes specified in the state child welfare agency policy requirements.

Item 1 Rating: 73% of all 1,985 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 1.

1A: Reviewers indicated that all reports for over four-fifths of cases (85%) were initiated in accordance with state timeframes, while 13% of the 1,985 applicable cases had one report where the investigation or assessment was not initiated in accordance with state timeframes. Around 2% had two or more such reports.

1B: For over two-thirds (69%) of applicable cases, face-to-face contact was made in accordance with state timeframes. Of the 1,985 applicable cases, 25% had one report where face-to-face contact was not made in accordance with state timeframes. Additionally, 4% of applicable cases had two such reports and 1% had three or more reports.

1C: Delays in the cases above were due to circumstances beyond the control of the agency in 14% of the 623 applicable cases.

Practice Strengths

- Regardless of the priority level assigned to an accepted report, reports were initiated timely and there was timely face-to-face contact with children
- Caseworkers made multiple attempts to see families and used a variety of efforts to locate and make contact with children and families

Practice Concerns

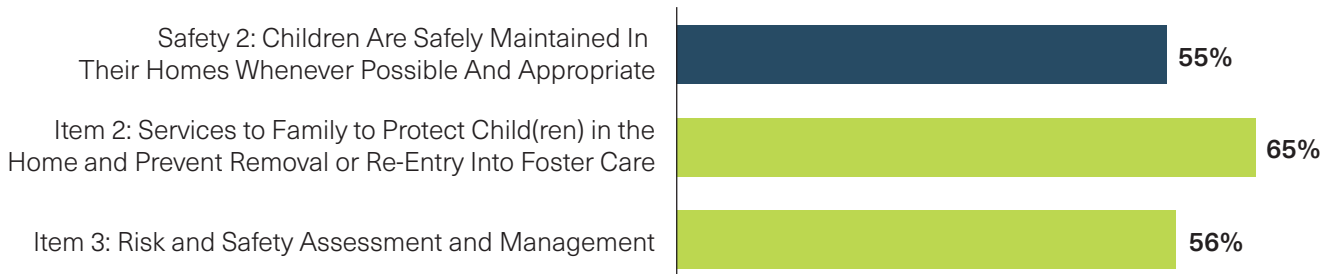
- There was a lack of concerted efforts to initiate and see child(ren) within established timeframes
- Caseworkers did not make multiple efforts to see child(ren) in different settings and/or did not use different sources of communication to ensure initiation (e.g., in some cases, caseworkers did not visit children at school, despite its being an option)
- Timely response to accepted child maltreatment reports was affected by a high volume of reports and high caseloads

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

No state achieved substantial conformity with **Safety Outcome 2**. At the case level, across the 51 states, 55% of the applicable 4,067 cases substantially achieved this outcome. (See **Figure 18**.)

There are two items associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, both items must be rated as a Strength, or Item 3 must be rated as a Strength while Item 2 is rated as Not Applicable.

Figure 18: Performance on Safety Outcome 2 and Supporting Items



Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

Cases involving children in foster care and cases involving families receiving in-home services were applicable for this item unless (1) the children entered foster care prior to the PUR and remained in care throughout the PUR, and there were no other children in the home, or (2) there were no concerns regarding the safety of any of the children in the home during the PUR. For applicable cases, reviewers assessed whether the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to families that would prevent placement of children in foster care or re-entry into foster care after reunification. Cases were not applicable for assessment on this item if only a safety plan was needed to ensure the child(ren)'s safety and no safety-related services were necessary based on the circumstances of the case.

Item 2 Rating: 65% of the 1,538 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 2.

2A: In 45% of the 1,530 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to provide appropriate services to the family to prevent children's entry or re-entry into foster care.

2B: In cases where a child was removed from home without providing services during the PUR, this was necessary to ensure the child's safety in 72% of the 524 applicable cases.

Practice Strengths

- Appropriate and relevant services were provided to the family to prevent child(ren)'s entry or re-entry into foster care. Services were provided in the home, which, in some cases, also provided an additional source of monitoring



- When children were removed from their homes, it was necessary to ensure safety (e.g., the child(ren) was in imminent danger)

Practice Concerns

- Appropriate services were not provided to address the existing safety concern or to prevent children from entering foster care due to inadequate assessment of safety or lack of available services
- There were delays in providing safety services
- There were no concerted efforts to engage parents in, or successfully access, services. For example, the agency did not follow up with parents to see how the services were going or if the parent was making progress

In **25%** of the 1,530 applicable cases, safety-related services were not provided and children were left in homes with unaddressed safety concerns.

Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management

All cases were applicable for this item. In assessing Item 3, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to children in their own homes or while in foster care. (See **Figure 19**.)

Item 3 Rating: 56% of all cases (n=4,067) were rated as a Strength for Item 3.

3A1: During the PUR, there were maltreatment allegations about the family, but they were never formally reported or formally investigated/assessed in 6% of the 4,067 cases.

3A2: During the PUR, there were maltreatment allegations that were not substantiated despite evidence that would support substantiation in 3% of the 4,067 cases.

3A: For cases opened during the PUR, the agency conducted an initial assessment that accurately assessed all risk and safety concerns for 70% of the 1,489 applicable cases.

3B: The agency conducted ongoing assessments that accurately assessed all risk and safety concerns for 62% of the 4,021 applicable cases.

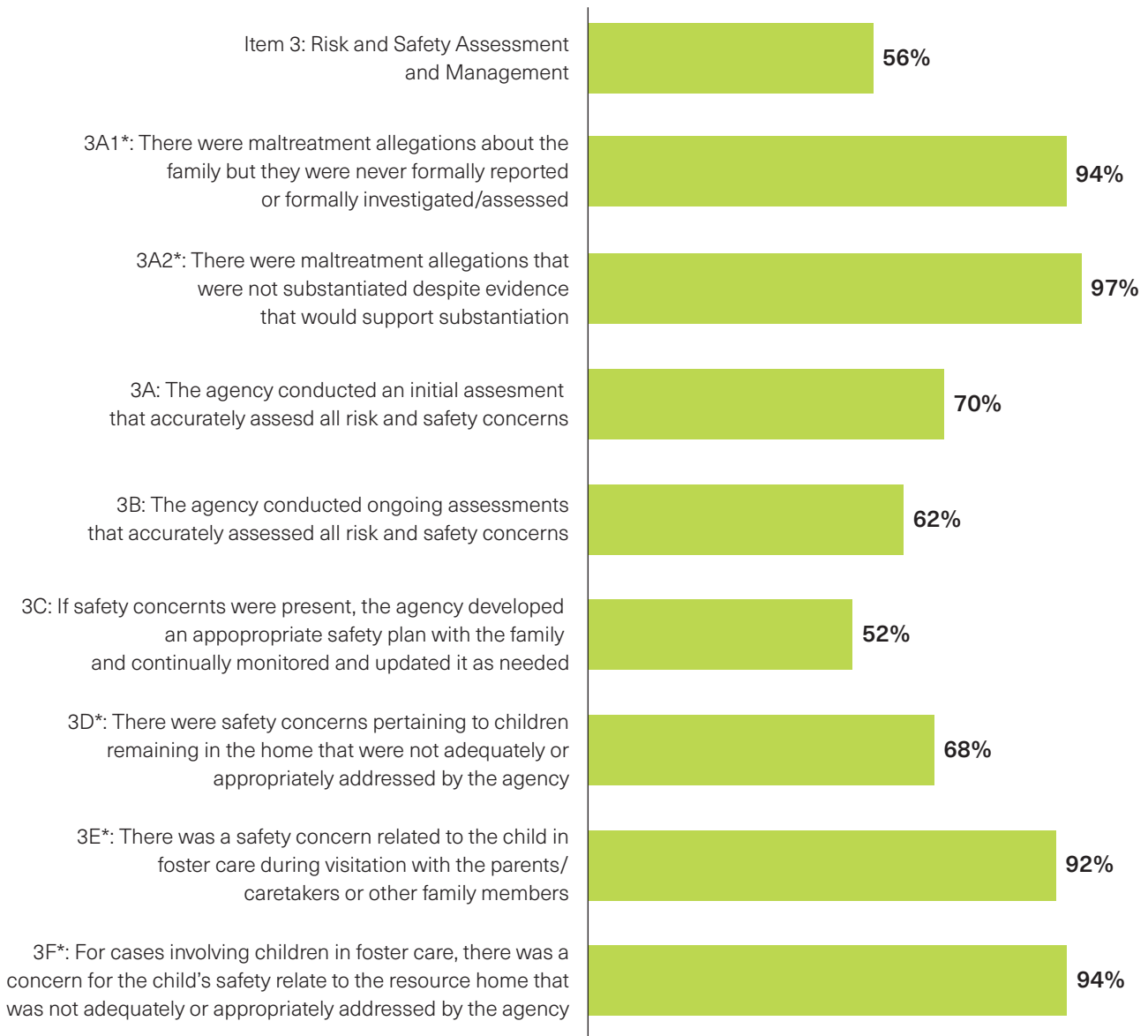
3C: If safety concerns were present during the PUR, the agency developed an appropriate safety plan with the family and continually monitored and updated it as needed for 52% of the 1,481 applicable cases.

3D: During the PUR, there were safety concerns pertaining to children remaining in the home that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency in 32% of the 1,718 applicable cases.

3E: During the PUR, there was a safety concern related to the child in foster care during visitation with parents/caregivers or other family members in 8% of the 1,997 applicable cases.

3F: For cases involving children in foster care during the PUR, there was a concern for the child’s safety related to the resource home that was not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency in 6% of the 2,486 applicable cases.

Figure 19: Performance on Item 3 and Item 3 Questions



NOTE: * indicates that rate was subtracted from 100% to show percentage of cases reflecting desired performance.

Practice Strengths

- Agencies used tools/instruments to conduct formal risk and safety assessments
- Ongoing formal and informal risk and safety assessments were conducted by visiting the child in the home and other settings
- Information from a variety of sources was used to inform ongoing formal and informal risk and safety assessments
- Safety plans included family members to help facilitate/monitor safety

Practice Concerns

- Relevant household members were not included in assessments/safety plans
- Reassessments were not conducted when there was a change in the family circumstances, e.g., new household members
- Safety and risk were not reassessed for children remaining in the home

- There was a lack of frequent and quality visits with children
- Safety plans did not address all the safety concerns identified, were not effectively monitored, and were not updated when circumstances changed
- Safety plans relied on parental promises
- Individuals involved in safety plans were not clear on expectations or able/willing to implement the plans
- Alternate caregivers were not used appropriately for safety plans

Permanency

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

No state achieved substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. At the case level, across the 51 states, 27% of the 2,486 applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome. (See Figure 20.)

There are 3 items associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, Items 4 and 6 must be rated as a Strength, and Item 5 must be rated as a Strength or Not Applicable.

Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement

All cases involving children in foster care were applicable for Item 4. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the PUR and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child’s permanency goal or to meet the needs of the child. Reviewers also assessed the stability of the child’s current or most recent placement setting.

Item 4 Rating: 74% of all 2,486 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 4.



Figure 20: Performance on Permanency Outcome 1 and Supporting Items

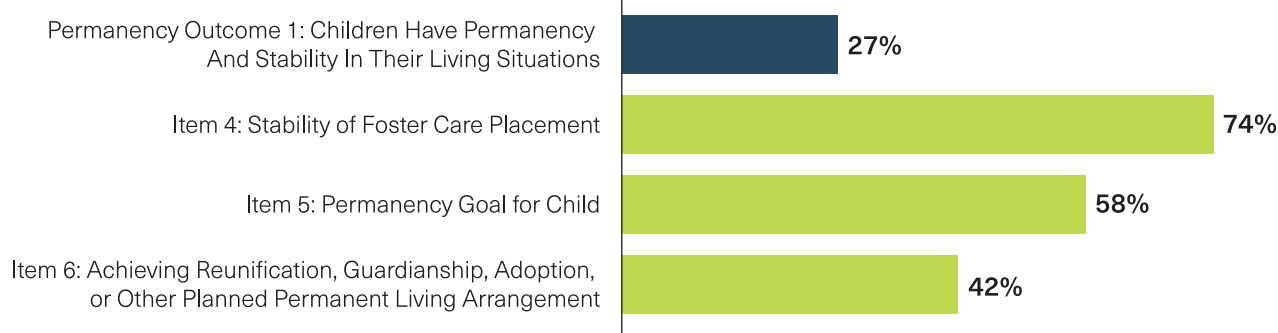
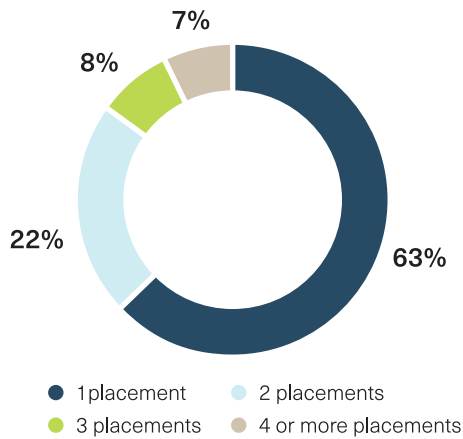


Figure 21: Number of Foster Care Placement Settings During Period Under Review



37% of children in foster care resided in more than 1 placement setting during the PUR.

4A: The children in the 2,486 applicable foster care cases experienced up to 12 placement settings during the PUR. As **Figure 21** indicates, 63% of children had 1 placement setting.

4B: Placement changes for 43% of the 922 applicable cases were planned by the agency in an effort to achieve the child’s case goals or to meet the child’s needs.

