

Child and Family Services Reviews Update

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CB Releases More COVID-19 Guidance

The Children's Bureau has released multiple guidance documents and letters to states about various aspects of dealing with issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Below is a listing with links:

CFSR/CQI Processes During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Recognizing the importance of states continuing oversight activities to ensure that they are adequately serving vulnerable families and children especially during this pandemic, the CB provides some suggestions in this document released in May 2020 related to case reviews to help agencies maintain their oversight capacity and stay connected in a remote-work environment.

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/covid19_case_review.pdf

COVID-19 webpage: This page provides links to various updates and guidance on COVID-19 from the CB. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/covid-19-resources>

Letters to the Field From the Department of Health and Human Services: In the last CFSR Update newsletter (April 2020), we referenced guidance letters released in March 2020. See <https://training.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/resources/3105> (scroll to CFSR Updates). The letters listed below, which are also available via the COVID-19 webpage noted above, were released in April through June 2020. This list also includes related resources listed by the Children's Bureau:

- **Letter Regarding TPR During COVID-19 Pandemic, Service Delivery Strategies, and Challenges Adoptive Families May Face** (June 23, 2020): This letter was sent from Jerry Milner to state and Tribal child welfare leaders. Recognizing the significant stress that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting national public health emergency has placed on the child welfare system, the letter addresses concerns related to filing petitions to terminate parental rights when services have not been available, highlights some service delivery strategies, and highlights challenges that adoptive families may face during the pandemic. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/terminating-parental-rights-service-interruptions>
- **Joint Letter to Family Support, Maternal and Child Health, and Early Childhood Programs on Strategies During COVID-19 Pandemic** (May 28, 2020): This letter, which was jointly issued by the Administration for Children and Families and the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), encourages family support, maternal and child health, and early childhood programs to promote family strengthening and prevention strategies via virtual, electronic, telephonic, or other safe means during the COVID-19 pandemic. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/acf_hrsa_joint_letter.pdf

- **Children’s Bureau Letter Regarding Existing Title IV-E Flexibility** (April 27, 2020): This letter from the Children’s Bureau to state and Tribal child welfare leaders describes existing flexibilities in the Title IV-E program that may help agencies better serve children, youth, and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/flexibility_letter.pdf
- **Letter to Governors Regarding Personal Protective Equipment for Child Welfare Workers** (April 17, 2020): This letter from the HHS Deputy Secretary urges state governors to classify child welfare workers and service providers as level 1 emergency responders to allow them greater access to personal protective equipment.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/letter_to_state_governors.pdf
- **Guidance About Seeking Personal Protective Equipment for Child Welfare Workers** (April 17, 2020): This letter from the Children’s Bureau suggests that child welfare leaders seek to have child welfare workers and service providers classified as level 1 emergency responders, which would allow them to have greater access to personal protective equipment.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/letter_on_child_welfare_emergency_responders.pdf
- **Economic Impact Payments for COVID-19** (no date): The Basics. This webpage provides information for youth about the Federal Economic Impact Payments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including determining eligibility and how to apply.
<https://engage.youth.gov/resources/economic-impact-payments-covid-19-basics>
- **Letter From the Children’s Bureau Regarding the Use of Federal Funds for Cell Phones and Personal Protective Equipment** (April 17, 2020): This letter from the Children’s Bureau to child welfare leaders addresses the availability of federal funding to assist with the purchase of cell phones and plans as well as personal protective equipment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/letter_on_federal_funds.pdf
- **Guidance Regarding Fingerprint and Caseworker Visit Requirements During COVID-19 Response** (April 17, 2020): This letter from the Children’s Bureau advises child welfare leaders of the flexibility of certain requirements regarding fingerprint-based criminal record checks and caseworker visits to a child’s home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/stafford_act.pdf
- **Conducting Effective Remote Hearings in Child Welfare Cases** (no date): This guide from the Capacity Building Center for Courts describes best practices and other recommendations for remote or virtual court hearings in child welfare cases.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/covid19_conducting_effective_hearings.pdf
- **Use of Court Improvement Programs to Assist Dependency Courts in Response to COVID-19** (April 14, 2020): This letter from the Children’s Bureau encourages state court administrators and chief justices to engage their Court Improvement Programs to assist dependency courts in their response to COVID-19, particularly in acquiring and supporting telework and videoconferencing equipment and software to continue case oversight.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/covid19_policy_clearance_administrators.pdf

