

Child and Family Services Reviews Round 4 Site Selection Proposals

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) onsite review phase includes an examination of the experiences of children and families served by the child welfare system. Information is collected by reviewing a sample of cases and conducting interviews with case participants and is used to determine whether a state is operating in substantial conformity with federal requirements pertaining to seven child and family outcomes (45 CFR § 1355.33). Cases are reviewed at a selection of sites that reflect a cross-section or range of environments in the state, including rural and suburban areas. Case reviews provide evidence of state child welfare practice and system performance, as well as opportunities to further analyze system strengths and areas needing improvement. Three sites will be selected for the Children’s Bureau (CB)-Led Reviews. For State-Led Reviews, the number of review sites will be negotiated with the state when a statewide random sample is not used.

Selection of sites is a collaborative process between states and CB, with CB having final approval. States and CB use state data and information to explore prospective sites and child welfare system and practice dynamics to be examined during the onsite review. Guidelines for selecting sites provide maximum flexibility to determine the most appropriate review sites, given each state’s unique characteristics, practices, systems, and population.

CB recommends that states consider and address data and information on the following factors in their proposals for selection of CFSR sites when a statewide sample is not used:

Metro site. Identify the state’s metropolitan site. The state’s largest metropolitan subdivision is a required site for the CFSR onsite review (45 CFR § 1355.33(c)(2)). The largest metropolitan subdivision is included as a site to ensure that the CFSRs include the country’s urban centers, where typically a disproportionate number of families have contact with child welfare systems. The following criteria are used to determine the largest metropolitan subdivision:

- Largest city, by population, as determined by federal and/or state population data;
- If the state’s largest city is self-contained within a single county, the metro site will consist of the entire county; and
- If the state’s largest city crosses county lines, all the child welfare offices that serve the largest city will be included in the metro site.

In some states, two or more of the largest cities may have minor differences in population. In these situations, provide the supporting evidence and state’s recommendation for the city to be used as the metro site in the site selection proposal. CB, in consultation with the bureau’s Measurement and Sampling Committee (MASC), will determine which metropolitan subdivision provides the best opportunity to review urban child welfare practice.

CFSR case population. Describe the in-home services and foster care case populations in the state and proposed sites, including the types of programs and cases counted in each case type. Note whether the case populations served are included in the continuum of federally funded child welfare programs described in the state’s Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). Identify the locality/jurisdiction in the state with the largest total case population and whether

that site is the metro site or one of the other proposed sites, or provide a rationale for not reviewing that site. Provide supporting detail showing that the universe of cases for both case types is sufficient to support random sampling in each proposed site.

- The Children’s Bureau recommends considering the site with the largest total case population for site selection.
- In general, a site should have at least four to six times more cases than the number of cases scheduled for review in that site.

Population diversity and characteristics. Describe the demographic composition of the state and the children and families served. Identify American Indian/Alaska Native Tribes in the state and the degree of Tribal involvement in the provision of child welfare services. Identify the percentage of children and families living below the poverty line in the state and the range of poverty rates across the state. Address whether the combination of proposed sites reflects the state’s demographic data and, if not, the rationale for proposing the site(s) for the CFSR.

Urban and rural characteristics. Identify whether the proposed non-metro sites are urban or rural, and the size of the geographic area covered. Describe whether services and resources to meet the needs of children and families are readily available and accessible. Identify if the urban/rural characteristics of proposed sites are typical of the state and, if not, the rationale for recommending the sites for the CFSR. Describe potential challenges related to accessibility to case participants for conducting case reviews.

Child welfare practice and system performance. Provide information to show how the state and proposed sites perform on the statewide data indicators, case review, and other key measures used to assess system performance and child and family outcomes in the domains of safety, permanency, and well-being. Identify whether performance varies by child’s demographic characteristics. Describe whether the combination of proposed sites is similar to statewide performance or reflective of a range of high and low performance. Identify whether proposed sites have unique strengths or local practices indicated in the data that could inform improvement plans in other parts of the state and/or if there are challenges that would be helpful to explore more closely during the onsite review. When assessing system performance, use a combination of data sources, including but not limited to:

- Quantitative data (observed performance on the statewide data indicators, state child welfare, and court administrative data as available); and
- Qualitative data (e.g., case reviews, quality hearing project results, surveys, and focus groups).

New programs and initiatives. Identify whether the state recently implemented or is implementing innovative practices and programs (e.g., practice model, safety model, workforce projects, joint child welfare agency/CIP projects) that appear to be having a positive impact and would benefit from further assessment through the onsite review. Note whether these have or will be implemented in one or more proposed CFSR sites.

Community partnerships. Describe to what extent there are strong partnerships within the child welfare system between and among youth, families, Tribes, legal and judicial communities, and others with a vested interest in the system. Identify whether the degree of partnership at proposed sites is typical of the state, and whether one of the rationales for conducting an onsite review at the proposed sites is to provide insight into strengths or challenges of the partnerships that would benefit the child welfare system statewide.