4C: The child’s current placement setting (or most recent if no longer in care) was stable in 91% of the 2,486 applicable cases.

Practice Strengths

- Child welfare agency used various mechanisms (e.g., placement with relatives, services to children in care) to support placement stability for children
- There was frequent and quality visitation with children in foster care to monitor placement stability
- Child welfare agency sought placements to meet the needs of children to ensure placement stability
- Services were provided to resource parents to ensure placement stability

Practice Concerns

- There was a lack of appropriate resource homes to meet the needs of the child
- There was a lack of agency responsiveness in addressing concerns, securing services, or providing training to support caregivers in meeting the needs of the child

Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child

All cases involving children in foster care were applicable for Item 5 unless the child had not been in foster care long enough (at least 60 days) for the state to have developed a case plan and established a permanency goal. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established a permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and whether the most current permanency goal was appropriate. Reviewers also were to determine whether the agency had sought termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requirements.

Item 5 Rating: 58% of the 2,459 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 5.

5A3: The child’s permanency goal was specified in the case file for 99% of the 2,459 applicable cases.

5B: The permanency goals that were in effect during the PUR were established in a timely manner in 77% of the 2,459 applicable cases.

5C: The permanency goals in effect during the PUR were appropriate to the child’s needs for permanency and to the circumstances of the case in 78% of the 2,459 applicable cases.

5D: The child had been in foster care at least 15 of the most recent 22 months in 57% of the 2,459 applicable cases.

5E: When the child had not been in foster care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months, 18 (2%) of the 1,069 applicable cases met other ASFA criteria for TPR.

5F: The agency filed or joined a TPR petition before the PUR or in a timely manner during the PUR in 50% of the 1,365 applicable cases.

For children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months, agencies did not file for TPR, and no exception to the requirement existed in **26%** (n=358) of the 1,365 applicable cases.

The permanency goals in effect during the PUR were appropriate to the child’s needs for permanency and case circumstances in **78%** of cases.



5G: An exception to the ASFA requirement to file or join a TPR petition when a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months or meets other ASFA criteria for TPR existed in 48% of the 685 applicable cases.

Overall, of the 1,365 cases, the agency did not file or join a TPR petition before the PUR, or in a timely manner during the PUR, or document an exception to the requirement to file TPR in 26% of the cases (n=358).

Practice Strengths

- Caseworkers assessed children’s needs and case circumstances to establish appropriate permanency goals and involved children and families in goal-setting (e.g., engaging with children and families in visits, planning meetings, family group decision-making meetings)
- Caseworkers followed ASFA requirements by monitoring timeframes and identifying the existence of exceptions to the TPR requirements

Practice Concerns

- Reunification goals were in place too long
- Inappropriate permanency goals were set based on child’s age, case circumstances, and need for permanency:
 - Guardianship rather than adoption for very young children
 - OPPLA goal for children under the age of 16
- OPPLA was selected without adequate consideration of other permanency goals
- There were delays in completing the paperwork and filing TPRs

- High caseworker caseloads often mentioned as a reason for delayed TPR filing
- Agencies did not document compelling reasons for not filing for TPR

Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

All 2,486 cases involving children in foster care were applicable for Item 6. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made or was making concerted efforts during the PUR to achieve the child’s permanency goal(s).

Item 6 Rating: 42% of the 2,486 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 6.

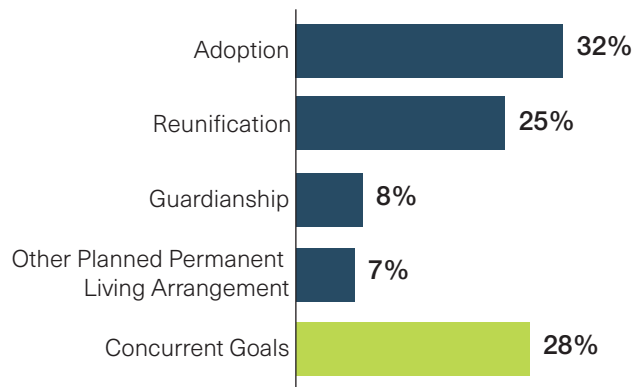
Permanency Goals

Approximately three-quarters of children in foster care (72%, n=1,780) had a single permanency goal, while 28% (n=706) of children had concurrent permanency goals.

Around three-quarters of children in foster care had a single permanency goal, while about one quarter of children had concurrent permanency goals.

Figure 22 shows an unduplicated percentage of children in foster care, by goal, having either a single permanency goal or having concurrent goals. As shown in Figure 22, adoption was the most common permanency goal across all cases; 32% of all children had adoption as a sole permanency goal. The second most common goal across all cases was reunification; 25% of all children had reunification as a single permanency goal.

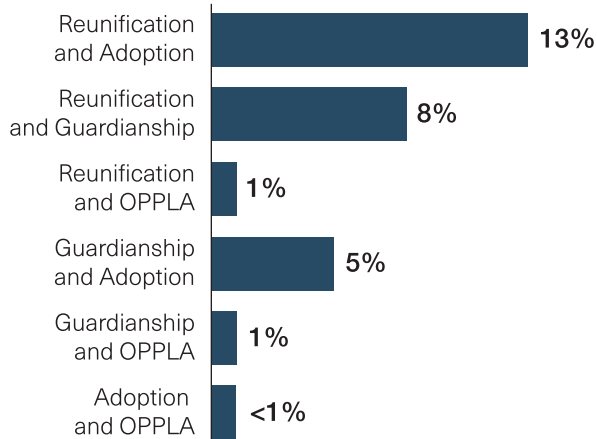
Figure 22: Percentage of Children in Foster Care With Either Single or Concurrent Permanency Goals



The breakdown of those with concurrent permanency goals is shown in **Figure 23**. Of these, the combination of reunification and adoption is the largest group (13%) followed by reunification and guardianship (8%).

While the group of children in foster care cases with OPPLA as a permanency goal was small (n=225), their cases were

Figure 23: Children in Foster Care With Concurrent Goals (28% of Total Cases)



more likely (62%) to be rated as a Strength for Item 6 (concerted efforts to achieve a permanency goal). Children with adoption as a permanency goal (n=1,258) were least likely (31%) to have their cases rated as a Strength for Item 6. (See **Figure 24**.)

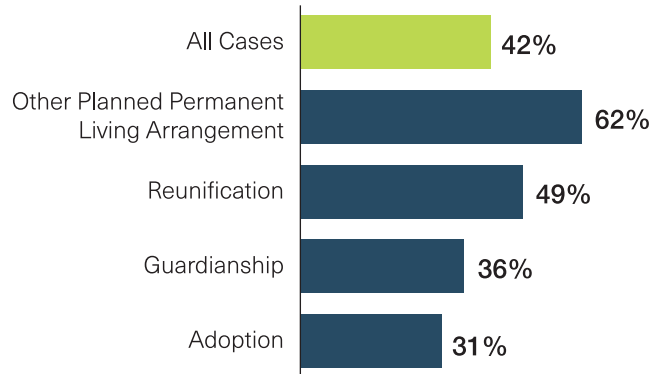
6B: The agency and court made concerted efforts during the PUR to achieve permanency in a timely manner in 40% of the 2,307 applicable cases.²⁰

6C: For a child with a goal of OPPLA during the PUR, the agency and the court made concerted efforts to place the child in a living arrangement that can be considered permanent until discharge from foster care in 63% of the 200 applicable cases.

Practice Strengths

- There was evidence of agency-court collaboration in an effort to achieve permanency goals (e.g., permanency hearings were held timely and in coordination with other court hearings, such as juvenile probation hearings)

Figure 24: Percentage of Children in Foster Care With Each Permanency Goal That Received a Strength on Item 6 (Cases May Have More Than One Goal)



- Caseworkers adjusted case plans to changing circumstances to achieve established permanency goals timely

Practice Concerns

- Children and parents did not receive needed services
- Caseworker/attorney high caseloads and turnover affected the agency’s ability to achieve permanency goals
- There were delays in scheduling hearings/legal proceedings
- There were multiple court continuances
- Appeals processes for contested TPRs were lengthy
- Caseworkers did not provide sufficient case plan updates to families



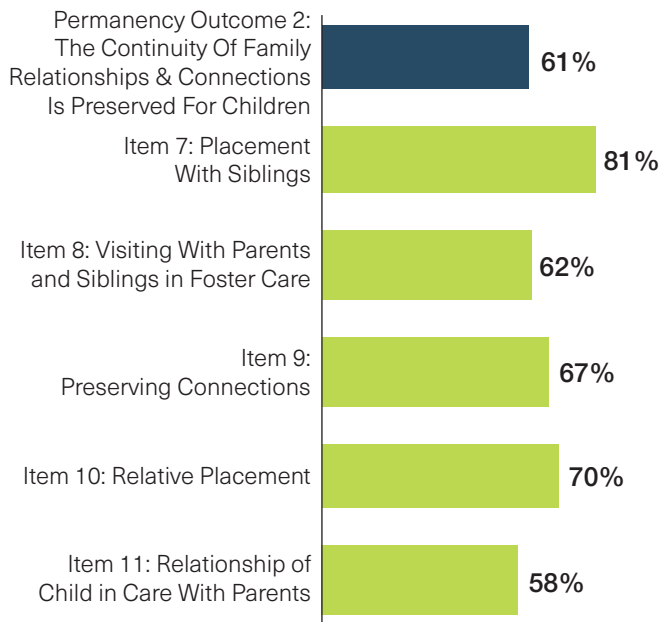
²⁰ Question 6B is not applicable for children with a single permanency goal of OPPLA.

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

No state achieved substantial conformity with **Permanency Outcome 2**. At the case level, across these states, 61% of the 2,482²¹ applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome. (See **Figure 25**.)

There are 5 items associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, no more than 1 of the applicable items for this outcome may be rated as an Area Needing Improvement, and 1 item must be rated as a Strength.

Figure 25: Performance on Permanency Outcome 2 and Supporting Items



Item 7: Placement With Siblings

Cases were applicable for this item if the child had a sibling in foster care at any time during the PUR. In assessing Item 7, reviewers were to determine whether, during the PUR, concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in foster care were placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings.

Item 7 Rating: 81% of all 1,547 applicable cases²² were rated as a Strength for Item 7.

7A: During the entire PUR, the child was placed with all siblings who were also in foster care in 46% of the 1,546 applicable cases.

7B: If the child was not placed with all siblings also in foster care, there was a valid reason for the child’s separation from the siblings in 65% of the 835 applicable cases.

In **46%** of the applicable cases, children were placed with their siblings.

Practice Strengths

- Caseworkers nurtured sibling bonds by placing siblings together using relative resources
- Caseworkers limited the separation of siblings to when there was a valid reason for separating the child from his or her siblings

Practice Concerns

- There was a lack of placement resources able to accept sibling groups
- The agency did not reconsider placing siblings together after separation

Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

Regarding siblings, cases were applicable for this item if the child had siblings in foster care in a different placement setting. Regarding parents, cases were applicable for this item unless the parental rights of both parents remained terminated during the entire PUR, the parents were deceased during the entire PUR, it was documented in the case file that contact with the parents was not in the best interests of the child, the whereabouts of both parents were unknown despite concerted agency efforts to locate them, or the only parent(s) being assessed in this item did not meet the definition of Mother/Father for this item.

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure that

²¹ Four cases were rated as Not Applicable for Permanency Outcome 2 because the children were either abandoned at hospitals or the parents relinquished their rights at the hospital and their family and community connections were unknown.

²² The number of applicable cases for Item 7 and 7A differs because 1 case had an override rating in the CFSR Online Monitoring System; however, the ability to override a rating occurs only at the item rating level and not at the question level.

visitation between a child in foster care and his or her parents and siblings in other foster care placement settings was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child’s relationship with these family members.

Item 8 Rating: 62% of all 1,912 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 8.

Concerted efforts were made during the PUR to ensure that:

8A: Visitation between the child and his or her mother was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the relationship in 75% of the 1,609 applicable cases.

8B: Visitation between the child and his or her father was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the relationship in 68% of the 958 applicable cases.

8C: The quality of the visitation between the child and the mother was sufficient to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship in 82% of the 1,465 applicable cases.

8D: The quality of visitation between the child and the father was sufficient to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship in 79% of the 806 applicable cases.

8E: Visitation (or other forms of contact) between the child and his or her sibling(s) was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship in 66% of the 802 applicable cases.

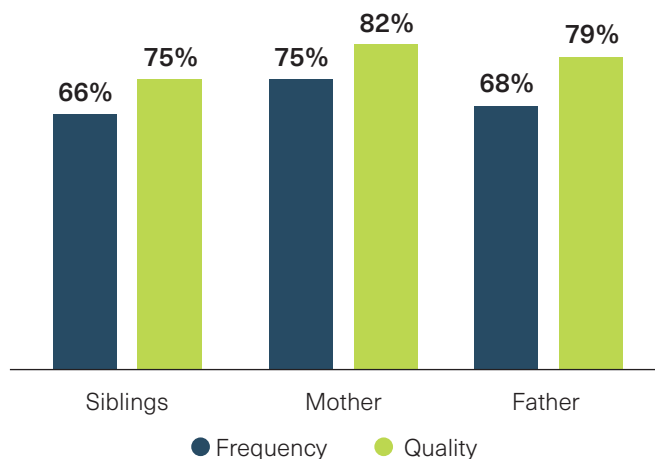
8F: The quality of visitation between the child and his or her sibling(s) was sufficient to promote the continuity of their relationships in 75% of the 743 applicable cases.

