



Child and Family Services Reviews

Stakeholder Interview Guide

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

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STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

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Stakeholder interviews are conducted at the local review sites and at the State level during the onsite component of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The purpose of the stakeholder interviews is to collect information for evaluating and rating the outcomes and systemic factors that are examined during the CFSRs.

The review team interviews stakeholders who are representative of the types of organizations and individuals who participated in the development of the State's Child and Family Services Plan, as required at 45 Code of Federal Regulations 1357.15(1). These include representatives of courts, administrative review bodies, children's guardians ad litem, and other individuals or bodies assigned responsibility for representing the best interests of children. Interviews should be limited to approximately 1.5 hours for caseworkers, supervisors, and administrative case reviewers and 1 hour for other respondents. The following core stakeholders must be interviewed:

State Stakeholders

State child welfare director
State child welfare program specialists
State court system representative(s)
Major tribal representatives
State representative(s) of administrative review bodies
Youth being served by the agency
State foster and/or adoptive parent association representatives

Local Stakeholders

Local child welfare agency administrator
Foster and adoptive parent(s)
Juvenile court judge
Law enforcement representative
Caseworker(s) from the local agency
Supervisor(s) from the local agency
Guardians ad litem/legal representatives
Agency attorney(s)
Local representatives of administrative review bodies
Tribal representatives
Youth being served by the local agency

Review teams may interview additional stakeholders at both the State and local levels, as needed. Optional interviewees at the State level may include representatives of the education system, youth service agency, health department, Medicaid program, mental health agency, child welfare advocacy organization, university social work education program, major child welfare initiative or project, or other appropriate stakeholders. Optional interviewees at the local level may include representatives of youth service agencies, major child welfare initiatives or projects, major service providers, mental and physical health agencies, educational institutions (including special education or early intervention coordinators), child and family advocacy organizations, or other appropriate stakeholders.

Note: The guide has been reorganized so that the systemic factors appear first, to reflect the order in which most reviewers prefer to ask the questions. We have retained original section and item numbers, however, to ensure consistency with other review-related documents, such as the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions.

Administration of the Stakeholder Interview Guide

Background Information:

- This interview guide identifies the Core Question(s) to be asked during each stakeholder interview. The identified Core Question(s) listed by item number represent the central theme(s) for each outcome and systemic factor that the reviewer should attempt to address during stakeholder interviews. The ratings that the review team assigns to the outcomes and systemic factors should be based on thorough explanations of and responses to the Core Questions.
- Questions pertaining to children in foster care include juvenile justice cases served by the child welfare agency either directly or through a title IV-E agreement.
- Reviewers should become thoroughly familiar with the questions in the Stakeholder Interview Guide before beginning the stakeholder interviews. Reviewers should note that stakeholders may provide information out of sequence from the order of the Stakeholder Interview Guide. Reviewers should be familiar with the Statewide Assessment and Preliminary Assessment in order to ensure that the appropriate stakeholders are identified to be interviewed and that adequate information is gathered related to the State under review.

General Instructions:

- ***Determining who is an appropriate respondent or stakeholder:*** For each Core Question, the Stakeholder Interview Guide lists the respondent or stakeholder groups who are most likely to have sufficient knowledge to respond meaningfully to the item. Reviewers should be careful to pursue issues only with stakeholders who have firsthand knowledge of the issues under review. The information recorded on the Stakeholder Interview Guide, and therefore subsequently used to evaluate the agency's performance, should reflect the input of stakeholders with firsthand, well-founded knowledge of the issues based only on the period under review. (Some stakeholders may offer secondhand experience or express opinions that are not supported by facts or experience; this information should not be recorded on the interview guide.)
- ***Assigning ID numbers:*** To identify which stakeholders made specific comments, reviewers should assign a number to each stakeholder (or stakeholder group) interviewed. A chart is provided in the front of the guide for recording a stakeholder's name, ID number, and other identifying information.
- ***Recording responses:*** The Local Site Leaders (Children's Bureau and Administration for Children and Families staff) or their designees (for example, Consultant Co-Local Site Leaders) should record the notes from each stakeholder interview in the appropriate blank spaces, using a separate Stakeholder Interview Guide for each interview. Reviewers may add pages as needed to record notes under each section of the guide. A supplementary page that can be copied for that purpose is included on page 5 of this guide. Reviewers should be sure to record the item number, stakeholder ID number, and stakeholder type along with any responses recorded on the supplemental pages.
- Local Site Leaders must turn in the completed Stakeholder Interview Guides to their Team Leader before the statewide exit conference and/or before departing the State at the end of the review week.

