

**Children's Bureau  
Child and Family Services Review  
Key Findings Report**

**Mississippi Department of Human Services**

**Family and Children's Services**

**Division of**

The Children's Bureau and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) administer the child and family services reviews. The reviews comprise two phases: (1) the Statewide Assessment, during which the State analyzes its child welfare data and practice, and (2) the onsite review, during which Federal and State teams examine outcomes for children and families by conducting case record reviews and case-related interviews, and assess State systemic issues through stakeholder interviews.

Following the onsite review, Federal staff prepare a Final Report, which is provided to the State not more than 30 days after the onsite review or resolution of a discrepancy. States are provided a courtesy copy of the Final Report before the official Final Report is issued. In order for the State to be found in substantial conformity in any one of the seven outcomes reviewed, the outcome must be determined to be substantially achieved in 95 percent (90 percent during the first review) of the cases reviewed. States that are found not to be in conformity on any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors must prepare a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that includes action steps and benchmarks for bringing the State into conformity. The PIP is due not more than 90 days after the State receives the courtesy copy of the Final Report. This report presents key findings from the Mississippi Final Report of the review.

**I. Identifying Information and Review Dates**

**ACF Region:** IV

**Date of Onsite Review:** February 9–13, 2004

**Period Under Review:** October 1, 2002–February 9, 2004

**Date Final Report Issued:** May 18, 2004

**Date Program Improvement Plan Due:** August 16, 2004

**Date Program Improvement Plan Approved:** To be determined

**Estimated Penalties:** \$982,308

**II. Highlights of Findings**

A. The State met the national standards for two of the six standards.

B. The State achieved substantial conformity for none of the seven outcomes.

C. The State achieved substantial conformity for two of the seven systemic factors.

<b>III. State's Conformance With the National Standards</b>				
<b>Data Indicator</b>	<b>National Standard (Percentage)</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>
Repeat Maltreatment	6.1 or less	4.6	X	
Maltreatment of Children in Foster Care	.57 or less	.59		X
Foster Care Re-Entries	8.6 or less	4.6	X	
Length of Time To Achieve Reunification	76.2 or more	56.7		X
Length of Time To Achieve Adoption	32 or more	19		X
Stability of Foster Care Placements	86.7 or more	55		X
<b>IV. State's Conformance With the Outcomes</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>			<b>Achieved Substantial Conformity</b>	<b>Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity</b>
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				X
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				X
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				X
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				X
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				X
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				X
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				X

<b>V. State's Conformance With the Systemic Factors</b>		
<b>Systemic Factor</b>	<b>Achieved Substantial Conformity</b>	<b>Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity</b>
Statewide Information System		X
Case Review System		X
Quality Assurance System		X
Training		X
Service Array		X
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	X	
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	X	
<b>VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor<sup>1</sup></b>		
<p><b>A. The review noted the following strengths regarding the outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing repeat maltreatment of children</li> <li>• Preventing children from re-entering foster care within 12 months of a previous discharge</li> </ul> <p><b>B. The review noted the following concerns regarding the outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not consistently investigating reports of child maltreatment in a timely manner</li> <li>• Not making diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes</li> <li>• Not making sufficient efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children</li> <li>• Not consistently providing stable placements for children in foster care</li> <li>• Not consistently establishing appropriate permanency goals for children in a timely manner</li> <li>• Not making adequate efforts to achieve permanency for children through reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship</li> <li>• Not making diligent efforts to achieve adoption for children in a timely manner</li> <li>• Not making adequate efforts to assist children in attaining the permanency goal of emancipation</li> </ul>		

<sup>1</sup> Visit the Children's Bureau Web site at <[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/sumfinding.doc](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/sumfinding.doc)> for more detailed information about the child and family services reviews outcomes and systemic factors.

## VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- Not consistently placing children in close proximity to their biological families or with their siblings, when appropriate
- Not consistently facilitating visitation of children in foster care with their parents and siblings
- Not consistently preserving children's connections to their family, faith, community, culture, and friends
- Not making consistent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources for children
- Not making sufficient efforts to support the parent-child relationship of children in foster care
- Not assessing the needs of, nor providing services to, parents, foster parents, and children
- Not involving parents and children in case planning
- Not visiting with children or parents frequently enough to monitor and promote the safety and well-being of children
- Not meeting the educational needs of children
- Not meeting the physical, dental, and mental health needs of children

### C. The review noted the following strengths regarding the systemic factors:

- Quality Assurance System
  - Standards have been implemented to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services to address their needs.
- Training
  - The State operates a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives of the Child and Family Services Plan and adequately addresses all of the skills and information needed by new staff.
- Agency Responsiveness to the Community
  - The State engages in ongoing consultation with consumers, service providers, courts, and other stakeholders.
  - The State jointly develops with its stakeholders annual reports of progress.
  - The State's services are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal programs serving the same population.

## VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention
  - The State has implemented standards for foster and adoptive family homes and child care institutions.
  - State standards for foster and adoptive family homes are applied uniformly.
  - The State conducts criminal clearances for foster care and adoptive families and operates a case planning process that includes provisions for ensuring children's safety.
  - The State uses cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for children.

### D. The review noted the following concerns regarding the systemic factors:

- Statewide Information System
  - The statewide automated information system does not consistently reflect a child's current situation that will enable the State to readily identify the status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care.
- Case Review System
  - Case plans for children in foster care are not developed in a manner that consistently involves children and parents in case planning.
  - The State is unable to consistently implement a process to ensure that the status of each child is reviewed in court at least every 6 months.
  - Permanency hearings are not consistently held for children in foster care within 12 months of entry into care.
  - Delays exist in achieving termination of parental rights.
  - Foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caretakers of children in foster care are not routinely notified of, and given an opportunity to participate in, hearings for children.
- Quality Assurance System
  - The State does not operate a fully operational quality assurance system.

## VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- Training
  - The State does not provide ongoing training that addresses all the skills and knowledge base needed by staff to perform their duties with regard to the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan.
  - The State does not provide training that adequately addresses the skills and knowledge needed for current and prospective foster and adoptive parents and staff of State-licensed facilities that care for children in foster care to carry out their responsibilities.
- Service Array
  - The State does not offer an adequate array of services to meet the needs of children and families.
  - Some services are not accessible to families and children in all locations of the State.
  - Services offered are not consistently individualized to the unique needs of children and families.
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention
  - The State does not diligently recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom homes are needed.