The percentage of cases rated as a Strength on frequency of visits with the child in foster care ranged from 66% to 75% for siblings, mothers, and fathers. The percentage of cases rated as a Strength on quality of visits with the child in foster care ranged from 75% to 82% for siblings, mothers, and fathers. (See **Figure 26**.)

Practice Strengths

- High-quality and frequent visits continued until the child(ren) achieved permanency
- The frequency of visitation changed to meet the needs of the child and case circumstances
- Case circumstances were taken into consideration to promote quality visitation (e.g., visits were held in the home and/or community, parents and children participated

Figure 26: Percentage of Cases With Concerted Efforts to Ensure Frequent and Quality Visitation Between Child, Parents, and Siblings in Foster Care



in activities together, parents participated in caregiving activities)

Practice Concerns

- Visitation between siblings to promote ongoing interaction and well-being did not occur
- Parent-child visits were not sufficient in frequency and/or quality especially for fathers
- Visitations with parents and siblings in foster care were not of sufficient frequency or quality due to unaddressed barriers (e.g., transportation, location of the visits)

Item 9: Preserving Connections

Almost all cases involving children in foster care were applicable for this item unless, for example, the child was an infant who was abandoned and the agency had no information about the child’s extended family or connections. In assessing Item 9, reviewers were to determine whether, during the PUR, concerted efforts were made to maintain the child’s connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care.

Item 9 Rating: 67% of all 2,444 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 9.

9A: Concerted efforts were made during the PUR to maintain the child’s important connections in 69% of the 2,447 applicable cases.

9B: Sufficient inquiry was conducted with the parent, child, custodian, or other interested party to determine whether the child was a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Tribe in 90% of the 2,447 applicable cases.²³

9C: If the child may have been a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Tribe during the PUR, the Tribe was provided timely notification of its right to intervene in state court proceedings seeking an involuntary foster care placement or TPR in 74% of the 244 applicable cases.²⁴

9D: If the child was a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Tribe, concerted efforts were made to place the child in foster care in accordance with Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) placement preferences in 69% of the 204 applicable cases.

Practice Strengths

- When children were placed outside of their community, the agency made efforts to maintain the child’s connections
- Relative placement facilitated contact with extended family members
- The agency arranged for transportation services to allow children to remain in their same schools

Practice Concerns

- A lack of placement resources in the child’s community resulted in school changes and challenges in maintaining the child’s connections
- Extended family members were not contacted or offered opportunities to maintain connections with the child
- There was insufficient inquiry into the child’s heritage

Spotlight Section: Identification of American Indian and Alaska Native Children, Tribal Notification

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) regulates state child custody proceedings involving children who are members of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Tribe. ICWA allows the child’s Tribe to intervene in matters regarding the removal and placement of American Indian and Alaska Native children in foster or adoptive homes.

The CFSR assesses these practices in the questions for Item 9: Preserving Connections. **Figure 27** shows the responses for these questions.

There were 244 cases that were considered for question 9C (Tribal notification), and 204 of those cases were also considered for question 9D (concerted efforts to place child in accordance with applicable ICWA requirements). The number of cases considered applicable for the questions

Figure 27: Questions for Item 9—Identification of American Indian and Alaska Native Children, Tribal Notification, and Placement Preferences

Questions for Item 9: Identification of Indian Children, Tribal Notification, and Placement Preferences	Yes	No
Question 9B: Sufficient inquiry to determine if the child may be a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe*	90% (2,189)	11% (258)
Question 9C: If the child may be a member of a federally recognized Tribe during the PUR, was the Tribe provided timely notification of its right to intervene in court proceedings?	74% (181)	26% (63)
Question 9D: If the child may be a member of a federally recognized Tribe, was the child placed in foster care in accordance with ICWA (or were concerted efforts made to do so)?	69% (141)	31% (63)

* Question 9B was not used to determine the Item Rating for Item 9.

²³ Question 9B is not used to determine the item rating but is included here for informational purposes.

²⁴ The number of cases considered applicable for 9C (n=244) and 9D (n=204) is higher than the reported number of American Indian/Alaska Native children (n=123) in foster care for several reasons. Some children whose cases were considered in 9C did not have American Indian/Alaska Native heritage listed in their case records but reviewers determined through interviews that these children may have had Tribal connections. Others were either categorized as More Than One Race or were of Hispanic ethnicity and thus categorized as Hispanic.

Figure 28: Examination of Rating for Question 9C—Timely Notification to Tribe of Right to Intervene in Court Proceedings

Question 9C: Tribe Was Notified	Children With Race Identified as American Indian in Case Records	Children Identified as American Indian by Another Means	Total
Yes	90% (151)	39% (30)	74% (181)
No	10% (16)	61% (47)	26% (63)
Total	100% (167)	100% (77)	100% (244)

NOTE: Includes (a) children identified as American Indian/Alaska Native and another race or Hispanic in case records; and (b) cases where reviewers discovered the child could possibly have such heritage through document reviews and interviews with family members.

about preserving connections is greater than the number of cases (123) reported as American Indian/Alaska Native under Race/Ethnicity.²⁵ Seventy-seven cases involved children who had not been identified as American Indian or Alaska Native in case records.

Cases where the children were previously identified in the case record as having American Indian/Alaska Native heritage were more often found to have met requirements for Tribal notification. (See **Figure 28**.) For some other cases, however, where reviewers learned through interviews or documentation review that family members believed a child not identified in the case file as American Indian/Alaska Native had some type of American Indian/Alaska Native heritage, reviewers then determined that the requirements for Indian children had not been addressed adequately by the agency. This suggests that performance related to preserving connections for American Indian and Alaska Native children is better for children whose Tribal connections have been established clearly in the case records, and that performance on Item 9 might be improved by focusing assurance efforts on earlier identification of children’s American Indian/Alaska Native heritage. If caseworkers are aware of American Indian/Alaska Native heritage, they are more likely to meet relevant requirements for preserving connections.

The CFSR narratives for these cases suggest a potential practice concern: whether appropriate communication occurred (i.e., whether the agency asked the family about American Indian and Alaska Native heritage, and whether the agency followed up with the relevant Tribe to determine whether the child was enrolled or eligible to be enrolled).

Item 10: Relative Placement

Cases were applicable for this item unless relative placement was not an option during the PUR because the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement or due to specific situations, such as abandonment, in which the identity of the parents and all relatives remained unknown despite concerted efforts to find them. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether, during the PUR, the agency made concerted efforts to place the child with relatives when appropriate.

Item 10 Rating: 70% of all 2,345 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 10.

10A1: The child’s current or most recent placement during the PUR was with a relative in 37% of the 2,345 applicable cases.

10A2: Among this group of children whose current or most recent placement was with relatives, 93% of the 868 applicable cases were in a stable and appropriate placement.

²⁵ The method of reporting race/ethnicity in this report follows Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) reporting protocol and includes only those reported as American Indian/Alaska Native with no other racial heritage and who are non-Hispanic in the American Indian/Alaska Native race/ethnicity. Children of Hispanic ethnicity are reported as Hispanic, regardless of race. Children with more than one racial heritage are reported as “two or more races.” These questions were also applied to children (a) who were identified as American Indian/Alaska native and another race or Hispanic; and (b) who reviewers discovered could possibly have such heritage through document reviews and interviews with family members. In the Round 3 CFSRs, 204 children were identified in case records during the reviews as American Indian/Alaska Native. Of these, 123 children were non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native. Forty-nine children were non-Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native and categorized as More Than One Race. Thirty-two children were American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic and were categorized as Hispanic due to their ethnicity.

10B: The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate maternal relatives as potential placements for the child in 56% of the 1,282 applicable cases.

10C: The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate paternal relatives as potential placements for the child in 47% of the 1,161 applicable cases.

The child's current or most recent placement was with a relative in approximately **37%** of the applicable cases, and **93%** of those placements were stable and assessed to meet the needs of the child.

Agencies were more likely to make concerted efforts to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate maternal relatives than paternal relatives. (See **Figure 29**.)

Figure 29: Percentage of Cases Where Agency Made Concerted Efforts to Identify, Locate, Inform, and Evaluate Maternal and Paternal Relatives



Practice Strengths

- The agency effectively used relative questionnaires, relative searches, and/or relative notifications to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate relatives for placement
- Caseworkers included the child(ren) in the process of identifying relatives for placement
- Caseworkers initiated Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) requests, when necessary and appropriate, to facilitate relative placements

Practice Concerns

- Although children were placed with relatives, some of these placements were not stable and children were moved
- Ongoing efforts were not made to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate relatives for placement
- Efforts were not made to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate both maternal and paternal relatives

Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents

All cases involving children in foster care were applicable for this item unless, during the entire PUR, parental rights remained terminated; the child was abandoned, and parents could not be located; the whereabouts of the parents were not known despite documented concerted efforts to find them; it was documented that contact with the parents was not considered in the child's best interests; both parents were deceased; or the only parent(s) being assessed in this item did not meet the definition of Mother/Father for this item.

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made concerted efforts to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver(s) through activities other than arranging visitation.

Mothers were more likely than fathers to receive encouragement to participate in their children's school activities, medical appointments, and after-school programs.

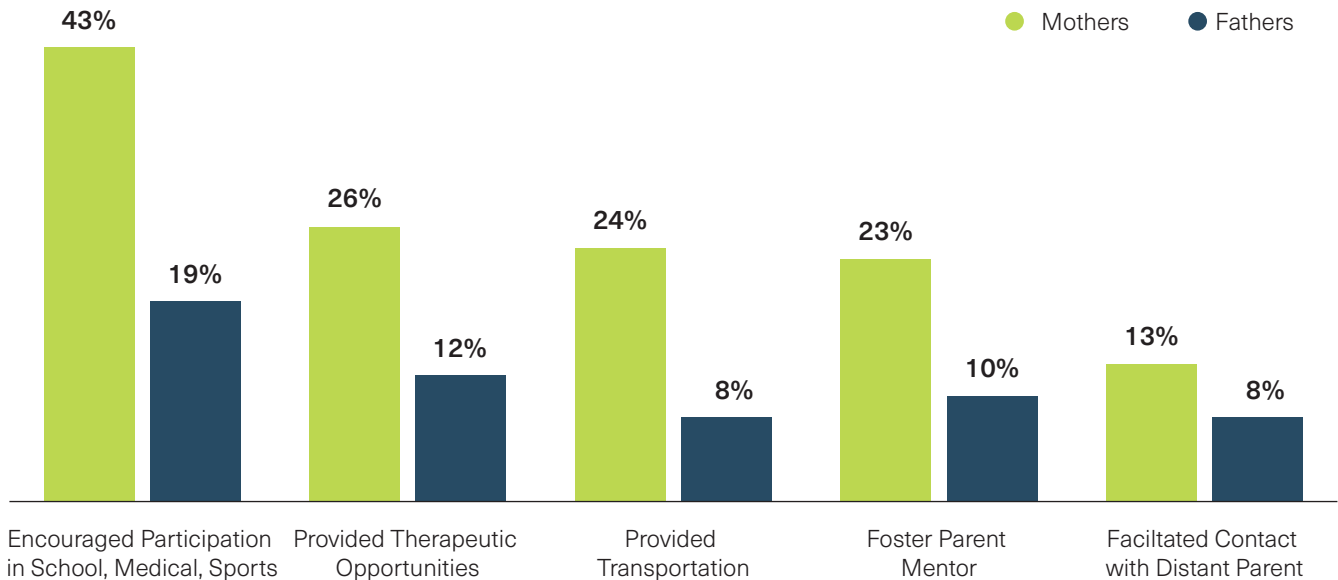
Item 11 Rating: 58% of all 1,677 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 11.

11A: Concerted efforts were made during the PUR to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her mother in 65% of the 1,609 applicable cases.

11B: Concerted efforts were made during the PUR to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her father in 56% of the 954 applicable cases.

The review asked what concerted efforts were made to support the parent-child relationship, such as encouraging participation in the child's school activities, medical appointments, and after-school sports; providing transportation so the parent could attend the child's activities; providing therapeutic opportunities; encouraging resource parents to mentor parents; and facilitating contact with a parent who is not living near the child. Of all the types of support given to parents, mothers and fathers were both most likely to receive encouragement to participate in school

Figure 30: Specific Methods Used by Caseworkers To Support Parent-Child Relationship



NOTE: Parents may have received one or more types of support.

activities, medical appointments, and after-school sports. Across all types of support, mothers were more likely than fathers to receive concerted efforts to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships with their children in foster care. (See Figure 30.)