How to Use the Questions:

- *Core Questions:* While each individual stakeholder may not be able to answer every Core Question, reviewers should be able to elicit all the needed information from the range of stakeholders interviewed at the State and local site levels. Following each item is a list of possible stakeholders who may be able to address the Core Question(s). Reviewers, however, will need to make judgments about which of the questions they should pursue with each individual stakeholder.
- *Follow-up Questions:* Each Core Question is followed by bulleted Follow-up Questions that reviewers may use to fully explore various aspects of the response to the Core Question. Follow-up Questions need not be answered individually but may be used as appropriate during the interviews. The Follow-up Questions should be seen as a guide rather than a mandate or limit on what reviewers may ask. The Follow-up Questions guide reviewers in determining the most appropriate response to the Core Question(s). Reviewers may rephrase the Follow-up Questions or ask related questions in order to explore the Core Question(s) fully, for example, by asking “why” or “why not,” as appropriate.
- *State-Specific Questions:* In addition to the Core Questions and Follow-up Questions, the Administration for Children and Families Regional Office Team Leader, in collaboration with the State and the Children’s Bureau, will identify State-specific issues from the Statewide Assessment that need further examination through stakeholder interviews; these will then be listed in the space provided in the guide for this purpose.

Section IV: Statewide Information System (Item 24)

Item 24: Statewide Information System

The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the legal status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

Respondents:

Agency Administrator(s), Local Agency – CPS Staff, Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Local Child Welfare Agency Administrator(s), Other, Quality Assurance Staff, State Child Welfare Director(s), State Child Welfare Program Specialist(s), State Information System Staff, Supervisor(s) from the Local Agency, Training Staff

Core Question:

How effective is the State’s statewide information system in readily identifying the legal status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Are there any variations in the State’s statewide information system’s capacity to track the information in the Core Question across different geographic areas?
- Are there any variations in the State’s statewide information system’s capacity to track the information in the Core Question for different groups in out-of-home care (including those served through title IV-E agreements with other agencies)?
- Evaluate whether data reports are useful and current, and are provided to staff, supervisors, managers, and administrators in a timely manner. Identify strengths and barriers to producing and accessing current, useful data.
- Does the State have knowledge of any children under its care for whom information on their whereabouts is not in the information system?
- If the State has knowledge of any children under its care for whom information on their whereabouts is not in the information system, what efforts has the State made to obtain and enter the information?

Explanatory Comments *(optional)*:

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments *(optional)*:

Item 27: Permanency Hearings

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.

Respondents:

Administrative Review Bodies, Agency Attorney(s), Birth Parents, CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocate(s), Chief Justice(s), Child Attorney(s), Court Improvement Program Coordinator(s), Guardian(s) Ad Litem/Legal Representative(s), Independent Living Coordinator(s), Juvenile Court Judge(s), Juvenile Justice Representative(s), Local Administrative Review Bodies, Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Major Tribal Representative(s), Other, Parent Attorney(s), State Administrative Review Bodies, State Court System Representative(s), State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, Supervisor(s) from the Local Agency, Tribal Representative(s), Youth Being Served by the Agency, Youth Being Served by the Local Agency, Youth Service Agency Representative(s)

Core Question:

How effective is the State in ensuring that each child in foster care 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?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Describe the use of court hearings, hearings by an administrative body appointed by the court, or other procedures for conducting permanency hearings for children in foster care, including juvenile justice cases where the children are in foster care and served by the child welfare agency, directly or through a title IV-E interagency agreement. Identify strengths and barriers to their use.
- Describe the timeframes used for court hearings, hearings by an administrative body appointed by the court, and/or other procedures. Identify strengths and barriers to their timeliness.
- Describe the participation and roles of children, parents, foster and pre-adoptive parents, and others in permanency hearings. Identify strengths and barriers to greater participation.
- Evaluate how well the permanency hearings promote timely achievement of permanency for all children in foster care. Identify strengths and barriers to their effectiveness.
- Does the State have a process at the local level to review the recommendations and results of the permanency hearing? If so, evaluate the effectiveness of the local process and identify strengths and barriers to its effectiveness.