- **Postponement of Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and National Youth in Transition Database Reviews** (April 10, 2020): This letter to child welfare leaders announces an updated postponement of the Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and National Youth in Transition Database Reviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This letter extends the postponement announced in a March 18, 2020, letter. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/covid19_nytd_reviews.pdf
- **Joint Statement on Child Welfare Courts During a Public Health Crisis: Access to Justice and Advocacy Are Critical Anchors During Uncertain Times** (March 31, 2020): This joint statement by several legal organizations describes ways in which the court system can support families involved with child welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic, including ensuring access to due process and counsel and promoting family time, case review, and the role of court leadership. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/statement_child_welfare_crisis.pdf
- **Virtual Visitation Resources** (March 2020): This document lists resources on the use of virtual visitations in child welfare and other fields. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/virtual_visitation_resources.pdf
- **Updates to Formula Grant Opportunities Related to COVID-19 Pandemic** (April 1, 2020): This letter outlines changes to two formula grant opportunities: extending the application deadline for kinship navigator program funding and eliminating the application requirement for Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Grants. These changes are intended to ease administrative burdens during the COVID-19 pandemic. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/updates_to_formula_grant_opportunities_related_to_covid_19_pandemic.pdf
- **Guidance on Flexible Convening of Court Hearings During COVID-19** (March 27, 2020): This letter urges attorneys, courts, Court Improvement Programs, and administrative offices of the courts to work together to ensure that requisite judicial proceedings continue during the COVID-19 pandemic. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/covid_19_childlegalandjudicial.pdf

Final Round 3 CFSR Aggregate Report Posted

The CFSR Round 3 Aggregate Report is now posted on the Children's Bureau website (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cfsr-aggregate-report-round3>). The report describes performance on the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) for the 51 states reviewed across the 4 years of Round 3 (2015-2018).

The report includes information on:

- Case and child-level characteristics, such as reasons for case opening, child age and race/ethnicity, and case type
- Performance on the CFSR outcomes and supporting case practices, including breakdowns by permanency goal type and family role
- Common practice strengths and concerns

- The extent to which states demonstrate the capacity to promote child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes by managing routinely high-functioning operations, as observed in the seven systemic factors
- Key takeaways

The results highlight practice and systemic strengths and challenges across the United States that affect the lives of vulnerable children, youth, and families every day. The report also identifies critical areas requiring focused continuous quality improvement (CQI) change and implementation activities to strengthen child welfare systems and practices to better serve and improve outcomes for children and families.

The Children's Bureau is committed to assisting states with the process of continually assessing practice and systemic factor functioning, and identifying and making program improvements to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. If you have questions about this report, please email cw@jbsinternational.com. If you would like help in understanding the need for and making improvements in your state child welfare system, please contact your CB Regional Office (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/oro/regional-offices>).

Extension of Non-Overlapping Evaluation Period

All states are provided a non-overlapping evaluation period following the 2-year PIP Implementation Period to:

- Assure that states have the opportunity to see the impact of PIP strategies on practice
- Provide states an additional evaluative period after PIP implementation to determine achievement of PIP measurement goals

The end date of the non-overlapping evaluation period for all states in CFSR Round 3 was set to align with the last day of the second federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) submission period following the end of the PIP Implementation Period. This created a range in the length of the non-overlapping evaluation period, depending on when the PIP Implementation Period began.

In an effort to ensure that all states have the same amount of time to measure progress from implementing their PIP and other CQI change and implementation activities, the Children's Bureau will offer all states an 18-month non-overlapping evaluation period. This option is also available for states that already completed the non-overlapping evaluation period. Jerry Milner sent a letter to states on June 4, 2020, referring them to their Regional Office specialist for more information.