Practice Strengths

- Caseworkers promoted contact between parents and children using methods such as phone calls, letters, and social media when the parent was not living near the child
- Parents were encouraged to participate in “everyday activities” with their children outside of regularly scheduled visitation
- Caseworkers assisted parents with transportation to support their participation in their children’s lives
- Caseworkers encouraged resource families to have a good relationship with parents, and the resource families helped mentor parents
- Caseworkers arranged for therapeutic visitation between parents and their children, which helped to support and reinforce the development of positive parent-child relationships

Practice Concerns

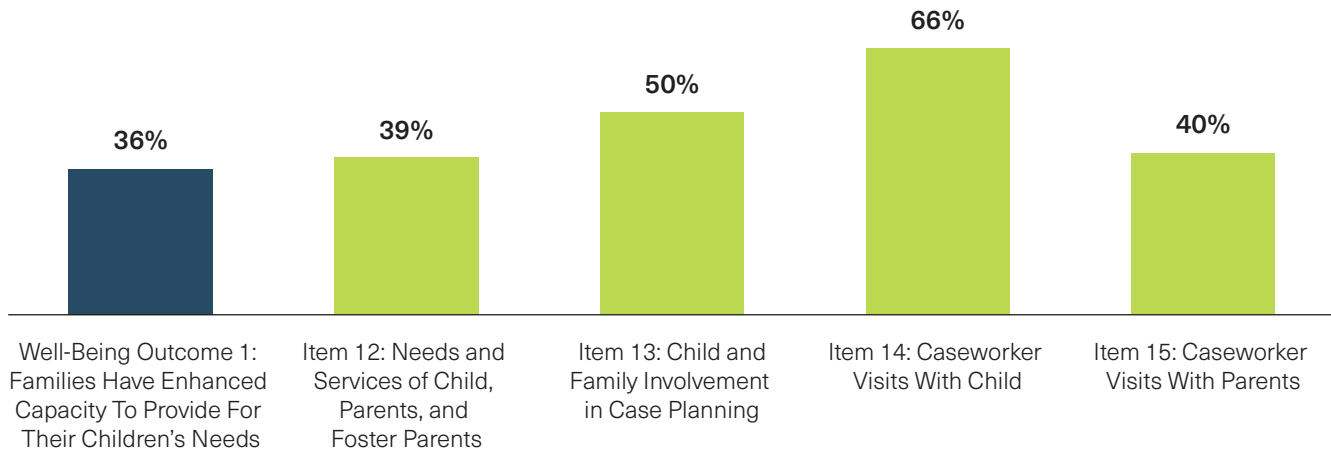
- Caseworkers were less likely to use a variety of methods to promote and/or maintain the relationship between

parents and their children or re-engage parents who were previously involved in their children’s lives

- Caseworkers faced challenges in supporting parent-child relationships if a parent was incarcerated
- There was a lack of concerted efforts to arrange parents’ participation in their children’s appointments or activities
- Caseworkers did not encourage or facilitate effective working relationships between resource parents and parents
- The agency prioritized the involvement of one parent over the other (most often, the father was left out when concerted efforts were made to involve the mother)



Figure 31: Performance on Well-Being Outcome 1 and Supporting Items



Well-Being

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

No state achieved substantial conformity with **Well-Being Outcome 1**. At the case level, across the 51 states, 36% of the 4,067 cases substantially achieved this outcome. (See **Figure 31**.)

There are 4 items associated with this outcome. For a case to substantially achieve this outcome, Item 12 must be rated as a Strength or Not Applicable (NA), and no more than 1 of the remaining applicable items may be rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents

Almost all cases were applicable for Item 12. There is only a very narrow set of circumstances for cases involving families receiving in-home services when Item 12 is not applicable for assessment. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made concerted efforts to assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents and to provide the services necessary to meet those needs. This item excludes the assessment of children's (but not parents') needs pertaining to education, physical health, and mental health. These areas are addressed in later items. Safety-related services are not addressed in this item; they are covered in Item 2.

Item 12 Overall Rating: 39% of all 4,051 applicable cases²⁶ were rated as a Strength for Item 12.

Agencies did better assessing children's, parents', and resource families' needs than providing services to meet the identified needs, suggesting a need to focus on providing services. This might include meeting children's needs in the areas of social competencies, attachment and caregiver relationships, social relationships and connections, social skills, and self-esteem, and for older youth, independent living skills. For parents, it may mean meeting needs related to the reasons the family came to the attention of the agency, including concrete needs such as housing and transportation. For resource parents, it may mean providing services and supports to stabilize placements.

For this item to be rated as a Strength overall, Sub-Item 12A (pertaining to the child) must be rated as a Strength, and 12B (pertaining to the parents) and 12C (pertaining to the foster parents) must be rated as either a Strength or Not Applicable.

12A1: The agency conducted initial and/or ongoing assessments during the PUR that accurately assessed the child's needs in 76% of the 4,059 applicable cases.

12A2: The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to meet the child's identified needs in 64% of the 2,833 applicable cases.

²⁶ Although all cases were considered applicable for this item, ratings for 16 cases were Not Applicable for Item 12. These cases reflect circumstances where there was a comprehensive initial assessment of safety and risk, no substantiated or indicated child maltreatment, and no identified risk or safety concerns that necessitated provision of ongoing assessment and services.

Sub-Item 12A Rating: 71% of the 4,051 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Sub-Item 12A (children’s needs and services).

12B1: The agency conducted initial and/or ongoing assessments during the PUR that accurately assessed the mother’s needs in 62% of the 3,380 applicable cases.

12B2: The agency conducted initial and/or ongoing assessments during the PUR that accurately assessed the father’s needs in 46% of the 2,747 applicable cases.

12B3: The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to meet the mother’s identified needs in 57% of the 3,232 applicable cases.

12B4: The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to meet the father’s identified needs in 42% of the 2,448 applicable cases.

Sub-Item 12B Rating: 40% of the 3,508 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Sub-Item 12B (parents’ needs and services).

12C1: The agency conducted ongoing assessments during the PUR that accurately assessed the needs of the foster or pre-adoptive parents in 79% of the 2,243 applicable cases.

12C2: The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to meet the identified needs of the foster or pre-adoptive parents in 69% of the 1,801 applicable cases.

Sub-Item 12C Rating: 73% of the 2,243 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Sub-Item 12C (foster parents’ needs and services).

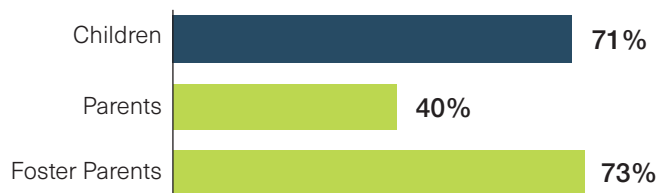
Overall, agencies were more likely to make concerted efforts to assess the needs and provide appropriate services for children and resource (foster) parents (Sub-Items 12A and 12C) than for parents (Sub-Item 12B). (See **Figure 32.**)

Practice Strengths

Children

- Children’s needs were assessed at least monthly and sometimes more often, with multiple individuals providing information to inform the assessment
- Services were age-appropriate for the child, which suggests appropriate application of the prudent parenting standards (e.g., resource parents were given resources to facilitate children’s participation in extracurricular activities)

Figure 32: Percentage of Cases Where Agency Made Concerted Efforts To Assess Needs and Provide Services to Children, Parents, and Foster Parents



Parents

- Caseworkers consistently followed up with parents to explore their needs and ensure that parents followed through with their services
- Caseworkers worked with parents to eliminate difficulties in accessing services, such as transportation
- For many parents, caseworkers relied on varied sources of information to inform assessments and service needs (e.g., interviews with family members, health records, criminal records)

Resource Parents

- Caseworkers used multiple types of communication to facilitate contact with resource parents and assess their initial and ongoing needs
- When resource parents discussed their needs and/or requested services, caseworker responses were timely
- Caseworkers effectively kept resource parents up to date on children’s permanency status

Practice Concerns

Children

- Needs assessments were not informed by gathering information from children themselves, and/or from collateral contacts (e.g., grandparents, teachers) to inform initial and/or ongoing assessments of children
- Children did not receive services to address their needs. In many cases, this included a lack of services to meet children’s basic needs (e.g., diapers, clothes, beds, food), children’s socialization needs, or Independent Living Services
- While initial assessments were often completed, children did not receive ongoing assessments to inform service provision, even if/when new case circumstances arose

Parents

- Initial or ongoing assessments were not comprehensive and, as a result, the services provided to parents were focused on treating symptoms instead of underlying issues or were “cookie cutter” in nature
- Some parents did not receive comprehensive assessments or appropriate services because assessments and services were not available or provided in the parent’s language
- Many cases that received an ANI rating reflected circumstances in which agencies struggled to help families with their financial needs

Resource Parents

- Caseworker efforts to assess and address resource parents’ needs were not consistent and/or thorough. For example, many resource parents reported receiving some services (e.g., transportation), but not all of the requested/necessary services (e.g., help with managing children’s behaviors)
- Caseworkers failed to share key information or case details with resource parents, which often resulted in resource parents being unaware of what services were available and/or which to request
- Instead of providing resource parents with services they needed to help stabilize placements or delaying a change in placement until requested services were provided, caseworkers moved the child to a new resource home

Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

All cases were applicable for this item unless it was not developmentally appropriate for the child to be involved in case planning and, during the entire PUR, parental rights remained terminated, the whereabouts of the parents were not known despite documented concerted efforts to find them, contact with the parents was not considered in the child’s best interests, the parents indicated they did not want to be involved in the child’s life, or the parents were deceased.

Item 13 Rating: 50% of all 3,878 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 13.

13A: The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to actively involve the child in the case planning process in 66% of the 2,553 applicable cases.

13B: The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to actively involve the mother in the case planning process in 64% of the 3,332 applicable cases.

13C: The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to actively involve the father in the case planning process in 49% of the 2,532 applicable cases.

Overall, agencies were more likely to make concerted efforts to involve children and mothers in case planning than fathers. (See **Figure 34.**)

Figure 34: Percentage of Cases Where Agency Made Concerted Efforts To Involve Children and Parents in Case Planning



Practice Strengths

Children

- Children were involved in case planning at the appropriate level for their age and understanding
- Children were involved in case planning activities both formally (i.e., attending case planning meetings) and informally (i.e., during at least monthly conversations with their caseworkers)

Parents

- Caseworkers focused on building rapport through an open exchange and full explanation of the child welfare process
- Caseworkers ensured that parents helped develop and understood the case plan
- Caseworkers sought feedback from parents on whether services were meeting their needs and what parents thought of the direction the case was taking
- Caseworkers effectively used certain practices, such as Family Team Meetings and Motivational Interviewing, to emphasize parents’ strengths
- Caseworkers communicated with parents in the parents’ primary language and had one-on-one conversations with them to gather their input and engage in case planning

Practice Concerns

Children

- Children’s involvement in case planning was limited to superficial conversations with caseworkers

- Caseworkers did not meet with children regularly, limiting engagement and opportunities to be involved in case planning

Parents

- The agency developed the case plan without parental input and then provided it to the parent for signature
- Caseworkers focused on how to get parents to comply with a case plan rather than addressing the parents’ issues or concerns
- Caseworkers sometimes faced communication issues, which affected the degree of engagement with parents who did not speak English or parents with mental health issues or cognitive impairments
- The physical location or particular circumstances of the parents presented challenges for caseworkers in engaging parents. For example, some parents lived outside of the state or county and the distance limited opportunities for face-to-face interaction. Other parents were homeless or living in transient housing, which made it difficult to locate and involve them in case planning
- There was a lack of involvement of fathers in case planning

Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child

All cases were applicable for Item 14. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and to promote achievement of case goals.

Item 14 Rating: 66% of all 4,067 cases were rated as a Strength for Item 14.

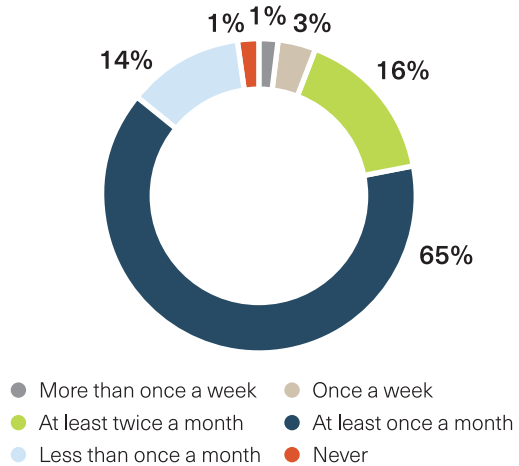
14A: The frequency of the visits between the caseworker and the child during the PUR was sufficient in 80% of the 4,067 cases.

14B: The quality of the visits between the caseworker and the child during the PUR was sufficient in 71% of the 4,031 applicable cases.

The pattern of caseworker visits with the child is shown in **Figure 35**. Most children (65%) receive visit from their caseworkers monthly.

In **85%** of cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with the child or children.

Figure 35: Pattern of Caseworker Visits With Child



Practice Strengths

- The frequency and length of caseworker visits corresponded with the needs of the child
- Caseworkers used a variety of developmentally appropriate strategies to engage children during visits
- Visits occurred in multiple settings and/or there were multiple types of contact between the caseworker and the child
- Caseworkers developed rapport with children using a variety of techniques (e.g., discussions about daily activities, favorite foods, music, and other topics to promote relationships)

Practice Concerns

- Children were not seen privately, which affected the quality of the visits
- Children were not visited in their homes, which reduced the quality of their visits
- Visits lacked purposeful, substantive, and/or comprehensive conversations
- The frequency and quality of visits were not driven by case dynamics or children’s needs

Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents

All cases were applicable for this item unless, during the entire PUR, parental rights remained terminated, the whereabouts of the parents were not known despite documented concerted efforts to find them, contact with the parents was not considered in the child’s best interests, the parents indicated they did not want to be involved in the child’s life, or the parents were deceased.

Reviewers assessed whether, during the PUR, the caseworker’s face-to-face contact with the child’s mother and father was of sufficient frequency and quality to ensure the child’s safety, permanency, and well-being and to promote achievement of case goals.

Item 15 Rating: 40% of all 3,487 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 15.

15A2: The frequency of visits between the caseworker and the mother during the PUR was sufficient in 62% of the 3,340 applicable cases.

15B2: The frequency of visits between the caseworker and the father during the PUR was sufficient in 45% of the 2,527 applicable cases.

15C: The quality of the visits between the caseworker and the mother during the PUR was sufficient in 62% of the 3,145 applicable cases.

15D: The quality of the visits between the caseworker and the father during the PUR was sufficient in 54% of the 2,059 applicable cases.