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Section VII: Staff and Provider Training (Items 32–34)

Item 32: Initial Staff Training

The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the Child and Family Services Plan, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.

Respondents:

ICPC Staff, Independent Living Coordinator(s), Law Enforcement Representative(s), Licensing Staff, Local Agency – CPS Staff, Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Major Tribal Representative(s), Other, Quality Assurance Staff, State Child Welfare Program Specialist(s), State Court System Representative(s), State Information System Staff, Supervisor(s) from the Local Agency, Training Staff, Tribal Representative(s), University Social Work Program

Core Question:

How effective is the State in providing and ensuring completion of adequate *initial* training for all staff who provide child welfare services?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Evaluate the adequacy of requirements for pre-service or initial training for State child welfare staff. Identify strengths and barriers to these requirements.
- Describe how participation in and completion of initial training is monitored. Is sufficient training (or mentoring) provided before a caseworker receives a caseload? Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in monitoring and completion of initial training.
- Evaluate how well initial training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed by staff to perform their jobs, including covering topics and issues that may be unique to particular areas or caseloads. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the training.
- Describe how the State ensures that staff are able to access required trainings. Identify strengths and barriers to accessing initial training.
- Where a State contracts out full case management responsibility (that is, a private agency provides the same services as State staff without a State staff person assigned to the family), does the State require or provide initial training for that staff? If so, identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the initial training the State requires or provides.

Item 33: Ongoing Staff Training

The State provides for 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 Child and Family Services Plan.

Respondents:

ICPC Staff, Independent Living Coordinator(s), Law Enforcement Representative(s), Licensing Staff, Local Agency – CPS Staff, Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Other, Quality Assurance Staff, State Child Welfare Program Specialist(s), State Court System Representative(s), State Information System Staff, Supervisor(s) from the Local Agency, Training Staff, Tribal Representative(s), University Social Work Program

Core Question:

How effective is the State in providing and ensuring completion of adequate *ongoing* training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Evaluate the adequacy of requirements for ongoing training. Identify strengths and barriers to these requirements.
- Describe how participation in and completion of ongoing training is monitored. Is sufficient training or mentoring provided on an ongoing basis? Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in monitoring and completion of ongoing training.
- Evaluate how well the ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed by staff to perform their jobs, including covering topics and issues that may be unique to particular areas or caseloads. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the training.
- Are staff members able to access ongoing training as needed? Identify strengths and barriers to accessing ongoing training.
- Where a State contracts out full case management responsibility (that is, a private agency provides the same services as State staff without a State staff person assigned to the family), does the State require or provide ongoing training for the private agency staff? If so, identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the ongoing training the State requires or provides.

Explanatory Comments *(optional)*:

Item 34: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of 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.

Respondents:

Birth Parents, Foster and Adoptive Parent(s), Independent Living Coordinator(s), Licensing Staff, Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Major Tribal Representative(s), Other, Relative Caregiver(s), State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, Supervisor(s) from the Local Agency, Training Staff, Tribal Representative(s), University Social Work Program, Youth Being Served by the Agency, Youth Being Served by the Local Agency

Core Question:

How effective is the State in providing and ensuring completion of adequate training for current or prospective foster parents, including relative caregivers, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities, that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Evaluate the adequacy of the requirements for initial and pre-service foster parent and adoptive parent training, including for relative caregivers. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the requirements.
- Explain under what circumstances foster and adoptive parents, including relative caregivers, do and do not receive initial training prior to caring for children in their homes.
- Evaluate the adequacy of the requirements for providing advanced or ongoing training consistently to all caregivers throughout the State. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps, including timeliness, accessibility, attendance, and monitoring issues.
- How well does the State ensure that training is provided for the staff of State licensed or approved child care facilities?
- Evaluate the accessibility of initial and ongoing training for caregivers. Identify strengths and barriers to accessing training.
- How does the State identify who needs training and what the training needs are?