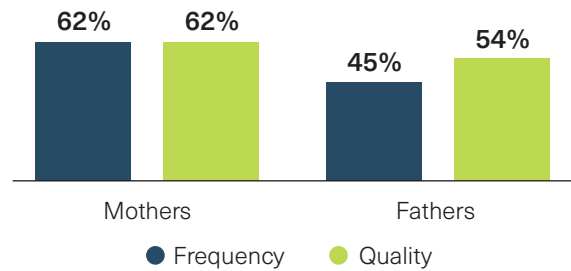
In **58%** of the applicable cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with mothers. In **37%** of the applicable cases, caseworkers had at least monthly visits with fathers.

Caseworkers were more likely to have sufficient frequency and quality of visits with mothers than with fathers. (See **Figure 36.**)

The pattern of caseworker visits with parents is shown in **Figure 37.** There were 3,340 applicable cases involving mothers.

- 1% (n=26) of mothers saw their caseworkers more than once a week
- 3% (n=105) of mothers saw their caseworkers once a week
- 14% (n=467) of mothers saw their caseworkers less than once a week, but at least twice a month
- 40% (n=1,351) of mothers saw their caseworkers less than twice a month, but at least once a month
- 37% (n=1,220) of mothers saw their caseworkers less than once a month

Figure 36: Percentage of Cases Where Caseworker Visits With Parents Were of Sufficient Frequency and Quality



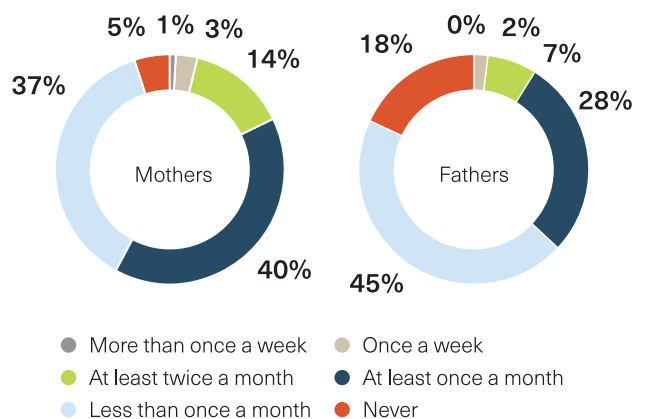
For mothers, caseworkers had sufficient frequency of visits in **62%** of cases and sufficient quality of visits in **62%** of cases. For fathers, these rates were **45%** and **54%**, respectively.

- 5% (n=171) of mothers never saw their caseworkers

There were 2,527 applicable cases involving fathers.

- Less than 1% (n=10) of fathers saw their caseworkers more than once a week
- 2% (n=46) of fathers saw their caseworkers once a week
- 7% (n=163) of fathers saw their caseworkers less than once a week, but at least twice a month
- 28% (n=716) of fathers saw their caseworkers less than once a week, but at least once a month
- 45% (n=1,138) of fathers saw their caseworkers less than once a month
- 18% (n=454) of fathers never saw their caseworkers

Figure 37: Pattern of Caseworker Visits With Parents



Practice Strengths

- Caseworkers met consistently with parents, seeking them out and meeting them at convenient locations, including in the family home
- Caseworkers made varied and repeated efforts to locate and contact parents, including maintaining contact with family members as conduits to parents
- The duration of caseworker visitation with parents varied according to need
- Consistently seeing the same caseworker helped build a supportive relationship between the caseworker and the parent

Practice Concerns

- Caseworkers’ efforts to locate or meet with the parent were insufficient
- Caseworkers did not adjust visitation in response to changes in family circumstances or situations
- There were too few caseworker visits when the parent (most often the father) was not living in the same home with the child or was not living in the same home from which the child was removed
- Caseworkers did not engage all the parents during visits, particularly fathers

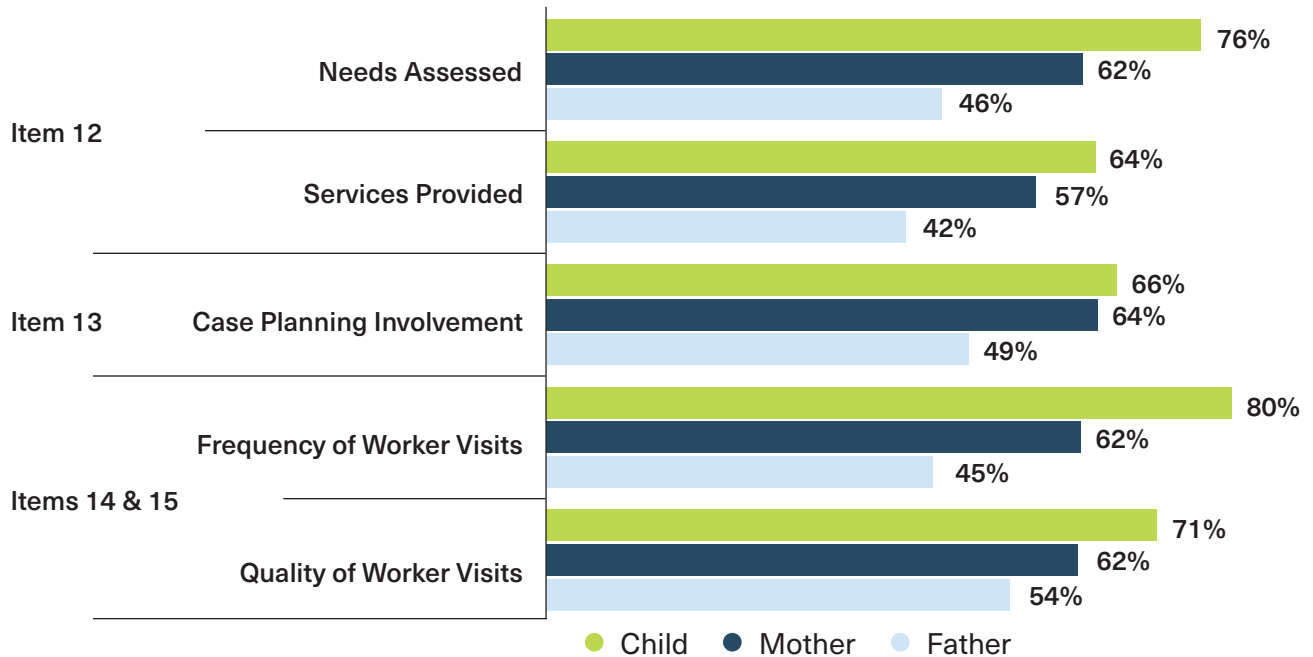


- Communication methods such as phone calls, text messages, and emails replaced rather than supplemented face-to-face interactions between caseworkers and parents

Comparison by Family Role

A comparison of responses to questions by family role from the items that make up Well-Being Outcome 1 reveals that efforts and work with children are more likely to be rated as a Strength than efforts and work with parents. Additionally, efforts and work with fathers are much less likely to be rated as positively as efforts and work with mothers. The diminished performance with regard to efforts and work with fathers is an ongoing pattern in the CFSRs. (See **Figure 38.**)

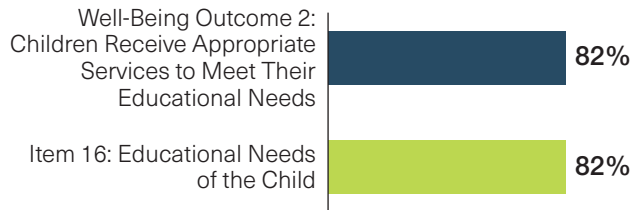
Figure 38: Comparison of Performance by Family Role for Items 12, 13, 14, and 15



Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Six states achieved substantial conformity with **Well-Being Outcome 2**. At the case level, across the 51 states, 82% of the 2,587 applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome. (See **Figure 39**.)

Figure 39: Performance on Well-Being Outcome 2 and Supporting Item



There is one item associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, Item 16 must be rated as a Strength.

Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child

Cases were applicable for this item if one of the following applied: (1) children in foster care were of school age; or (2) for cases involving families receiving in-home services, educational issues were relevant to the reason for the agency’s involvement with the family or, given the case circumstances, it was reasonable to expect that the agency would address educational issues.

Additionally, if a child in foster care was 2 years old or younger and had developmental delays, the case may have been applicable if the developmental delays should have been addressed through an educational approach. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether, during the PUR, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children’s educational needs and whether those needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

Item 16 Rating: 82% of all 2,587 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 16.

16A: The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to accurately assess the child’s educational needs in 87% of the 2,587 applicable cases.

16B: The agency made concerted efforts during the PUR to address the child’s educational needs through appropriate services in 78% of the 1,913 applicable cases.

Practice Strengths

- Children’s educational needs were assessed both formally and informally, often leading to educational services and/or an Individualized Education Plan
- There was strong collaboration among the agency, parent/resource parent, and school

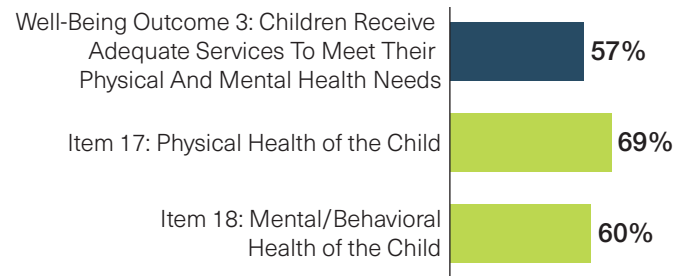
Practice Concerns

- Caseworkers did not make concerted efforts to ensure that children were assessed, referred to, and/or participating in educational services. There was often a lack of follow-up, coordination, and collaboration with parents, resource parents, and/or the school system
- Some children experienced multiple school settings, and changing schools resulted in gaps in receiving educational services

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

No state achieved substantial conformity with **Well-Being Outcome 3**. At the case level, across all 51 states, 57% of the 3,632 applicable cases substantially achieved this outcome. (See **Figure 40**.)

Figure 40: Performance on Well-Being Outcome 3 and Supporting Items



There are 2 items associated with this outcome. For an applicable case to substantially achieve this outcome, both items must be rated as a Strength, or 1 item may be rated as a Strength while the other is rated as Not Applicable.

Item 17: Physical Health of the Child

All cases involving children in foster care were applicable for this item. Cases involving families receiving in-home services were applicable when there were physical health concerns.²⁷ In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children’s physical health needs (including dental needs) had been appropriately addressed.

Item 17 Rating: 69% of all 3,055 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 17.

17A1: The agency accurately assessed the child’s physical health care needs during the PUR in 86% of the 3,045 applicable cases.

17A2: The agency accurately assessed the child’s dental health care needs during the PUR in 82% of the 2,551 applicable cases.

17B1: The agency provided appropriate oversight of prescription medications for physical health issues during the PUR in 81% of the 900 applicable cases.

17B2: The agency ensured that appropriate services were provided during the PUR to the child to address all identified physical health needs in 81% of the 2,567 applicable cases.

17B3: The agency ensured that appropriate services were provided during the PUR to the child to address all identified dental health needs in 75% of the 2,077 applicable cases.

Practice Strengths

- All health-related needs and services were provided in a timely manner
- The caseworker encouraged parents and/or youth to learn how to make appointments and monitor the child’s health

Practice Concerns

- There was a lack of agency/caseworker oversight to ensure that children’s appointments, especially follow-up appointments, were made and/or kept
- There was a lack of agency/caseworker oversight of prescription medication
- Children did not receive appropriate dental assessments and/or services

Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

Cases involving children in foster care were applicable for this item if the child had existing mental/behavioral health needs, including substance abuse issues, during the PUR. Cases involving families receiving in-home services were applicable when there were relevant mental/behavioral issues related to the agency’s involvement with the family. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether mental/behavioral health needs had been addressed during the PUR.

Item 18 Rating: 60% of all 2,590 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for Item 18.

18A: The agency conducted accurate initial and/or ongoing assessments of the child’s mental/behavioral health needs to inform case planning decisions in 77% of the 2,590 applicable cases.

18B: The agency provided appropriate oversight for children in foster care of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health issues in 70% of the 713 applicable cases.

18C: The agency provided appropriate services during the PUR to address the child’s mental/behavioral health needs in 64% of the 2,437 applicable cases.

Practice Strengths

- Children’s mental/behavioral health needs were assessed both formally and informally
- Children’s services were appropriately targeted to address their mental/behavioral needs
- Services were adjusted based on the child’s ongoing needs

Practice Concerns

- There were delays in assessing needs and/or providing services
- There were gaps in service provision (e.g., due to changing service providers or a lack of providers)
- Mental/behavioral health services were provided for some, but not all, needs

²⁷ Includes cases where physical/dental health issues were relevant to the reason for the agency’s involvement with the family, or cases where it is reasonable to expect that the agency would address physical/dental health issues given the circumstances of the case.

Figure 41: Responses to Item 18, Question B: Agency Provided Appropriate Oversight for Prescription Medications for Mental/Behavioral Health Issues, by Percentage (Number)

Question 18B	Yes	No	Total
For cases involving children in foster care only, during the PUR, did the agency provide appropriate oversight of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health issues?	70% (499)	30% (214)	100% (713)



Spotlight Section: Oversight of Prescription Medications for Mental/Behavioral Health

The Round 3 CFSR examined oversight of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health issues (i.e., psychotropic medications). This was addressed in question 18B of Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child, which asked whether the agency provided appropriate oversight of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health issues for children in foster care during the PUR.

As **Figure 41** shows, 713 cases (over two-thirds of cases) were applicable for this question, with 70% (n=499) receiving positive responses.²⁸

Reviewer comments for cases receiving “Yes” responses for question 18B (i.e., the agency provided appropriate oversight of prescription medications for mental/behavioral health issues) mentioned the following:

Prescribing physician and agency

- The caseworker is in touch with and communicates regularly with the physician who prescribes medications.
- The agency effectively monitors medication and has signed consent forms approving the child’s medication regimen on file. A new form is filed when medications are changed.

Caregivers

- The caseworker discusses medications with caregivers, including how medications are administered and any side effects experienced by the child.
- Medication is kept locked up.
- The caregivers keep logs of medication administration and share them with the caseworker.
- Medication logs are filed appropriately.

Child

- The caseworker discusses medications with the child and their potential side effects in addition to asking how the child is feeling and whether he or she is taking the medication as prescribed.
- The child receives regular medication management from a professional.
- Medications are adjusted for the child as needed.

Reviewer comments indicated that cases receiving “No” responses for question 18B (i.e., the agency did not provide appropriate oversight of psychotropic medications) were often characterized by a lack of communication with the relevant parties and/or a lack of documentation of the child’s treatment regimen (i.e., caseworkers were unaware of medication(s) and/or dosage(s)). Among the issues that were cited for these cases:

Prescribing physician and agency

- Caseworker was not communicating regularly with the physician who prescribed medications for the child. This occurred sometimes due to staff changes in caseworkers or prescribing physicians with resulting delays in re-establishing communication.
- Changes in medication were not approved and documented appropriately at the agency.
- Caseworkers did not document informed consent.

²⁸ Reviewers considered state protocol on the appropriate use and monitoring of medications when determining responses to question 18B.



Resource parents/caregivers

- Caseworkers did not meet monthly with resource parents/caregivers to discuss the administration of medication and its side effects. In some cases, reviewers found that caseworkers and caregivers had conflicting information about which drugs the children were taking.
- In some cases, caregivers arranged for the child to meet with prescribing physicians without keeping the caseworker informed.
- Caregivers were not always instructed on how to monitor or document prescription medications. The resource parents/caregivers may have kept medication logs, but the caseworker did not collect or review them.

Child

- Caseworkers did not regularly discuss medications and their side effects with the child.
- In some cases, children decided to stop taking their medications without consulting a medical professional or the caseworker.

Systemic Factors Introduction

This section explains the systemic factors and the items on which they are based.

On the basis of information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews (where necessary) conducted as

part of the onsite review, the CSFR determines whether the state is in substantial conformity with federal requirements for each of the following 7 systemic factors:

- Statewide Information System
- Case Review System
- Quality Assurance System
- Staff and Provider Training
- Service Array and Resource Development
- Agency Responsiveness to the Community
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Determining Substantial Conformity

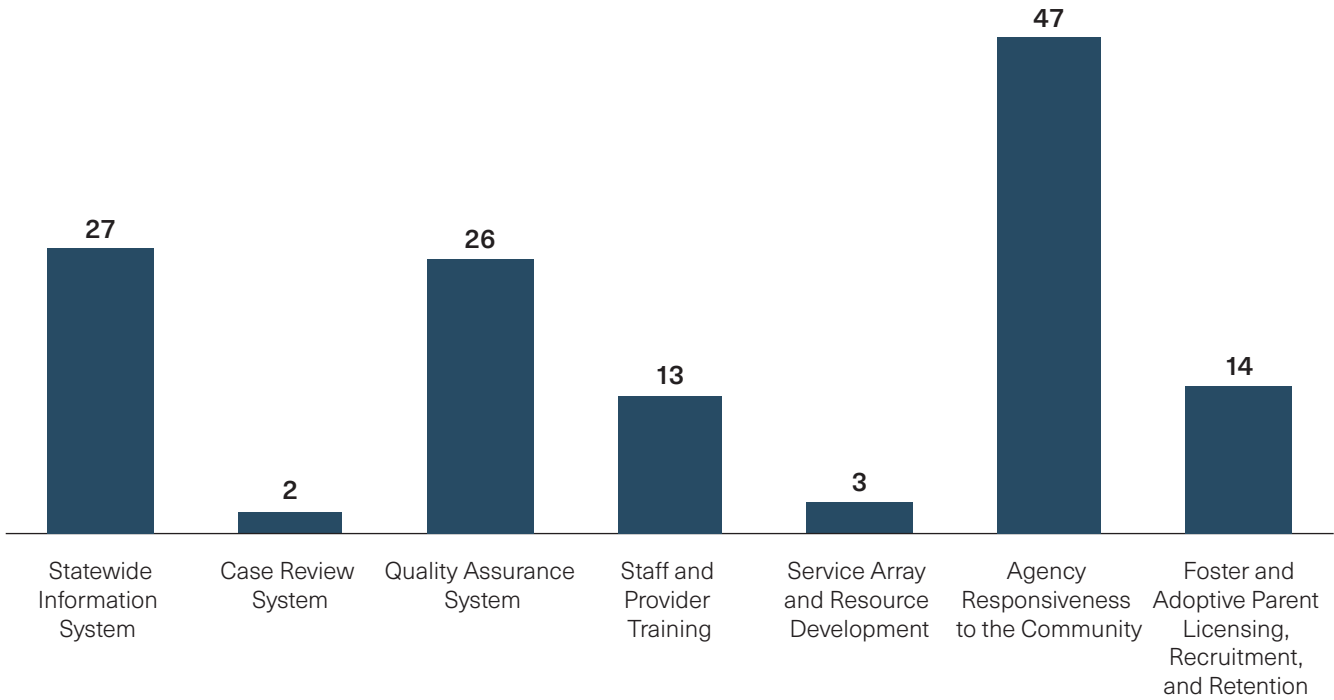
The ratings for the systemic factors are based on state performance on 18 individual items. Using the information contained in the statewide assessment, a determination is made as to whether the state will receive an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement for each item. The Children’s Bureau determines whether a state is in substantial conformity with federal requirements for the seven systemic factors based on the level of functioning of each systemic factor across the state.

If more information is needed to determine the rating, it is collected through stakeholder interviews. However, stakeholder interviews must be conducted to gather information about the **Service Array and Resource Development** systemic factor. The item ratings are then used to determine if the state is in substantial conformity with the systemic factors.

Each individual item included in a systemic factor reflects a key federal title IV-E or IV-B program requirement in federal child welfare laws and regulations. For any given systemic factor, a state is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” or “not in substantial conformity.” In Round 2, states received a rating of 1 to 4 for each systemic factor, with a rating of 3 or 4 required to be in substantial conformity. For Round 3, the state did not receive a numeric rating but was rated as either “in substantial conformity” or “not in substantial conformity.”²⁹ Five of the 7 systemic factors are rated on the basis of multiple items or plan requirements. For

²⁹ This change in method to determine conformity precludes statistical comparison of state-level performance on outcomes and items with systemic factors as included in the Round 2 aggregate report.

Figure 42: Number of States Achieving Substantial Conformity With Systemic Factors (n=51)



a state to be found in substantial conformity with a systemic factor, findings must indicate that no more than one of the

required number of items for that systemic factor fails to function as required. **Statewide Information System** and **Quality Assurance System** are rated on the basis of one item. For these systemic factors, the single item for each must be functioning as required to be in substantial conformity.

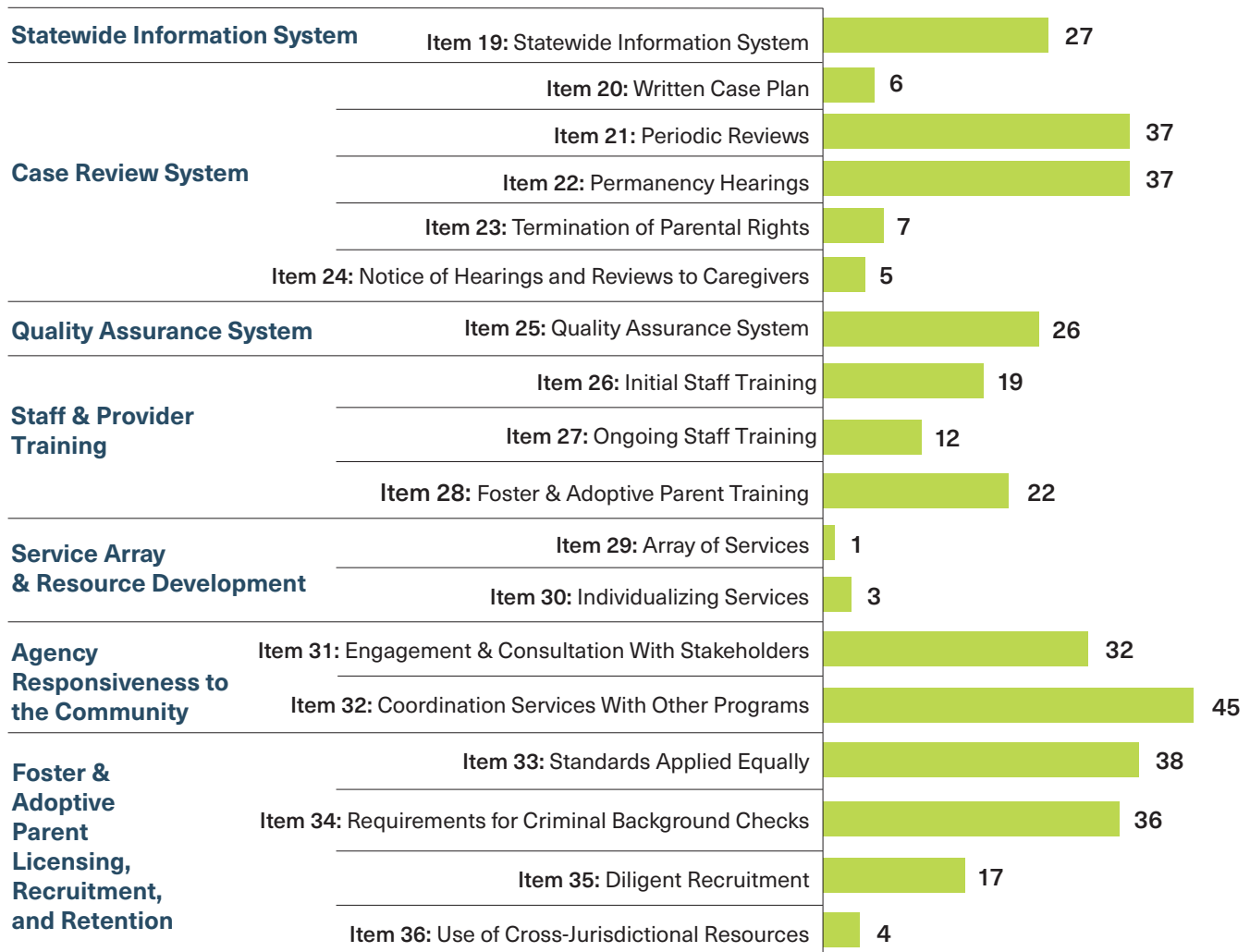
Performance

Figure 42 shows how many of the 51 states reviewed during Round 3 achieved substantial conformity on each of the systemic factors.

The majority of the 51 states reviewed in Round 3 achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factors measuring **Statewide Information System, Quality Assurance System, and Agency Responsiveness to the Community**. However, 14 or fewer states achieved substantial conformity on 4 systemic factors: **Case Review System (n=2), Staff and Provider Training (n=13), Service Array and Resource Development (n=3), and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention (n=14)**.

Figure 43 summarizes state performance on the items comprising each of the systemic factors.

Figure 43: Number of States with a Strength Rating on Systemic Factor Items 19–36 (n=51 States)



Statewide Information System

As shown in Figure 44, 27 states reviewed in Round 3 received a Strength rating for the 1 item associated with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. Because there is only 1 item associated with this systemic factor, the rating for Item 19 determines substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

Item 19: Statewide Information System

Twenty-seven states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location,

and placement goals for every child who is (or, within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

Systemic Factor Concerns

The following areas were highlighted as challenges for the Statewide Information System:

- Lack of timely data entry
- Accuracy of the information in the system
- Lack of communication with caseworkers about the importance of data entry
- Limited resources for continued system improvement

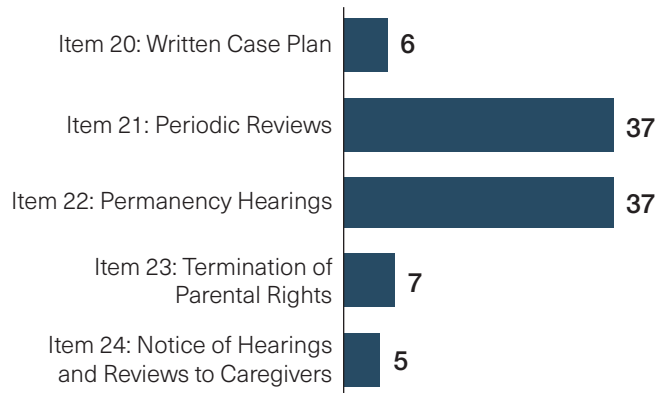
Figure 44: Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Statewide Information System Item



Case Review System

Figure 45 shows the number of states that received a Strength rating for each of the 5 items within the systemic factor of Case Review System. If at least 4 of the individual items were rated as a Strength, a state would have achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor. Two states achieved substantial conformity for Case Review System.

Figure 45: Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Case Review System Items



The majority of states were rated as a Strength on two items within this systemic factor. Periodic reviews and permanency hearings are the strongest items as reviews/hearings are happening and generally within frequency requirements. Few states were rated as a Strength on Items 20, 23, and 24.

Item 20: Written Case Plan

Six states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan, to be developed jointly with the child’s parent(s), that includes the required provisions.

Item 21: Periodic Reviews

Thirty-seven states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child no less

frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.