Section VIII: Service Array and Resource Development (Items 35–37)

Item 35: Array of Services

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 foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

Respondents:

Agency Administrator(s), Birth Parents, Child and Family Advocate(s), Child Placing Service Provider(s), Domestic Violence Representative(s), Education/Educational Representative(s), Foster and Adoptive Parent(s), Group Care Provider(s), Independent Living Coordinator(s), Juvenile Justice Representative(s), Local Agency – CPS Staff, Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Law Enforcement Representative(s), Local Child Welfare Agency Administrator(s), Major Child Welfare Initiative(s) or Project(s), Major Tribal Representative(s), Medicaid Representative(s), Mental Health Representative(s), Other, Parent Attorney(s), Prevention and/or Reunification Provider(s), Relative Caregiver(s), State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, Substance Abuse Representative(s), Tribal Representative(s), Youth Being Served by the Agency, Youth Being Served by the Local Agency, Youth Service Agency Representative(s)

Core Question:

How effective is the State’s array of services in meeting the needs of the children and families it serves, including in-home and foster care cases?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Does the State provide or contract for an adequate array of services to protect children in their own homes and prevent removal? Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in services.
- Does the State provide or contract for an adequate array of services to promote timely reunification of children in foster care with their families? Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in services.
- Does the State provide or contract for an adequate array of services to promote timely adoptions? Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in services.
- Does the State provide or contract for an adequate array of services to support adoptive families and prevent disruption after placement and finalization? Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in services.
- Does the State provide or contract for an adequate array of services to youth in foster care to prepare them for independent living and to make the transition from foster care to adulthood? Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in services.

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Item 42: Standards Applied Equally

The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.

Respondents:

Child and Family Advocate(s), Child Placing Service Provider(s), Foster and Adoptive Parent(s), Licensing Staff, Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Local Child Welfare Agency Administrator(s), Other, State Child Welfare Program Specialist(s), State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, Supervisor(s) from the Local Agency

Core Question:

How effective is the State in applying its foster care standards to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- What types of licenses (e.g., initial, probationary, full, relative home) does the State have and when are they used? Explain whether the State uses waivers of licensing requirements and, if so, in which situations.
- Evaluate the State’s effectiveness in ensuring that foster care funds under title IV-E are used in accordance with the title IV-E requirements; specifically that the State does not claim title IV-E foster care funds for children placed in homes that do not meet full licensure requirements. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the State’s oversight in this area.
- Evaluate the State’s effectiveness in ensuring that foster care funds under title IV-E are used in accordance with the title IV-E requirements; specifically that the State does not claim title IV-E funds for children placed in homes in which a licensing standard is waived, except that a State may waive a non-safety standard on a case-by-case basis for a relative caring for a specific child. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the State’s oversight in this area.
- Describe any State policy and procedure used to exclude children from receiving title IV-E foster care funds who are in homes that are not fully licensed (e.g., those in homes with initial licenses or in non-relative homes with waivers). Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the State’s oversight in this area.

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Explanatory Comments *(optional)*:

Explanatory Comments (optional):

Section I: Safety Outcomes for Children

Safety Outcome 1:

Children Are, First and Foremost, Protected From Abuse and Neglect. (Items 1–2)

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

Respondents:

Agency Administrator(s), Child and Family Advocate(s), Law Enforcement Representative(s), Local Agency – CPS Staff, Local Child Welfare Agency Administrator(s), Major Tribal Representative(s), Other, State Child Welfare Director(s)

Core Question:

How timely is the agency in initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Evaluate the agency’s effectiveness in consistently responding to all reports of maltreatment within the timeframes specified in agency policy for reports of a given priority, including at night and on weekends. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the process.
- Describe how the agency responds to reports of maltreatment of children in foster care and in-home cases that are already open, including the timeliness of the response and whether a new report is generated in its system. Identify strengths and barriers to the agency’s response.
- Describe the role of other organizations or agencies (such as law enforcement, contracted case managers, alternative response providers) in responding to reports of child maltreatment. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in their responses, including the timeliness of their responses.