Item 22: Permanency Hearings

Thirty-seven states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the state has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights

Seven states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses how well the system is functioning to ensure that the filing of TPR proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions statewide.

Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers

Five states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

Systemic Factor Concerns

The following issues were identified with regard to Case Review System:

- Lack of oversight to know whether case plans are consistently developed on an ongoing basis and include the required content
- Lack of parental involvement in case plan development or data and information providing evidence that case plans are developed jointly with parents
- Crowded court dockets and heavy caseworker workloads
- Processes not in place to ensure that notice of hearings to caregivers are routinely provided and timely
- Lack of consistency in providing caregivers an opportunity to be heard when present at court hearings
- Lack of staff to complete periodic reviews and lack of full participation in reviews
- Continuances affecting timeliness of reviews and hearings
- Long delays in filing TPR resulting from missing information or delays in collecting needed information

- Lack of monitoring systems to ensure that TPR petitions are filed timely or data to show how often the presence of compelling reasons not to file are the reason for delayed filing

Quality Assurance System

Figure 46 shows state performance on the one item associated with the systemic factor of **Quality Assurance System**. For a state to achieve substantial conformity with this systemic factor, Item 25 must be rated as a Strength.

Figure 46: Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Quality Assurance System Item



Item 25: Quality Assurance System

Twenty-six states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state is operating an identifiable quality assurance (QA) system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

Systemic Factor Concerns

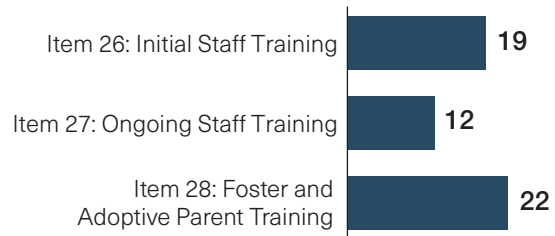
The following issues were identified with regard to Quality Assurance System:

- States lacked a process to evaluate planned program improvement
- There was a lack of standards to impartially evaluate the quality of services
- States lacked a process or method for identifying the strengths and needs of the service delivery system
- CQI activities were not integrated into agency operations

Staff and Provider Training

Figure 47 shows state performance on the 3 individual items associated with the systemic factor of **Staff and Provider Training**. If at least 2 of the individual items were rated as a Strength, a state achieved substantial conformity with

Figure 47: Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Staff and Provider Training Items



this systemic factor. Thirteen states achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

As Figure 47 shows, the majority of states did not receive Strength ratings on any of the items under **Staff and Provider Training**.

Caseworkers spoke favorably about formal mentoring programs, shadowing experienced workers, and using trainers located in the same office.

Item 26: Initial Staff Training

Nineteen states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state is operating a staff development and training program that provides initial training to all staff members who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions.

Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training

Twelve states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

Twenty-two states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff from state-licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

Systemic Factor Concerns

The following issues were identified with regard to **Staff and Provider Training**:

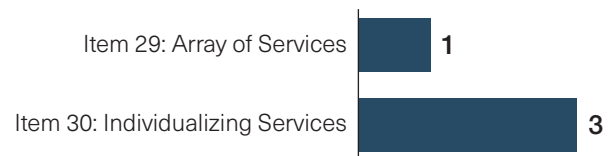
- New workers were assigned cases before completing training
- The frequency and location of initial and ongoing training were barriers to attending
- Caseloads and workloads were barriers to attending ongoing training
- Some agencies did not have ongoing training requirements or did not have methods for tracking compliance with ongoing training requirements
- Caseworkers were not always aware of ongoing training requirements
- There was a lack of training for supervisors
- New workers said that initial classroom training did not accurately reflect the demands of the position
- Caseworkers and supervisors said they felt a need for more skills-based activities that reflect real-world situations
- There was inconsistency and lack of clarity concerning requirements for ongoing resource parent training
- The location of training, lack of transportation, and lack of child care were barriers for resource parents attending training
- The quality of training was inconsistent
- Training for resource parents was not consistently available in languages other than English
- There was an insufficient mechanism for tracking resource parents' and kinship providers' compliance with training requirements; training was not required or available for relative care providers

Service Array and Resource Development

Figure 48 shows the number of states that received a rating of Strength for the 2 items within the systemic factor of **Service Array and Resource Development**. If at least 1 of the individual items was rated as a Strength, a state achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

As Figure 61 indicates, just 3 states reviewed in Round 3 received a Strength rating for the **Service Array and Resource Development** systemic factor.

Figure 48: Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Service Array and Resource Development Items



Item 29: Array of Services

One state received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in resource and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

Item 30: Individualizing Services

Three states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the services in Item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

Systemic Factor Concerns

The following issues were identified with regard to **Service Array and Resource Development**:

- Lack of services in rural areas



- Gaps in availability of services or waiting lists for services
- Difficulty accessing services because of payment-related and/or transportation issues
- Delays in referrals and arranging services due to caseworkers' workloads
- Poor-quality providers
- Services most often needed but insufficiently available, including:
 - Substance abuse treatment
 - Behavioral/mental health treatment
 - Domestic violence services
 - Trauma-informed services
 - Housing
 - Child care
 - Employment assistance
 - Transportation
 - Visitation
 - Services to support youth transitioning into adulthood
- Challenges with individualizing services, including:
 - Lack of linguistically appropriate services and service providers
 - Inability to meet the cultural needs of the diverse populations served
 - Lack of ability to meet medical or developmental needs

Agency Responsiveness to the Community

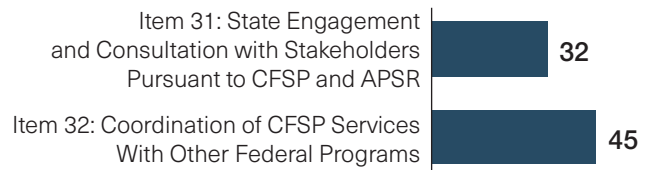
Figure 49 shows state performance on the 2 individual items associated with the systemic factor of **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**. If at least 1 of the individual items was rated as a Strength, a state achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor. Forty-seven states reviewed in Round 3 achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

As Figure 49 shows, more than half of states reviewed received a Strength rating on the items associated with this systemic factor.

Item 31: Stakeholder Consultation for the CFSP

Thirty-two states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether, in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related Annual Progress and

Figure 49: Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Agency Responsiveness to the Community Items



Services Reports (APSRs), the state engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP.

Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs

Forty-five states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.

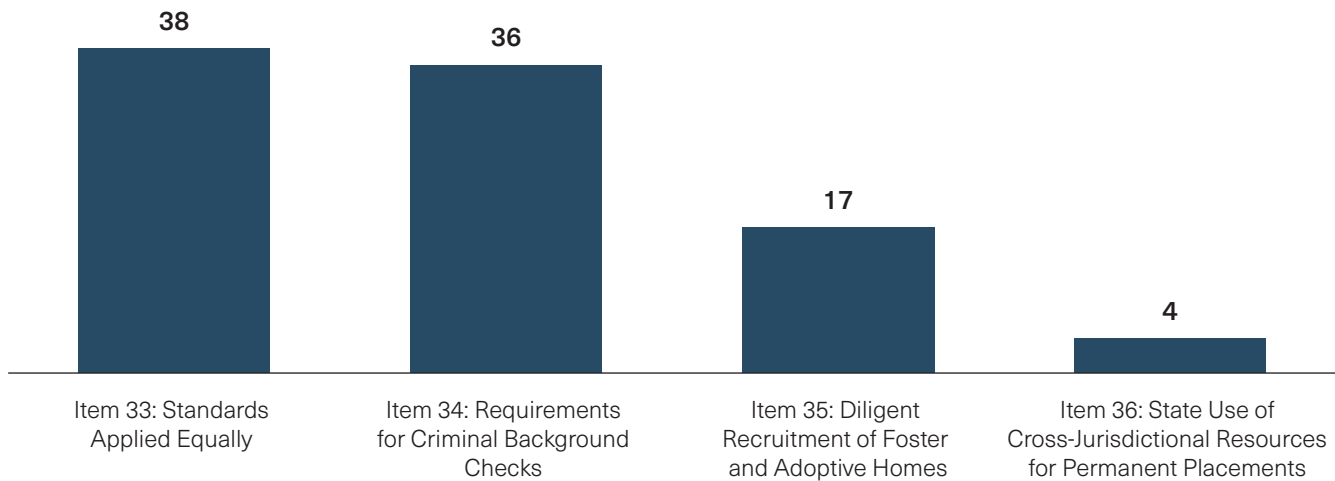
Systemic Factor Concerns

The following issues were identified with regard to **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**:

- Failure to engage some key stakeholders, such as parents, resource parents, caseworkers, and Tribes
- Not having a consistent process for engagement, or for engaging stakeholders for the development of the CFSP and the APSR
- Failure to coordinate with key federal programs, or not having information about those efforts or results of those efforts



Figure 50: Number of States Receiving a Strength Rating for Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention Items



Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Figure 50 shows state performance on the 4 individual items associated with the systemic factor of **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**. If at least 3 of the individual items were rated as a Strength, a state achieved substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

As Figure 50 shows, items within this systemic factor reflected widely varying state performance, with 14 states achieving substantial conformity.

Item 33: Standards Applied Equally

Thirty-eight states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state has ensured that state standards are applied to all state-licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds.

Item 34: Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

Thirty-six states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.

Item 35: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

Seventeen states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

Item 36: State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements

Four states received a Strength rating for this item, which assesses whether the state has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

Systemic Factor Concerns

The following issues were identified with regard to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention:

- No statewide recruitment plan
- A lack of resources for recruitment, licensing new resource parents, completing background checks, and responding to resource parents in a timely manner
- Not having sufficient information to know whether policies requiring criminal background checks were being followed
- Not having adequate case planning processes for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.
- Challenges in administering the ICPC

Conclusion

This report presents CFSR findings from the 51 states from FYs 2015 through 2018, all four years of Round 3. The CFSR data highlight the successes and challenges of state child welfare systems.

The Children’s Bureau continues to focus attention on assisting states in examining and improving their systems and enhancing their capacity to promote safety, permanency, and well-being among children and families. All states are engaged in program improvement to address areas of need and to strengthen practice, programs, and systems, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for children and families served.

The percentage of cases rated as substantially achieved and the number of states in substantial conformity with CFSR case review outcomes are summarized in **Figure 51**. This table shows that most states need to improve practice across all case review outcomes.

Figure 51: Round 3 Case Review Outcomes Summary

Outcomes	Percentage of Cases Rated as a Strength	Number of States in Substantial Conformity
Safety 1	73%	4
Safety 2	55%	0
Permanency 1	27%	0
Permanency 2	61%	0
Well-Being 1	36%	0
Well-Being 2	82%	6
Well-Being 3	57%	0



Figure 52: Round 3 Systemic Factors Summary

Systemic Factors	Percentage of States in Substantial Conformity	Number of States in Substantial Conformity
Statewide Information System	53%	27
Case Review System	4%	2
Quality Assurance System	51%	26
Staff and Provider Training	25%	13
Service Array and Resource Development	6%	3
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	92%	47
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	27%	14

Figure 52 shows the percentage and count of states in substantial conformity with the systemic factors. As indicated by case review results, most states need to improve routine statewide functioning of most systemic factors, with the exception of Agency Responsiveness to the Community.

CFSR onsite case record reviews assess child welfare practices that are fundamental to supporting the achievement of positive safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families involved with state child welfare systems. Results from CFSR Round 3 indicate the following practice areas in need of improvement:

- Assessment of child risk and safety, and development, monitoring, and updating of safety plans to address child safety concerns
- Provision of safety-related services to families to protect children in the home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care
- Consistent and genuine engagement of families in case planning
- Timely achievement of permanency, and timely filing of TPR in accordance with ASFA
- Casework practice with fathers
- Efforts to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate placement with relatives, particularly paternal relatives

- Placement of children with siblings who are also placed in foster care
- Placement changes planned to achieve the child’s case goals or meet the needs of the child
- Frequent visits and contact for children in foster care with their siblings and parents
- Quality caseworker visits with children
- Frequent and quality caseworker visits with parents
- Promotion and maintenance of children’s connections to their neighborhoods, communities, faiths, extended families, Tribes, schools, and friends while in foster care
- Assessment and provision of services to address children’s mental health needs

Routine statewide functioning of systemic factors provides a foundation for state child welfare systems to achieve child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. Information gleaned from CFSR Round 3 suggests the following salient factors affecting systemic functioning that merit greater attention:

- Caseworker, attorney, and court caseloads and workloads
- Meaningful and effective partnerships between state child welfare agencies and the legal and judicial community
- Inclusion of child, youth, parent, and resource family voices
- Enhanced and effective service array to address the needs of children and families served, particularly in rural areas
- Systematic approach to evaluating practices, programs, systems, and outcomes
- Effective resource family recruitment plans
- Administrative processes to support, track, and monitor timely data entry and adherence to practice, program, and policy requirements

Using information collected during CFSR Round 3 and presented in this report, the CB also identified notable child welfare practice strengths that contribute to positive child



and family outcomes. Highlights of state practice strengths include:

- Timely initiation and response to child maltreatment reports
- Frequent caseworker visits with children
- Timely establishment of permanency goals appropriate for the child and case circumstances
- Quality visitation of children in foster care with their siblings and parents
- Stability of children’s current placement, especially children placed with relatives
- Assessment of child and resource family needs
- Assessment and provision of services to meet children’s educational needs
- Assessment and provision of services to meet children’s physical health and dental needs

In summary, this report presents findings from the CFSRs conducted during Round 3 for the 51 states. The results highlight areas of practice and system strengths, challenges, and opportunities to focus improvement activities to better serve children and families involved with child welfare systems.

Appendix A Statewide Data Indicators for the Child and Family Services Reviews

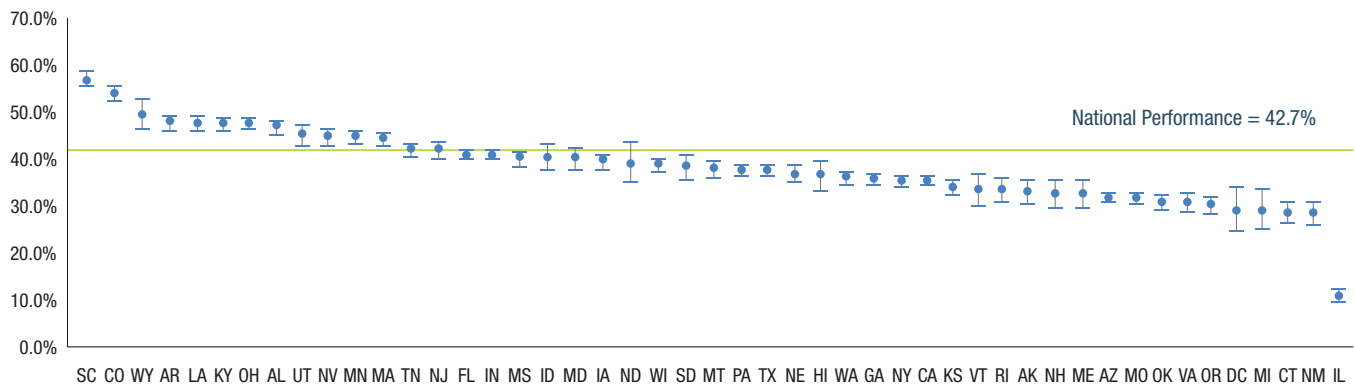
This appendix shows state performance on the statewide data indicators for the most recent 12-month reporting period included in data profiles transmitted to states in August 2019. Each chart presents states' Risk-Standardized Performance (RSP).³⁰ To determine how a state is performing relative to national performance (NP), we compared the RSP interval³¹ to national performance for the indicator. State RSP intervals may be statistically above, below, or no different than national performance. Performance was not calculated for states that exceeded the data quality limit on one or more data quality (DQ) checks associated with the indicator(s).

Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care

12-month reporting period: 16B17A³²

Data used: 16B-19A

National Performance: 42.7% (↑³³)



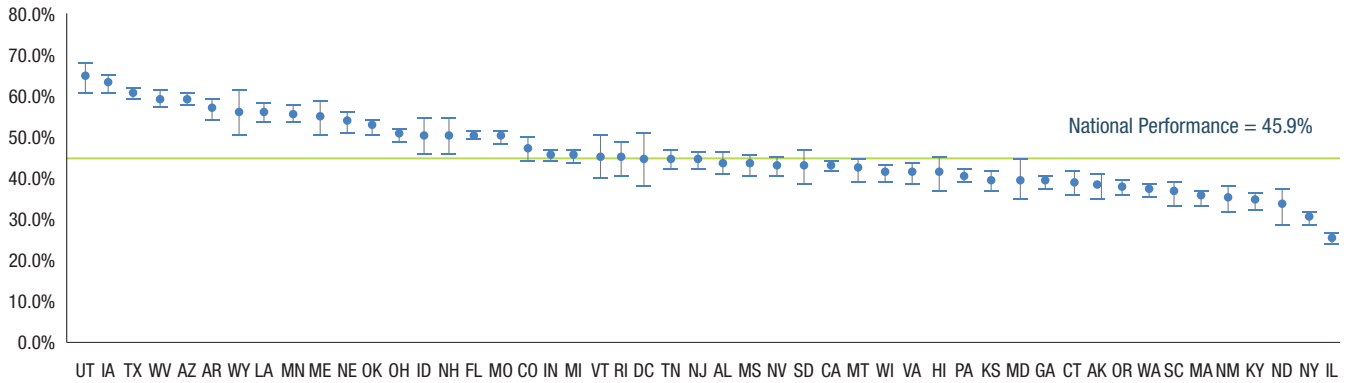
³⁰ RSP is used to assess state performance on the CFSR statewide data indicators compared to national performance. RSP accounts for some of the factors that influence performance on the indicators over which states have little control. One example is the ages of children in care; children of different ages have different likelihoods of experiencing an outcome (e.g., achieving permanency), regardless of the quality of care a state provides. Accounting for such factors allows for a more fair comparison of each state's performance relative to national performance.

³¹ To determine whether a state's performance was statistically higher, lower, or no different than national performance, we calculated a 95% confidence interval estimate for the state's RSP. The interval accounted for the amount of uncertainty associated with the RSP value. In other words, we are 95% confident that the value of the RSP was between the lower and upper limit of the interval. The RSP interval is what we used to compare state performance to national performance. If the interval overlapped national performance, the state's performance was statistically no different than national performance. If the interval was above or below national performance, it was statistically different than national performance. Whether higher or lower performance is desirable depends on the desired direction of performance for the indicator.

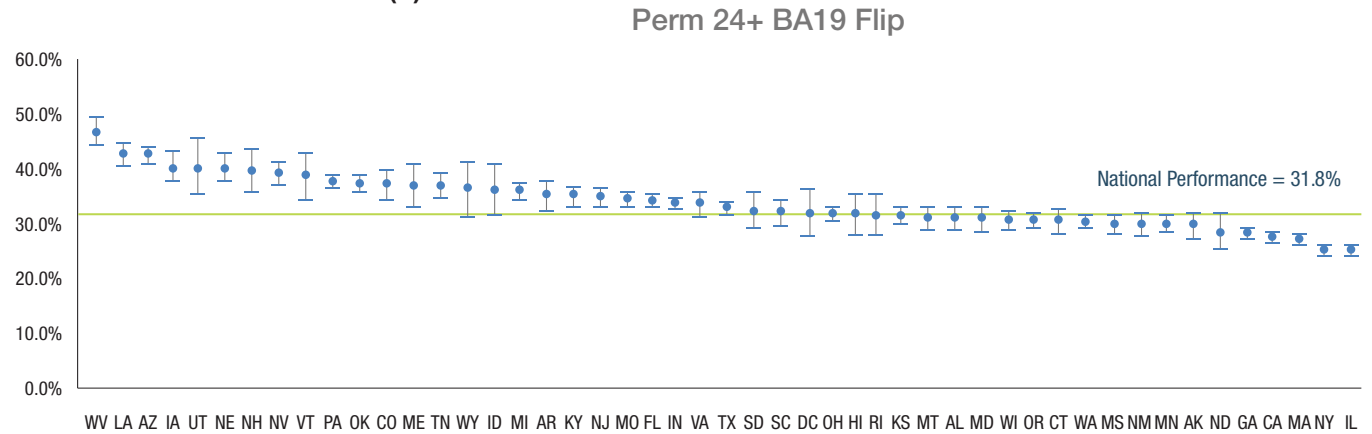
³² Data used refers to the initial 12-month period (specific to each indicator's denominator) and the period(s) of data needed to follow the children to observe their outcomes. The FY (e.g., FY18), or federal fiscal year, refers to NCANDS data, which spans the 12-month period October 1 through September 30. All other periods refer to AFCARS data: "A" refers to the 6-month period October 1 through March 31. "B" refers to the 6-month period April 1 through September 30. The 2-digit year refers to the calendar year in which the period ends (e.g., 19A refers to the 6-month period October 1, 2018, through March 31, 2019).

³³ Arrows pointing up indicate that higher values are desired. Arrows pointing down indicate that lower values are desired.

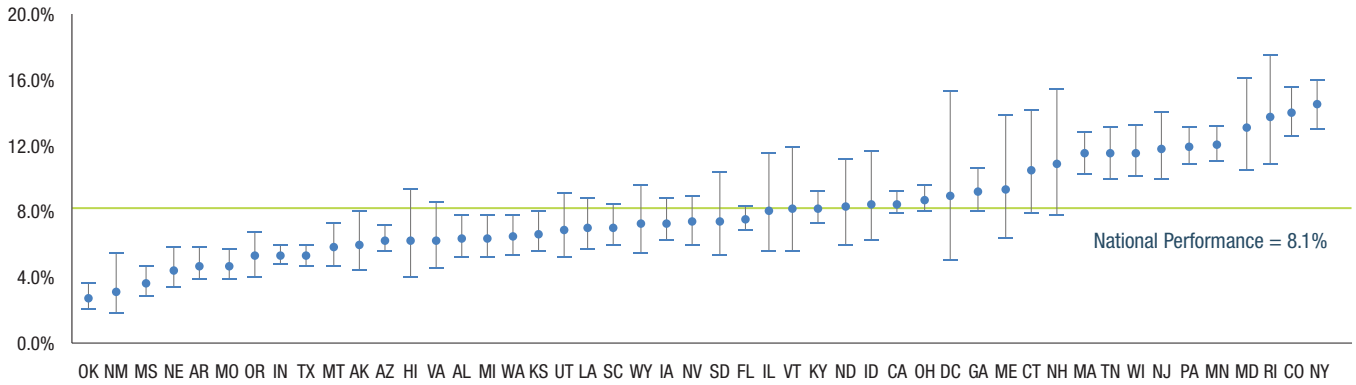
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12–23 months
12-month reporting period: 18B19A
Data used: 18B–19A
National Performance: 45.9% (↑)



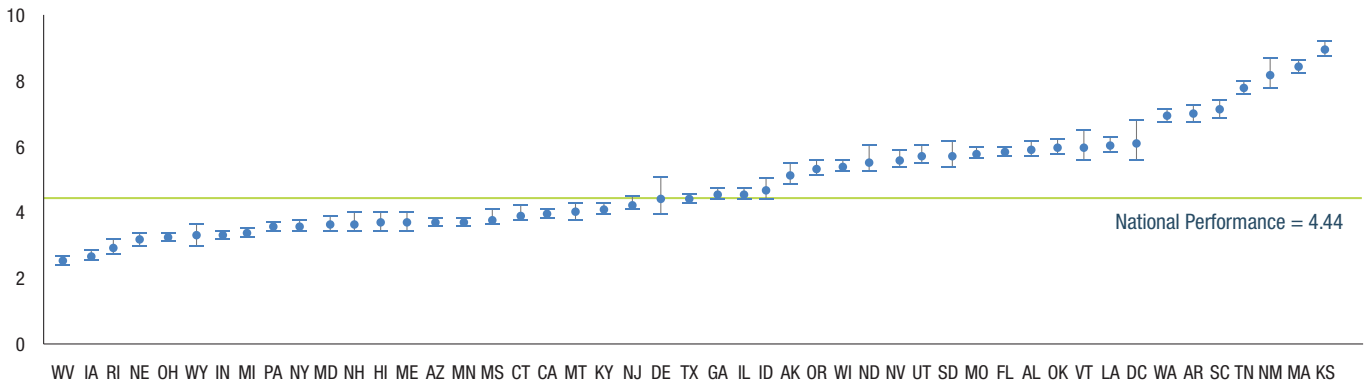
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 24 months or more
12-month reporting period: 18B19A
Data used: 18B–19A
National Performance: 31.8% (↑)



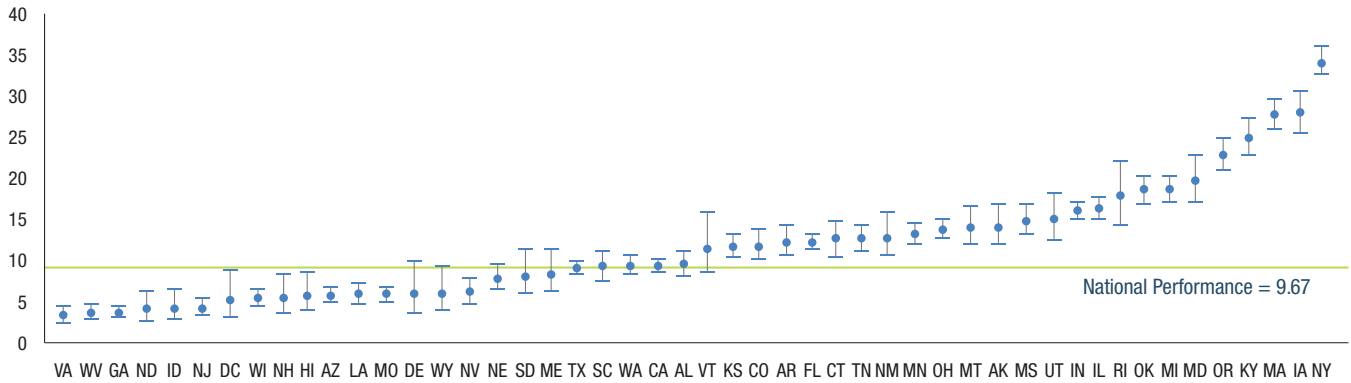
Re-entry to foster care in 12 months
12-month reporting period: 16B17A
Data used: 16B-19A
National Performance: 8.1% (↓)



Placement stability (moves per 1,000 days in foster care)
12-month reporting period: 18B19A
Data used: 18B-19A
National Performance: 4.44 (↓)



Maltreatment in foster care (victimizations per 100,000 days in foster care) 17AB, FY17
12-month reporting period: 17AB, FY17
Data used: 17A-17B, FY17-18
National Performance: 9.67 (↓)



Recurrence of maltreatment FY17-18
12-month reporting period: FY17-18
Data used: FY17-18
National Performance: 9.5% (↓)