Item 6: Stability of Foster Care Placement

Respondents:

Birth Parents, Child Attorney(s), Foster and Adoptive Parent(s), Group Care Provider(s), Guardian(s) Ad Litem/Legal Representative(s), Independent Living Coordinator(s), Juvenile Justice Representative(s), Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Local Child Welfare Agency Administrator(s), Other, Quality Assurance Staff, Relative Caregiver(s), State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, Supervisor(s) from the Local Agency, Youth Being Served by the Agency, Youth Being Served by the Local Agency, Youth Service Agency Representative(s)

Core Question:

How effective is the agency in providing placement stability for children in foster care (that is, minimizing placement changes for children in foster care)?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Do children in foster care change placements frequently? Describe the reasons for frequent foster care placement changes and identify strengths and barriers to placement stability.
- Explain how initial shelters, assessment centers, or other temporary placements are used, the expected timeframes for their use, and whether these timeframes generally are met. If temporary placements are not used, explain how they are avoided.
- What helps children to remain, or prevents children from remaining, in stable placements while in foster care?
- Describe any specific types of cases or situations where placement stability is especially problematic in this location and evaluate the agency's response.
- Describe how placement decisions are matched to the needs of the children. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in how placement decisions are matched to children's needs.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of services and/or supports to prevent placement moves provided to foster parents and relatives providing care. Identify strengths and barriers or gaps in these services and/or supports.

Item 13: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

Respondents:

Birth Parents, Child Attorney(s), Guardian(s) Ad Litem/Legal Representative(s), Local Agency – Foster Care Staff, Other, Youth Being Served by the Agency, Youth Being Served by the Local Agency

Core Questions:

How effective is the agency in planning and facilitating visiting of children in foster care with their parents? How effective is the agency in planning and facilitating visiting among siblings placed separately in foster care?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Evaluate how well the agency assures that children in foster care have visits, when appropriate, with their mothers, including whether such visits occur frequently enough to meet the children’s needs.
- Evaluate how well the agency assures that children have opportunities for visits with their mothers that are of sufficient quality as to support and sustain the family relationships (for example, through the location of the visits and by providing meaningful opportunities for appropriate interaction).
- Evaluate how well the agency assures that children in foster care have visits, when appropriate, with their fathers, including whether such visits occur frequently enough to meet the children’s needs.
- Evaluate how well the agency assures that children have opportunities for visits with fathers that are of sufficient quality as to support and sustain the family relationships (for example, through the location of the visits and by providing meaningful opportunities for appropriate interaction).
- Evaluate how well the agency assures that children in foster care have visits, when appropriate, with their siblings placed separately in foster care, including whether such visits occur frequently enough to meet their needs.
- Evaluate how well the agency assures that children have opportunities for visits with other siblings in foster care that are of sufficient quality as to support and sustain the family relationships (for example, through the location of the visits and by providing meaningful opportunities for appropriate interaction).

Section III: Child and Family Well-Being

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families Have Enhanced Capacity To Provide for Their Children's Needs. (Items 17–20)

Item 17: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, Foster Parents

Respondents:

Birth Parents, Child Attorney(s), Child Placing Service Provider(s), Domestic Violence Representative(s), Foster and Adoptive Parent(s), Independent Living Coordinator(s), Juvenile Justice Representative(s), Licensing Staff, Other, Parent Attorney(s), Prevention and/or Reunification Provider(s), Relative Caregiver(s), State Child Welfare Director(s), State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, Substance Abuse Representative(s), Supervisor(s) from the Local Agency, Youth Being Served by the Agency, Youth Being Served by the Local Agency, Youth Service Agency Representative(s)

Core Question:

How effective is the agency generally in assessing and providing services to meet the needs of children, parents, and foster parents?

Please use these Follow-up Questions as needed to fully explore the Core Question:

- Evaluate how well the agency assesses and reassesses the needs of the groups it serves (for example, children in foster care and in their homes, mothers, fathers, foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, relative caregivers) in determining goals and services. Describe the process used and identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the process.
- Evaluate how well the agency uses information obtained from needs assessments to develop case plans and provide the appropriate services to meet the needs of the groups it serves (for example, children in foster care and in their homes, mothers, fathers, foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, relative caregivers). Describe the process used and identify strengths and barriers or gaps in the process.
- Are adolescents' needs for independent living services assessed on an ongoing basis as part of the child's independent living plan?

APPENDIX

State-Specific Issues

Core Question(s):

Follow-up Questions:
