Child and Family Services Reviews

Procedures Manual

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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
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Chapter 1

Overall Framework for the Child and Family Services Reviews

The Child and Family Services Reviews are a federal-state collaborative effort designed to help ensure that quality services are provided to children and families through state child welfare systems. The Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has administered the reviews since 2000. They are reviews of state child welfare programs and practice that identify strengths and challenges in state programs and systems, focusing on outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. The reviews work in tandem with other state and federal frameworks for system planning, reform, and effective implementation, such as the Child and Family Services Plan and a well-functioning continuous quality improvement system.[1]

Purpose of the Reviews

Section 1123A of the Social Security Act (the Act) requires the Department of Health and Human Services to review state child and family services programs to ensure substantial conformity with the state plan requirements in titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act. Through the reviews, the Children's Bureau also assesses state programs implemented under titles IV-B and IV-E related to child protection, foster care, adoption, family preservation and family support, and independent living services.

In addition to reviewing for states' substantial conformity with applicable state plan requirements, the reviews are designed to help states improve child welfare services and the outcomes for children and families who receive services. Based on the strengths and areas needing improvement within state programs identified by the reviews, states develop Program Improvement Plans to address areas in which they were found not to be in conformity with any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors under review. Implementing Program Improvement Plan strategies helps states create lasting and statewide systemic change while also addressing the immediate needs of children and families.

Principles of the Reviews

The Child and Family Services Reviews are based on the following central principles and concepts:

- The reviews are a collaborative effort between the federal and state governments. Joint planning between state and federal staff occurs at multiple junctures throughout the process and may include preparing statewide assessment information, planning and involvement in the case review process, identifying issues and measurements for

[1] Title IV-B Child and Family Service Plan (ACYF-CB-PI-14-03), March 5, 2014, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1403.pdf; Continuous Quality Improvement in Title IV-B and IV-E Programs (ACYF-CB-IM-12-07), August 27, 2012, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/im1207.pdf.

inclusion in Program Improvement Plans, monitoring progress on related activities, and determining achievement of established goals.

- The reviews examine state programs from two perspectives. First, they assess the outcomes of children and families served by the state's child welfare agencies. Second, they examine identified systemic factors that affect the ability of state agencies to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

- The review process collects information from a variety of sources so the Children's Bureau can make determinations about a state's performance. These sources include the statewide assessment (and by cross-reference, the state's Child and Family Services Plan or Annual Progress and Services Reports); statewide data indicators; case records; case-related interviews with children, parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and other professionals; and interviews with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders, as necessary.

- Through the reviews, the Children's Bureau promotes states' use of practice principles that support positive outcomes for children and families. These principles include family-centered practice, community-based services, individualizing services that address the unique needs of children and families, and strengthening parents' capacity to protect and provide for their children.

- The reviews capture state program strengths and areas needing improvement. They include a program improvement process that states use to make improvements, where needed, and build on an agency's identified strengths. The reviews promote the development of Program Improvement Plans designed to strengthen states' capacity to create positive outcomes for children and families. The reviews promote ongoing state self-evaluation of programs and outcomes.

- The reviews are best supported by a state's maintaining and enhancing its quality assurance system through a continuous quality improvement approach so that ongoing measurement of service quality can promote continuous improvement in outcomes for the children and families served by the state.

- The reviews, and the results thereof, emphasize accountability. While the review process includes opportunities for states to make program improvements before having federal funds withheld for nonconformity, significant penalties are associated with the failure to make the identified improvements needed to improve outcomes.

Collaborating During the Review

The Child and Family Services Reviews promote change through collaboration that begins between the federal and state governments as they assess the effectiveness of child welfare agencies in serving children and families, and continues between child welfare agency leaders and their internal and external partners. Federal and state staff partner throughout the Child and Family Services Reviews process, but final decisions are the responsibility of federal staff.

The Child and Family Services Reviews require collaboration that focuses on identifying shared goals and activities and establishing a plan for improving child welfare services. Most important, this collaborative process should result in changes that promote improved outcomes for children and families. The overarching principles guiding this collaborative process include:

- The safety, permanency, and well-being of children is a shared responsibility. Child welfare agencies must make every effort to reach out to Tribes and other partners in the state who can help achieve positive results with respect to the outcomes and systemic factors subject to review.

- Child welfare agencies do not serve children and families in isolation. They should work in partnership with policymakers, community leaders, and other public and private agencies to improve outcomes for children and families in their states. This includes partnering with organizations that directly serve children, youth, and families, and those whose actions affect family and community life.

- Family-centered and community-based practices are integral to improving outcomes for children and families. As such, collaboration with families, including young people, is important in identifying and assessing strengths and barriers to improved outcomes for children, youth, and families.

- States are encouraged to use a variety of approaches to continue the collaboration and consultation with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders that informed the Child and Family Services Plan throughout the review process. For example, the agency might gather information by holding focus groups, conducting surveys, holding joint planning forums, or developing other strategies for linking the review process with the ongoing consultation process used for title IV-B (Child and Family Services Plan) planning. Children's Bureau expectations related to the use of data and collaboration with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders are consistent across all assessment and planning processes.

Real collaboration has a purpose and a goal. It takes planning, time, and a commitment to working together to create change. There are varying degrees of collaboration, each of which can serve the review process and, more importantly, children, youth, and families. See "A Guide for Implementing Improvement Through the Child and Family Services Plan and Child and Family Services Reviews," Appendix E, and "Collaborating During the Child and Family Services Reviews," Appendix B.

Structure of the Reviews

The Child and Family Services Reviews are a partnership between federal and state staff and involve a two-phase process: (1) a statewide assessment and (2) an onsite review as required by 45 CFR § 1355.33. If needed, a state will develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan to improve upon areas identified as not in substantial conformity.

- In the first phase, the staff of the state child welfare agency, representatives selected by the agency who were consulted in the development of the Child and Family Services Plan, and other individuals deemed appropriate and agreed upon by the state and the Children's Bureau, complete a statewide assessment, using statewide data indicators to evaluate the programs under review and examine the outcomes and systemic factors subject to review.

- The second phase of the review process is an onsite review, which includes case reviews, case-related interviews for the purpose of determining outcome performance, and, as necessary, stakeholder interviews that further inform the assessment of systemic factors. There are two possible paths to the case reviews

conducted during the onsite review: (1) the "Traditional Review," a 1-week, onsite review during which a federal and state team reviews a sample of cases at three sites and conducts case-related and stakeholder interviews; or (2) the "State Conducted Case Review," when approved by the Children's Bureau, which consists of case reviews within the context of the state's ongoing case review process during a defined 6-month period.

- A state determined not to be in substantial conformity with one or more of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors under review must develop a Program Improvement Plan jointly with the Children's Bureau that addresses identified areas of nonconformity.

- The state then implements the approved Program Improvement Plan, seeking technical assistance as needed. The Children's Bureau and the state monitor the plan's implementation and the state's progress toward plan-specified goals.

- If the state is unable to demonstrate the agreed-upon improvement, the Administration for Children and Families must take a financial penalty from a portion of the state's title IV-B and IV-E federal child welfare funds.

Outcomes and Systemic Factors

In both phases of the Child and Family Services Reviews, the states are assessed regarding seven expected outcomes for children and families and seven state plan requirements-based systemic factors that affect child outcomes. For a detailed list of the items assessed under the outcomes and systemic factors, see the Child and Family Services Reviews Quick Reference Items List at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_quick_reference_list.pdf.

Assessment of Outcomes

Under three domains of safety, permanency, and child and family well-being, states are assessed for the following seven outcomes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For Safety Outcome 2, Permanency Outcome 2, and the three Well-Being outcomes, the qualitative information about the items related to each outcome collected through the onsite case reviews is used to determine substantial conformity (the percentage of cases reviewed in which the outcomes were determined to be substantially achieved).

Safety Outcome 1 and Permanency Outcome 1 are rated using the state's performance on statewide data indicators for which national standards have been established, in addition to the qualitative information referenced above.

Statewide Data Indicators

Statewide data indicators are aggregate measures calculated using information that states report to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. National standards have been established for each statewide data indicator. By measuring state performance against national standards on statewide data indicators, the Children's Bureau can assist states in continuously monitoring their performance on child outcomes and better understand the entirety of their child welfare systems. There are two statewide data indicators used to determine substantial conformity with safety and five related to permanency and placement stability. Refer to Appendix C for more information on the statewide data indicators.

Assessment of Systemic Factors

The systemic factors refer to seven systems operating within a state that have the capacity, if well-functioning, to promote child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The systemic factors, comprising title IV-B and IV-E plan requirements, are:

- 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

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. The information used to inform systemic factor ratings comes from the statewide assessment (see Chapter 2) and stakeholder interviews (see Chapter 6), as necessary.

Steps in the Review Process

The major steps in the review that are conducted by the Children's Bureau and the state are:

- Joint pre-review planning to determine case review path and date of review
- Children's Bureau transmission of the statewide assessment instrument and data profile to the state

- State completion and submission of the Statewide Assessment Instrument to the Children's Bureau
- Joint preparation for the onsite review, including:
  - Participation in planning conference calls
  - Discussion of review sites, review team structure, and Reviewers
  - Sampling activities
  - Managing logistics for the onsite review
  - Selection of stakeholder interviewees and scheduling of stakeholder and case-specific interviews
  - Debriefing and results discussion
- Completion of the onsite review, including case reviews, stakeholder interviews, quality assurance of information, reconciliation of findings, and conducting debriefings/results discussion
- Children's Bureau analysis of review data and issuance of the Final Report with determinations of substantial conformity
- State development of the Program Improvement Plan, as necessary, in consultation with the Children's Bureau
- Children's Bureau approval of the state's Program Improvement Plan
- Joint evaluation of progress in meeting Program Improvement Plan goals
- State Program Improvement Plan completion
- Planning for the next Child and Family Services Review cycle

Chapter 2

Statewide Assessment

The statewide assessment, the first phase of the Child and Family Services Review, provides an opportunity for states to gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data and information in order to evaluate their child welfare programs and practice, considering their programmatic goals and the desired outcomes for the children and families they serve. The statewide assessment:

- Helps the state and Children's Bureau prepare for the onsite review by providing evaluative information regarding the state's practice and performance
- Provides information for making decisions regarding substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors, identifies areas needing additional examination through stakeholder interviews, and assists in preparing for and determining the content of those interviews
- Identifies state practice or performance issues that require clarification before or during the onsite review period
- Enables states, Tribes, partners, and stakeholders to identify early in the review process the areas potentially needing improvement and to begin developing their program improvement approach
- Provides states with the opportunity to build/expand their capacity for continuous quality improvement

The state uses the Statewide Assessment Instrument to document the most recent assessment information available before the state's scheduled onsite review. Both quantitative and qualitative data should be included and used to assess the impact of state policies and practices on the children and families being served by the state child welfare agency, identify the state's strengths and areas needing improvement, and identify areas that need further examination through the onsite review.

Overview

The state conducts the statewide assessment in collaboration with partners internal and external to the child welfare agency. Such collaboration occurs throughout the review process. The statewide assessment should include Tribes, partners, and stakeholders who were consulted in the development of the Child and Family Services Plan and/or whose involvement the state deems necessary for ongoing assessment and strategic planning. States are encouraged to use a variety of approaches in collaborating and consulting with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders throughout the review process. States are also encouraged to include families and youth being served by the agency in the stakeholder process. This alignment between the Child and Family Services Plan, ongoing planning, and the review is strengthened by the opportunity for states to refer to their Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and

Services Report, which must include an assessment of performance on the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors in the statewide assessment, updating information as needed.[2]

The Children's Bureau transmits the Statewide Assessment Instrument, including the state's data profile, to the state at least 6 months before the onsite review phase. The state submits the completed Statewide Assessment Instrument no later than 2 months before the start of the onsite review period. States are encouraged to submit to the Children's Bureau drafts of the Statewide Assessment Instrument sections as they are developed so the Children's Bureau can provide feedback to the state regarding content. This draft review process provides the state time to revise the Statewide Assessment Instrument before submitting the final version to the Children's Bureau Regional Office.

The Statewide Assessment Instrument

States must use the Statewide Assessment Instrument to capture the most recent assessment information before their scheduled onsite reviews. The instrument enables states to gather and document information that is critical to analyzing their practice, capacity, and performance. It comprises four sections:

- Section I requests general information about the state agency and requires a list of the Tribes, partners, and stakeholders involved in developing the statewide assessment.
- Section II contains state data profiles for the safety and permanency outcomes.
- Section III requires an assessment of the seven outcome areas based on the most current information on the state's performance in these areas. The state includes an analysis and explanation of the state's performance in meeting the national standards as presented in section II.
- Section IV requires an assessment of the statewide functioning of each of the seven systemic factors.

In assessing performance on child and family outcomes and systemic factors, the state must review and analyze relevant information/data on its performance on each of the outcomes and systemic factors. The information reviewed and provided should include:

- The state's most recent data profile
- The state's performance on the national standards
- Data or information related to statewide functioning of the systemic factor requirements
- All other relevant data for this assessment

Within the Statewide Assessment Instrument, the state may refer to data and/or assessments in the most recent Child and Family Services Plan or most recent Annual Progress and Services Report. The state should review them to determine if more recent data are available and should be included in the statewide assessment.

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[2] See Title IV-B Child and Family Service Plan (ACYF-CB-PI-14-03), March 5, 2014, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1403.pdf.

The Statewide Assessment Instrument and instructions are available on the Children's Bureau website at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/round3-cfsr-statewide-assessment.

Data Profiles/Statewide Data Indicators Related to Safety and Permanency Outcomes

Section II of the Statewide Assessment Instrument includes data profiles for safety and permanency outcomes. The Children's Bureau extracts the data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System or an alternate, Children's Bureau-approved source of safety data submitted by the state, and transmits the data to the state in report format. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data are used to develop a permanency profile of the state's foster care populations. National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System data are used to develop a safety profile of the child protective services population. The data profiles also include statewide data indicators used, in part, to determine substantial conformity (see Appendix C for further information on the statewide data indicators). The Children's Bureau has established national standards for each of the statewide data indicators used to determine substantial conformity. The Children's Bureau and the state compare the state's data for the period under review—which starts at the beginning of the sampling period and ends when the cases are reviewed—with the national standards to determine the state's substantial conformity with these standards.

If a state does not submit data to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, the Children's Bureau and the state must agree on an alternate source of statewide data to be used in preparing the safety profile. In the absence of National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System data, the state transmits data from the approved alternate source and the Children's Bureau prepares the safety profiles based on those data.

The Children's Bureau transmits the data profile to the state 6 months before the onsite review phase, allowing sufficient time for the state to conduct the statewide assessment. The state should then:

- Examine the profile for accuracy and decide whether to correct and resubmit the data
- Analyze the data
- Identify methods the state will use to gather additional information, if needed

Ideally, states should review the statewide data indicators and previously prepared data profiles to identify any data quality issues affecting their performance that will be used in the statewide assessment. Should the state decide to resubmit data before the onsite review phase, it should do so as early as possible to allow the Children's Bureau time to prepare an updated data profile.

In conducting the statewide assessment, the state should compare the state's performance on the safety and permanency statewide data indicators with the national standards, where applicable. For indicators falling below the national standards, it is important for the state to identify factors affecting performance through data analysis and collaboration with Tribes, internal and external partners, and stakeholders.

Systemic Factors: Using Data to Assess Functioning

In Section IV of the Statewide Assessment Instrument, states must record their assessment of whether each systemic factor requirement is functioning as required. The Children's Bureau

uses information in the state's submitted Statewide Assessment Instrument to determine whether each of the systemic factors is in substantial conformity, or if it is necessary to gather additional information through stakeholder interviews to make that determination. Because the assessment of systemic factor functioning is also required as part of the Child and Family Services Plan, states are encouraged to reference that assessment and the data/analysis supporting it in the Statewide Assessment Instrument, and update as necessary.

The Children's Bureau considers a systemic factor to be "functioning" if it is occurring or is being met consistently and on an ongoing basis across the state for all relevant populations. Beyond considering a description of law, procedure, or process, a state must demonstrate through data and information that the systemic factor is routinely functioning as required.

States are encouraged to consider all available qualitative and quantitative data and information for each systemic factor, and identify areas where more information or data are needed. In examining and analyzing data, the state should consider if it is relevant to the systemic factor's functioning. For systemic factors comprising multiple requirements (items), it is important to consider whether multiple types of data and information are necessary to characterize functioning. The Children's Bureau provides additional guidance.[3]

The Children's Bureau reviews the state's final Statewide Assessment Instrument submission to evaluate the information provided by the state regarding each of the systemic factors. In that evaluation, the Children's Bureau considers if/how the state has or has not demonstrated that each systemic factor is functioning statewide. The Children's Bureau may determine that the state has demonstrated specific factors to be functioning appropriately and that no further information or data are needed to determine substantial conformity for those factors. When the Children's Bureau determines that more information is needed to determine substantial conformity, it notifies the state in writing. That notification includes a list of the specific items within each systemic factor that require additional information and a potential list of individuals and/or groups for the Children's Bureau and the state to interview. The state and Children's Bureau then begin planning and coordinating the stakeholder interviews and related activities.

[3] See "Guidance on Potential Data and Information That Can Be Used To Assess Systemic Factor Functioning," http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_round3_guidance_data.pdf.

Chapter 3
The Onsite Review Process

Introduction

The onsite review is the second phase of the Child and Family Services Reviews. The purpose of the onsite review is to gather state performance information from the examination of a sample of cases for outcome achievement and to conduct interviews with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders to evaluate the systemic factors under review, as needed. States may engage in the onsite review in one of two ways: (1) by conducting their own case reviews, if approved by the Children's Bureau (the "State Conducted Case Review" path), and submitting those data for the Children's Bureau to use in substantial conformity determinations; or (2) by participating in a 1-week review of cases conducted by a team of federal and state Reviewers (the "Traditional Review" path). Both paths require federal participation in any stakeholder interviews conducted to make final determinations of substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors.

Overview

During the onsite review, a team of Reviewers examines case records and conducts case-related and stakeholder interviews to collect qualitative and quantitative information on outcomes and systemic factors to supplement the data and information reported through the statewide assessment.

The combination of this information is used to determine whether a state is in substantial conformity with federal requirements regarding the seven child and family outcomes and seven systemic factors, and to inform the development of plans for improvement and additional technical assistance.

The Children's Bureau developed the following instruments and guides for collecting and recording information during the onsite review:

- Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions: This instrument is mandatory and is used to conduct case reviews. It contains questions that the Reviewers must answer to determine the ratings for the 18 items within the seven outcomes under review and for documenting information to support those ratings.

- Case-Related Interview Guides and Instructions: These guides provide a framework for Reviewers when conducting case-specific interviews on each case they are reviewing. There is a guide for use in interviewing each of the required interviewees: the child, the parents, the foster parent(s), and the caseworker. The guides suggest questions that will elicit information pertinent to each of the items in the Onsite Review Instrument and offer a way of explaining what the Reviewer's questions will be about.

- Quality Assurance Guide: This guide is used to facilitate discussions between Reviewers and the Quality Assurance team to ensure the accuracy of ratings and proper application of federal Onsite Review Instrument instructions. The guide helps those conducting Quality Assurance to ensure that Reviewers are applying the instrument correctly based on the case circumstances; to understand the key practice concerns that will need to be addressed within the instrument; to have the opportunity to obtain any needed clarification on rating process/criteria and applicability of items in the instrument; and to

identify and address inconsistencies between information gathered from interviews and case documentation.

- Stakeholder Interview Guide: This instrument is mandatory and provides the questions for conducting interviews with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders regarding the items within the seven systemic factors under review. The review team is responsible for determining which stakeholder interview questions to use from the guide to address the systemic factors for which groups and how to frame the questions for the interviewees. There is also a supplemental guide that provides additional information on the state plan requirements that form the basis for the systemic factors and offers tips for rephrasing language appropriately for the stakeholder group being interviewed.

The Children's Bureau provides online training on how to employ these instruments and guides during the review on the CFSR Information Portal's Round 3 Resources tab at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105. The CFSR Online Monitoring System, or OMS, is a Web-based online application consisting of the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions, the Stakeholder Interview Guide, and reporting tools. It is used for both Traditional Reviews and State Conducted Case Reviews. For more information on how to use the OMS, see https://training.cfsrportal.org/section-1/module-4. The review instruments and related guidance are also available on the portal and on the Children's Bureau website at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews/round3.

Onsite Review Types

As noted above, there are two ways of conducting onsite reviews for the Child and Family Services Reviews. The first path, known as State Conducted Case Reviews, allows states that have secured Children's Bureau approval to use their own case review process to conduct case reviews during an identified 6-month period. The second path, known as Traditional Case Reviews, engages states in a 1-week federal-state-led onsite review at three approved sites across the state.

State Conducted Case Reviews

States meeting Children's Bureau criteria for State Conducted Case Reviews[4] may conduct their own case reviews using the federal Onsite Review Instrument. They must review a minimum of 65 cases over a 6-month review period from April 1 through September 30 in geographic areas, defined by the state, that meet Children's Bureau criteria. During this time, federal staff participate in the state's case review process in the form of quality assurance and other oversight activities. In addition, the federal-state team may interview select Tribal members, partners, and/or stakeholders regarding systemic factor functioning during the onsite review as informed by the statewide assessment.

States submit the data from these reviews to the Children's Bureau, which, in addition to using information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews, uses these data to inform determinations of substantial conformity as required at 45 CFR § 1355.34.

[4] See "Criteria for Using State Case Review Process for Child and Family Services Reviews Purposes," http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_review_criteria.pdf.

Traditional Case Reviews

States engaged in Traditional Reviews participate in a 1-week onsite review during which the federal-state team reviews a total of 65 cases and conducts case-specific interviews at three locations in the state using the federal Onsite Review Instrument. In addition, the federal-state team may interview selected Tribal members, partners, and/or stakeholders regarding systemic factor functioning during the onsite review as informed by the statewide assessment.

Onsite Review Process Preparation

Preparatory activities will vary depending on which of the two review types the state pursues. The chart below outlines the steps the state and the Children's Bureau will need to take to prepare the state for its onsite review period and indicates the applicable steps for each review type.

Table: Preparatory Activities by Review Type

Preparatory Activities	State Conducted Case Reviews	Traditional Reviews
Explore case review types with the state	Ongoing Children's Bureau and state activities, as needed, to consider: • The state's review type preference • The status of the state's case review process • The state's capacity to meet case review criteria	Ongoing Children's Bureau and state activities, as needed, to consider: • The state's review type preference • The status of the state's case review process • The state's capacity to meet case review criteria
Letter of Intent submitted to the Children's Bureau from the state	Due September 1, 2014, or July 15 of the year preceding scheduled onsite review year	Due September 1, 2014, or July 15 of the year preceding scheduled onsite review year
Statewide Assessment Instrument with data profile transmitted to the state	Six months before the scheduled onsite review	Six months before the scheduled onsite review
Children's Bureau case review criteria verification activities	• Ongoing until November 14, 2014, or October 1 of year preceding scheduled onsite review year • Children's Bureau verification activities culminate in approval or denial no later than January 15, 2015, or December 1 of onsite review year	N/A
Conference call series	A minimum of 3 calls over a 5-month period preceding the onsite review	A minimum of 3 calls over a 5-month period preceding the onsite review

Preparatory Activities	State Conducted Case Reviews	Traditional Reviews
Statewide assessment	• State submits Statewide Assessment Instrument drafts, as able • State has 4 months to complete statewide assessment; generally submits the final Statewide Assessment Instrument 2 months before the onsite review period • Children's Bureau provides state with information on needed stakeholder interviews approximately 1 month after receiving completed Statewide Assessment Instrument	• State submits Statewide Assessment Instrument drafts, as able • State has 4 months to complete statewide assessment; generally submits the final Statewide Assessment Instrument 2 months before the onsite review period • Children's Bureau provides state with information on needed stakeholder interviews approximately 1 month after receiving completed Statewide Assessment Instrument
Sampling activities	• Sample period is either 4/1-9/30 of the year before the year of the state's review or a rolling 6-month sample plan that begins on 4/1 and adjusts forward 1 month per each month of the review period. This is the time during which the state identifies the sample in accordance with case review criteria approved by the Children's Bureau	• Sample period is either 4/1/20xx-9/30/20xx or 10/1/xx – 3/31/xx depending on when the onsite review is scheduled and is the time during which state and Children's Bureau identify the sample in the three sites • Identify three review sites, including the largest metro area • Select in-home (25) and foster care (40) sample cases • Total of 65 cases
Onsite review scheduling	• State or Children's Bureau draws the sample; state prepares case records for review and schedules case-related interviews • State identifies its review and quality assurance teams if not identified previously • State schedules stakeholder interviews to occur during case review period • Children's Bureau and state conduct stakeholder interviews as agreed upon with the state • State works with Children's	• Children's Bureau and state agree to review week date • Following sample period, Children's Bureau pulls case sample. State prepares case records and schedules case-related interviews • Children's Bureau and state identify the review and quality assurance teams • State schedules stakeholder interviews to occur during the review week, unless otherwise agreed to by Children's Bureau • State invites participants to

Preparatory Activities	State Conducted Case Reviews	Traditional Reviews
[Cell intentionally left blank]	Bureau to incorporate Children's Bureau participation and oversight into 6-month review plan	end of review week debriefings in local sites

General Preparatory Activities

States can do a number of things to prepare for the reviews:

Explore Review Process Types

To decide which review type to pursue, states should explore their capacity and desire to conduct their own case reviews with Tribes, partners, and internal and external stakeholders and discuss this with the Children's Bureau. Considerations include:

- Status of the state's case review process and the degree to which the process meets Children's Bureau case review criteria
- State's capacity to conduct the reviews in accordance with Children's Bureau requirements
- State's ability to meet Children's Bureau case review criteria, if not already in place, by time frames established by the Children's Bureau

Letter of Intent

After exploring these issues, each state should formally communicate which review type it wants to pursue to its Children's Bureau Regional Office with a letter of intent no later than the dates indicated in the table below. The state can choose the level of detail it wants to provide in the letter of intent. For a state choosing to conduct its own case review, the letter should confirm the discussions between the state and the Children's Bureau about the state's capacity to conduct its own case reviews and ensure sufficient time for:

- The state to present information to the Children's Bureau about the case review processes currently in place and the components that can reasonably be expected to be in place by the beginning of the case review period
- The Children's Bureau to determine if the state's case review process meets the established criteria
- The Children's Bureau and the state to collaboratively plan and negotiate the Children's Bureau's participation before, during, and after the review period

Table: Due Dates for Letters of Intent and Children's Bureau Notifications

Tentatively Scheduled Review Year	Letter of Intent Due	Children's Bureau Initial Decision Notification
FFY 2015	**No later than** September 1, 2014	November 14, 2014

Tentatively Scheduled Review Year	Letter of Intent Due	Children's Bureau Initial Decision Notification
FFY 2016	By September 1, 2014, but **no later than** July 15, 2015	October 1, 2015
FFY 2017	**No later than** July 15, 2016	October 1, 2016
FFY 2018	**No later than** July 15, 2017	October 1, 2017

State Data Profiles

The Children's Bureau transmits or makes available state data profiles, comprising data that the Children's Bureau extracts from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System Child File (or another approved source of data), to the state approximately 6 months before the onsite review unless the data are not available from the state's submissions. Doing so provides the state the opportunity to examine the profiles for accuracy, determine if corrections and resubmissions are needed, and integrate the data with a variety of other sources to complete its statewide assessment (see Chapter 2 for guidance on the statewide assessment).

Conference Call Series

The state and the Children's Bureau participate in a series of at least three preparatory conference calls to discuss the core elements of the Child and Family Services Review. These discussions are intended to be an extension of the joint planning and ongoing conversations between the state and Children's Bureau and vary in specific content based upon which review type has been approved. General discussions include:

- Collaboration throughout the review process
- The onsite case review process
- State outcome and systemic factor data
- State performance on the Round 3 statewide data indicators and other data sources
- Logistics of the review

The conference call series also addresses more specifically the following key elements of the onsite case review process:

- Status of the review preparations
- Review of joint planning discussions
- Overview of the state's review timeline
- Discussion of the state's case review process, statewide assessment, and data profile
- Training, scheduling, and review logistics
- Next steps
- Other topics as needed

The number, timing, and/or content of the conference calls can be modified with Children's Bureau concurrence based upon the individual needs of the state. See Appendix D or an outline of the conference call schedule.

Scheduling Required Stakeholder Interviews

The Children's Bureau notifies the state of the systemic factors that require additional information from stakeholder interviews, approximately 1 month following receipt of the statewide assessment. If possible, stakeholder interviews should be scheduled during regular work hours during the time period in which the Children's Bureau will participate in the state's case review. However, the Children's Bureau and the state can negotiate an alternative schedule that allows stakeholder interviews to be conducted off site or before the Children's Bureau's onsite participation, if necessary. In addition, states should include families and youth served by the agency and will need to consider plans for selection and preparation of these stakeholders. The Children's Bureau and the state should finalize a schedule of stakeholder interviews at least 2 weeks in advance. (See Chapter 6 for guidance on stakeholder interviews).

Preparation for State Conducted Case Reviews

Preparation for a State Conducted Case Review includes case review process criteria verification activities; participation in a series of planning conference calls; preparation of the statewide assessment; discussion of the state's 6-month case review plan and the Children's Bureau's participation therein; and determination of the extent, scope, and scheduling of stakeholder interviews needed to make substantial conformity determinations.

Provide Oversight to State Onsite Review Team Members

To provide oversight to the state onsite review team and be the main point of contact for the Children's Bureau onsite review team, the state should assign a senior state staff person to serve as the State Team Leader for the Child and Family Services Review.

Children's Bureau Approval of State Conducted Case Review

For the Children's Bureau to determine that the state may use its own process for case reviews, the state must demonstrate to the Children's Bureau in the calendar year before its review that criteria set out by the Children's Bureau are either in place or will be in place by the beginning of, and throughout, the case review period. The Children's Bureau, using the case review criteria, reviews the information submitted by the state and other materials as needed to determine whether a state's case review process can be used to provide data for determinations of substantial conformity. The Children's Bureau issues initial approval decisions in writing within the time frames indicated in the "Due Dates for Letters of Intent and Children's Bureau Notifications" table, above.

As early as possible, the Children's Bureau begins working with states to discuss what criteria are currently in place and the areas where states need to consider additional case review development, enhancements, and/or modifications. In some cases, the Children's Bureau may notify a state of remaining criteria for the state to demonstrate before its case review process can be approved.

The state has no more than 60 days after being notified to make the identified changes to its case review process if it wants to continue to seek approval. At the end of that time frame, the Children's Bureau either approves the state's case review process if all criteria have been met or, if not, the Children's Bureau notifies the state that it is not approved to conduct its own review and schedules the state for a Traditional Review. The final decision regarding whether or not the state meets the established criteria rests with the Children's Bureau.

Case Review Process Criteria

The Children's Bureau bases its decision about whether a state can conduct its own case reviews on criteria that cover three areas. These areas that emphasize the importance of case reviews as an effective way for states to gain an understanding of how policy, programming, and practice affect the outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system. The state must demonstrate compliance with all criteria before the Children's Bureau can approve the use of its case review. Alternatively, states not operating a case review process but that plan to implement one before the case review period must submit a plan to the Children's Bureau that meets all aspects of the requirements. The plan must include:

- Time frames by which all aspects of the case review criteria will be in place
- Details of how the state will address issues and/or concerns raised about the state's case review process
- Evidence of the state's capacity to implement all the case review process criteria within the established time frames

In the "Criteria for Using State Case Review Process for Child and Family Services Reviews Purposes" at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_review_criteria.pdf, each criterion is listed along with a description of the applicable standards, additional guidance, and acceptable evidence and methods of verification to assist states in assessing their case review process against the criteria.

States that meet the criteria must:

- Use a sample period of April 1 to September 30 of the year before the year in which the state is scheduled to be reviewed. A rolling monthly sampling period, starting with the April 1 through September 30 of the year before the year of the state's review, may be used for states conducting an equal number of reviews each month over the 6-month review period. The sampling period may advance 1 month per each month of the review period.

- Conduct the case reviews between April 1 and September 30 of the year of the review and provide the Children's Bureau information to allow federal staff to participate in the state's case review process.

- Report results of their reviews to the Children's Bureau by November 15 of the year of the review.

States that cannot meet the criteria are scheduled for a Traditional Review, conducted jointly by the state and Children's Bureau.

Statewide Assessment Completion

The statewide assessment is due before the state's onsite review, 4 months from transmittal of the Statewide Assessment Instrument and data profile. The statewide assessment is used to inform systemic factor substantial conformity decisions, the extent and scope of stakeholder interviews, and issues requiring further exploration on site (see Chapter 2 for detail about the preparation and use of the Statewide Assessment Instrument, and Chapter 4 for sampling guidance).

Sampling Activities

Onsite reviews and state improvement planning require reliable types of evidence from which to draw conclusions. The Child and Family Services Review is designed to evaluate the key areas of the state's IV-B and IV-E child welfare programs. As such, the sample must identify the cases subject to review as comprehensively and clearly as possible to reflect an adequate representation of the state's child welfare population. Case review samples have common requirements across all states as well as requirements specific State Conducted Case Reviews. The state and the Children's Bureau negotiate individualized sample plan elements resulting in a state-specific case sampling plan to be finalized by the beginning of the 6-month case review period for states conducting their own case reviews (see Chapter 4 for sampling guidance).

Review Scheduling

Early in the planning process, the state should identify key logistical personnel who will act as the main points of contact for the Children's Bureau during the 6-month case review period.

During the case review criteria verification process, the state provides its case review schedule through the 6-month onsite review period. This schedule is the basis for discussions about when the Children's Bureau will participate in and provide oversight of the state's case review process, including scheduling of the stakeholder interviews deemed necessary to make substantial conformity determinations (see Chapter 6 for guidance on stakeholder interviews).

Debriefings

In states that conduct debriefings as part of their case review process, the Children's Bureau may observe and/or participate in those meetings depending on availability. For states that do not include debriefings as part of their case review process, the Children's Bureau does not require them. In either case, the Children's Bureau discusses any relevant observations and feedback with the state.

The Children's Bureau provides feedback on the case review process early in the process and on a regular basis throughout the case review period. If the Children's Bureau identifies significant issues with the state's implementation of the case review process—for example, data quality or rating issues—the Children's Bureau provides immediate feedback to the state. Documentation of these issues as well as high-level feedback on outcomes may be provided to the local site and the state (see Chapter 7 for more information about debriefings).

Preparation for the Traditional Review Process

Preparation for the Traditional Review includes selecting sites, selecting cases to be reviewed, preparing case records for review, scheduling case-related and stakeholder interviews, assembling the Reviewers, preparing Reviewer schedules, managing logistical arrangements, providing training, and distributing review-related materials to the onsite review team. Related activities are discussed below.

Provide Oversight to the State Onsite Review Team Members

To provide oversight to the state onsite review team and be the main point of contact for the Children's Bureau onsite review team, the state should assign a senior state staff person to serve as the State Team Leader for the review. Similarly, the state should assign a Local Site Coordinator for each of the review sites. Local Site Coordinators are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the case records to be reviewed are available
- Setting up interviews
- Arranging local meeting space, meal options, lodging, and transportation as needed
- Coordinating the plan for the debriefing at the end of the review week

Local Site Coordinators should be administrators from the site under review or their designees. To avoid conflicts of interest, the Local Site Coordinator does not participate in team activities, such as stakeholder or case-related interviews. Local Site Coordinators should be available to the team during regular working hours to handle unexpected issues that may arise, such as the need to reschedule interviews.

Statewide Assessment

The statewide assessment is due before the state's scheduled onsite review and is used to inform systemic factor substantial conformity decisions, the extent and scope of stakeholder interviews, and issues requiring further exploration on site (see Chapter 2 for detail about the preparation and use of the Statewide Assessment Instrument and Chapter 4 for sampling composition).

Site Selection

The onsite review activities are conducted in three sites in the state. The state's largest metropolitan subdivision is designated in 45 CFR § 1355.33(c)(2) as a required site for the onsite review. The largest metropolitan subdivision is included as a site to ensure that the Child and Family Services Reviews include the country's urban centers, where typically a disproportionate number of families have contact with child welfare systems.

In almost all situations, the largest metropolitan subdivision is the entire county in which the state's largest city, by population, is located. There are, however, exceptional circumstances in some states that are considered in making this decision. The following criteria are used in determining the largest metropolitan subdivision in each state:

- Each state's largest city, by population, will be reviewed.
- If the state's largest city is self-contained within a single county, that entire county will be reviewed.
- If the state's largest city crosses county lines, all of the child welfare offices that serve the city will be reviewed.

In some states, two or more cities may have minor differences in population, but one may have a more urban character than the other(s). In these cases, the Children's Bureau Regional Office will work with the state to jointly determine which metropolitan subdivision provides the best opportunity to review urban child welfare issues.

Only a few guidelines have been established for selecting the other two sites to provide the Children's Bureau Regional Office staff and the state maximum flexibility in ensuring that the onsite review is responsive to individual state issues and needs. The Children's Bureau selects these sites in collaboration with the state on the basis of issues raised by a review of relevant data and information submitted by the state, including data about the state's performance on statewide data indicators in the current and prior review rounds and the national standard data from Rounds 2 and 3. When available, county-level data is helpful in understanding differences that exist across the state in demographics and outcomes. The Children's Bureau recommends that states provide at least four possible options for site selection along with the data and rationale for each option.

As with the selection of the largest metropolitan subdivision, each of the other two onsite review sites will typically be single counties in the state; however, in some states, selecting single counties as review sites is not possible (for example, where state child welfare agencies are not organized by county). In either case, the following criteria are used in selecting the other two sites:

- Sites that represent a mix of population sizes and different geographic areas; for example, one small rural site and one mid-sized urban site

- Sites that represent areas with significant Native American or other populations that are representative of state demographics

- Sites that have implemented innovative practices and programs that appear to be achieving more positive outcomes than in other areas, or where the state wishes to explore the impact of specific practices and programs (such as concurrent planning)

- Sites that include particular geographic areas, program areas, populations of children and families, or issues that merit further study. For example, a site where the number of terminations of parental rights has increased but where achieving timely adoptions is a challenge, or a site experiencing an increase in non-relative guardianships

In choosing sites, the Children's Bureau, in collaboration with the state, also may select locations that represent the most typical practice in the state if there are no outstanding programmatic or systemic issues to be addressed through the onsite review. The sites selected should represent a cross-section of practice in the state. It is not necessary to select sites solely because they represent geographic areas experiencing the most difficult child welfare issues, although it is important to select sites that ensure the review team is able to examine relevant issues and concerns within the state.

In addition, the Children's Bureau uses state data and information to compare prospective sites regarding the critical indicators to be examined during the onsite review. By doing so, the Children's Bureau seeks to ensure that the sites selected represent the range of strengths and areas needing improvement reflected in the data.

Moreover, to be selected, sites must have a large enough universe of cases to support sampling. In general, a site should have at least three times more in-home services and foster care cases than the number of cases scheduled for review in that site.

Sampling Activities

Onsite reviews and state continuous quality improvement efforts require reliable forms of evidence from which to draw conclusions. To ensure that the state child welfare population's cases subject to the Child and Family Services Review are as comprehensive as possible and that key program areas within the population are represented, the state target population's cases should be sampled using a clearly defined sampling frame, which may be based on the state's review schedule and an adequate representation of the state population. Case review samples have common requirements across all states as well as requirements specific to the Traditional Review. The state and the Children's Bureau negotiate individualized sample plan elements, resulting in a state-specific case sampling plan to be finalized at least 60 days before the onsite review (see Chapter 4 for sampling guidance).

Selection of Reviewers

At least 3 months before the onsite review, the Children's Bureau collaborates with the State Team Leader to develop the federal-state review team and site assignments. Pairing of Reviewers is permitted but not required.

The state identifies the State Review Team members, ensuring that:

- Staff of the state's public child welfare agency and external partners are included
- Conflicts of interest are minimized by not assigning Reviewers to the site in which they work(ed) or have/had oversight responsibilities.

The Children's Bureau then discusses the review team composition overall to determine the number of federal Reviewers needed and identify potential conflicts of interest. If Reviewer pairs are used, they comprise one person representing the state and one person representing the Children's Bureau. The state and the Children's Bureau should consider experience and role (for example, external stakeholder or state agency staff) when establishing the pairs.

Reviewers and their site assignments should be finalized at least 6 weeks before the onsite review.

Preparation of the Case Records for Review

The state should make available at the review sites all electronic and paper case records to be reviewed. The case records should be complete, including applicable information for periods preceding the period under review, which starts at the beginning of the sampling period and ends when the case is reviewed. Case records also should be as organized and up-to-date as possible, including any files maintained separately, such as separate child protective services or adoption files or separate child and family records. States should confirm that any sealed foster care or adoption file is available if the case is part of the case review sample. Caseworkers and/or supervisors assigned to these cases must be available for interviews.

If the child welfare agency uses electronic files instead of, or in addition to, paper files, the Local Site Coordinator must make computers and technical support available to Reviewers so that they can view the electronic records; obtain hard copies of the files or the portions of the files containing information relevant to the review; or use a combination of these two approaches.

If necessary, the state should obtain confidentiality statements or releases of information before the onsite review to permit Reviewers to read case records and conduct case-related interviews.

In addition, the Children's Bureau may require federal Reviewers to sign an agreement that includes a confidentiality provision.

The state should also arrange for a secure site for overnight case record storage.

Review Scheduling

Scheduling Case-Related Interviews

Onsite review team members are responsible for reviewing the case records and interviewing the individuals involved in the cases to which they are assigned. The Local Site Coordinators schedule the case-related interviews to take place after each case record is reviewed, which enables Reviewers to identify relevant issues to explore with each person interviewed (see Chapter 5 for guidance on case-related interviews).

Local Site Coordinators should allow time at the beginning of each day for Reviewers to read the cases before the first interview is scheduled. Local Site Coordinators should schedule each interview for 1 hour or less and allow time between interviews for travel between the appointments. Local Site Coordinators also should prepare, in advance, a list of addresses, maps, and/or written directions to the interview sites and provide these to Reviewers as needed. In addition, Local Site Coordinators may plan transportation to the interviews, but the Children's Bureau can arrange for rental cars for members of the Federal Review Team.

Unless specific concerns exist about having Reviewers interview someone alone, the assigned caseworker should not be present at the interview. In addition, if concerns exist about the safety of Reviewers or other issues related to the interview, the Local Site Coordinator should take the necessary precautions, such as arranging for the interview to be held in the local child welfare agency office or other safe environment.

If special accommodations are required to complete an interview—for example, to address language needs—the Local Site Coordinator makes the necessary arrangements, including obtaining an interpreter, if needed. The consultant pool from which Federal Review Team members are drawn includes individuals with an array of language skills. The Local Site Coordinator should let the State Review Team leader know in advance if it would be helpful to have Reviewers with special language skills or capacities assigned to a particular site. The Children's Bureau will work to accommodate these requests whenever possible.

The Local Site Coordinator or his or her designee should prepare the individuals to be interviewed, including helping them to understand the purpose of the review. The interviewees should be informed that their participation is voluntary but critical to the success of the review. Once the Local Site Coordinator has scheduled the interviews, the appointments should be confirmed in writing.[5]

The state must submit the review team's schedules to the Children's Bureau, including the name, date, time, and location of case-related interviews, at least 2 weeks before the review.

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[5] See Case-Related Interview Guides and Instructions, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_interview_guides.pdf.

Logistical Preparations

The state, in consultation with the Children's Bureau, makes logistical arrangements, including:

- Identifying lodging arrangements for onsite review team members
- Arranging location and times for the entrance conferences. The informal entrance conference at each site should focus on logistics and last no more than 30 minutes. Local agency leaders who wish to provide information to review team members about the review site may submit it in writing to the Children's Bureau Regional Office at least 5 weeks before the onsite review
- Coordinating transportation for onsite review team members
- Ensuring that all state Local Site Leaders and Local Site Coordinators are well oriented to the review process and materials, including reviewing in advance the *Procedures Manual,* instruments, and guides
- Preparing maps and other written directions for review team members as needed to assist them in getting to the site office and scheduled appointments
- Planning transportation for review team members to interviews
- Arranging for space for the onsite review team's case records, debriefings, and other planned meetings
- Ensuring that review team members have access to the site office during non-business hours
- Arranging private space/accommodations for interviews that will take place both in person and over the telephone
- Ensuring that the technical requirements for the Web-based Onsite Review Instrument are met, including making Internet connections and power sources available
- Arranging location and times for the end-of-the-week debriefing session

Debriefings

Local site debriefings on case and systemic findings are held on the Friday morning of the review week at each review site. The debriefings are informal guided discussions open to the entire onsite review team and those invited by the local office. The Children's Bureau encourages the state to invite those key agency staff, whether local or state-level, who will benefit from hearing about the findings or will have major or shared responsibility for program improvement planning. The Children's Bureau documents high-level issues noted during the debriefings and provides the feedback to the local site and state (see Chapter 7 for more details on debriefings).

Chapter 4

Case Sampling

The onsite reviews, as well as Program Improvement Plan performance measurement and state continuous quality improvement efforts, require reliable forms of evidence from which to draw conclusions. It is not cost-effective or practical to collect and examine all the case data that might be available. Rather, it is necessary to draw a sample of information from the whole population to enable detailed examination guided by case review instruments. To ensure that the state child welfare target population's cases subject to the Child and Family Services Review are as comprehensive as possible and to ensure that key program areas within the population are represented, the state target population's cases should be sampled using a clearly defined sampling process. In accordance with 45 CFR § 1355.33(c), the reviews require an onsite review of a random sample of foster care and in-home cases for evaluating the outcomes.

These case review samples have common requirements across all states as well as requirements specific to the Traditional or State Conducted Case Review type. All states will have some individually negotiated sample plan elements related to the in-home services population, case-specific elimination, and possible site stratification. States that wish to conduct their own reviews and have the capacity to review at least 3 sites in 6 months with samples of at least 65 cases are encouraged to do so. After the state and Children's Bureau have determined whether the reviews will be conducted by the state or via Traditional Review, a state-specific case sampling plan is finalized at least 60 days before the onsite review for Traditional Review states or by the final approval of a state case review plan for State Conducted Case Review states.

Requirements Common to All Onsite Review Samples

The state case review sample must include a minimum of 65 cases served during the sample period with a minimum of 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home cases. For states conducting their own case reviews, samples larger than 65 should reflect the state ratio of foster care and in-home cases as long as the minimums above are met for both case types.

A simple random sample design should be used but may include additional stratification to achieve an adequate representation of key program areas or by geographical area. The samples should be selected from a randomly drawn oversample of cases subject to review (approximately four to six times the number of cases planned for review). The cases in the oversample that are not selected for review may serve as substitutes to replace any selected cases that are eliminated before or during the review.

Sampling Frames

As noted above, to ensure that the state child welfare population's cases subject to review are as comprehensive as possible and that key program areas within the population are represented, the state target population's cases should be sampled using a clearly defined sampling frame. A sampling frame is the actual set of units from which a sample will be drawn. In the case of a simple random sample, all units from the sampling frame have an equal chance to be drawn and to occur in the sample. The sampling frame coincides with the population of interest, which for the review is by family unit for in-home cases and by individual child in foster care for foster care cases. For states conducting their own case reviews, the state's sampling frame may be based on the state's review schedule and an adequate representation of the state

population. The state must provide the sample frame of in-home services cases for the selected review sites to the Children's Bureau no later than 60 days before the onsite review for a Traditional Review. States using a State Conducted Case Review must provide an example in-home sample frame for Children's Bureau review during the approval process.

Foster Care Sampling Frames

The sampling frame for the state foster care population consists of the listing of children served statewide or by jurisdiction strata according to the state's Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System-defined reportable cases for the Children's Bureau-specified sample period. Some states use regions or districts instead of counties as review sites. Such states should provide an abridged Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System file containing the Federal Information Processing Standards codes demarcating the geographic areas selected for the onsite review. The remainder of the abridged Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System file should contain the encrypted case numbers and the dates of birth broken out into three columns: one for year, one for month, and one for day. The state can transmit the abridged file of foster care cases to the Children's Bureau as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or other commonly used spreadsheet format.

Foster care cases may be stratified to achieve an adequate representation of cases in key program areas, ensure proportions consistent with the regulation, and address the need to focus on state practice or populations. The Children's Bureau and state will review Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System Federal Information Processing Standards code distribution lists prepared by the Office of Data, Analysis, Research, and Evaluation that will summarize the number of served cases as well as other demographics to assist with possible site selection for consideration of possible additional stratification of the random samples.

In-Home Services Sampling Frames

The sampling frame for in-home services cases must include cases that either were opened for services for at least 45 consecutive days during the sampling period or began a 45-day consecutive period during the sampling period. The latter would allow for in-home services cases to complete the 45-day period after the sample period ends within the period under review. The state and the Children's Bureau will need to engage in detailed conversations about the services provided under the state's IV-B/IV-E plans to have an accurate understanding of what to include in the sampling frame. This sampling frame includes:

- Alternative or differential response cases if applicable in the state

- Non-foster care cases for which the state's title IV-B/IV-E agency is responsible as defined in state policy or through contract pursuant to the state's Child and Family Services Plan. This may include juvenile justice cases, mental health cases, and other in-home services cases, even if they are not funded with federal funds if the services the state IV-B/IV-E agency provides to them, either directly or through contractual arrangements, are provided pursuant to the state's Child and Family Services Plan. For example, the requirement that a state have a pre-placement preventive services program to help children at risk of foster care placement remain safely with their families

- Cases in which a state child welfare agency contracts out the responsibility for providing in-home services—whether the state's title IV-B/IV-E child welfare agency made the referral for services, paid for the services through federal or state funds, or monitored the

service provision by the contractor—and the family is served pursuant to the state's Child and Family Services Plan

The sampling frame should support the identification of cases in which any child in the family was in foster care for 24 hours or more during any portion of the review period to support the elimination of such cases from the sample.

In preparing the sampling frame, the state should organize it by family and also provide:

- The Federal Information Processing Standards code, to verify that the county is correct; or separate the file into regions or districts, if applicable
- The case number, to verify that the sampled cases correspond to the ones to be reviewed during the onsite review once these numbers are decrypted and cross-walked
- The caseworker identification code, to ensure that a particular caseworker is not over-represented in the sample

Sample Period

The foster care sampling period coincides with the 6-month Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System submission period immediately following the data profile period provided by the Children's Bureau for the statewide assessment. The in-home services sampling period begins with the same 6-month submission period but may extend an additional 45 days beyond the foster care sampling period because all in-home cases must be open for 45 consecutive days.

For states conducting their own reviews, the sample period will be April 1 through September 30 for foster care cases and through November 15 for in-home cases. A rolling monthly sampling period, starting with April 1 through November 15 of the year *before* the year of the state's review, may be used for states conducting an equal number of reviews each month over the 6-month review period. The sampling period may advance 1 month per each month of the review period. For example, cases to be reviewed in June 2015 will be drawn from the sample period June 1–November 30, 2014, for foster care cases and through January 15, 2015, for in-home cases.

For states engaged in the Traditional Review, the sampling period will be either 4/1/20xx – 9/30/20xx or 10/1/xx – 3/31/xx depending on when the onsite review is scheduled.

Case Elimination

The state must have a written process for tracking cases eliminated during sample selection before the onsite review that uses the Children's Bureau's case elimination criteria. The following case elimination criteria are required to ensure applicability of cases regardless of review path chosen and are consistent with the "Criteria for Using State Case Review Process for Child and Family Services Reviews Purposes"[6]:

- An in-home services case open for fewer than 45 consecutive days during the period under review

[6] See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_review_criteria.pdf.

- An in-home services case in which any child in the family was in foster care for more than 24 hours during the period under review
- A foster care case open fewer than 24 hours during the period under review, which starts at the beginning of the sampling period and ends when the case is reviewed
- A foster care case in which the child was on a trial home visit (placement at home) during the entire period under review
- A foster care case that was closed according to agency policy before the sample period begins, resulting in no state responsibility for the case
- A case open for subsidized adoption or guardianship payment only and not otherwise inclusive of a child in foster care or open for in-home services during the period under review
- A case in which the target child reached the age of majority as defined by state law (18 years old in most states) before the period under review
- A case in which the child is or was in the placement and care responsibility of another state, and the state being reviewed is providing supervision through an Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children agreement
- A case appearing multiple times in the sample, such as a case that involves siblings in foster care in separate cases or an in-home services case that was opened more than one time during a sampling period
- A foster care case in which the child's adoption or guardianship was finalized before the period under review and the child is no longer in foster care
- A case in which the child was placed for the entire period under review in a locked juvenile facility or other placement that does not meet the federal definition of foster care at 45 CFR § 1355.20

State-Specific Case Elimination

The state must have written protocol to address other possible case eliminations consistently, including when key participant interviews cannot be arranged or interviewees are not available. In addition, the state should maintain a list of any case(s) that it deletes from the sample and provide the reason(s) that it did so. States may consider elimination of cases beyond the required criteria for reasons outlined below and other state-specific reasons as detailed in their case elimination plans:

- Situations in which case selection would result in overrepresentation of child welfare agency staff, such as when more than two cases in one site are from the caseload of a single caseworker
- Situations in which case selection would result in overrepresentation or underrepresentation of juvenile justice cases or other program areas
- Situations where the state has various types of in-home services cases and some elimination may allow balanced observation
- Situations when the state has a large number of short-stay children entering care

Case Sample Plans and Preparation

All states will have some individually negotiated sample plan elements related to the in-home services population and possible site stratification. After the state and Children's Bureau have determined whether the state will conduct its own case reviews or engage in the Traditional Review, a state-specific case sampling plan is finalized.

The state must submit its sampling plan at least 60 days before the onsite review for a Traditional Review, or by the final approval of a state case review plan for a State Conducted Case Review.

State Conducted Case Reviews

States conducting their own reviews are subject to Children's Bureau approval and to the criteria and approval requirements outlined in the "Criteria for Using State Case Review Process for Child and Family Services Reviews Purposes."[7]

Traditional Reviews

States participating in a Traditional Review should send the in-home services sample frame, along with the foster care sampling frame and abridged Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System file (if applicable), electronically to the Children's Bureau at least 60 days before the onsite review.

Children's Bureau Sample Preparation

Review planning conference calls or consultation calls with Children's Bureau sampling specialists and Administration for Children and Families statisticians are arranged at least 60 to 90 days before the onsite review. Before selecting the in-home services and foster care samples, the Children's Bureau and the state should:

- Confirm the three counties (or other geographical areas) where the onsite review will be conducted
- Confirm that in each review site selected for the onsite review there are at least three times more in-home services and foster care cases than the number of cases scheduled for review in that site
- Obtain a list of all state counties or jurisdictions based on the Federal Information Processing Standards or county codes. The Children's Bureau will provide a list to assist in the site confirmation process. If an insufficient number of in-home services or foster care cases is available, either another site must be selected or the issue should be resolved through conference calls with the Children's Bureau and the state
- Determine whether the state's in-home services cases are categorized by child or by family and, if necessary, discuss converting cases to family
- Confirm that any sealed foster care or adoption records will be available if they are selected for the sample, as federal authority exists to audit such cases (§ 471[a][8][D] of the Social Security Act). The Children's Bureau and state should develop a plan to access sealed records and locate and invite participation by adoptive families.

After the review sites have been determined, and upon receiving the sample frames from the state, the Children's Bureau draws two random samples of cases from the respective sample frames in the three sites to be reviewed based upon the proportion of cases to be reviewed at

[7] See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_review_criteria.pdf.

each site. If this is not possible, the Children's Bureau attempts to preserve the proportionality of the cases scheduled for review at each site to the extent possible. The Children's Bureau then re-randomizes the cases in each sample before transmitting these to the state to preclude any bias when the state selects the cases to be reviewed at each of the three sites.

Case Selection

After the state receives the re-randomized samples, it selects the cases to be reviewed following the sequential order in which the cases appear in the re-randomized samples. The state then verifies and finalizes the list of cases to be reviewed, following the guidance regarding eliminating cases and consultation with the Children's Bureau.

Once the state and Children's Bureau agree on the final list of cases to be reviewed, the state schedules the 65 cases for onsite reviews across the three sites. At each review site, the Children's Bureau reviews approximately 15 to 35 cases (for example, the Children's Bureau typically reviews up to 35 cases in the largest metropolitan subdivision and no fewer than 15 in the other two sites), unless otherwise agreed upon by the Children's Bureau and the state. The Children's Bureau reviews no fewer than 15 cases at any review site.

If 25 in-home services cases cannot be scheduled on site, no substitution of foster care cases will be undertaken. At least two alternate in-home services cases should be available from the lists at each site in the event that in-home services cases are eliminated during the onsite review. If the target number of in-home services cases cannot be reached or adjustments across sites are necessary, the Children's Bureau will seek to review a minimum of 5 in-home services cases for the two non-metropolitan sites.

Case Elimination During Scheduling

The state must record the reasons for eliminating cases from the sample while scheduling cases for review. In addition, the state must submit to the Children's Bureau for approval a list of any case(s) that it plans to delete from the sample and the reason(s) for doing so. Case elimination may be appropriate in the following situations:

- Cases in which the key individuals are unavailable during the onsite review week or are unwilling to be interviewed, even by telephone. Note:
    - The key individuals in a case are the child (if school age), the parent(s), the foster parent(s), the family caseworker, and other professionals knowledgeable about the case.
    - There may be cases that should not be eliminated even though key individuals are unavailable. Before eliminating these cases, the state should determine whether sufficient information and perspectives can be obtained from the available parties.
    - Children on runaway status should not be eliminated from the sample unless it has been determined that pertinent information needed to complete the Onsite Review Instrument cannot be obtained from other available parties, such as the *guardian ad litem* or other significant individuals.

- Cases involving out-of-county or out-of-state family members or services are considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the availability of key individuals.

- If an interview with a critical party to the case is cancelled at the last minute and this results in insufficient information being available to review the case, the case should be eliminated from the sample after approval of the Local Site Leader and the Local Site Coordinator. Note:

  - The state should make reasonable efforts to seek the participation of key individuals in the case to ensure the validity of the random sample.

  - In the event a case(s) is eliminated, the Children's Bureau and the Local Site Coordinator will consider whether sufficient time exists to use a substitute case.

  - The Children's Bureau and the state will then identify alternate cases as substitutes by following the numerical order provided in the sample.

- A case originally included in the foster care sample frame that is determined during the onsite review to be an in-home services case during the entire period under review may be reviewed as an in-home services case only when no alternative foster care cases can be scheduled, provided no child in the family was in foster care during the period under review.

- An in-home case found with a foster care episode during the period under review may not be reviewed as a foster care case.

This chart summarizes some of the similarities and distinctions between the review types that relate to case review sampling:

Case Review Sampling Elements by Review Type

Element	State Conducted Case Reviews	Traditional Reviews
Sample size	Minimum of 65—no upper limit Potential for statistically valid samples based on state capacity	Limited to 65 cases No statistically valid samples
Review sites	At least 3 over 6-month period—no upper limit	Limited to 3 sites in 1 week
Case mix ratio	Reflective of state's ratio as long as minimum 40/25 met	40 foster care/25 in-home
Sampling frame—foster care	• Organized by individual child • Served statewide or by jurisdiction strata • According to state's Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System reportable cases for the sampling period	• Organized by individual child • Served statewide or by jurisdiction strata • According to state's Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System reportable cases for the sampling period

Element	State Conducted Case Reviews	Traditional Reviews
Sampling frame—in-home	• State-provided list by family unit • Opened for at least 45 consecutive days during the sampling period including alternative/differential response and other in-home services cases served pursuant to the Child and Family Services Plan • Supports the identification of cases in which any child in the family was in foster care for 24 hours or more during any portion of the review period to support the elimination of such cases from the sample	• State-provided list by family unit • Opened for at least 45 consecutive days during the sampling period including alternative/differential response and other in-home services cases served pursuant to the Child and Family Services Plan • Supports the identification of cases in which any child in the family was in foster care for 24 hours or longer during any portion of the review period to support the elimination of such cases from the sample
Representa-tiveness	• Consists of a statewide sample or cross-section of state child welfare practice • Includes largest metro area • Includes significant Tribal or other populations that are representative of state demographics	• Consists of a cross-section of state child welfare practice based on 3 sites • Includes largest metro area • Includes significant Tribal or other populations that are representative of state demographics
Sampling period	• The foster care sampling period coincides with the 6-month Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System submission period immediately following the data profile period. The in-home services sampling period extends an additional 45 days beyond the foster care sampling period • Either 4/1–9/30 of the year before the year of the state's review or a rolling 6-month sample plan that begins on 4/1 and adjusts forward 1 month per each month of the review period	• The foster care sampling period coincides with the 6-month Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System submission period immediately following the data profile period. The in-home services sampling period extends an additional 45 days beyond the foster care sampling period • Either 4/1/20xx–9/30/20xx or 10/1/xx–3/31/xx depending on when the onsite review is scheduled
Period under review	Starts at the beginning of the sampling period and ends when the case is reviewed	Starts at the beginning of the sampling period and ends when the case is reviewed
Sampling activities	Conducted by the state	Managed by Children's Bureau

Element	State Conducted Case Reviews	Traditional Reviews
Sampling plan content	See "Criteria for Using State Case Review Process for Child and Family Services Reviews Purposes" at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_review_criteria.pdf	• Identification of 3 review sites • Sufficiency of oversample • Case elimination process
Case elimination	• Must follow Children's Bureau case elimination criteria • Must consult with Children's Bureau regarding any state-specific case elimination criteria	• Must follow Children's Bureau case elimination criteria • Must consult with Children's Bureau regarding any state-specific case elimination criteria
Sampling plan due	At State Conducted Case Review initial approval point (11/14/14 or 10/1 for subsequent years' reviews)	At least 60 days before onsite review
Children's Bureau consultation	Available throughout the process on sampling design and plan	Available throughout the process on sampling design and plan

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Chapter 5

Onsite Review Instrument

For both State Conducted Case Reviews and Traditional Reviews, the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions is used to review in-home and foster care cases. The instrument contains questions, definitions, and instructions to guide how to rate state child welfare system performance related to the seven outcomes. A Reviewer must complete the instrument based on a review of the case record and interviews with key case participants, including the children, parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and other professionals involved with the child and family.

Using the Onsite Review Instrument

The instrument includes a Face Sheet for the Reviewer to document general information about the case and the child and family participants. That is followed by sections that focus on the safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

Each of the outcomes includes one or more items that guide Reviewers in assessing the child welfare system's performance in working with the child and family. While the instrument itself includes detailed guidance on how to assess performance for each case being reviewed, Reviewers should familiarize themselves with the general expectations for how the state can meet requirements and demonstrate strong performance before reviewing any cases.[8]

Reviewers must gather and analyze available information to rate each item appropriately through reviewing the case file and interviewing key case participants. It is critical that Reviewers read all instrument instructions and definitions to understand what the questions are asking and what is being assessed by each item. Reviewers should use their professional judgment in identifying and resolving conflicting information. Support and guidance on how to rate cases can be obtained through early discussions with quality assurance staff.

The Children's Bureau provides additional support and guidance through the Onsite Review Instrument Quality Assurance Guide at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_qa_guide.pdf. Areas/issues covered in this document include:

- Identifying case participants (e.g., parents, caregivers)
- Assessing and rating short-term cases
- Determining the involvement of non-custodial parents

In reviewing each case, Reviewers need to focus broadly on the child welfare system as it works in concert with its partners, like the courts, law enforcement, and service providers. It is important to identify how the system supported or prevented positive outcomes for the children and family in the case being reviewed. Additionally, it is important to determine who in the family should be considered for the case review, regardless of case type.

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[8] The expectations incorporated in the instrument are discussed in the "Reviewer Brief—Understanding the Federal Expectations for Rating Cases," http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_reviewer_brief.pdf on quality assurance support.

Case-Related Interviews

Through the review process, the Children's Bureau wants to gain a full understanding of what occurred that affected child and family outcomes in a particular case. It is critical to obtain information from a variety of sources before making initial determinations about outcomes. Case-related interviews with key individuals involved in the case serve as an opportunity to determine what has occurred in the case, confirm case record documentation, collect information that might be missing from the record, and obtain input about case participants' experiences. The interview information should be weighed equally with information obtained from the case file documentation.

When interviewing persons important to the case, Reviewers are responsible for asking questions relevant to the items in the instrument. Sometimes, information obtained during an interview may conflict with the documentation contained within the case record or obtained from another interview. In these cases, Reviewers have a responsibility to pursue the issue across multiple interviews until they can determine the most accurate response to the relevant item questions.

Required Interviews With Key Case Participants

When scheduling interviews with key case participants, states should keep in mind that there are often multiple parents and/or caregivers who should be included in the review process. Ensuring that all of the relevant participants of the case are available for interviews is critical for a successful review process.

The following individuals related to a case must be interviewed unless they are unavailable or unwilling to participate:

- The child (school-age)
- The child's parent(s) and/or caregivers
- The child's foster 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.

The following guidance should be considered when identifying the key case participants in a case who should be interviewed:

Children

Only school-age children are interviewed, unless other arrangements are made. Cases involving children younger than school age, children who are developmentally younger than school age, or children who are incapacitated due to physical or mental health issues or delays may be reviewed but do not require an interview with the child.

Children in in-home cases include:

- All children in the family home

Children in foster care cases include:

- The target child.
- Other children in the family home are optional at the Reviewer's discretion, depending on case circumstances (there may be cases that warrant interviews with other children in the home because they are included in the assessment of safety outcomes, but this should be considered on a case-by-case basis and should be requested as needed by Reviewers during the review).

Parents/Caregivers in In-Home Cases

Parents/caregivers in in-home cases include:

- Parents/caregivers with whom the children were living when the agency became involved with the family and with whom the children will remain (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adoptive parents).
- If a biological parent does not fit the definition above, he or she may need to be included in interviews based on the circumstances of the case. Some things to consider in this determination are the reason for the agency's involvement, the identified perpetrators in the case, the status of the children's relationship with the parent, the nature of the case (court supervised or voluntary), and the length of case opening. If, during the period under review, a biological parent indicated a desire to be involved with the child and it is in the child's best interests to do so, the parent should be included in the case review and should be interviewed.

Parents/Caregivers in Foster Care Cases

Parents/caregivers in foster care cases include:

- Parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification.
- Biological parents who were not the parents from whom the child was removed.
- Adoptive parents, if the adoption has been finalized during the period under review.

If it has been documented that it is not in the child's best interests to involve a parent in case planning, or if the parent did not want to be involved in the child's life during the entire period under review, that parent does not need to be interviewed.

Foster Parents

Foster parents include 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. If there are multiple foster parents during the period under review, all foster parents should be included for interviews.

Potential Exceptions to Conducting Interviews

- Preschool-age children
- Parents who cannot be located despite the agency's demonstrated efforts to locate them, or a parent who lives outside of the United States
- There is a safety or risk concern in contacting any party for an interview
- Any party who is unable to consent to an interview due to physical or mental health incapacity
- Any party who refuses to participate in an interview and the agency can document attempts to engage him or her
- Any party who is advised by an attorney not to participate due to a pending criminal or civil matter

Unacceptable Exceptions

- An age cut-off that does not take into account a child's developmental capacity; e.g., a policy of not interviewing children under age 12
- A party who refuses to participate in an interview but the agency did not attempt to engage him or her beyond a letter
- A party who has a pending criminal, civil, or procedural matter before the agency; e.g., appeal of termination of parental rights
- A party who cannot be located but the agency has not made attempts to locate the individual
- A party who speaks a language other than English

Optional Interviews

Interviews with other professionals knowledgeable about the case may be arranged but are not required as part of the case review process. When numerous service providers are involved with a child or family, the Children's Bureau suggests that interviews be scheduled only with those most recently involved, those most knowledgeable about the family, or those who provide the primary services the family is receiving.

Other individuals who have relevant information about the case also may be interviewed, such as the child's *guardian ad litem* or advocate, or other family members.

Arranging Interviews

Case-related interviews should be scheduled to take place after Reviewers have had an opportunity to review case record documentation thoroughly. This allows Reviewers to explore relevant issues and confirm or verify information found in the case record with each person interviewed.

If possible, interviews with parents, foster parents, and children should be conducted in their homes, group homes, or foster homes. Service providers may be interviewed wherever is most convenient for them and the Reviewers. When travel arrangements and the schedules of Reviewers preclude travel to those locations, or when persons to be interviewed prefer not to have Reviewers in their homes or offices, the state may arrange to hold the interviews in a central location. Telephone interviews also may be arranged for individuals located outside the review site.

Interview Guides

Guidance on conducting key case participant interviews (Child[ren], Parents/Caretakers, Foster Parents, and Caseworkers) is provided in the "Case-Related Interview Guides and Instructions" at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_interview_guides.pdf. The guidance includes suggested language for introducing the interview process to the interviewee as well as specific questions that can be asked that will cover the key areas in the Onsite Review Instrument that should be informed by case participant information. The questions in the guidance can be modified to fit the specific needs of participants as well as the circumstances of the case. The Children's Bureau strongly recommends that the guidance be used for interviews to ensure that adequate and consistent information is gathered through the interviews across the sample of cases being reviewed. Reviewers are encouraged to review the guidance before their interviews so they can highlight questions that they plan on asking and develop additional questions that may be needed.

Quality Assurance and Secondary Oversight on Case Reviews and the Onsite Review Instrument

Strong quality assurance processes can assist states in:

- Guiding review teams through the case review process and clarifying the application of the instrument to cases being reviewed
- Applying professional judgment appropriately to reconcile the information gathered and resolve disagreements about case ratings fairly and accurately
- Identifying topics to be further explored in Reviewer training and guidance
- Tracking issues with the process or instrument that the Children's Bureau needs to address and/or resolve
- Cultivating confidence in the results of the case review
- Viewing practice assessment as part of a fair and equitable process based on standardization and objectivity

All cases reviewed for the CFSR, regardless of review type, must undergo some form of initial quality assurance. Initial quality assurance ensures that Reviewers are accurately rating cases and properly applying federal instructions. Initial quality assurance must be conducted on all cases.

The Children's Bureau engages in secondary oversight activities to ensure that the cases reviewed during the onsite review period are accurate, consistent, and adhere to the guidance provided for use of the instrument. These activities are intended to ensure the integrity of the completed instruments, the information contained therein, and the accuracy of the ratings so the Children's Bureau can rely on the data to make final substantial conformity determinations that states can use to inform program and practice improvement. Secondary oversight also ensures consistency among all cases reviewed within the state and ensures that the Children's Bureau can support national consistency across all states.

The Children's Bureau's secondary oversight is in addition to quality assurance activities that are the foundational work between reviewers and the quality assurance team to ensure initial completion of the instrument for an individual case. The Children's Bureau tailors its secondary oversight activities to the state's review type. The scope and intensity of secondary oversight activities vary for states with State Conducted Case Reviews in relationship to each state's demonstrated accuracy and consistency in applying the instrument.

Roles and Responsibilities

The instrument quality assurance and secondary oversight processes extend the collaborative approach that the Children's Bureau and the state employ throughout the review. This responsibility is shared by both the state and the Children's Bureau so that the results generated by the case reviews accurately reflect the practices on which the state's performance on the outcomes is based. The roles and responsibilities of those conducting quality assurance on the instruments may vary depending upon the case review type for which the state has been approved, but there are specific roles for Child and Family Services Review leaders, those charged with primarily conducting quality assurance activities, and Reviewers.

The review team shares responsibility for ensuring that ratings are accurate and consistent through comprehensive and informed review of cases and two levels of quality assurance.

- Reviewers gather and reconcile the information needed to answer the relevant questions using the guidance within, and supplemental to, the instrument and the support and guidance of the quality assurance team

- During initial quality assurance, the quality assurance staff assist in all phases of the review, from the preparation of the case for the review through the completion of the instrument, by:

    - Answering questions
    - Working with Reviewers on clarifying issues
    - Assisting Reviewers to reconcile information in order to arrive at appropriate case ratings

- The Children's Bureau completes Secondary Oversight across cases and sites once initial quality assurance on the individual instruments are completed

Initial Quality Assurance and Secondary Oversight in Traditional Reviews

During Traditional Reviews, Local Site Team members who are performing quality assurance engage the Reviewer(s) as they review and rate each case. After these and other initial quality assurance activities are complete, Local Site Leaders performing quality assurance analyze a selection of cases to ensure rating consistency and accuracy across the review site. The Children's Bureau may also use staff who are working remotely in secondary oversight activities. Finally, the Children's Bureau, in consultation with the state, reconciles and resolves necessary case rating changes.

Local Site Team Leaders performing quality assurance are responsible for fielding questions and conducting group debriefings with individuals conducting quality assurance throughout the review week. They are also responsible for communication with the overall State Team Leaders as rating issues arise. This communication should include a joint assessment of the reasons for any rating issues and how these could be addressed. At least 1 month before the onsite review, the Children's Bureau and the state work together to agree on a process for resolving rating disagreements, including when during the review week State Team Leaders and the Children's Bureau will discuss ratings and resolve issues. Ultimately, however, the Children's Bureau retains final authority for ensuring that ratings are accurate, which may include changing case ratings when joint resolution cannot be reached.

The Children's Bureau assigns a quality assurance pair, comprising a federal and a state quality assurance Local Site Team member, to work with each Reviewer/Reviewer pair to conduct initial quality assurance activities, including providing advice, support, and coaching throughout the case rating process, on all 65 cases.

Reviewing the Case

The quality assurance team member(s) will discuss and consult with the Reviewer/Reviewer pair while working through each case. This ongoing consultation will provide opportunities for coaching the Reviewers as they consider the child and family's circumstances as documented in the case record and elicited during interviews. Taking into account the Reviewers' experience, the quality assurance team member will collaborate with them to:

- Determine early whether the case should be in the sample
- Become familiar with the instrument, its instructions, and the definitions used, and:
  - Input information into the instrument as it is discovered
  - Identify questions about confusing information and/or a lack of information
  - Document thoughts about potential ratings and discuss what has been learned before completing them
- Develop a plan for reviewing the case record, including:
  - Determining the reason for agency involvement
  - Identifying key participants, such as parents and caregivers
  - Determining who should be rated for different items
  - Focusing on events and activities during the period under review
- Reinforcing the need for the Reviewer to consult with assigned quality assurance team members regarding questions or concerns

Case-Specific Interviews

During these initial quality assurance activities, the assigned quality assurance team member also supports the Reviewer in planning for case-specific interviews, including:

- Verifying as early as possible who should be interviewed and who will be available for interviews and when
- Identifying information, using the instrument, that needs to be gathered through interviews
- Discussing the Reviewer's approach to the interviews and adjustments that may be necessary based on the interviewee's needs
- Integrating the results of the interviews into case findings and ratings

Together, the quality assurance team member and Reviewer should consult this manual and its appendices for specific guidance and information regarding case-specific interviews, including the Case-Related Interview Guides and Instructions at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_interview_guides.pdf. This guidance provides suggestions about basic approaches to case-specific interviews to help the interviewee feel comfortable with and understand the interview process. To that end, Reviewers should introduce themselves, explain the purpose of the reviews, clarify their neutrality, and reassure

the interviewee that anything they say during the interview remains confidential, with the exception of information indicating current safety concerns.

Validating Information

Another function that initial quality assurance serves in the case review process is that of cross-checking information and decisions within each instrument to ensure that the Reviewer is responding correctly to the instrument instructions. The Children's Bureau Onsite Review Instrument Quality Assurance Guide at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_qa_guide.pdf, and this manual, provide guidance on how to cross-check information and adhere to:

- Instructions that apply across the instrument
- Item-specific instructions
- Guidance applicable to common case dynamics (e.g., short-term foster care cases)

Child Safety Concerns

The assigned quality assurance team member should ensure that the Reviewer knows to immediately report child safety concerns uncovered during the review of the case record or in an interview. It is important for the quality assurance team to help the Reviewer determine when there is a safety concern and to follow the state's protocol to report it.

Secondary Oversight

The focus of secondary oversight is to ensure consistency across the review sites and all states. The Children's Bureau accomplishes this by reviewing a selection of cases, either on site or remotely, for:

- Accuracy of ratings, changed ratings, and resolution of disputed ratings
- Challenging areas of the instrument
- National consistency

State Quality Assurance and Children's Bureau Secondary Oversight in State Conducted Case Reviews

States approved to conduct their own case reviews to generate the data the Children's Bureau will use to make conformity determinations will have defined how they will carry out quality assurance activities as part of the case review criteria approval process. The case review criteria[9] detail the minimum requirements for State Conducted Case Review quality assurance processes. These include providing training for the state's Reviewers and those conducting quality assurance, and ensuring that there is a written process for centrally tracking and resolving process and/or instrument issues and sharing that information with the state's review team.

[9] See "Criteria for Using State Case Review Process for Child and Family Services Reviews Purposes," http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_review_criteria.pdf.

The Children's Bureau encourages states to develop and use quality assurance processes that adhere to the Children's Bureau's standard expectations, rely on more than one individual to verify case review instrument information and ratings, and, when needed, have a process for activating protocols to correct ratings.

At least 1 month before the onsite review period, the Children's Bureau and the state work together to agree upon a process for resolving rating disagreements, including when the state and Children's Bureau will discuss ratings and resolve issues. The Children's Bureau retains final authority for ensuring that ratings are accurate, which may include changing case ratings when joint resolution cannot be reached.

The process the state uses to complete quality assurance activities associated with the cases being reviewed and ensuring the consistency of ratings across multiple sites and Reviewers may be unique to each state approved to conduct its own case review. As such, how the Children's Bureau works with each state may differ—requiring discussion and consultation between the Children's Bureau and the state to determine, at a minimum:

- When, within the state's review period, Children's Bureau staff and its review team members will observe how the state's Reviewers are completing the instrument and how the state is conducting initial quality assurance on cases. It is important that the Children's Bureau participate in the state's quality assurance activities early in the state's 6-month case review period so the Children's Bureau can assist the state in achieving accurate results for all the cases reviewed.

- How the Children's Bureau will conduct secondary oversight in relation to the state's quality assurance process. It may be necessary for the state and the Children's Bureau to discuss how the state can accommodate the secondary oversight in a way that is not typical for the state's selected quality assurance approach. For example, if quality assurance typically occurs through ad hoc calls between the state Reviewer(s) and quality assurance team member(s), the Children's Bureau may ask for a conference call at a prearranged time to support its observation of that interaction to gain insight into the topics covered and feedback given.

- The number and selection of the cases of which the Children's Bureau will conduct Secondary Oversight across the review period and after the state's initial quality assurance activities are complete to gain insight into:

    - The accuracy and consistency of ratings across the review period
    - Any trends in ratings or changes in ratings across the review period
    - National consistency

- Who, within the state, is responsible for resolving issues related to case rating decisions and how the Children's Bureau will engage with that person should concerns arise during quality assurance or secondary oversight.

- Appropriate methods and timing of feedback and continued consultation on the strength of the state's quality assurance process. It is necessary for the state to practice continuous quality improvement in conducting case reviews so that it can be responsive to feedback and concerns about the application of the OSRI.

The Children's Bureau provides support consistent with the state's quality assurance needs. In states with little demonstrated experience with the instrument and/or in conducting quality assurance, the Children's Bureau's participation in observing the state's quality assurance processes may be more frequent and/or more intensive based on the areas of challenge the Children's Bureau has identified with the state. Further, the Children's Bureau is prepared to adjust its plans for secondary oversight during the period of the case reviews in a state. Therefore, the state and the Children's Bureau will continue to revisit how secondary oversight may look over the course of the review period.

Chapter 6
Stakeholder Interviews

Purpose

Stakeholder interviews are part of the onsite review phase of the Child and Family Services Reviews. This includes interviews with partners who are knowledgeable about the statewide functioning of the agency, and must include families and youth being served by the agency. The purpose of stakeholder interviews is to collect information needed to determine whether the state is in substantial conformity with the systemic factors. The interviews obtain information regarding how the systemic factors are functioning to supplement the data and information provided in the Statewide Assessment Instrument. Stakeholder interviews are distinct from case-related interviews, which are designed to elicit information about specific cases. The process and structure for conducting stakeholder interviews is the same for both the State Conducted Case Review and Traditional Review processes. In general, information from the stakeholder interviews in combination with the data and information from the Statewide Assessment Instrument is used to determine a state's substantial conformity with the systemic factors.

Assessment of Systemic Factors

The Children's Bureau assesses whether each systemic factor requirement is functioning across the state. The information used to inform systemic factor ratings generally comes from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews, as necessary. The Children's Bureau may determine whether the state is in substantial conformity with systemic factors through the review of data and information contained in the statewide assessment, with one exception: the "Service Array" systemic factor. For that systemic factor, the Children's Bureau uses information from both the statewide assessment and the onsite review via stakeholder interviews to determine substantial conformity (see Chapter 2).

The breadth and scope of stakeholder interviews may vary depending on the extent to which substantial conformity can be sufficiently demonstrated for systemic factors through the statewide assessment. Interviews with Tribes, partners, and/or stakeholders may not be necessary for all systemic factors. If interviews are needed, the federal-state team will conduct them during the onsite review process.

Conducting Stakeholder Interviews

When stakeholder interviews are required to inform the functioning of a specific systemic factor, the federal-state team engages in a collaborative process to plan and coordinate stakeholder interviews in preparation for the onsite review. This includes the identification of Tribes, partners, and stakeholders—including families and youth served by the agency—and the information needed to determine substantial conformity for the targeted systemic factor. See (1) Stakeholder Interview Guide, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_cfsr_sig.pdf, which includes information on preparation for onsite review stakeholder interviews: initiation of planning/coordination activities with the state; and (2) Appendix B, Collaborating During the Child and Family Services Reviews.

When identifying the necessary stakeholder interviews, it is important to determine what information, in addition to the data and information presented in the statewide assessment, is needed for the Children's Bureau to determine substantial conformity. The team should

interview Tribes, partners, and stakeholders who are knowledgeable regarding the statewide functioning of the agency with respect to the identified systemic factor, and should include families and youth served by the agency.

If possible, stakeholder interviews should be scheduled during regular working hours and during the time period in which the Children's Bureau will participate in the state's case review. However, the Children's Bureau and the state can negotiate an alternative schedule that allows stakeholder interviews to be conducted off site or before the Children's Bureau's onsite participation, if necessary. The Children's Bureau and the state should finalize a schedule of stakeholder interviews at least 2 weeks before the review (see Chapter 3 for logistical information regarding scheduling).

If group interviews are planned:

- Include no more than 8 to 10 individuals whose interests and involvement in child and family services are similar

- Avoid mixing groups in a way that would limit feedback, such as pairing contracted providers with staff of the overseeing agency or caseworkers with their supervisors. Some interviews may need to be conducted individually

- Schedule stakeholder interviews for approximately an hour, depending on the number of individuals to be interviewed, with the schedule allowing for travel between appointments. The time needed for interviews varies depending on the number of systemic factors to be addressed and the information needed to adequately address them

Information regarding systemic factor functioning is collected using the Stakeholder Interview Guide. The questions in this guide are critical to the identification of potential stakeholders. The guide also provides information regarding preparation for stakeholder interviews, and a stakeholder interview guide structure. The Stakeholder Interview Guide instrument and supplemental guidance are available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_cfsr_sig.pdf.

Chapter 7

Initial Determination of Substantial Conformity

After the completion of the onsite review phase of the Child and Family Services Review, whether for a State Conducted Case Review or a Traditional Review, the Children's Bureau makes a determination regarding substantial conformity for each of the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors under review based on the requirements set forth at 45 CFR § 1355.34. The Children's Bureau submits these findings, along with information on the state child welfare agency's strengths and areas needing improvement in serving children and families, to the state in a Final Report prepared by the Children's Bureau after all data have been obtained.

A Program Improvement Plan is required only for outcomes or systemic factors determined not to be in substantial conformity. The Program Improvement Plan process is discussed in detail in Chapters 8-10 of this manual.) Appendix A, Child and Family Services Reviews: Pathway to Substantial Conformity, displays the criteria for determining substantial conformity with the outcomes and the systemic factors.

This chapter describes the preliminary information the Children's Bureau shares with the state after completion of the case review period, the Final Report, and the process for determining substantial conformity with the outcomes and systemic factors, including rating items and comparing statewide data indicators with the national standards. It also provides information on penalty assessment.

The Children's Bureau's Preliminary Feedback and Findings

During the onsite review, the Children's Bureau engages in discussions with the state to provide feedback and observations. In Traditional Reviews, this often takes the form of local debriefings on case review findings and stakeholder interviews. For State Conducted Case Reviews, Children's Bureau participation will generally lead to the Children's Bureau's sharing its observations about findings, trends, ratings, and quality assurance activities. Any information shared with the state before it receives the courtesy copy of the Children's Bureau's Final Report should be considered preliminary feedback and findings. The Final Report includes the official determinations of substantial conformity made by the Children's Bureau once all information has been reconciled.

Local Debriefings

Local debriefings allow for the sharing of site-specific information with the local participants who are most likely to benefit, including but not limited to caseworkers, supervisors, and local administrators. The debriefings provide a forum to:

- Gather and share preliminary information about local review findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement
- Discuss trends and systemic issues identified during the case reviews
- Provide an opportunity to learn the story behind the numbers
- Collect feedback on the review process
- Discuss next steps

Traditional Case Review Debriefings

For states engaged in a Traditional Review, local debriefings occur at each site on Friday, at the end of the review week activities. The debriefings, which are facilitated by the Children's Bureau and the state, are informal guided discussions open to the entire onsite review team and those the local office invites. The Children's Bureau encourages the state to invite those key agency staff, whether local or state-level, who will benefit from hearing about the findings or will have major or shared responsibility for program improvement planning.

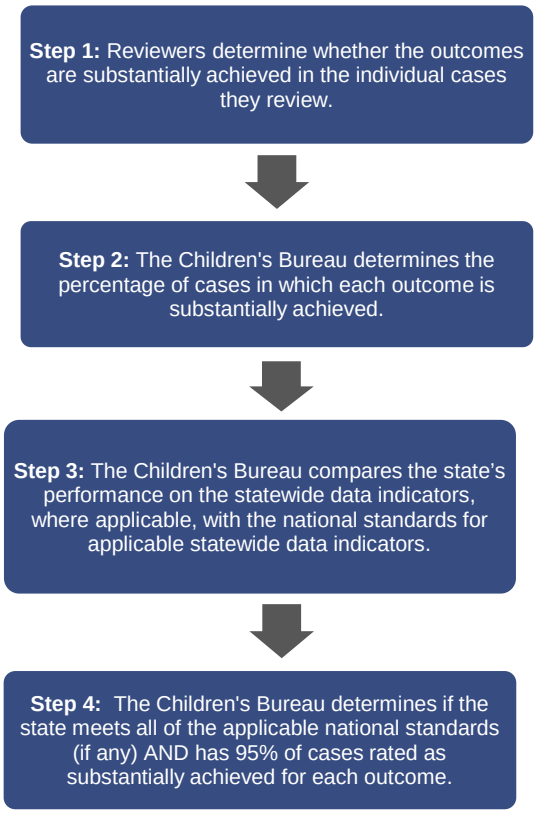
State Conducted Case Review Debriefings

In states that conduct debriefings in the context of their Children's Bureau-approved case review process, the Children's Bureau and the state will determine the level of Children's Bureau participation in the debriefings. However, if the state does not have debriefings as part of its case review process, the Children's Bureau will not require them.

Determination of Substantial Conformity with the Outcomes

Using the statewide assessment and onsite case review data, the Children's Bureau assesses seven outcomes under three domains (safety, permanency, and child and family well-being) by examining 18 items, included in the "Quick Reference Items List" at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_quick_reference_list.pdf.

The diagram below illustrates the process of determining substantial conformity with the outcomes.



Case Reviews

Reviewers conduct case reviews by reviewing the case record and conducting case-related interviews using the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions (see Chapter 3 for more information on the onsite review process and Chapter 5 for more information on the instrument). The instrument lists the items that Reviewers examine in assessing achievement of each outcome. For each case, once the Reviewer has examined 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. The system then records whether, for each case, each of the seven outcomes was substantially achieved, partially achieved, not achieved, or not applicable.

In the instrument, Reviewers rate outcomes for each case based on which items are identified as strengths or areas needing improvement.

To rate an outcome as substantially achieved for a case, the following criteria must be met:

- Safety Outcome 1, “Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect”: Item 1 is rated as a strength.
- Safety Outcome 2, “Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate”: All applicable items are rated as strengths.
- Permanency Outcome 1, “Children have permanency and stability in their living situations”: All applicable items are rated as strengths.
- Permanency Outcome 2, “The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children”: No more than one of the applicable items for this outcome is rated as an area needing improvement and at least one item is rated as a strength.
- Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 1, “Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs”: Item 12 must be rated as a strength, plus no more than one of the remaining applicable items may be rated as an area needing improvement.
- Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 2, “Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs”: Item 16 is rated as a strength.
- Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 3, “Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs”: All applicable items are rated as strengths and at least one item is applicable.

Performance on Statewide Data Indicators as Compared to National Standards

The Children’s Bureau provides information on the state’s performance on the national standards at the time of the release of the initial data profile that accompanies the statewide assessment. The Children’s Bureau updates the state’s performance data as necessary (e.g., if the state has resubmitted more accurate data for the applicable period) before making a determination of substantial conformity. The Children’s Bureau determines if the state meets, exceeds, or falls below the national standard for each statewide data indicator associated with the outcome. The state must meet or exceed all applicable national standards associated with

the outcome, and the state must meet the associated case review standards for the Children's Bureau to consider the state in substantial conformity.

See the chart on substantial conformity in Appendix A for more details.

Determination of Substantial Conformity With the Systemic Factors

Through the statewide assessment, the state compiles and evaluates information about the systemic factors referencing the state's Child and Family Services Plan or Annual Progress and Services Report for the most relevant and recent information where appropriate. The Children's Bureau examines this information at the time of the submittal of the statewide assessment to determine whether any systemic factors can be deemed in substantial conformity at that time. When that determination is not possible, the Children's Bureau determines the scope of stakeholder interviews needed during the onsite review and gathers the information necessary from the interviews to make final substantial conformity decisions.

Using the statewide assessment and information gathered from stakeholder interviews, the Children's Bureau assigns a rating of "Strength" or "Area Needing Improvement" to each of the title IV-B/IV-E plan requirements ("items") corresponding to the systemic factor based on how well the item-specific requirement is functioning as described in the applicable regulation or statute. By "functioning," the Children's Bureau means that the requirement is occurring or is being met consistently and on an ongoing basis across the state for all relevant populations. The Children's Bureau considers the following factors in making determinations at the point of the statewide assessment:

- Has the state provided data and information that is relevant and on point with respect to the totality of the item?
- Do the data and information indicate that the systemic factor item is routinely functioning as required statewide?
- Are there no significant methodological, scope, quality, or time-frame issues with the data and information the state provided so that the Children's Bureau may rely on it?
- Does the state assert (or at least not contravene/contradict) that the data and information represent their statewide performance on the systemic factor item?

If the Children's Bureau can respond "yes" to the above factors when considering the data and information in the statewide assessment, no further stakeholder interviews will be necessary except for the service array systemic factor.

Following the onsite review, the Children's Bureau considers the additional information from the stakeholder interviews in concert with the statewide assessment data and information to determine whether a state is in substantial conformity.

Five of the seven systemic factors are rated on the basis of multiple items or plan requirements. Two systemic factors, "statewide information system" and "quality assurance system," are rated on the basis of only one item. For a state to be found in substantial conformity with a systemic factor, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that no more than one of the required number of items for that systemic factor fails to function as required. For the statewide information system and quality assurance system systemic factors, the single item for each must be functioning as required to be in substantial conformity.

Final Report

The Final Report is a compilation of information on the state agency's strengths and areas needing improvement regarding each of the outcomes and systemic factors reviewed through the Child and Family Services Reviews.

Content of the Final Report

The Final Report documents the Children's Bureau's determination of substantial conformity or nonconformity in each area reviewed. The review findings, supported by information from the statewide assessment and the completed Onsite Review Instruments and Stakeholder Interview Guides, form the basis of the report. To protect the confidentiality of individual children, families, and representative stakeholders, the report does not identify interviewees or cases reviewed. Information about the state's past performance in the Child and Family Services Reviews is also summarized in the report.

The report is accompanied by a cover letter that includes a statement about substantial conformity. If a state is not in substantial conformity, the letter also estimates the amount of any applicable penalty and the date by which the state must submit a Program Improvement Plan to the Children's Bureau Regional Office.

The information the Children's Bureau prepares provides the state with initial insight into which items may be contributing to the achievement or lack thereof of the outcomes or systemic factors. States should consider the report as a foundation for conducting further analysis to inform their program improvement efforts. Further exploration of all strengths and challenges uncovered by the review should occur during Program Improvement Plan development discussions between the Children's Bureau and the state.

Dissemination of the Final Report and Results Discussion

The Children's Bureau aims to release the Final Report to the state within 30 days from the date on which the Children's Bureau received all case review data. Concurrent with the issuance of the Final Report, the Children's Bureau and the state schedule a formal discussion of the results.

The Children's Bureau encourages the state to invite to the discussion:

- The entire review team
- Agency staff from the locations reviewed
- Key agency staff who will benefit from hearing the review findings, including staff who will have major responsibility for planning program improvements
- Community partners including, but not limited to, the Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in the Child and Family Services Plan collaboration process.

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Chapter 8

Framework for Systemic Improvement

Integration of Child and Family Services Plan and Program Improvement Plan

The Child and Family Services Plan is a 5-year strategic plan that sets the stage for a state to fulfill its vision and accomplish its goals for strengthening the child welfare system statewide. The Annual Progress and Services Report is the annual update to the Child and Family Services Plan.

The Child and Family Services Plan guides the state's broad scope of child welfare improvement over a 5-year period, while the Program Improvement Plan documents the state's focused improvements in outcomes and systemic factors identified through the Child and Family Services Review. The 2015 Child and Family Services Plan Program Instruction (ACYF-CB-PI-14-03, March 5, 2014) describes stronger integration of the 5-year Child and Family Services Plan and the Child and Family Services Review process to better align these federal monitoring efforts. Subsequent Annual and Progress Service Report instructions will also carry forward this integration.

The Child and Family Services Plan process includes:

- Required collaboration between Tribes, partners, and stakeholders throughout the process of developing and implementing the Child and Family Services Plan
- Reliance on data and analysis to diagnose areas of concern and identify possible solutions
- Setting goals and selecting interventions
- Measurement of progress throughout the 5-year period

As with the Child and Family Services Plan, the Child and Family Services Review also requires the involvement of Tribes, courts, and other partners and stakeholders. The "substantial, meaningful and ongoing collaboration" with stakeholders and partners, required for the development and implementation of the state's improvement efforts described in the Child and Family Services Plan process, should be sustained throughout the Program Improvement Plan. As the state develops and implements its Program Improvement Plan, the state should consider how these partners and stakeholders can guide, support, and monitor the work.

The Child and Family Services Plan includes the state's assessment of safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and the seven systemic factors. In addition, because the Child and Family Services Plan includes goals, objectives, and interventions to improve outcomes for children and families as well as measures/benchmarks to gauge improvement throughout the 5-year period, the Children's Bureau encourages states to build upon these elements when developing Program Improvement Plans. In identifying goals, strategies and interventions, and key activities needed to make the required improvements, the state and the Children's Bureau jointly consider whether existing elements of the Child and Family Services Plan can be incorporated into the Program Improvement Plan. This joint work can also identify whether existing Child and Family Services Plan efforts need to be strengthened or modified for the Program Improvement Plan, or whether new efforts are needed to meet the Program Improvement Plan's requirements.

Finally, the state and the Children's Bureau can determine how the Program Improvement Plan reporting schedule can be aligned with the Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report submissions to allow these submissions to serve as Program Improvement Plan progress reports when possible.

Joint Planning for the Child and Family Services Plan, Annual Progress and Services Report, and Child and Family Services Review Processes

Joint planning is a collaboration between the state and the Children's Bureau, which, in consultation with the state's stakeholders and partners within and outside of the state agency, produces an integrated plan. This plan describes the state's child welfare program, and how it will meet federal requirements and lead to more effective services for children and families.

The aim of joint planning is to guide the state's systemic, resource, programmatic, and practice adjustments to lead to improved outcomes for children and families. Joint planning relies on and is informed by an accurate understanding of the data and information used to identify and continually assess strengths, challenges, and trends in practice and systemic functioning.

The most recent Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report, as well as any more recent Child and Family Services Review information, is the starting point for the development of the state's Program Improvement Plan. To be well-positioned to improve performance within the Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan period, a state, in consultation with the Children's Bureau, should update, revise, or better align its overall Child and Family Services Plan through the Annual Progress and Services Report using more recent performance data available from the Child and Family Services Review. Such information could include, as applicable, the state's:

- Data profiles
- Statewide assessments
- Case review results
- Stakeholder input
- Child and Family Services Review Final Report and other monitoring reports
- Program Improvement Plan
- Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, and other sources of aggregate data

Similarly, the Children's Bureau encourages states to build upon their Child and Family Services Plans and Annual Progress and Services Reports when developing their Program Improvement Plans. In identifying the Program Improvement Plan goals, objectives, and interventions needed to make the required improvements, the state and the Children's Bureau jointly consider to what extent existing Child and Family Services Plan goals, objectives, and interventions can serve as building blocks for the Program Improvement Plan. This joint work can also identify whether existing Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report efforts need to be strengthened or modified for the Program Improvement Plan, or whether new goals, objectives, and interventions are needed to meet the Program Improvement Plan requirements. Conversely, the Children's Bureau and the state jointly plan for the integration of the Program Improvement Plan into subsequent Annual Progress and Services Reports along with new data and information.

The Children's Bureau's integrated approach to joint planning around the Child and Family Services Plan, Annual Progress and Services Report, and Child and Family Services Review processes supports a common and accurate understanding of the state's child welfare system and practice. It also reinforces, within the regulatory framework of the Child and Family Services Review, state efforts to build and institutionalize capacity to self-monitor for child and family outcomes, systems functioning, and improvement practices. This style of collaboration creates an opportunity to reduce duplication and align with the state's work flow, plans, and processes.

Planning and Implementing Successful Change

Effective systemic improvement begins with identifying and understanding relevant data as well as the underlying factors affecting the state's performance. With this level of understanding, strategies or interventions can be chosen based on research and evidence of effectiveness. A well-chosen strategy or intervention requires effective implementation to achieve the desired outcomes. The Children's Bureau encourages states to explore "A Guide for Implementing Improvement Through the CFSP and CFSR" (see Appendix E). States can use the implementation guide as a resource for conducting effective assessment, planning, and implementation activities in the development of Program Improvement Plans as well as throughout the Child and Family Services Review and Child and Family Services Plan processes. The implementation guide includes a three-phase model for systemic improvement:

- **Foundation Phase**: During this phase, a team is formed, data are analyzed, and decisions are made about what goals and initiatives will be the focus of the systemic change.

- **Planning Phase**: This is the phase during which implementation is planned, needed infrastructure is developed, and monitoring and feedback loops are designed.

- **Action Phase**: During this phase, the plans are executed and the implementation team is engaged in continuous monitoring and improvement of the change effort.

The implementation guide is written to provide questions and helpful hints that the Children's Bureau can use with states, and states can use internally and with their partners, to clarify how the state can implement successful system improvement.

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Chapter 9

Developing the Program Improvement Plan

Overview of Program Improvement Plan Development, Approval, and Implementation

The Program Improvement Plan process is designed to create lasting and statewide systemic change in key areas identified in the Child and Family Services Review while also addressing the immediate needs of children and families. As such, the Program Improvement Plan planning and implementation process is crucial to the ultimate success of the Child and Family Services Review.

After the review ends and the Final Report is issued, the state is expected to continue its collaboration with Tribes, courts, other partners and stakeholders, and the Children's Bureau, to prepare a Program Improvement Plan and submit it to the Children's Bureau for approval.

States will be best prepared to submit a Program Improvement Plan within the required time frame if the state uses its Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report process, statewide assessment, and ongoing continuous quality improvement efforts as a foundation for Program Improvement Plan development. By engaging with its partners and the Children's Bureau in ongoing review of data and in the development and implementation of the Child and Family Services Plan, the state should be prepared to strategically address the areas needing improvement as it develops its Program Improvement Plan. As a result, once the state and the Children's Bureau discuss the content of the Final Report after the onsite review, the state will be well-positioned to address any outcome or systemic factor requiring improvement and to submit the Program Improvement Plan within the required time frame.

The following time frames apply to the Program Improvement Plan development and implementation process:

- The state must submit the Program Improvement Plan to the Children's Bureau Regional Office for approval within 90 calendar days from the date on which the state receives written notification from the Children's Bureau that it is not operating in substantial conformity with any one of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors.

- The Children's Bureau works with the state to develop the Program Improvement Plan in collaboration with its partners. If the Children's Bureau does not approve the state's initial Program Improvement Plan submission, the Children's Bureau will provide additional information to help the state revise it. The state must submit a revised Program Improvement Plan to the Children's Bureau Regional Office within 30 calendar days of receiving written notice that it was not approved.

- The Children's Bureau approval notice indicates the commencement date of the state's Program Improvement Plan. The state's Program Improvement Plan must be designed so that its implementation is completed no later than 2 years from the date on which it is approved by the Children's Bureau. Not all Program Improvement Plan elements will require this much time to address. Two years is, therefore, an outer limit for those elements requiring more extensive action.

- Strategies or interventions affecting child safety must be implemented first and in less than 2 years. The priority given to safety should be reflected in both the level of effort and the time frame for implementing the safety provisions of the Program Improvement Plan.

In the event that the Children's Bureau and the state cannot reach consensus regarding the content of the Program Improvement Plan or the degree to which program or data improvements are to be achieved, the Children's Bureau retains the authority to assign the contents of the plan and/or the degree of improvement required for it to be considered to have been successfully completed. Under such circumstances, the Children's Bureau will provide to the state a written rationale for the content and the degree of improvement required.

Required Content of the Program Improvement Plan

In addition to the formal submission of the Program Improvement Plan, the state and the Children's Bureau should plan discussions about the state's work and plans that support the full implementation of the plan. Such work plans or implementation plans are not required to be documented or submitted to the Children's Bureau. However, the Children's Bureau encourages the exchange of this information to ensure that there is sufficient detail and context for the state and the Children's Bureau to evaluate the state's progress in implementing and completing the Program Improvement Plan as well as to think through any supports that may be needed.

The state must include certain required content in the Program Improvement Plan consistent with the regulations, as described below.

Goals, Strategies or Interventions, and Key Activities

Consistent with 45 CFR § 1355.35(a)(ii) and (iii) and (a)(v), the Program Improvement Plan must:

- Identify the goals for improvement and the strategies or interventions that will be implemented to address outcomes and systemic factors identified as not in substantial conformity

- Demonstrate that the goals and strategies or interventions relate to the items identified as areas needing improvement

- Articulate the scope of the program improvement efforts with respect to its target population(s), the geographic scope, and any relevant time frames—including any specification of phased-in implementation. This can be done at the level of goals, strategies or interventions, or key activities, as appropriate

- Include the key activities that the state and the Children's Bureau can use as benchmarks of progress for making improvement. The state must complete the key activities during the course of the Program Improvement Plan implementation period to successfully complete its plan consistent with 45 CFR § 1355.36(d)

- Reflect that key activities were jointly selected with the Children's Bureau, and the most significant action steps the state will take to implement and or monitor each strategy or intervention. Key activities are benchmarks or metrics such as process measures, implementation milestones, or qualitative markers, and must be associated with targeted

time frames for completion. Key activities help the state and the Children's Bureau determine whether the state is on track to make improvements in the required time frames and allow for the opportunity to make adjustments to improve performance

- Identify this content even if the state is not in substantial conformity, wholly or in part, because of the Children's Bureau's inability to determine the state's performance due to the unavailability of data for any item or due to data that exceeds Children's Bureau quality item thresholds for statewide data indicators. If the state has such issues with data quality related to the statewide data indicators, the Program Improvement Plan must address how the state will correct them

- Include a key activity to develop and/or implement an ongoing plan to monitor improvement by the end of the Program Improvement Plan implementation period for outcome items identified as areas needing improvement that contributed to "Not in Substantial Conformity" determinations for Permanency Outcome 2, Well-Being Outcome 2, or Well-Being Outcome 3. The state must include the approved measurement plan and implementation steps in the state's subsequent Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report for the Children's Bureau to monitor improvement on these outcomes

- Identify the goals, and strategies or interventions, to improve each systemic factor identified as "not in substantial conformity." The Children's Bureau and state negotiate which systemic factor items must be addressed based on the state's Child and Family Services Review findings and the state's proposed strategies to address each systemic factor. States are encouraged to address the most challenging items identified within a systemic factor rather than all items designated as areas needing improvement.

- Identify an associated key activity that is a metric for any systemic factor items included in the Program Improvement Plan that do not have quantifiable measures to demonstrate improvement. For example, one of the key activities to improve systemic factor functioning for "Notice of hearings and reviews to caregivers" might be for the state to develop a new caregiver notification template in the electronic case record and release policy requiring its use by a certain date. An accompanying key activity that provides a metric would be for the state to report the number of cases showing the template was completed and provided to the caregiver in the electronic case record by a certain date.

The state will report its progress on key activities in a Program Improvement Plan report and/or in the Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report. These reports will be used by the Children's Bureau and the state to assess the state's progress and, ultimately, the status of Program Improvement Plan completion.

Measurement Plan

Consistent with 45 CFR § 1355.35(a)(iv) and (v), the Program Improvement Plan must identify the quantifiable measures for statewide data indicators and select case review items that will demonstrate that the state has improved during the Program Improvement Plan implementation period. The state and the Children's Bureau will discuss the extent of quantifiable measurement that is appropriate to be included in the Program Improvement Plan. The approved measures of improvement and approach to measurement form the state's Program Improvement Plan measurement plan.

The Children's Bureau requires approval of the Program Improvement Plan measurement plan at the time the Program Improvement Plan is approved. At a minimum, the measurement plan must include the Children's Bureau-approved methodology for establishing the baseline at the time the Program Improvement Plan is approved. States may negotiate with the Children's Bureau additional time, up to six months from the time the Program Improvement Plan is approved, to finalize the complete measurement plan.

States should review Technical Bulletin #8A[10] for more detailed information on acceptable methods for establishing goals and demonstrating improvement on Program Improvement Plan item measures. The bulletin also contains guidance on how the Children's Bureau determines the Program Improvement Plan goals the state must attain relative to the statewide data indicators.

The Children's Bureau encourages states to use their state-generated data from their continuous quality improvement (CQI) systems to the extent that they meet Children's Bureau criteria. Measurement plans that replicate plans approved in prior Child and Family Services Reviews rounds are not necessarily approvable for Round 3 because the plans should include state efforts to institutionalize capacity consistent with CB's Information Memorandum on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) as described in ACYF-CB-IM-07, CFSR Technical Bulletin #7,[11] and the requirements of the state Child and Family Services Plan.

The state must meet the required measures of improvement by the end of the non-overlapping year for the Children's Bureau to determine that the state has successfully completed its Program Improvement Plan consistent with 45 CFR § 1355.36(d). After the Children's Bureau has approved the state's Program Improvement Plan, including the measurement plan, the state must notify the Children's Bureau and seek its approval of any substantive change or modification to its review instruments, reports, sampling methods, or review approach. Failure to do so may result in the Children's Bureau's not being able to determine whether the state has successfully completed its Program Improvement Plan.

Measurement Plan Provisions for Statewide Data Indicators

The Program Improvement Plan must include the state's baseline performance and the amount of improvement to be achieved for each statewide data indicator that does not meet the national standard and, if applicable, the threshold for a companion measure.

The Children's Bureau sets the baseline for each statewide data indicator included in a Program Improvement Plan at the state's observed performance for the most recent year of available data in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. The Children's Bureau will establish the improvement goals and thresholds relative to each state's performance during the past 3 years. The most recent available data (most recent 12 months and 2 years prior) will be determined by the date on which the initial Program Improvement Plan is due to the Children's Bureau; i.e., 90 days from when the Children's Bureau provides the Final Report to the state.

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[10] Technical Bulletin #8A is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105 (CFSR Technical Bulletins and Related Information).
[11] Technical Bulletin 7 is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105 (CFSR Technical Bulletins and Related Information).

If the Children's Bureau is unable to determine a state's performance on a statewide data indicator because the data are unavailable or exceed the data quality limits set for the statewide data indicator, the state will be required to include that statewide data indicator in the Program Improvement Plan, along with key activities to correct the quality of the data.

The Children's Bureau will accept resubmissions of corrected or more complete data (i.e., via the standard methods for submitting data to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System) for use in the Child and Family Services Review if a state believes the original data are inaccurate. The Children's Bureau expects that states will resolve data quality concerns for baselines by the time of Program Improvement Plan approval or soon after and resubmit all data used for Program Improvement Plan measurement before the end of the 12-month non-overlapping period, to allow the Children's Bureau to close the Program Improvement Plan timely.

If the state submits multiple data files to improve the data quality of a particular data profile period, the most recent and accurate data will be used for baselines relative to the initial Program Improvement Plan due date. If data quality limits are not met by the date on which the initial Program Improvement Plan is due to the Children's Bureau, a retrospective baseline will be determined when the state submits data that meet data quality limits during the Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

<u>Measurement Plan Provisions for Case Review Items</u>

The Program Improvement Plan must include measures of improvement to be achieved for each case review item requiring quantifiable measurement as identified below:

- Safety Outcomes 1 and 2: When a safety outcome is not in substantial conformity, a quantifiable measure is required for each item identified as an area needing improvement.

- Well-Being Outcome 1: When Well-Being Outcome 1 is not in substantial conformity, quantifiable measures are required for *selected* Well-Being Outcome 1 items. The Children's Bureau negotiates with the state the specific Well-Being Outcome 1 items the state will measure based on the state's Child and Family Services Review findings and the state's proposed strategies to address the outcome.

To the extent that a state does not believe that the Child and Family Services Review case review performance is indicative of its statewide performance, the state may request that the Children's Bureau consider state-provided aggregate data that demonstrate state performance. For example, if a state has comparable statewide data for the same or similar time period of the CFSR findings that are of good quality, and that indicate timely state child protective services investigations at a rate of 95%, the Children's Bureau will not require the state to include Safety Outcome Item 1 in its Program Improvement Plan.

The measurement plan for case review items requiring quantifiable measurement is negotiated by the Children's Bureau and the state. The following guidelines are used by the Children's Bureau to approve a state's case review measurement plans:

- Sampling approaches must use the defined population of children served in foster care and receiving in-home services as provided in CFSR Technical Bulletin #7[12]

- The state may be able to use the onsite review findings to establish baselines and goals for improvement if the state conducted its own Child and Family Services Review and plans to use the same sampling plan and case review process outlined for Round 3 to report ongoing progress on the Program Improvement Plan

- Similar to Round 2, states in Round 3 that have Traditional Reviews will not be able to use the Child and Family Services Review onsite review findings to establish baselines and goals for improvement because of the inherent differences between a state's quality assurance review process and the traditional onsite review

- States that did not do a State Conducted Case Review or are otherwise not using the instrument per Technical Bulletin #7 for Round 3 will be expected to develop a measurement plan that minimally addresses core continuous quality improvement case review components. The measurement plan will need to:
    - Measure the same or similar items in substance to those found needing improvement in the Child and Family Services Review. This means that the items in a state case review instrument must be aligned and mapped to the practice and rating findings from the Child and Family Services Review onsite review instrument
    - Include gathering data from case records and interviews of key case participants
    - Include a quality assurance process to ensure the accuracy of ratings across multiple sites and reviewers involving third-party (i.e., someone who has not reviewed the case) quality assurance of cases reviewed for accuracy of ratings in accordance with the instrument and instructions
    - Avoid conflicts of interest between review and quality assurance team members and key case participants

The Children's Bureau may approve alternative case review instruments and information collection methods proposed by the state that provide consistent and accurate information comparable to a Traditional or State Conducted Case Review approach.

<u>Measurement Plan Provisions for Systemic Factors</u>

For each systemic factor found not to be in substantial conformity, the Children's Bureau and state negotiate which systemic factor items must be addressed in the Program Improvement Plan based on the state's Child and Family Services Review findings and the state's proposed strategies to address the systemic factor. States are encouraged to address the most challenging items identified within a systemic factor rather than all items designated as areas needing improvement. Systemic factor items included in the Program Improvement Plan require a metric as a key activity or a quantifiable measure to demonstrate improvement.

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[12] Technical Bulletin #7 is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105 (CFSR Technical Bulletins and Related Information).

Item-specific quantifiable data measures selected for inclusion in the Program Improvement Plan will have baselines and improvement goals established using a similar process as quantifiable case review items.

Additional Guidance for Approval of Case Review and Systemic Factor Measurement Plans

The Children's Bureau measures improvement based on the information that a state can provide and replicate through its Program Improvement Plan implementation period. Baselines and goals for improvement are set using the most reliable data sources.

The Children's Bureau has preapproved three methodologies for states to establish and measure improvement toward achieving Program Improvement Plan item-specific quantifiable measurement goals: (1) The retrospective data method addresses situations where a state's baseline data are available before the Children's Bureau approves the state's Program Improvement Plan and the state outlines a process for determining the baseline and improvement goals from existing data. (2) The prospective data method addresses situations where the state's baseline data will be collected during the Program Improvement Plan implementation period and the state has a process for developing a minimum case sample before setting the goal of improvement. This method requires the baseline to be established within one year of the approval of the Program Improvement Plan. (3) The third methodology for using a state case management data or other aggregate data to measure a universe larger than a sample review approach.

For the retrospective and prospective methods, the Children's Bureau recommends that an 80% confidence level[13] be used and that, at a minimum, states include the largest metropolitan area and a representative cross-section of counties or jurisdictions in their sample, including Tribal or other significant populations.

The Children's Bureau also recommends the following for case review item measures when retrospective and prospective methods are used:

- State samples be equal to or greater than the number of applicable cases for the item from the state's Child and Family Services Review onsite review
- Baseline and measurement samples include case types similar to the distribution and ratio used for the Child and Family Services Review
- Once a baseline sample size is established, the ongoing monitoring measurement sample size and ratio must be comparable to the baseline
- The number of applicable cases used for the baseline be the minimum required for ongoing measurement for the Children's Bureau to determine that goals are met.
- If a state sample falls below the minimum number of applicable cases, a 2% tolerance should be applied when comparing the number of applicable cases for ongoing measurement to applicable cases used for the baseline

[13] A level of confidence represents the amount of certainty that the interval estimate will contain the parameter. In other words, the state is 80% confident that the true value of performance will be included in the interval.

- A state should maintain the ratio of metropolitan area cases to cases from the rest of the state. A 5% tolerance should be applied to the distribution of case types and metropolitan area proportion between the baseline and subsequent reviews for ongoing measurement

More information about these methodologies, including examples, is contained in Technical Bulletin #8A.[14]

For the Children's Bureau to determine the appropriateness of measurement plans, the state must provide a description of the specific case review criteria or aggregate data methods employed, goal measurement, sample source, sample frame, sample size, minimum number of applicable cases for each case review item, review periods, locations (as applicable), data collection instruments, and reports/report format.

To ensure that Program Improvement Plan measurement plans are based on sound methodological principles across states, all measurement plans are reviewed by the Measurement and Sampling Committee of the Children's Bureau before state finalization and Children's Bureau approval. The committee provides states with consultation on the development and application of the measurement approach for establishing baselines, improvement goals, and monitoring improvement in the Program Improvement Plan. The committee applies Technical Bulletins #3A and #8A[15] concerning prior program improvement efforts when negotiating the degree of improvement required to successfully complete a Program Improvement Plan; and in providing consultation to states. States may propose alternative measurement approaches, which the Children's Bureau will consider individually. State consultation calls with Measurement and Sampling Committee (MASC) are scheduled through the Regional Office specialists and CFSR Child and Family Services Reviews Unit Leads within the Children's Bureau. The MASC is available to states for consultation throughout the Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Program Improvement Plan Reporting Schedule

The Program Improvement Plan must identify the format for reporting Program Improvement Plan progress, the reporting periods, and the schedule for submitting written progress reports to the Children's Bureau. While the state must report its Program Improvement Plan progress to the Children's Bureau on at least an annual basis and the Children's Bureau recommends semi-annual reporting, the state and the Children's Bureau determine the reporting period and schedule taking into account how the reports can be integrated and aligned with the state's Child and Family Services Plan and Annual Progress and Services Report submissions. See Chapter 10 for additional information on Program Improvement Plan reporting.

[14] Technical Bulletin #8A is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105 (CFSR Technical Bulletins and Related Information).
[15] Technical Bulletin #3A is available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/cfsr-amended-technical-bulletin-3. Technical Bulletin #8A is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105 (CFSR Technical Bulletins and Related Information).

Technical Assistance

The state should assess the need for technical assistance to build capacity to develop and implement the Program Improvement Plan in conjunction with the state's overall strategic plan for child welfare services as articulated in the Child and Family Services Plan and updated as needed through the Annual Progress and Services Report. In doing so, the state should consider and discuss with the Children's Bureau, as applicable, the availability of Children's Bureau technical assistance resources, how the Program Improvement Plan is designed to build on and make progress beyond past plans, and what the state's needs may be for technical assistance to make such progress (45 CFR § 1355.34[a][1][vi]).

The state should articulate to the Children's Bureau its plan for using federal or non-federal sources of technical assistance, if any, to support program improvements for each outcome and systemic factor found not to be in substantial conformity (45 CFR § 1355.34[a][1][vii]), but may do so in the form the state deems most appropriate. For example, the state may describe, cross-reference, or amend any existing plan for technical assistance or any description in the state's Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report, or note its needs in its Program Improvement Plan.

Program Improvement Plan Format

The Children's Bureau has provided states with a format for the Program Improvement Plan (see Appendix F) that supports the state's inclusion of required content and facilitates the state's reporting on progress. The Children's Bureau strongly encourages states to use this format, but a state may choose another format as long as it includes the required content. If the state chooses another format, the Program Improvement Plan must include the following required content:

- Goals and strategies or interventions—A clear statement of the goals (the outcomes/systemic factors and statewide data indicators the state is targeting for improvement) and the strategies or interventions used to make improvement for each goal(e.g., the implementation of specific child welfare practices, programs, or policies)

- Key activities—A description of the key activities the state will implement to achieve the goal and implement the intervention/strategy and the benchmarks or metrics that indicate progress to improvement. Attached to key activities must be the time frames targeted for completion during the implementation period

- Statewide data indicators requiring improvement—For each, the national standard, baseline, improvement goal, and thresholds for companion measures (if applicable)

- Case review items requiring quantifiable measurement—For each, baselines, improvement goals, data sources, and approach to measurement

- Systemic factor items requiring quantifiable measurement—As applicable, for each, the data measure, baseline, improvement goal, data sources, and approach to measurement

- The reporting schedule, report period, and format (e.g., the Children's Bureau template, state template, Annual Progress and Services Report) that will be used for the duration of the Program Improvement Plan implementation period

The state does not need to include a narrative in the Program Improvement Plan. Rather, as a part of joint development, the state and the Children's Bureau discuss how the goals, strategies or interventions, and key activities included in the Program Improvement Plan meet the areas identified as needing improvement by the Child and Family Services Review. The state and Children's Bureau also discuss in advance how the plan builds on the state's prior program improvement areas and how the state's plans for implementation drive the Program Improvement Plan. The Children's Bureau also discusses the state's capacity building needs as evidenced in the Program Improvement Plan, and facilitates and/or monitors the state's receipt of technical assistance to support implementation of the plan.

Approach to Developing and Implementing a Successful Program Improvement Plan

The Program Improvement Plan provides an opportunity for states to effectively engage in program improvement activities that result in measurable improvement in outcomes for children and families. It is important that the state work in collaboration with the Children's Bureau during the entire Program Improvement Plan development and implementation process, to ensure agreement regarding areas that require improvement under federal regulations and the selection of priorities for improvement that will most significantly affect the state's outcomes for children and families. The Children's Bureau's implementation guide (see Appendix E) provides details on the Program Improvement Plan development and implementation activities recommended for successful program improvement, discussed below.

Identifying the Planning and Implementation Team and Developing a Communication Plan

The implementation guide suggests that a state develop and/or use an existing planning and implementation team that has the authority, skills, and support to accomplish change efforts. States are encouraged to use this team of key internal and external partners to lead Child and Family Services Plan and continuous quality improvement efforts as well as to lead the development, implementation, and monitoring of the Program Improvement Plan. The implementation guide also suggests that the state create and periodically adjust a plan for ongoing bi-directional communication with the broader group of internal and external partners and stakeholders for use during each step of the process.

Throughout the Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report and improvement processes, the state should continually review and assess its collaboration efforts and make adjustments as needed. In determining how stakeholders, Tribes, and courts can be engaged in and support the state Program Improvement Plan process, the state should consider the following activities:

- Discussing and analyzing data
- Identifying strengths and needs
- Prioritizing needs and selecting improvement interventions
- Monitoring Program Improvement Plan progress and making adjustments to sustain the improvements beyond the Program Improvement Plan period

See step 1 of the implementation guide (Appendix E) for additional information on the composition and function of the planning and implementation team and development of a communication plan.

Assessing Needs

States, in collaboration with their Tribes, courts, other partners, and stakeholders, and in joint planning with the Children's Bureau, should use data to develop a precise picture of the state's needs and challenges. This process begins with ongoing continuous quality improvement work, and Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report planning, and continues with the statewide assessment and the Final Report. To assess needs in preparation for the Program Improvement Plan, the state should explore its effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes for children and families and in operating its programs. In particular, the state should review state performance on the statewide data indicators, outcomes, and systemic factors in addition to conducting other assessment activities.

The state should analyze the underlying factors that affect the state's performance over time. Once the onsite review and the Final Report are completed, the state should determine whether any additional analysis and discussion are needed to fully understand the areas to be addressed in the Program Improvement Plan.

See step 2 of the implementation guide for additional information on assessing needs.

Establishing Program Improvement Plan Goals

A **Goal** in the context of the Program Improvement Plan is a broad, positive, and measurable statement expressed in terms of improved outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being for children and their families or systemic functioning of the child welfare system. The Program Improvement Plan must state the goal as a positive change to the outcomes and systemic factors for each area requiring improvement. See step 3 of the implementation guide for additional information on selecting goals.

Understanding Target Populations

Before selecting strategies or interventions, the state should identify and understand the specific characteristics and needs of the population(s) whose safety, permanency, or well-being outcomes it needs to change. Understanding a target population allows the state to select the most appropriate strategy or intervention, to target it to the children and families whose outcomes most need to be improved, to select strategies or interventions that are culturally responsive, and to avoid selecting strategies or interventions that will not be effective. Because this analysis can take some time, the state is encouraged to begin analyzing data on the target populations as soon as possible using existing state data and data profile information. The state should also review and update this analysis as needed when it receives additional updated data profiles, Child and Family Services Review onsite review results, and other relevant data.

See step 4 of the implementation guide for additional information on identifying the target population.

Selecting Strategies or Interventions

Strategies or interventions are the implementation of specific child welfare practices, programs, or policies that will be used to make improvements, and may be directed at improvements in more than one goal. For each strategy or intervention, the state should be able to clearly articulate how and why it will address the identified problem and lead to the required improvement.

When selecting strategies or interventions, the state should consider:

- Limiting its improvement efforts by selecting strategies or interventions that can address more than one performance area, thereby allowing the state to focus its improvement efforts over the course of the Program Improvement Plan

- Whether there are strategies or interventions supported by evidence, research, or experience that focus on a target population and directly respond to the underlying reasons for the area of concern

- Selecting strategies or interventions that address improvements in the day-to-day practice of child welfare, rather than focusing strictly on new policies and procedures. By focusing on casework practice at the local level, the state is most likely to link its vision, policies, and procedures to the actual interactions that occur with children and families. This integration of policy and practice with day-to-day casework in the field allows the state to achieve lasting improvements in child welfare

- Selecting strategies or interventions that are guided by the principles of family-centered practice, community-based services, individualizing services that address the unique needs of children and families, and strengthening parents' capacity to protect and provide for their children

- Selecting strategies or interventions that can be implemented within the 2-year Program Improvement Plan implementation period

Although states may need to do additional planning and study as part of its work plan or implementation plan to support improvement, the state's Program Improvement Plan should focus on actual implementation of change efforts.

See step 5 of the implementation guide for additional information on selecting interventions.

Assessing Readiness to Implement the Strategies or Interventions

Once the state has identified possible strategies or interventions, the state should assess its readiness to implement each selected approach within the required Program Improvement Plan time frames. The state should determine whether an approach has or can gain the support of leadership and internal and external partners. The state also should consider the infrastructure and resource needs associated with each strategy or intervention, including:

- Staffing
- Training, coaching, and mentoring
- Administrative infrastructure
- Automated systems
- Policies and regulatory requirements
- Financial resources
- Technical assistance

By considering these factors in advance of implementation, the state can be better positioned to successfully implement the selected improvements within the required time frames.

See step 6 of the implementation guide for additional information on assessing readiness.

Creating an Implementation Plan

The state should consider developing a more detailed implementation plan or work plan to guide its day-to-day Program Improvement Plan work. The state's implementation or work plan does not need to be submitted to the Children's Bureau for approval, but such a plan would be helpful to lay out how each strategy or intervention in the Program Improvement Plan is designed to achieve the goal within the time frames as well as create a common understanding within the state of the collaboration needed among the person(s) responsible to accomplish the key activities.

When developing an implementation or work plan, the state should consider:

- How to sequence implementation of the strategies or interventions so that actions and resources needed for each build on and support each other and are not overwhelming to field staff or those partners and stakeholders affected by the change
- The proposed scale of the strategies or interventions and any plans for transformation zones or plans for expansion over the 2-year Program Improvement Plan implementation period
- How the scale and sequencing of implementation activities for the strategies or interventions during the Program Improvement Plan are designed to make the required amount of measurable improvement on a statewide basis within the Program Improvement Plan period
- How the scale and sequencing of the improvements will affect child and family outcomes within the Program Improvement Plan time frame
- How the scale and sequencing of improvements to systemic factors will result in improved statewide functioning
- Plans for putting in place the necessary infrastructure and resource supports
- Plans for monitoring the progress and effectiveness of implementation

See step 7 of the implementation guide for additional information on developing an implementation plan.

Selecting Measures and Establishing Methods for Monitoring

Measures, in the context of a Program Improvement Plan, are quantifiable improvements to safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes that are stated as improvements to statewide data indicators, case record item measures, or systemic factors. Refer to Technical Bulletin #8A[16] and the "Measures of Improvement" section in this chapter. Further, although not required, the Children's Bureau encourages states to consider using fidelity measures, as appropriate, to assess whether a strategy or intervention is being implemented as intended. The

[16] Technical Bulletin #8A is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105 (CFSR Technical Bulletins and Related Information).

state also should use feedback loops with affected Tribes, partners, and stakeholders to monitor implementation and determine whether the strategy or intervention is having the desired effect.

Key activities are benchmarks or metrics such as process measures, implementation milestones, or qualitative markers and must be associated with targeted time frames for completion. Key activities help the state and the Children's Bureau determine whether the state is on track to make improvements in the required time frames and allows for the opportunity to make adjustments to improve performance. For the purposes of Program Improvement Plan reporting, the state must identify and report on key activities and on its Program Improvement Plan measures as defined above.
See step 8 of the implementation guide for additional information on selecting measures and establishing methods for monitoring.

Chapter 10

Program Improvement Plan Implementation and Monitoring

Program Improvement Plan Implementation

Once the Children's Bureau approves the Program Improvement Plan, the state must continue to meet measurement and reporting requirements. The Children's Bureau and the state will also engage in continuous evaluation and monitoring of Program Improvement Plan implementation and determine what, if any adjustments, are necessary.

Initial Implementation and Assessment of Progress

At this stage, implementation of the strategies or interventions begins. The state, with Tribes, courts, and other partners and stakeholders, initiates activities and uses feedback loops and process measures to assess how well implementation is going. The state can make adjustments to address challenges and improve implementation. This is an ongoing process of initiating activities to implement strategies or interventions, obtaining feedback, addressing barriers, and making adjustments.

The state should assess the early results, feedback, information, and preliminary data about the implementation of each intervention. The state should consider monitoring:

- Whether the roll-out of the strategy or intervention is on schedule
- Whether the strategy or intervention is being implemented consistently across all sites
- Early indicators of success or unintended negative consequences

Based on the feedback, information, and data, the state makes adjustments to strengthen implementation of each strategy or intervention. If necessary, the state or the Children's Bureau can request a renegotiation of the Program Improvement Plan for changes to interventions or key activities.

See step 9 of the implementation guide for more information on initial implementation and assessment of progress.

Assessing Improvement and Adjusting Strategies or Interventions

After the strategy or intervention is implemented and in place, the state should look at its measures to determine whether the strategy or intervention is having the intended effect. Based on these data, the state should make any necessary adjustments. Toward this end, the state reviews data and information in areas where the strategy or intervention has been implemented to determine:

- Whether the measures have improved
- Whether the improvement is consistent across sites
- Whether there have been unintended negative effects

If there is a lack of progress, the state should determine the underlying reason(s), which could include faulty or incomplete implementation or a concern with the strategy or intervention. After a full analysis, the state, in consultation with the Children's Bureau, should make necessary adjustments. If necessary, based on the level of adjustment needed, the state and the

Children's Bureau should renegotiate the Program Improvement Plan intervention or key activities.

See step 10 of the implementation guide for more information on assessing improvement in outcomes and adjusting strategies or interventions.

Scale Up and Sustain

If applicable, the state should review the information and data from the initial implementation sites, lessons learned, and the implementation plan to determine when and how to expand. The roll-out schedule in the implementation plan should be revisited and adjusted, if necessary, based upon the initial data and feedback. The state also should assess whether supports and readiness activities for the next sites have begun and whether those sites are prepared to begin implementation.

Planning for sustainability of a strategy or intervention takes place throughout implementation; however, at this stage, the state should revisit sustainability and take additional steps to ensure that the improvements continue after the completion of the Program Improvement Plan.

See step 11 of the implementation guide for more information on scaling up and sustaining improvements.

Program Improvement Plan Monitoring

The Children's Bureau and the state will continue to partner in monitoring the state's implementation of the strategies or interventions and progress in completing the Program Improvement Plan.

Reporting of Progress

The state must submit written progress reports (preferably electronically) to the Children's Bureau that address Program Improvement Plan implementation. The Children's Bureau will provide states with written feedback on these progress reports.

The Children's Bureau recommends submitting the written reports semi-annually. A more or less frequent schedule for reporting may be negotiated as long as it is at least annual. The state must submit each written report within the agreed-upon time frames (for example, 30 days after the end of the reporting period). In negotiating the schedule, the state and the Children's Bureau should consider how the Annual Progress and Services Report can be used as a report on Program Improvement Plan progress.

The Children's Bureau will continue to partner with the state to continue collaboration and communication on the state's progress outside of these formal Program Improvement Plan written reports. This includes discussions through conference calls, onsite visits, and facilitation of technical assistance, as needed, throughout the Program Improvement Plan implementation and non-overlapping periods.

Progress Report Content

States are encouraged to use the Children's Bureau reporting template to prepare reports (see Appendix G). If a state elects not to use the reporting template, an alternate reporting format

with the required elements must be submitted for Children's Bureau approval before implementation.

Program Improvement Plan progress reports must include:

- For each strategy or intervention, the progress made to complete the key activities identified in the Program Improvement Plan
- State performance on each of the agreed-upon statewide data indicators, case review measures, and systemic factor data measures (if applicable)
- If key activities are not completed in accordance with the schedule, or if sufficient progress is not being made on the measurement plan, an explanation of the steps the state is taking to address the concerns and ensure improvement is made within Program Improvement Plan time frames

Integration of Program Improvement Plan With Child and Family Services Plan

The state is expected to have a coordinated approach to improvement. This includes integrating the Program Improvement Plan with the Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report. The state should amend its Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report to reflect this integration as it begins implementing its Program Improvement Plan and must do so no later than the next Child and Family Services Plan/Annual Progress and Services Report, which must include:

- The goals and strategies or interventions from the Program Improvement Plan
- Progress in implementing the Program Improvement Plan and meeting the benchmarks of progress
- The plan to develop and/or implement an ongoing method to monitor improvement for Permanency Outcome 2, Well-Being Outcome 2, and Well-Being Outcome 3, as applicable

The Children's Bureau will monitor future Child and Family Services Plans and Annual Progress and Services Reports for the state's reported implementation progress and results.

Program Improvement Plan Evaluation

The Children's Bureau, in collaboration with the state, evaluates the state's achievement with reference to the terms and conditions of the approved Program Improvement Plan as follows:

- The Children's Bureau monitors the state's progress in completing the provisions of the Program Improvement Plan through review of the state's submitted Program Improvement Plan reports and clarifying discussions with the state
- At least annually, the Children's Bureau and the state must jointly evaluate the state's progress in implementing the Program Improvement Plan. This activity may occur in conjunction with the joint planning of the state's Annual Progress and Services Report/Child and Family Services Plan, and in collaboration with other members of the state team

- Statewide data indicators, case review results, and systemic factors (if applicable) item measures are evaluated based on whether the state has met the required amount of improvement. Additional considerations for evaluating the measurement plan include:
  - A state can complete its Program Improvement Plan goals for statewide data indicators in one of two ways: (1) the state can meet its improvement goal based on the state's observed performance, and not exceed the threshold for its companion measure (if applicable), at a point from the approved Program Improvement Plan start date through the end of the state implementation and non-overlapping monitoring period; or (2) the state's risk-standardized performance meets the national standard at any point from the data profile period used for the statewide assessment through the end of the implementation and non-overlapping monitoring period
  - In situations where the state's Program Improvement Plan case review item improvement goals are above 90%, the Children's Bureau applies consideration of a plateau effect in determining whether a state has met its goal. If the state has an improvement goal above 90% and is able to sustain performance above the baseline for three quarters, the Children's Bureau will consider the goal met even if the state does not meet its actual goal
- Key activities are evaluated to determine whether they have been completed and if the proposed strategy or intervention has been implemented

The Children's Bureau may determine, on the basis of sufficient information, that key activities have been completed and/or measurable improvement goals achieved at any point during the tenure of the Program Improvement Plan. When that occurs, the Children's Bureau and the state are not required to further evaluate those key activities or improvement goals during the remainder of the Program Improvement Plan implementation period. When a state completes all requirements related to an outcome or systemic factor, the Children's Bureau notifies the state that associated penalties are rescinded.

If, at the conclusion of the Program Improvement Plan period, the state has not demonstrated the required amount of improvement on its measurement goals, the state may submit additional data through the end of the 12-month non-overlapping period following the end of the implementation period (refer to Technical Bulletin #8A[17] regarding the non-overlapping year.) The state and the Children's Bureau will jointly determine a schedule for reporting and monitoring during the overlapping year.

Renegotiation of the Program Improvement Plan

In accordance with 45 CFR § 1355.35(e)(4), the state may request to renegotiate the Program Improvement Plan with the Children's Bureau, as needed. Requests for changes to the Program Improvement Plan, including changes to the measurement plan, should be submitted in writing to the Children's Bureau Regional Office for approval before the anticipated completion of the

[17] Technical Bulletin #8A is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105 (CFSR Technical Bulletins and Related Information).

strategy or intervention and/or key activity. The Children's Bureau will then contact the state to discuss the issues leading to the request.

The Children's Bureau and state may renegotiate elements of the Program Improvement Plan, as needed, but the new plan must meet the following criteria:

- All Program Improvement Plan requests for renegotiation must be received and approved by the Children's Bureau within the 2-year Program Improvement Plan implementation period
- The renegotiated elements of the Program Improvement Plan are designed to correct the areas of the state's program determined not to be in substantial conformity and/or to achieve the improvement target(s) for the data indicator(s)
- The terms of the renegotiated elements of the Program Improvement Plan are approved by the Children's Bureau and incorporated into the Program Improvement Plan

Extensions of the Program Improvement Plan

The amount of time needed to implement the provisions of the Program Improvement Plan does not extend beyond 2 years from the date of the original Program Improvement Plan approval unless the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approves an extension not to exceed one additional year. The circumstances under which requests for extensions will be approved are expected to be rare. States should describe the exceptional circumstances and provide compelling documentation of the need for such an extension, and link requests for extensions to specific Program Improvement Plan interventions requiring additional time. States must submit the request to the Children's Bureau in writing at least 60 days before the approved Program Improvement Plan implementation completion date.

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Chapter 11

Final Determination of Substantial Conformity

When it is determined that the state has completed all requirements of the Program Improvement Plan related to an outcome and/or systemic factor, and/or achieved the agreed-upon amount of improvement for a statewide data indicator, the Children's Bureau makes a decision regarding substantial conformity. This may occur:

- During the improvement plan implementation period;
- At the end of the improvement plan; or
- At the end of the non-overlapping year.

Implementation of the improvement plan must be completed within 2 years from the date on which it is approved by the Children's Bureau. Not all Program Improvement Plan elements may require this length of time to address, and 2 years is an outside time limit for those elements requiring more extensive planning and action (45 CFR § 1355.35[d][1]). When a key activity or measurement is achieved, the Children's Bureau and the state are not required to evaluate these further during the remainder of the Program Improvement Plan implementation period (45 CFR § 1355.35[e][3]). When there is no associated measurement required with an item, the state must successfully complete the key activity to be considered to have successfully completed that item in the plan.

The decision regarding substantial conformity is in accordance with the regulation at 45 CFR § 1355.34, which sets forth the requirements for determining substantial conformity through the Child and Family Services Reviews. When the state completes all requirements of the Program Improvement Plan related to an outcome, systemic factor, and/or data indicator, the Children's Bureau Regional Office notifies the state regarding the substantial conformity decision and that associated penalties are being rescinded.

Financial Penalties

The withholding of funds assessed as a financial penalty is suspended while the state is implementing an approved Program Improvement Plan. If the Children's Bureau determines, however, that the state failed to submit Program Improvement Plan reports, or that the state is not making satisfactory progress toward achieving the goals and key activities in a timely manner, then the suspension of penalties ceases and withholding of funds begins (45 CFR §§ 1355.36[e][2][i] and [ii]).

After the relevant completion date specified in the Program Improvement Plan, the Children's Bureau notifies in writing states determined not to be in substantial conformity that fail to successfully complete their plans of this final determination of nonconformity. The notification advises the state of the amount of title IV–B and title IV–E funds to be withheld, and the state's opportunity to appeal that decision.

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Appendix A

Child and Family Services Reviews: Pathways to Substantial Conformity

The tables below show how the Children's Bureau determines whether a state is in substantial conformity with the Child and Family Services Reviews outcomes and systemic factors. Table 1 provides information on the outcomes (and the items and statewide data indicators within each), how the Children's Bureau rates the items, how it determines substantial achievement for each case reviewed, how the data indicators are factored in, and how substantial conformity with the outcomes is determined.

Table 2 provides information on the systemic factors (and the items within each), how the items are rated, and how substantial conformity with the systemic factors is determined.

Table 1: Outcomes

Outcome	Items and Ratings	Statewide Data Indicator
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	For maltreatment in foster care, the state is no different than or below the national standard of 8.50 victimizations per 100,000 days in foster care **AND** For recurrence of maltreatment, the state is no different than or below the national standard of 9.1%
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	NA

Outcome	Items and Ratings	Statewide Data Indicator
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	For Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Foster Care, the state is no different than or above the national standard of 40.5% **AND** For Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care 12 to 23 Months, the state is no different than or above the national standard of 43.6% **AND** For Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care 24 Months or More, the state is no different than or above the national standard of 30.3% **AND** For Re-Entry to Foster Care in 12 Months, the state is no different than or below the national standard of 8.3% **AND** For Placement Stability, the state is no different than or below the national standard of 4.12 moves per 1,000 days in foster care

Outcome	Items and Ratings	Statewide Data Indicator
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 Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents	NA
Child and Family 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 Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parent(s)	NA
Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	In 95% of the applicable cases… Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child is rated a Strength	NA

Outcome	Items and Ratings	Statewide Data Indicator
Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	In 95% of the applicable cases… Both Item 17: Physical Health of the Child **AND** Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child are rated a Strength	NA

Table 2: Systemic Factors

Systemic Factor and Items	Substantial Conformity Determination
Systemic Factor 1: Statewide Information System Item 19: Statewide Information System	For the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that *the one required item* is functioning as required.
Systemic Factor 2: 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	For the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that *no more than one of five items* for this systemic factor fails to function as required.
Systemic Factor 3: Quality Assurance System Item 25: Quality Assurance System	For the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that *the one required item* is functioning as required.
Systemic Factor 4: Staff and Provider Training Item 26: Initial Staff Training Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training	For the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that *no more than one of the three items* for this systemic factor fails to function as required.

Systemic Factor and Items	Substantial Conformity Determination
Systemic Factor 5: Service Array and Resource Development Item 29: Array of Services Item 30: Individualizing Services	For the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews must indicate that *no more than one of the two items* for this systemic factor fails to function as required.
Systemic Factor 6: Agency Responsiveness to the Community Item 31: State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP [Child and Family Services Plan] and APSR [Annual Progress and Services Report] Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs	For the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that *no more than one of the two items* for this systemic factor fails to function as required.
Systemic Factor 7: 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 Placement	For the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that *no more than one of the four items* for this systemic factor fails to function as required.

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Appendix B

Collaborating During the Child and Family Services Reviews

The Children's Bureau designed the Child and Family Services Reviews as a vehicle for promoting change through collaboration. This begins with federal-state joint planning in the development and implementation of the Child and Family Services Plan and collaboration in assessing the effectiveness of child welfare agencies in serving children and families. It continues with collaboration between child welfare agency leaders and Tribes, internal and external partners, and stakeholders in both processes. Those internal partners include child welfare administrators and staff. Partners and stakeholders external to the agency include Tribes and Tribal organizations; policymakers; other agencies serving children, youth, and families; the courts; the community; and children, youth, and families, including young adults over age 18 who may, or may not, still be receiving services.

These collaborations are critical during the two assessment phases of the continuum of Child and Family Services Reviews activities. The information presented below is intended to (1) offer guidance to states in fostering enhanced collaborations during the Child and Family Services Reviews; and (2) provide a structure for the Children's Bureau staff responsible for assessing state child welfare agency efforts to enhance or forge new collaborations in conjunction with the Child and Family Services Reviews.

This guidance works in concert with the implementation-specific guidance found in "A Guide for Implementing Improvement Through the CFSP and CFSR" (see Appendix E) and contains information that may be helpful in considering how to collaborate more generally in advancing state child welfare programs. The information below covers:

- Overarching Principles of Child and Family Services Reviews Collaboration
- Child and Family Services Reviews Collaborative Partners
- The Collaborative Process
- Engaging Collaborative Partners
- Evidence of State Collaboration With Tribes, Partners, and Stakeholders During the Child and Family Services Reviews
- Monitoring Stakeholder Involvement
- Technical Assistance in Support of State Collaborative Efforts
- Working With Key Partners and Stakeholders: Tribes, Courts, and Youth

Overarching Principles of Child and Family Services Reviews Collaboration

The Child and Family Services Reviews demand a collaborative process that focuses on identifying shared goals and activities and establishing a purpose, framework, and plan. Most important, that collaborative process should result in changes that promote improved outcomes for children and families. The overarching principles guiding this collaborative process are:

- The safety, permanency, and well-being of children is a shared responsibility, and child welfare agencies should make every effort to reach out to other partners in the state who can help to achieve positive results with respect to the Child and Family Services Reviews child welfare outcome measures and systemic factors.

- Child welfare agencies do not serve children and families in isolation; they should work in partnership with policymakers, community leaders, and other public and private agencies to improve outcomes for children and families in their states. This includes partnering with organizations that directly serve children, youth, and families and those whose actions affect family and community life.

- Family-centered and community-based practices are integral to improving outcomes for children and families. As such, collaboration with families, including young people, is important in identifying and assessing strengths and barriers to improved outcomes for children, youth, and families.

- Real collaboration has a purpose and a goal. It takes time and effort to promote meaningful collaboration. There also are varying degrees of collaboration, each of which can serve the Child and Family Services Reviews process and, more importantly, children, youth, and families.

Child and Family Services Reviews Collaborative Partners

The Child and Family Services Reviews process defines key partners that should be engaged in the statewide assessment, onsite review, and Program Improvement Plan (these include partners with whom the state is required to collaborate in developing the Child and Family Services Plan and Annual Progress and Services Reports, as noted at 45 CFR § 1357.15[1]):

- Tribal representatives

- Court representatives, including, but not limited to, Court Improvement Programs

- Youth representatives, including young adults over age 18 who may, or may not, still be receiving services

- Child welfare agency internal partners, such as state and local agency staff, training staff, contract staff, supervisors, and administrators

- Child welfare agency external partners, such as children (as appropriate); biological, foster, and adoptive parents and relative caregivers; and representatives from (1) other state and community-based service agencies; (2) state and local governments; (3) professional and advocacy organizations; and (4) agencies administering other federal and federally assisted programs. [These programs include those funded by the U.S. Departments of Education, Housing, and Labor, and others in the Department of Health and Human Services including Head Start, the Family and Youth Services Bureau, the Office of Family Assistance—and the Child Care Bureau within that Office, and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention within the Department of Justice. These programs are responsible for education, labor, developmental disabilities services, juvenile justice, mental health, substance abuse prevention and treatment, family support, services to runaway and homeless youth, domestic violence intervention, child care, Medicaid, and housing.]

- Partners that represent the diversity of the state's population, especially in relation to those served by the child welfare system

- Other entities related to children and families within the state, such as the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention lead agencies, citizen review panels, Children's Justice Act task forces, and Child and Family Services Plan and Promoting Safe and Stable Families partners

The Collaborative Process

Collaboration takes planning, time, and a commitment to working together to create change. State child welfare agencies can build new, or strengthen existing, collaborations by focusing on the following core elements:

- **A common goal.** Collaboration requires a common goal; collaboration for collaboration's sake does not create change. The shared goal of Child and Family Services Reviews-driven collaborations is improving outcomes for children and families.

- **Benefit to all parties.** All participants need to see the benefit to them of the collaborative goal. While each agency or individual might view improving child welfare as the altruistic goal of the Child and Family Services Reviews, states should identify the practical benefits for the Tribes, partners, and stakeholders they wish to engage. These might include, for example: (1) a reduction in calls to law enforcement if child abuse rates are reduced over time; (2) fewer requests for court continuances because of improvements in agency reporting on children's progress; or (3) improved coordination between child welfare agency staff and mental health professionals that enhances services while streamlining agency efforts to jointly serve children and families.

- **A vehicle for collaborating.** There should be a vehicle for achieving the agreed-upon goal. The Child and Family Services Reviews process provides excellent vehicles for collaboration, but the collaborative effort cannot happen serendipitously. It should be well planned so that each partner knows its role(s) and the required time and resource commitment.

- **The ability to come to consensus.** Real collaboration requires the ability to come to consensus about what needs to be done and the most effective approaches for doing so. The Child and Family Services Reviews offers states the former; through the reviews, they will have identified the improvements that need to be made. States then should engage the appropriate Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in identifying approaches that appear to be both effective and achievable. They also will need to provide support to Tribes and internal and external partners and stakeholders in adapting to the changes that will be identified, as necessary, through the program improvement process.

- **Strong leadership.** States need to provide strong leadership and to engage Tribes, partners, and stakeholders who have the ability and authority to help them create change. The Children's Bureau Regional Office staff should encourage states to use the Child and Family Services Reviews process, and other required or ongoing child welfare planning efforts (for example, title IV-B), to identify who has the power, responsibility, and/or expertise to help them reform their child welfare systems.

- **A process for ensuring meaningful partner and stakeholder involvement.** States need a process for ensuring that stakeholder engagement is real and meaningful; that Tribes, partners, and stakeholders feel valued; and that all partners are kept apprised of Child and Family Services Reviews activities, including the statewide assessment and onsite review, and of Program Improvement Plan development and implementation.

- **Encouraging consumer "voices."** States should create a process that openly welcomes and values the participation of families and youth, including young adults over age 18 who may, or may not, still be receiving services. States will want to consider how

to prepare families and youth so that they will feel comfortable and confident in their participation, and to ensure that other stakeholders are engaging families and youth as equals in the process and allowing their voices to be heard.

- **Shared success.** States should create opportunities for early collaborative successes. Nothing ensures ongoing involvement in a joint process more than a shared success. This links back to the concept that states should set reasonable Program Improvement Plan goals. States then can identify areas in which they can anticipate early successes and establish ways to share the credit with collaborators.

- **Use of Tribes, partners, and stakeholders to engage new partners.** States should encourage Tribes, partners, and stakeholders to bring new players into the process, whenever appropriate. A substance abuse agency director who witnesses positive changes in relationships with the child welfare agency as a result of being involved in the Child and Family Services Reviews becomes one of the agency's best advocates for engaging others in the process.

- **A shared vision for the future.** States need to develop strategies for keeping people involved in the long term. Success contributes to that, but so does "forward planning." If states can help Tribes, partners, and stakeholders continually consider next steps, they and others will begin to understand that change requires a long-term commitment and that the Child and Family Services Reviews and the program improvement process are intentionally ongoing in nature.

- **Ongoing evaluation.** States should develop a process for continually assessing the outcomes of collaborative efforts, especially with regard to creating real and lasting changes in policy and practice. More important, they should examine how those changes are resulting in improved outcomes for children and families.

Engaging Collaborative Partners

States can enhance the process of engaging their external partners by both focusing on the elements described above and undertaking the following steps:

1. Continually promoting the Child and Family Services Reviews process and findings; state child welfare agencies that set up procedures for doing this have been the most effective in involving others.

2. Identifying which Tribes, partners, and stakeholders need to be involved throughout the Child and Family Services Reviews process and who then might help with Program Improvement Plan development and implementation.

3. Conducting targeted outreach to Tribes, partners, and stakeholders (individuals or agencies) through the appropriate channels. If a state child welfare administrator needs the cooperation of the director of the state mental health agency, for example, he or she might jointly work through the head of the human services agency that manages both the child welfare and mental health services agencies. That person can help facilitate the mental health director's involvement by authorizing the time and resources necessary for them to collaborate.

4. Reviewing with each Tribe, partner, and stakeholder the advantages of Child and Family Services Reviews collaboration, and jointly identifying barriers encountered in previous collaborations and strategies for overcoming those barriers.

5. Establishing a process to prepare stakeholders, particularly families and youth, to fully engage and participate in the collaboration. States may want to consider ways to build on current established processes for family and youth participation, such as youth engaged in activities around the National Youth in Transition Database.

6. Jointly assessing the contributions, time commitment, and resources that each Tribe, partner, and stakeholder might bring to the process.

7. Jointly establishing the "rules of engagement." This means letting people know how the state plans to operate during the Child and Family Services Reviews process, engaging them in developing effective procedures for working together, and setting an equitable workload-sharing system. No one wants to feel that they are doing more than their share.

8. Setting timelines for all Child and Family Services Reviews-related meetings, activities, and products, and communicating those to Tribes, partners, and stakeholders.

9. Exploring how to manage and sustain Tribe, partner, and stakeholder involvement during the different stages of the Child and Family Services Reviews process; this may be different for each type of partner and stakeholder engaged.

Judges, for example, may offer staff to assist in assessing court-related strengths and needs and identifying strategies for improving court processing of child welfare cases. Those judges, however, should themselves be closely involved in making final decisions about new court procedures and ensuring that those will be institutionalized. Agency collaboration with youth and families might require a different level of preparation (for both agency staff and the youth or family members) and support.

Moreover, people likely will be participating in the Child and Family Services Reviews process in addition to their regular jobs. In those situations, people want to feel that their time is being used wisely and that their contributions will make a difference; a strong Child and Family Services Reviews management system will help with both. States also need to think of incentives for those involved and ways to show them appreciation.

Evidence of State Collaboration with Tribes, Partners, and Stakeholders During the Child and Family Services Reviews

At each stage of the collaborative process, there will be different levels of evidence showing the state's capacity to engage its external partners in the Child and Family Services Reviews process. During the early stages of any collaboration, for example, there will be evidence that shows the initial outreach and the beginnings of collaborative partnerships. Later, there should be evidence of how the partners are working together, including projected results and a process and timeline for achieving them. As the collaborative partnership develops, there should be strong evidence of results that can be measured and referenced as applicable in Child and Family Services Reviews discussions and related reports.

The table below provides illustrative examples of the continuum of state child welfare agency collaboration, from limited to strong. The Children's Bureau Regional Offices and state child welfare agencies can use the information in the table to periodically assess the status and effectiveness of state involvement with Tribes, partners and stakeholders. By doing so, they can determine the extent to which the state is building meaningful collaborative partnerships for creating positive changes in child welfare policy and practice and improving outcomes for children and families.

Table: Evidence of State Collaboration With Tribes, Partners, and Stakeholders During the Child and Family Services Reviews and Program Improvement Plan Processes

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Engagement of other partners	• The state has started to consult with at least one other partner agency to identify critical issues for the statewide assessment or Program Improvement Plan. • The state has not made any strong efforts to engage or consult with Tribes, other partners, or stakeholders in the development of the statewide assessment or Program Improvement Plan. • There is simply a list of Tribes, collaborative partner agencies, and stakeholders in the statewide assessment; there is no other indication of their level of collaboration in the Child and Family Services Reviews or statewide assessment.	• The state has worked to engage a broad group of Tribes, internal and external partners, and stakeholders in the development and ongoing analysis of the Program Improvement Plan and new statewide assessment. • The state has been invited by a broad group of external partners to participate in work or focus groups or other collaborative efforts. • Internal and external partners convey a shared ownership of the statewide assessment and Program Improvement Plan processes, including development, implementation, and outcomes.
Communication	• Entities identified as Tribes, partners, and stakeholders simply are invited to give input through one-time meetings or Program Improvement Plan or statewide assessment focus groups. • Tribes, partner agencies, and stakeholders are invited to collaborate only by reviewing and commenting on draft Child and Family Services Reviews materials. • There is no other evidence of ongoing communication.	• Tribes, partners, and stakeholders are invited to provide input on the state's Child and Family Services Reviews documents and processes on an ongoing basis, and there is a well-defined and regular feedback loop between the child welfare agency and partners. • The state has established standing meetings that are regularly attended by key Tribes, partners, and stakeholders; they track meeting participation and outcomes. • Tribes, partners, and stakeholders are actively involved in producing draft and final materials. • The state agency and its partners have assigned responsibility (and authority) to key staff for communicating regularly, internally and externally, about the Child and Family Services Reviews process.

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Needs assessment	• The state agency has developed a statewide assessment process for the Child and Family Services Reviews that is separate from other needs assessment processes established by the agency or others. • The state agency relies solely on its own data when analyzing strengths and areas needing improvement and does not examine data available from other sources.	• The state's statewide assessment process builds on the assessments conducted through existing vehicles such as the Child and Family Services Plan, Court Improvement Program, Children's Justice Act, consent decrees, and other agency needs assessment efforts. • The state and Tribes, partners, and stakeholders compile, analyze, and use data on a regular basis, such as quarterly, and share with others whenever possible.
Joint strategic planning	• The state's external partners do not participate in any joint planning efforts with the child welfare agency. • The state provides external partners with limited time to review draft plans and reports and does not respond to comments provided, and final state products do not reflect the comments of those partners.	• The state's external partners work with the agency to contribute to and review their strategic plans. They explore overlapping issues and strategies and determine how to work together to address those. • The state's external partners provide input on all of the federal child welfare programs (e.g., Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Chafee, Court Improvement Program) and support the coordination of such activities with those conducted during the Child and Family Services Reviews process, as applicable. • The strategic plans of the state child welfare agency and of external partners reflect mutual goals and activities.

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Sharing of resources and structural changes	• There is limited (or no) evidence that external partners are contributing resources (in-kind or direct funding) to address the issues identified through the previous Child and Family Services Reviews or to support the current statewide assessment process.	• The state's external partners have identified and/or made specific contributions to the previous Child and Family Services Reviews and the current statewide assessment process. • Tribes, partners, and stakeholders have identified areas in which they can contribute to making positive changes in outcomes through the Program Improvement Plan; for example, co-locating a mental health or public health specialist in the child welfare agency or co-locating a social worker in a school-based family resource center.
Sustainability	• There is no indication that the Tribes, partners, and stakeholders will continue participating in future Child and Family Services Reviews or ongoing evaluations of state performance. • There is no process or vehicle for promoting and sustaining the collaboration; for example, not sharing with partners agency data or ongoing evaluations of progress noted through the quality assurance process.	• There are established procedures and vehicles for collaborating in an ongoing manner, such as Tribal, partner, and stakeholder involvement in ongoing monitoring of progress through the state's quality assurance process or data sharing. • The state and its partners have identified specific actions that other agencies will undertake to support the Child and Family Services Reviews and other outcome-driven activities on an ongoing basis. This might include, for example, engagement in Program Improvement Plan implementation and monitoring, and involvement in Child and Family Services Reviews-related activities between previous Program Improvement Plan completion and the subsequent Child and Family Services Reviews. • The state's external partners coordinate with the child welfare agency in advocating for improvements in services for children and families through their state legislature or the state budget process.

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Policies/laws/ regulations	• Changes are made to policies without collaboration with key Tribes, partners, and stakeholders.	• Specific policies/laws/regulations have been established as a result of the collaboration process. • Agency leadership works together under the established protocols to advocate for legislative change or comment on proposed legislation, as appropriate.
Research/data/ evaluation	• There is no process for sharing data among Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in support of the planning and evaluation of programs and services.	• There is a process for sharing data among the state agency, Tribes, and external partners and stakeholders for the purposes of (1) identifying shared clients and promoting coordinated services/delivery; and (2) identifying policy and practice issues that require improvements or that can serve as best practices. • The roles of the collaborative partners in contributing to improved outcomes are continually evaluated, and the development of new strategies for making those improvements is ongoing. • There is a process for evaluating the impact of the collaborative process.
Leadership	• There is limited (or no) evidence that the leadership of the state agency or its external partner agencies are committed to collaboration. The leadership is not communicating with staff about the importance of, and/or strategies for, interagency collaboration.	• There is evidence that state agency and external partner leadership support strong collaboration. The state agency's vision and mission, and internal structure and management practice, promote collaboration and are shared with staff and the community. • Senior staff are assigned responsibility for promoting collaboration within the child welfare agency and with its external partners.

Monitoring Tribal, Partner, and Stakeholder Involvement

The Children's Bureau staff and state child welfare agency leaders share joint responsibility for monitoring state efforts to engage Tribes, partners, and stakeholders, both at the state and local levels, in the Child and Family Services Reviews process. The following strategies can be used by both to ensure that state agencies establish Child and Family Services Reviews planning process, both internal and with the Children's Bureau, that promote the involvement of Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in meaningful ways:

- **Assess how state agency staff are involving Tribes, partners, and stakeholders.** Children's Bureau staff and state agency leadership can consider how often state child welfare agency staff talk about their plans for collaborating with key Tribes, partners, and stakeholders and their efforts to do so. What are the focus and outcomes of those collaborations regarding both process and substance? Children's Bureau staff also should watch for other signs of state collaboration with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders. These might include, for example: (1) collaborative meetings that state staff attend or host; (2) websites that convey information to, or solicit information from, Tribes, partners, and stakeholders; (3) cross-training of agency, Tribal, partner, and stakeholder staff; or (4) the routine engagement of key Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in Program Improvement Plans or other child welfare reform action strategies and analysis.

  Questions such as the following also can be useful in assessing the degree to which an agency is engaging Tribes, partners, and stakeholders:

  - What collaborative relationships with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders did the agency have in place before the most recent Child and Family Services Review? After the most recent Child and Family Services Review?

  - Which Tribes, partners and stakeholders currently appear to be actively involved, and which are not and why?

  - Do the Tribes, partners, and stakeholders represent the diversity of the state population, particularly those being served by the child welfare system?

  - What role(s) are Tribes, partners, and stakeholders playing? Are they simply providing input, or do they appear to be playing a role in conducting Child and Family Services Reviews processes or developing and reviewing related materials?

  - What process(es) does the agency plan to use to provide feedback to Tribes, partners, and stakeholders on how their input will be used?

  - What strategies is the state using to continually educate/communicate with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders about the Child and Family Services Review/ and the Program Improvement Plan?

  - What strategies does the state agency currently employ or plan to employ to ensure the continuation or enhancement of Tribal, partner, and stakeholder relationships developed or strengthened through the Child and Family Services Reviews and Program Improvement Plan processes?

- **Check the engagement of Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in relation to the outcomes and systemic factors under review.** For each of the Child and Family Services Reviews outcomes and systemic factors, the Children's Bureau Regional Office staff and state agency leadership might use the following questions to explore with the state child welfare staff new ways for engaging Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in improving child welfare policies and practices. Children's Bureau staff should note that the inclusion of a question/strategy about collaboration in a specific area below does not denote it as a requirement to be assessed during the review of outcomes. Rather, Children's Bureau staff might use the questions to guide their assessment of, or

conversations with, the state child welfare agency about the state's ongoing Child and Family Services Reviews-related collaborative efforts to address needed improvements in state policies and practices related to those outcomes and systemic factors:

- How does the state agency currently engage the appropriate Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in designing and assessing its policy/strategies for each of the items under the Child and Family Services Reviews outcomes and systemic factors?
- Which Tribes, partners, and stakeholders does the agency engage in relation to the items, how does it do so, and what have been the results?
- What are the agency's plans for enhancing its engagement of Tribes, partners, and stakeholders related to specific items under the outcomes and systemic factors?

- **Prepare for the next review.** Before each new cycle of reviews (and throughout the Child and Family Services Plan and Child and Family Services Reviews processes), Children's Bureau Regional Office staff and state child welfare agency leadership can explore how the state is continually enhancing its plans for engaging critical Tribes, partners, and stakeholders by reflecting on the following:
  - What did the agency learn by consulting with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders during the previous Child and Family Services Review, and how will the agency integrate those lessons into future Child and Family Services Reviews planning?
  - Which of the processes used to solicit input from Tribes, partners, and stakeholders during the previous Child and Family Services Review might be useful during the current review in reaching out to the Tribes, partners, and stakeholders with whom the agency needs to consult?
  - What have been the benefits of the Tribal, partner, and stakeholder relationships with regard to the state's child welfare reform efforts?
  - Which Tribes, partners, and stakeholders are proving to be valuable assets to the state agency during the Child and Family Services Reviews planning process, and why?
  - How can the state build on those positive Tribal, partner, and stakeholder experiences?
  - Does the state have procedures for assessing Tribal, partner, and stakeholder perspectives on the agency's efforts to engage them in the Child and Family Services Reviews process and for responding to Tribal, partner, and stakeholder feedback received?
  - How is the agency planning to consult with Tribes, partners, and stakeholders during the statewide assessment, onsite review, and Program Improvement Plan development? Which Tribes, partners, and stakeholders is it planning to consult with, how will it do so (for example, through focus groups, meetings, or websites), and what are the anticipated results?

  - How is the agency planning to involve Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in the statewide assessment, onsite review, and Program Improvement Plan? Which stakeholders is it planning to involve, how will it do so (for example, having them participate in developing key sections of the statewide assessment or Program Improvement Plan or serve as a Reviewer during the onsite review), and what are the anticipated results?

  - What plans does the state have for building on the successful partnerships created to date, and how will it reach out in new ways to those previously reluctant to engage in the Child and Family Services Reviews planning process and continue to identify potential new partners?

  - What type of guidance or technical assistance appeared to help the state achieve greater Tribal, partner, and stakeholder involvement?

- **Check for clear signs of Tribal, partner, and stakeholder involvement when reviewing the statewide assessment or Program Improvement Plan drafts.** Questions such as the following can be valuable in checking for collaboration in the statewide assessment or Program Improvement Plan drafts:

  - Are Tribes, partners, and stakeholders listed as key players in the statewide assessment or Program Improvement Plan?

  - Were those Tribes, partners, and stakeholders involved in previous reviews so that they bring a strong understanding to the statewide assessment or Program Improvement Plan process?

  - What roles are the Tribes, partners, and stakeholders playing in the statewide assessment or Program Improvement Plan development, implementation, and monitoring/analysis process? Are these roles similar to those played during previous Child and Family Services Reviews, or have they been expanded?

Technical Assistance in Support of State Collaborative Efforts

Collaboration is not easy under the best of circumstances. It requires a time commitment and available resources, *and* it is contingent on the interest of agency leaders and the state's current political context. The Children's Bureau and state agency staff can use the following questions to assess whether technical assistance might help the state enhance its collaborative process:

- What types of collaborations and partnerships currently exist?
- Is the state child welfare agency the convener/leader of those collaborations/partnerships or a participant in a process facilitated by others?
- How strong is the evidence of these collaborations, as reflected in the statewide assessment, onsite review, and Program Improvement Plan?
- What changes have resulted from those collaborations/partnerships, and what has been the impact on outcomes for children, youth, and families?

- With whom/with which agencies has the agency been unable to establish a collaborative partnership?
- What have been the barriers to those collaborations, and how might technical assistance help address those?

States should consult with their Regional Offices to explore accessing Children's Bureau-supported technical assistance or investigating other outside resources related to collaboration.

Working With Key Partners and Stakeholders: Tribes, Courts and Youth

It is critical for states to engage three of their key partners—Tribes, courts, and youth. State child welfare agency staff managing the Child and Family Services Review process need to determine the best methods for doing so. In selecting those methods, states should consider both the issues specific to each group and the more general issues of collaboration, such as:

- Transportation issues (Where are Child and Family Services Reviews meetings scheduled? How will people get to those?)
- Meeting dates and times that accommodate participants' other commitments and schedules (for example, not during school hours)
- Systems for sharing information about the Child and Family Services Reviews with the key Tribes, partners, and stakeholders
- Ways to mentor or otherwise support key Tribes, partners, and stakeholders, particularly youth, during their involvement

The section below highlights the benefits of collaborating with Tribes, courts, and youth during the Child and Family Services Reviews; provides strategies for doing so; and outlines potential roles they can fulfill during the statewide assessment, onsite review, and Program Improvement Plan.

Collaborating With Tribes

State child welfare agencies can engage Tribal representatives in the Child and Family Services Reviews process by identifying and then working with the leaders of:

- Local Tribes
- Local Tribal organizations, such as urban service centers
- Local chapters of national organizations addressing Tribal issues
- Statewide Tribal organizations
- Tribal child-placing agencies or social services

Benefits of Collaborating With Tribes

- Clarifies the roles and responsibilities for the provision of care to Tribal children to better serve Native American children and families

- Provides opportunities to improve outcomes for Native American children served by the child welfare agency

- Enhances mutual understanding of the role of governmental agencies in formulating or implementing policies that have Tribal implications

Statewide Assessment

States can engage Tribal representatives in the statewide assessment process through:

- Providing formal notification of the Child and Family Services Reviews to the Tribal chairpersons/executive directors and social services directors, and requesting that they designate appropriate persons to be involved throughout this collaborative process

- Using the Child and Family Services Reviews process to formalize and enhance consultation and collaboration with Tribes; consulting early in the process and engaging Tribal representatives in meaningful roles, discussions of key issues, and decision-making

- Developing materials about the Child and Family Services Reviews to share with Tribal representatives; these materials should help them understand the benefits of the Child and Family Services Reviews to their efforts to support children and families[18]

- Including Tribal representatives on teams formed to complete the Statewide Assessment and/or associated work groups

- Inviting Tribal representatives to participate in surveys and focus groups

- Holding key statewide assessment meetings or focus groups on Tribal lands, in Indian Country, and/or on reservations, and at times convenient for Tribal members

- Asking Tribal representatives to identify any Tribal data that they would like to share related to children served by the state child welfare agency and to help analyze state agency data

- Identifying child welfare issues related to Native American children served by the state agency, and exploring strategies for resolving those with Tribal representatives, including building on the sharing of information that occurs in developing state and Tribal Child and Family Services Plans and reporting annual progress in each entity's Annual Progress and Services Report

- Identifying areas in which states and Tribes could work together better to improve their child welfare systems

- Initiating cross-training opportunities for state and Tribal child welfare agency staff

- Involving Tribal representatives in drafting sections of the Statewide Assessment Instrument

- Soliciting Tribal representatives' comments on Statewide Assessment Instrument drafts

Onsite Review

States can engage Tribal representatives in the onsite review through the following activities:

- Notifying key Tribal representatives about the timeline for planning and conducting the onsite review

- Inviting Tribal representatives to designate staff to participate as case record Reviewers during the onsite review

- Conducting stakeholder interviews with Tribal representatives (and providing to them in advance of the interview a copy of the questions that they will be asked)

- Inviting Tribal representatives to attend debriefings and results sessions

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[18] A fact sheet for Tribal child welfare officials is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105#Fact Sheets.

Program Improvement Plan

States can engage Tribal representatives in the Program Improvement Plan process through the following activities:

- Providing a copy of the Final Report to Tribal representatives
- Including Tribal representatives on teams formed to develop the Program Improvement Plan and associated work groups
- Establishing Memoranda of Understanding or Agreement. Through these agreements, the state agency and Tribes agree to work together to address child welfare policies and practices needing improvement. A Memorandum of Agreement, for example, might identify state and Tribal roles in recruiting foster parents. The partnerships created by these memoranda also enable state agencies to focus improvements on issues important to Tribes and reassure Tribes of the agency's willingness to collaborate
- Asking for assistance in identifying areas needing improvement
- Engaging Tribal representatives in analyzing state and local data to identify Tribal issues and concerns and promising practices
- Ensuring that the state's ongoing Quality Assurance efforts address issues concerning Native American children and include Tribal representatives in measuring program improvement activities
- Inviting Tribal representatives to review and comment on Program Improvement Plan drafts
- Teaming Tribal representatives with state child welfare agency staff to implement and monitor Program Improvement Plan activities. Ideally, state agencies engage Tribal representatives throughout the Child and Family Services Reviews process as stakeholders participating in the statewide assessment and onsite review, or in serving as onsite Reviewers, as appropriate. Engagement in Program Improvement Plan planning and implementation therefore flows logically from the collaboration established during the stages of the review cycle. In situations in which Tribal representatives were not involved in the Child and Family Services Reviews before the Program Improvement Plan process, states might provide a thorough and targeted explanation of the process and outcomes and ask Tribes for input into designing, and assistance in carrying out, Program Improvement Plan strategies
- Including Tribal representatives on Program Improvement Plan evaluation teams
- Identifying technical assistance needs for both Tribes and state child welfare agencies
- Initiating cross-training opportunities for state and Tribal child welfare agency staff about practice issues related to agency/Tribe jurisdiction over child welfare cases
- Holding Program Improvement Plan meetings on Tribal lands, in Indian Country, and/or on reservations
- Acknowledging both the uniqueness of Tribal child welfare circumstances and perspectives and the shared goal of improving outcomes for children and families

Collaborating With the Courts

State child welfare agencies can involve the courts in the Child and Family Services Reviews process by establishing working relationships with individuals and organizations such as:

- Chief Justice
- State Court Administrator
- Court Improvement Program Director
- Local presiding judges
- Agency attorneys
- *Guardians ad Litem* and Court-Appointed Special Advocates
- State bar association
- Parents' attorneys
- State Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges
- Juvenile Probation Officers
- Governor's Task Force on Juvenile Justice

Benefits of Collaborating With the Courts

The courts play an integral role in supporting positive outcomes for children and families engaged in child welfare services, and there are significant benefits to engaging them fully in the Child and Family Services Reviews process:

- Increases judicial and court personnel awareness of the benefits of the Child and Family Services Reviews process

- Ensures that the experience and perspectives of court personnel inform the Child and Family Services Reviews and Program Improvement Plan processes

- Ensures that new strategies for improving child welfare agency and court collaboration are designed by both agency and court personnel

- Promotes court interest in implementing and monitoring the impact of Program Improvement Plan strategies

- Builds ongoing relationships between agency and court personnel that affect day-to-day practice

- Promotes a coordinated and integrated approach to addressing issues raised through the Court Improvement Program and the Program Improvement Plan

Since the launching of the Child and Family Services Reviews, the Children's Bureau has strongly encouraged states to use the process to enhance their collaboration with the courts. In addition, the scope of the Court Improvement Program, as amended and reauthorized by the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001 (Public Law 107-133), was expanded to (1) include improvements that the highest courts deem necessary to provide for the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in foster care, as set forth in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, and (2) implement corrective action plans, as necessary, in response to findings about state child welfare systems identified by the Child and Family Services Reviews.

A related Information Memorandum[19] shares information about the special efforts that the Children's Bureau makes to foster collaboration between courts and state child welfare agencies. The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 added several new objectives to Child and Family Services Reviews-related efforts to promote court-child welfare agency collaboration. The Act: (1) appropriated funds for two new grants to improve case tracking and analysis by the courts and to provide training of court personnel, including cross-training with child welfare agency staff, and (2) added a title IV-B plan requirement for states to demonstrate substantial, ongoing, and meaningful collaboration with state courts during IV-B and IV-E planning and the Child and Family Services Reviews.

Strategies for Collaborating With the Courts[20]

Statewide Assessment

States can engage court personnel in the statewide assessment process through:

- Engaging the Chief Justice early in the process by notifying him or her of the purpose and schedule of the Child and Family Services Reviews
- Developing materials about the Child and Family Services Reviews to share with court personnel; the materials should help them understand the benefits of the Child and Family Services Reviews to their operation and to children and families[21]
- Notifying the court of the Child and Family Services Reviews timeline, including when the statewide assessment will take place
- Developing plans for engaging court personnel, and reporting on those during the Child and Family Services Reviews planning conference calls
- Including court personnel on the Statewide Assessment Team
- Conducting surveys, focus groups, and informational meetings with, or in conjunction with, court personnel
- Requesting court personnel's assistance in identifying legal and judicial issues affecting safety and permanency
- Developing cross-agency data teams to compare state agency and court data with regard to procedures for ensuring children's safety and permanency. For example, states can create teams of child welfare agency and court personnel to explore patterns in the data regarding the number of pending terminations of parental rights
- Engaging court personnel in cross-training opportunities

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[19] ACYF-CB-IM-02-01, available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/im0201.pdf.
[20] Adapted from *How and Why To Involve the Courts in Your Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).* Mark Hardin, National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues, American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, March 2002, http://apps.americanbar.org/child/rclji/cp_agency.pdf.
[21] A fact sheet for court representatives is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105#Fact Sheets.

- Requesting court assistance in preparing the narrative portions of the statewide assessment relative to the work of the court
- Asking key court personnel, both those involved in the Program Improvement Plan development process and others, to review and comment on statewide assessment drafts
- Creating a special Child and Family Services Reviews legal-judicial subcommittee to examine safety, permanency, and well-being issues and report on those to the Statewide Assessment Team

Onsite Review

States can engage court personnel in the onsite review through:

- Notifying key court personnel about the timeline for planning and conducting the onsite review
- Inviting senior court personnel to designate staff to participate as case record Reviewers during the onsite review
- Conducting stakeholder interviews with court personnel (and providing them in advance of the interview a copy of the questions that they will be asked)
- Inviting court personnel to attend exit meetings/debriefings

Program Improvement Plan

States can engage court personnel in the Program Improvement Plan process through:

- Providing the Final Report to the Chief Justice and other juvenile or family court judges
- Notifying key court personnel about the Program Improvement Plan timeline
- Engaging Court Improvement Program staff in exploring how best to integrate the Court Improvement Program Strategic Plan and the Program Improvement Plan
- Including key court personnel on the Program Improvement Plan Development Team and associated work groups
- Requesting court involvement in the development of Program Improvement Plan strategies to address onsite findings, particularly as they relate to the role of the court
- Using existing court data to measure the results of Program Improvement Plan action strategies, and exploring opportunities for new court data collection activities in support of the Program Improvement Plan
- Inviting court personnel to review and comment on Program Improvement Plan drafts
- Identifying TA needs; for example, strategies for achieving timely filings for terminations of parental rights

- Initiating cross-training opportunities for child welfare agency and court personnel on issues such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act requirements
- Partnering to develop strategies for approaching the state legislature to request needed legislative changes
- Ensuring that the Program Improvement Plan is aligned with Court Improvement Program reassessments
- Developing sustainable, regularly scheduled meetings to address challenges/problems that affect children's permanency plans and to shape and implement the state's reform agenda
- Teaming court personnel with state child welfare agency staff to implement and monitor Program Improvement Plan action strategies
- Committing to implement specific aspects of the Court Improvement Program's strategic plan for court improvements
- Including court personnel on Program Improvement Plan evaluation teams
- Sharing child welfare data with the court on an ongoing basis

Collaborating With Youth

State child welfare agencies can engage youth who are being or have been served by the child welfare system in the review process by identifying and then working with existing youth organizations and advisory boards. These might include:

- State, regional, and local child welfare youth advisory boards
- Governors' youth councils
- Local chapters of national child welfare or youth-related organizations
- Transitional Living Programs
- Community-based youth-serving organizations
- Youth life skills groups
- The child protective services component of the child welfare agency (to engage youth who received child welfare services in the home)
- State or local runaway or homeless youth programs
- State or local foster care, foster youth, or foster parent associations
- State or local mental health association subcommittees on youth
- State or local bar association subcommittees on youth/child welfare/juvenile justice
- Local Court-Appointed Special Advocate or *Guardian ad Litem* chapters
- State or local children's advocacy center organizations

Benefits of Collaborating With Youth

Young people bring a unique perspective to the Child and Family Services Reviews process. As former service recipients or volunteers in their local communities, they offer child welfare agencies insights into how services to youth can best be provided. There are significant benefits to engaging them fully in the Child and Family Services Reviews process, which:

- Offers youth who are the consumers of child welfare services the opportunity to provide input into systems change
- Ensures the input of youth about what works and what does not, and their service needs
- Offers child welfare agency staff the opportunity to consider new strategies on the basis of the creative perspectives that youth provide
- Empowers youth by engaging them in meaningful contributions to their communities, the child welfare system, and other youth in care and strengthening their sense of competence, usefulness, and belonging
- Creates opportunities for youth to speak on behalf of the agency regarding the needs of foster care youth and the program and systems improvements that need to be made

Strategies for Collaborating With Youth

Statewide Assessment

States can engage youth in the statewide assessment process through:

- Identifying existing statewide youth-serving or youth organizations, youth advisory or advocacy groups, or other standing committees that can help to promote the engagement of youth in the Child and Family Services Reviews process by both recommending youth participants and providing training and mentoring during their involvement
- Working with state or local foster youth ombudspersons to identify youth who might be involved
- Training staff on working collaboratively with youth; experienced youth can serve as co-trainers and co-facilitators
- Developing systems for preparing youth to collaborate with the state and its other partners during the statewide assessment process. These might include, for example, inviting them to Child and Family Services Reviews-related public forums or trainings, and developing Child and Family Services Reviews materials targeted to their age group and potential role in the process[22]
- Including two or more youth who are being or have been served by the child welfare system—either through in-home or foster care services—on the Statewide Assessment Team (and subgroups, as appropriate), providing a clearly defined role, setting expectations, and assigning a senior staff person to provide them with an orientation and to mentor them during the process. By engaging several youth, states can provide a measure of safety for them and increase their confidence in speaking up on youth-related issues

[22] A fact sheet for youth is available at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105#Fact Sheets.

- Defining the types of information that the Statewide Assessment Team feels it needs to gather from youth in completing the Statewide Assessment Instrument, and developing questions for doing so

- Conducting surveys of, and focus groups with, youth regarding their experience with the child welfare agency, and using the results to outline areas to be further assessed through the onsite review and to guide program analysis, service realignment, and practice improvements. These surveys and focus groups should target or include, when possible, youth engaged through child protective services and those who experienced out-of-home care

- Meeting with existing youth advisory or advocacy groups to gather input for inclusion in the statewide assessment about how child welfare services for youth meet the goals of ensuring their safety, permanency, and well-being

- In preparation for the second round of Child and Family Services Reviews, some states already are exploring such strategies for engaging youth in the process

Onsite Review

States can engage youth in the onsite review process through:

- Developing systems for preparing youth, especially those who are being or have been served by child welfare systems, or representatives of youth-serving organizations, to participate in stakeholder interviews during the onsite review. Begin by inviting them to Child and Family Services Reviews-related public forums or trainings and developing related materials targeted to their age group and role in the process

- Conducting stakeholder interviews with youth (and providing them in advance of the interview a copy of the questions that they will be asked)

- Inviting youth and/or representatives of youth-serving organizations to attend the state's exit conference at the end of the review week

Program Improvement Plan

States can engage youth in the Program Improvement Plan process through:

- Including youth on the Program Improvement Plan Team and in Program Improvement Plan development and implementation work groups (through both youth advisory or advocacy groups and inclusion of individual youth on teams and work groups)

- Inviting youth from the committee responsible for developing the Chafee State Plan to participate in the Program Improvement Plan development and implementation process to address overlapping areas of improvement

- Engaging youth in assessing Program Improvement Plan progress on issues related to serving youth in the child welfare system; for example, they can serve on a Program Improvement Plan monitoring subgroup charged with reviewing Program Improvement Plan progress quarterly

- Asking youth from various committees (Program Improvement Plan and other state advisory or advocacy groups on social service delivery) to review and comment on Program Improvement Plan drafts and participate in the subsequent revision discussions

- Asking staff from youth-serving organizations to participate in the ongoing evaluation of state data relative to youth outcomes; for example, taking a role in assessing youth involvement in the development of their case plans

- Teaming state child welfare agency staff with staff of state or local youth organizations to help design and implement specific Program Improvement Plan action steps

Appendix C
Statewide Data Indicators

Title	Description	Denominator	Numerator	Risk-Adjustment	Exclusions	Notes
Permanency in 12 months for children entering care	Of all children who enter care in a 12-month period, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering care? [c] *For national standard calculation, uses AFCARS periods 2011B through 2014A.*	Number of children who enter care in a 12-month period	Number of children in the denominator who discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering care	• Age at entry • State's foster care entry rate	• Children in care < 8 days • Children who enter care at age 18 or older	• Trial home visit adjustment is applied. • Youth entering at 17 but who turn 18 while in care or discharge at age 18 are not counted as achieving permanency.
Permanency in 12 months for children in care 12-23 months	Of all children in care on the first day of a 12-month period who had been in care (in that episode) between 12 and 23 months, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of the first day? *For national standard calculation, use AFCARS periods 2013B and 2014A*	Number of children in care on the first day of a 12-month period, who had been in care (in that episode) between 12 and 23 months	Number of children in the denominator who discharged to permanency within 12 months of the 1st day	• Age on first day	• Children age 18 or older on the first day of the year	• Youth age 17 on the first day but who turn 18 while in care or discharge at age 18 are not counted as achieving permanency.

Title	Description	Denominator	Numerator	Risk-Adjustment	Exclusions	Notes
Permanency in 12 months for children in care 24 months or more	Of all children in care on the first day of a 12-month period who had been in care (in that episode) for 24 months or more, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of the first day? *For national standard calculation, use AFCARS periods 2013B and 2014A.*	Number of children in care on the first day of a 12-month period, who had been in care (in that episode) for 24 months or more	Number of children in the denominator who discharged to permanency within 12 months of the 1st day	• Age on first day	• Children age 18 or older on the first day of the year	• Youth age 17 on the first day but who turn 18 while in care or discharge at age 18 are not counted as achieving permanency.
Re-entry to foster care in 12 months	Of all children who enter care in a 12-month period, who discharged within 12 months to reunification and live with relative or guardianship, what percent re-entered care within 12 months of their discharge? [a] *For national standard calculation, uses AFCARS periods 2011B through 2014A.*	Number of children who enter care in a 12-month period, who discharged within 12 months to reunification, and live with relative or guardianship	Number of children in the denominator who re-enter care within 12 months of their discharge	• Age at exit • State's foster care entry rate	• Children in care < 8 days • Children who enter or exit care at age 18 or older	• If a child has multiple re-entries within 12 months of discharge, only the first re-entry is selected.
Placement stability	Of all children who enter care in a 12-month period, what is the rate of placement moves, per day of foster care? *For national standard calculation, use AFCARS periods 2013B and 2014A.*	Of children who enter care in a 12-month period, total number of days these children were in care as of the end of the 12-month period [d]	Of children in the denominator, total number of placement moves during the 12-month period [e]	• Age at entry	• Children in care < 8 days • Children who enter care at age 18 or older • Any time in care and placement changes that occur after the 18th birthday is not counted. • The initial removal from home (and into care) is not counted as a placement move.	• Placement stability is expressed as a rate per 1,000 days in care.

Title	Description	Denominator	Numerator	Risk-Adjustment	Exclusions	Notes
Maltreatment in foster care	Of all children in foster care during a 12-month period, what is the rate of victimization, per day of care? *For national standard calculation, use Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) periods 2013A and 2013B and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) FY 2013 Child File.*	Of children in care during a 12-month period, total number of days these children were in care as of the end of the 12-month period [a]	Of children in the denominator, total number of substantiated or indicated reports of maltreatment (by any perpetrator) during a foster care episode within the 12-month period [b]	• Age at entry (for children entering) or age on first day of the 12-month period (for children already in care)	• Complete foster care episodes lasting < 8 days • Youth in foster care at 18 or older • For youth who start out as 17 years of age and turn 18 during the period, any time in care and victimizations that occur after the 18th birthday is not counted. • Records with an incident date occurring outside of the removal episode, even if report dates fall within the episode (used when incident date exists) • Maltreatment reports that occur within the first 7 days of removal • Victims age 18 or older • Records with disposition or report dates falling outside of the 12-month period • Subsequent reports that occur within 1 day of the initial report	• Cases are matched across AFCARS and NCANDS using AFCARS ID. • Maltreatment in foster care is expressed as a rate per 100,000 days in care.
Recurrence of maltreatment	Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during a 12-month period, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated maltreatment report within 12 months?	Number of children with at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report in a 12-month period	Number of children in the denominator that had another substantiated or indicated maltreatment report within 12-months of their	• Age at initial victimization	• Subsequent reports that occur within 14 days of the initial report • Subsequent reports in which the incident date shows that the subsequent report refers to the same incident as the initial report • If report date is prior to the	• Relies primarily on the report date to determine whether the maltreatment occurred in the first 12

Title	Description	Denominator	Numerator	Risk-Adjustment	Exclusions	Notes
	For national standard calculation, use NCANDS FY 2012 and FY 2013 Child Files.		initial report		first 12 months • Victims age 18 or older	month period; therefore, if a case does not reach disposition until the following 12-month period but has a report date in the first, we include it. • Unborn children are included in the 0-3 months age group.

Notes

The letters 'A' and 'B' are shorthand for the 6-month AFCARS reporting periods. The 'A' period spans October 1st – March 31st, and the 'B' period spans April 1st – September 30th of any given year. The year always refers to the year in which the 6-month period ends. For example, 2014A refers to the 6-month period of 10/1/2013 through 3/31/2014.

[a] For example, if during the 12-month period two children were in foster care, one child for **10** days (1st episode), the same child for **40** days (2nd episode), and the other child for **100** days (his only episode), the denominator would = **150** days (**10+40+100**).

[b] For example, if during the 12-month period two children were in foster care, and one child had **3** substantiated or indicated reports and the other had **1** such report, the numerator would = **4 reports** (**3+1**).

[c] If a child has multiple entries during the 12-month period, only the first entry in the 12-month period is selected.

[d] For example, if during the 12-month period two children entered care, one child for **10** days and the other child for **100** days, the denominator would be **110** days (**10**+**100**).

[e] For example, if during the 12-month period two children entered care, and one child had **3** moves and the other had **1** move, the numerator would = **4** moves (**3+1**).

Appendix D

Logistics and Planning Material

This appendix includes the Conference Call Schedule, the Traditional CFSR Planning Timeline, and the State Team Pairings Chart.

Conference Call Schedule

Conference Call Series

The state and the Children's Bureau participate in a series of at least three preparatory conference calls to discuss the core elements of the Child and Family Services Review. These discussions are intended to be an extension of the joint planning and ongoing conversations between the state and Children's Bureau and may vary in specific content based upon which review path has been approved. The number, timing, and/or content of the conference calls can be modified with Children's Bureau concurrence based upon the individual needs of the state.

Conference Call #1

Conference call #1 should be held no later than 5 months before the onsite review period. The topics for the first call in the conference call series will cover the following areas:

Review Type	Call Content
Both Review Types	**Status** • State planning and preparation • Identifying key state and federal contacts and roles in the review **Review joint planning discussions** • The collaborative process for the CFSP/APSR • Involvement of Tribes, partners, and stakeholders in the state's improvement processes • Integration of CFSP and APSR collaboration processes into the Program Improvement Plan process • Inclusion of additional internal or external stakeholders in the CFSP-CFSR/Program Improvement Plan implementation team, if needed **Overview of state timelines** • Statewide Assessment Instrument submittal • Program Improvement Plan submittal • State policies, procedures, and other materials **Statewide Assessment** • Remaining outcomes and systemic factors needing supplemental data or information, if any, based on review of most recent CFSP/APSR • Process and time frame for Children's Bureau review of the Statewide Assessment Instrument and determination of which stakeholder interviews are needed • Additional call scheduling to discuss the Statewide Assessment Instrument, if necessary **Data Profile** • State performance on national standards • Data quality and accuracy **Questions/other issues to address on next call** **Next steps**

Review Type	Call Content
State Conducted Case Reviews	**Status of case review process** • Planning and implementation status, if applicable • Identification of state case review onsite schedule • Timing of federal participation • State QA and federal participation process (refer to QA document)
Traditional Reviews	• The process for in-home case sample selection • Process and time frame for identification of sites • State team training, scheduling, and logistics

Conference Call #2

Conference call #2 should be held no later than 3 months before the onsite review period. The topics for the first call in the conference call series will cover the following areas:

Review Type	Call Content
Both Review Types	• Update and follow-up from call #1 • Onsite review logistics • Quality Assurance process • Questions/Other issues to address in next call • Next steps
State Conducted Case Reviews	No Additional Content
Traditional Reviews	• Review teams • Debriefing process

Conference Call #3

Conference call #3 should be held no later than 1 month before the onsite review period. The topics for the first call in the conference call series will cover the following areas:

Review Type	Call Content
Both Review Types	• Update and follow-up from call #2 • Confirmation and finalization of stakeholder interviews • Questions/other issues to address • Next Steps
State Conducted Case Reviews	• Confirmation and finalization of federal participation in onsite review activities and oversight
Traditional Reviews	• Confirmation and finalization: – Site selection and scheduling – Sampling and case elimination process – Review teams – Case-specific interview schedules • State Team Training

Traditional CFSR Planning Timeline

This schedule of activities/tasks is intended to support states and the state CFSR team in preparing for a Traditional Review after the date of the onsite review has been determined. Based on that date, specific due dates for each task can be identified by the state and the Children's Bureau, using the time frames provided below. This timeline may also be used to develop agendas for ongoing planning calls between the Children's Bureau and states in preparation for the onsite review. Activities may be performed by states, the state CFSR team, or together.

Task/Activity	Timeframe for discussion/completion	Due Date
Key Dates • Verify - Period under review - Sampling period—in-home (IH) and foster care (FC) cases - Data profile period	Approximately **8-9 months** before scheduled review (or within 1 month after determining the date of the review)	Cell intentionally left blank
State Team Training • Schedule for approximately 2 – 3 weeks before onsite review • Contact JBS to discuss possible dates and location • Share final date/location with the CB Regional Office (RO)	Approximately **8-9 months** before scheduled review (or within 1-2 months after determining date of review, as training locations can be difficult to secure)	Cell intentionally left blank
State Needs for Technical Assistance or Discussion • Select and schedule from topics: - OMS overview/training (determine if state wants a CQI site, if so set up with JBS) - OSRI training (online) - Systemic factors assessment - Data profiles, performance, and data quality - Implementing CQI (in preparation for PIP)	Approximately **8-9 months** before scheduled review (may need to revisit again 5 months before review and after state team is identified)	Cell intentionally left blank

Task/Activity	Timeframe for discussion/completion	Due Date
Statewide Assessment Instrument (SAI) Planning • Decide who from the state will participate in developing it (Helpful to have overlapping membership among the Statewide Assessment (SA), onsite review, and PIP development teams to facilitate cross-review-phase experiences and information-sharing) • Discuss: - Involvement of external stakeholders • Review instrument together, go over expectations for data in systemic factors assessment - Discuss rReference to most recent APSR in submission of SAI - Timeframes (CB will send SAI to state with data profile approximately 6 months before onsite review; final SAI due back to CB within 4 months of the date that the state received the SAI with data profile) - Plan for development, submission of drafts to CB • Note that stakeholder interviews cannot be determined and scheduled until final SA is submitted	Approximately **8-9 months** before scheduled review	Cell intentionally left blank
Site Selection • Use information in Chapter 3 of the CFSR Manual for discussion • Schedule Measurement and Sampling Committee (MASC) call • Send relevant data to be used in consideration to MASC before call • Select Metro site 1a, 1b, Site 2 and Site 3; send location info to JBS by CB RO	Begin discussions **6-7 months** before onsite review Sites selected **6 months** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
State IT Contacts • Identify state and local IT contacts and provide to JBS for follow-up	After sites have been determined, no later than **6 months** before the onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
Data Profiles Sends to the state in the SAI	At least **6 months** before the onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank

Task/Activity	Timeframe for discussion/completion	Due Date
Data Profile Discussion • Review data quality issues • Discuss areas for further data analysis in preparation for PIP • Determine data-related TA needs	**6 months** before onsite review (and after data profile is sent to state), call scheduled	Cell intentionally left blank
Onsite Review Team • Reference (State) Team Pairings Chart in identifying # of reviewers and additional state staff needed for team (including state leads and local site coordinators) • Discuss roles of local/state site leads, local site coordinators, state QA team members (to include role in debriefings) • Discuss conflict of interest for state/federal participants • Encourage involvement of state CQI staff • If state plans to conduct reviews using OSRI for PIP, discuss utilizing staff who will be involved in that review process as reviewers and QA staff • Determine date for finalizing state team members (at least 5 months before onsite review, as state staff will be helping to coordinate the review) • Complete and submit to JBS State Contact Information Form (after team is determined)	Begin discussions **5-6 months** before onsite review (preferably after sites are selected) State Review team should be finalized no later than **5 months** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank

Task/Activity	Timeframe for discussion/completion	Due Date
Onsite Review Logistics planning to include JBS; may require ongoing calls) • Determine: - Location of state-level interviews - Location of reviews at each site (ensure locations meet reviewer needs for case record review, interviews, telephone calls) - Transportation to/from case interviews, if needed - Transportation and hotel for review team - Supplies needed - Daily schedules (arrival and departure times), office hours - Role of JBS staff on site - Location for local debriefings • Confirm IT needs have been handled by IT contacts, including: internet access, MIFI needs, cellular accessibility concerns	**3-4 months** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
Sampling • Schedule MASC call • Discuss IH and foster care FC sampling frames with MASC • Note date state will send sampling universe for IH and FC to MASC (no later than **75 days** before onsite review) • Note date CB will send random sample per site to state (no later than **60 days** before onsite review)	MASC discussions held at least **3-4 months** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
Onsite Review Team – Federal Staff • CFSR Leader and RO Leader identify federal/consultant team members (including secondary oversight) and state reviews consultants to ensure no conflict of interest • Finalize federal team	Federal review team should be finalized no later than **3 months** before to onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank

Task/Activity	Timeframe for discussion/completion	Due Date
Policy Discussion • Include: - State's use of contracted case management (Specifically discuss requirements for face-to-face contact between the child/family and the agency caseworker.) - Differential/Alternative Response and implications for IH sample - Permanency goals - Unique case practices such as use of safety resources (non-FC placement of children outside of their homes) - Item 1 relevant policies - Placement types - Medication monitoring policies/protocol	**2-3 months** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
Case Sample – Universe • Send sampling universe for IH and FC to MASC	No later than **75 days** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
Case Elimination • Review case elimination protocol/criteria • Develop plan for case elimination, to include regular check-in calls	Begin discussions **2-3 months** before onsite review (preferably right before State anticipates receiving sample from CB)	Cell intentionally left blank
Case Sample • CB to send random sample per site to state	No later than **60 days** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
Finalizing Sample • Finalize IH and FC case sample (to include oversample)	**1-2 months** before the review	Cell intentionally left blank

Task/Activity	Timeframe for discussion/completion	Due Date
Case Review Schedule Discussion • Discuss steps in scheduling process (reviewing case to identify key interviews needed, scheduling interviews, scheduling case record review, call/mail reminders for interviewees a week before review) • Discuss ongoing case elimination that may occur during scheduling or during the review week (and back-up case prep). • Determine date for submitting final schedules (no later than 2 weeks before onsite review)	Begin discussion after case sample is finalized (**1-2 months** before onsite review) so that the state is prepared to begin developing schedules.	Cell intentionally left blank
State Team Training Discussion • Confirm participants • Plan/schedule debrief session for after training is complete	**1-2 months** before onsite review (Check in 1 month before scheduled training.) Training occurs 2-4 weeks before onsite review. Debrief occurs soon after training is complete.	Cell intentionally left blank
• **Final Statewide Assessment Instrument** final SAI to CB	**2 months** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
CB informs state of needed **Stakeholder Interviews** • Notify state of items requiring interviews and key questions that may be asked related to the SAI (in addition to basic functioning questions) • Determine if interviews will occur only during the review week or if additional phone interviews will occur the week prior • Develop plan with state for submitting interview schedule to state CFSR team	No later than **1 month** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank

Task/Activity	Timeframe for discussion/completion	Due Date
Review Week Management – Communication plans and QA process) • Discuss roles of state and site leads in communication during review (OSRI issues, progress updates) • Identify safety concerns by reviewers • Plan for Reviewer emergencies • Ensure team has shared relevant contact info (cell, e-mail) • Discuss role of federal QA staff and secondary oversight process • Discuss process and timing for resolving rating disagreements	**One month** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
Final Results Session – Planning Discuss: • Timing, location • Participants • Agenda	Begin discussion no later than **1 month** before onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
• **Case Review Schedules** Finalize case review schedules	Schedules finalized no later than **1-2 weeks before** onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank
Stakeholder Interviews Schedule • CB to review schedule and finalize	Schedule finalized no later than **1-2 weeks before** onsite review, depending on when interviews will occur	Cell intentionally left blank
• **Final Report**	Sent to State approximately **30-60 days** after onsite review	Cell intentionally left blank

(STATE) Team Pairings Chart

Children's Bureau FY XXXX

Child and Family Services Reviews: Traditional Review

State Level Team

Role	Name
CB Leads (Regional Office and CFSR Unit Leader)	Cell intentionally left blank
State Review Team Leader	Cell intentionally left blank
SIG Note-Taker	Cell intentionally left blank
SIG Note-Taker	Cell intentionally left blank

Metro Site: XX

X Site: Team 1A

Role	Name	Agency
Local Site Coordinator	Cell intentionally left blank	State
CB Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	CB RO
CB Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	CB CFSR
Local Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	State
QA Team – State	Cell intentionally left blank	State
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
Secondary Oversight	Cell intentionally left blank	Federal
Onsite TA	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP

X Site: Team 1B

Role	Name	Agency
Local Site Coordinator	Cell intentionally left blank	State
CB Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	CB RO
CB Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	CB CFSR
Local Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	State
QA Team-State	Cell intentionally left blank	State
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
Secondary Oversight	Cell intentionally left blank	Federal
Onsite TA	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP

(STATE) Team Pairings Chart Children's Bureau FY XXXX

Child and Family Services Reviews: Traditional Review

Team Pairing Chart Site 1A: XX

Team #	State Reviewer	CFSR CWRP Reviewer
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Team Pairing Chart Site 1B: XX

Team #	State Reviewer	CFSR CWRP Reviewer
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Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
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Site 2: XX

Role	Name	Agency
Local Site Coordinator	Cell intentionally left blank	State
CB Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	CB RO
CB Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	CB CFSR
Local Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	State
QA Team – State	Cell intentionally left blank	State
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
Secondary Oversight	Cell intentionally left blank	Federal
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Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
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Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP

Team Pairing Chart Site 2: XX

Team #	State Reviewer	CFSR CWRP Reviewer
Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
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Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
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(STATE) Team Pairings Chart Children's Bureau FY XXXX

Child and Family Services Reviews: Traditional Review

Site 3: XX

Role	Name	Agency
Local Site Coordinator	Cell intentionally left blank	State
CB Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	CB RO
CB Site Leader	Cell intentionally left blank	CB CFSR
Local Site Lead	Cell intentionally left blank	State
QA Team-State	Cell intentionally left blank	State
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
QA Team – Federal	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP or Federal
Secondary Oversight	Cell intentionally left blank	Federal
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Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	State
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP
Reviewer	Cell intentionally left blank	CWRP

Team Pairing Chart Site 3: XX

Team #	State Reviewer	CFSR CWRP Reviewer
Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank	Cell intentionally left blank
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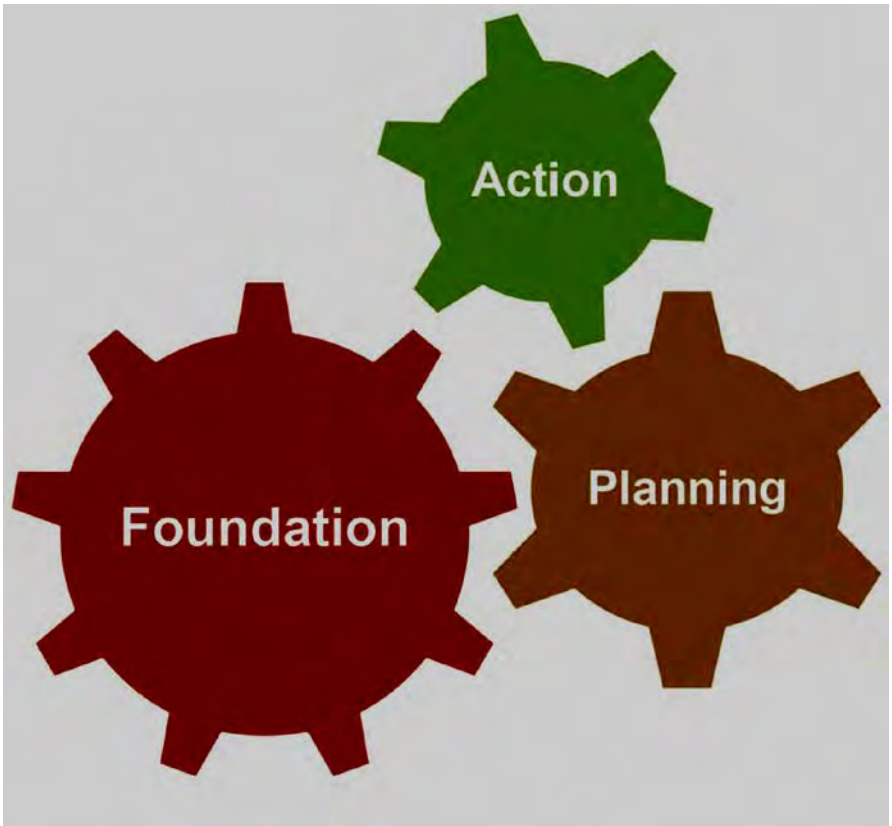
Appendix E

A Guide for Implementing Improvement Through the CFSP and CFSR



Children's Bureau

August 2014

This document is also available on the CFSR Information Portal at https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105 (scroll to Program Improvement Planning under CFSR and PIP Instruments, Manuals, and Guides).

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A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING IMPROVEMENT THROUGH THE CFSP AND CFSR

This guide translates principles of effective implementation for states and the Children's Bureau to use when working jointly on the development and implementation of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan (CFSR-PIP). The Children's Bureau developed this framework recognizing the challenges involved in implementing and sustaining system improvements.

This guide presents an implementation framework organized into three phases: Phase 1, Foundation; Phase 2, Planning; and Phase 3, Action. Each phase includes multiple steps that states are encouraged to take to successfully implement improvements. The guide includes questions that states can use as internal points of discussion and planning and that the Children's Bureau can use to guide conversations about a state's progress through each of the three phases. While this tool is not required, it is provided to help states successfully implement and sustain improvements in their change efforts.

The steps appear in a linear fashion, but executing the steps is actually a nonlinear and reflective exercise. At various times, the state may need to circle back to previous steps, reassess previous understanding, and modify actions based on the developments in each step.

PHASE 1—FOUNDATION

In this phase, the state identifies a planning and implementation team (team) and develops a communication plan. The state also analyzes relevant data and decides what strategic goals and initiatives will be the focus of the work.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE TEAM AND DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION PLAN

The purpose of Step 1 is for the state to identify and/or establish the team; determine team roles and responsibilities; engage stakeholders, Tribes, and courts; and develop a communication plan. The team plays a critical role in the improvement process. The team will be engaged throughout the entire process and will provide guidance through each phase.

A. Planning and Implementation Team

The team is the core working group of individuals responsible for the leading the change effort. The team uses the communication plan to facilitate the broader involvement of other partners and stakeholders. (See B. Engage Partners and Develop a Communication Plan later in Step 1.)

<u>Membership</u>

The state selects individuals for team membership who are empowered to influence change and make decisions, or have access to those who can. The state includes individuals who have experience and skills in implementing systems change. The state considers the key roles that need to be represented on the team. The state should consider selecting members that would be key partners in implementing reform efforts including:

- Individuals representing various levels and jurisdictions of the child welfare system; e.g., state, county, and private agency
- Individuals from Tribes, courts, and related state agencies—e.g., education, mental health, law enforcement
- Key stakeholders and partners such as providers, foster and adoptive parents, parents, youth, and families, or their representatives
- Formal and informal leaders

Regular Review of Team Composition

Determine the process for ensuring that the necessary partners are members of the team throughout the CFSP and CFSR program improvement process. As the process moves from the foundation phase to the planning and implementation phases, new members representing different roles or functions may be needed, or the state may find the need to develop additional teams to support the implementation of individual interventions. (See Step 7, C. Team Membership and Local Teams.)

Key Roles and Responsibilities

Obtain buy-in from state leadership on a written outline of the roles and responsibilities of the team. Consider:

1. What is the purpose of the team as defined by leadership?

2. What are the roles and responsibilities of the team as described by leadership?

3. How does the team fit into the structure of the agency and to whom does the team report?

4. What is the specific plan for reporting recommendations to agency leadership and reporting leadership communication to the team?

5. Are the decisions recorded to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities over time?

Clarify Decision-Making Process

Draft a written statement outlining the team's decision-making process to guide implementation. Consider:

1. How does the team plan to make decisions (by majority vote, consensus, or another method)?

2. What values and methods of work has the team decided to follow throughout the project (e.g., working toward consensus, embracing diverse opinions, resolving conflicts)?

B. Engage Partners and Develop a Communication Plan

Internal partners include but are not limited to mid-level managers, supervisors, and caseworkers.

External partners include but are not limited to Tribes, courts, service providers, foster and adoptive parents, parents, youth, and families, or their representatives, and other entities that may be affected by the interventions.

Engagement

Plan for gaining buy-in from internal and external partners. Enlist their support of the improvement process. Plan for their participation throughout the CFSP and CFSR-PIP period.

1. Who are the internal and external partners with whom the state will communicate information and solicit feedback?

2. What strategies will be used to enlist their support?

Communication Plan

Develop a plan for communicating with internal and external partners during each step of the process. The communication plan identifies the ways that the larger group of internal and external partners will be engaged throughout the process. The communication plan addresses:

- an ongoing review of data and assessment of agency strengths and concerns;
- selection of priority areas for the CFSP and CFSR-PIP;
- identification of goals, objectives, target populations, and interventions;
- identification and installation of implementation supports;
- implementation of interventions; and
- assessment of process and outcome data.

The communication plan should include bi-directional communication for providing relevant information to internal and external partners, then gathering and analyzing their feedback throughout the CFSP and CFSR-PIP implementation period.

Bi-directional communication emphasizes both receiving and providing information and ideas in an active, responsive, and receptive manner.

> *Helpful Hint: In addition to determining what communication processes are most effective, it is important for the state to consider what types of information and what communication formats are most significant to and most useful for internal and external partners based upon their role. Communicating involves meaningful bi-directional engagement, in which internal and external partners participate in a continuous feedback loop coordinated by the state. Ideally, there should be a method for tracking the information.*

STEP 2: ASSESS NEEDS

The purpose of Step 2 is to use quantitative and qualitative data to get a precise picture of the state's strengths, needs, and challenges, and to prioritize areas of concern that the state chooses to target for system improvement.

A. Understand the State's Current Context

1. What political and resource issues challenge the state's efforts to develop and implement the CFSP and CFSR-PIP?

2. Do any consent decrees, settlements, or pending lawsuits need to be considered?

3. What state initiatives are already underway?

4. What issues of disproportionality should be considered?

5. What issues regarding the state's implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act should be considered?

6. If the state has an approved child welfare waiver demonstration project, how will it integrate with the CFSP and CFSR-PIP?

7. What are the goals of discretionary grant projects active in the state that should be integrated with the CFSP and CFSR-PIP?

8. What current or recent training and technical assistance (T/TA) should be considered?

B. Identify the State's Data to Assess Performance

Identify qualitative and quantitative data that target specific performance concerns. Consider a range of data sources, including relevant data from partners, stakeholder groups, and other organizations that assess performance or otherwise inform understanding.

Prioritize data to maintain focus on specific CFSP goals to be accomplished to strengthen the state's overall child welfare system and required CFSR improvement areas.

1. Identify CFSR outcomes (statewide data indicators and case review data) and systemic factor data.

2. What other performance data in the child welfare information or Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information (SACWIS) systems should be considered?

   Helpful Hint: Examples of additional performance data include: title IV-B caseworker visit data, National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), timeliness of investigations, relative placements, data on placement types, and other data the state has gathered to target specific concerns. The Child Welfare Outcomes Report Data is a useful website: http://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/data/overview).

3. What supplemental data are available regarding well-being; e.g., survey or focus group data, trauma screening and assessment tool data, functional assessment data, quarterly or semi-annual progress reports, and/or evaluation findings of an active waiver demonstration project, if applicable?

C. Review and Understand the Data

Consider the strengths and potential limitations of each of the identified data sources to qualify its usefulness or credibility to assess the state's strengths, needs, and challenges.

1. Are there data quality concerns that limit the use of the data or its credibility?

2. Does the age of data limit its usefulness?

3. Are certain populations or geographic areas excluded from the available data?

Issues/Strengths/Concerns

Conduct a thorough review of available data to identify issues and determine strengths and areas of concern.

1. In looking at the data, what big issues can be identified? What do the data suggest in terms of higher and lower areas of performance?

2. Which performance areas fall below the national or case review standards and require improvement?

3. What do the data reveal about safety concerns?

4. What do the data show in terms of trends over time?

5. How does performance vary by different factors? Some key factors that may need to be considered include allegation type, age of child, racial and ethnic background, permanency goal, geography, case type, and identified strengths and needs of parents and children.

6. When combining the data into an integrated view of the state, what does it suggest about contributing factors and potential explanations for child and family outcomes in areas of safety, permanency, and well-being?

D. Engage Partners in Bi-Directional Discussion of Data

User-Friendly Data

Determine how to provide user-friendly data to internal and external partners. Consider how best to present complex data using trend lines, graphs, charts, and comparisons.

1. What data are most relevant to the different internal and external partners?

2. How will the state organize, present, and discuss the data in a user-friendly way with internal and external partners?

Methods for Gathering Feedback

Determine how to gather input from internal and external partners on their interpretations of the data, contextual factors, further analysis needed, and the state's priorities for improvement efforts.

E. Determine What Additional Analysis Is Needed

Based on information gathered in section D, determine whether additional data analysis, collection, clarification, and research are needed.

F. Prioritize Needs or Areas of Concern

List the critical needs or areas of concern, then consider the following questions:

1. What do the data, analysis, and partner feedback suggest about priorities for improvement?

2. What do the data, analysis, and partner feedback suggest about linkages between the performance areas? What are the cross-cutting issues?

3. What are the strengths to build on?

4. What efforts are currently in place to address performance?

5. What priorities for improvement will produce the greatest effect on the safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for the state's children and families?

STEP 3: ESTABLISH CFSP AND CFSR-PIP GOALS

The purpose of Step 3 is for the state to determine and clearly articulate the overarching goals of the CFSP and CFSR-PIP in terms of the changes the state hopes to achieve by the end of the improvement period.

The goals should align with the state's prioritized needs, respond to improvement efforts mandated by federal regulations, and reflect the input of key internal and external partners.

Informed by the prioritized needs and areas of concern requiring improvement identified in Step 2, the state determines what changes it would like to see by the conclusion of the CFSP or CFSR PIP period. These desired changes could occur at the systems, family, and/or child levels. It is likely that the CFSP and CFSR-PIP will target outcomes at multiple levels.

> *Helpful Hint: During this step, it may be useful to discuss the "big picture." The state should determine what it wants its child welfare system for children and families to "look like" at the end of the CFSP and CFSR-PIP period and which key outcome areas it wishes to target for measurable improvement. This process would likely include state leadership, the planning and implementation team, and key internal and external partners.*

A. Draft Goals

Determine which broad goals will best address the priority needs and areas of concern identified in Step 2. Focus on improved safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

1. What goal(s) are needed to address the safety outcomes?
2. What goals(s) are needed to address the permanency outcomes?
3. What goal(s) are needed to address the well-being outcomes?
4. What goal(s) are needed to strengthen systemic factors?

B. Review and Finalize Goals

1. Do the goals selected address all required improvement areas?
2. Are the goals measurable?
3. Are the goals being considered achievable within the CFSP and CFSR- PIP time periods?
4. Do the goals meaningfully target the identified improvement areas?

STEP 4: UNDERSTAND TARGET POPULATIONS

The purpose of Step 4 is to understand the populations whose child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes the state is attempting to improve through its initiatives, so that the state can select appropriate interventions to address the identified problems.

Before the state selects what reform initiatives and interventions it wants to implement as part of the CFSP or CFSR-PIP, it is critically important to develop a comprehensive understanding of the population(s) whose outcomes it wishes to change, including their characteristics and needs. The state then uses this information to inform the selection of the most appropriate interventions that are likely to improve the identified outcomes for the target population(s).

The state will likely have already begun in Step 2 some of the analysis needed to define the target populations. When the state uses state child welfare information system data to describe their target population(s) (e.g., age, race, reason for removal, placement type, number of placements), states should apply quantitative data analysis methods that will help them better pinpoint needs, characteristics, and/or combinations of factors that are contributing to a specific problem.

Qualitative methods, such as using new or existing interviews, surveys, and focus groups with key staff and stakeholders, and/or case record reviews, should be considered. These are appropriate for gaining deeper knowledge of key issues, detecting patterns, and understanding what is going on in different jurisdictions around the state.

Helpful Hint: The state may find it useful and meaningful to collaborate actively with its internal and external research and evaluation partners during this phase. This could include leveraging existing relationships with university partners who have the knowledge and statistical analysis programs (e.g., SPSS, SAS, NVivo) to do this work.

A. Identify Target Population

The state identifies the target populations experiencing the problem(s) that the state wants to address through its CFSP and CFSR-PIP efforts.

B. Target Population Characteristics and Needs

Characteristics are generally related to demographics or past experiences that are not readily changeable.

Needs define the circumstances and conditions that are amenable to change, and may be targeted as part of the state's CFSP and CFSR-PIP.

For each key target population, identify the child, case, and family characteristics and needs that are associated with the outcomes the state is trying to address, as well as any relevant systemic barriers.

1. What child characteristics and needs, e.g., age, behaviors, are relevant to the identified outcome area? How did the state determine which child characteristics and needs are relevant to the problem?

2. What case characteristics, e.g., foster care, in-home, are relevant to the identified outcome areas? How does the state determine which case characteristics are relevant to the problem?

3. What family characteristics and needs, e.g., incarcerated parent, substance abuse, are relevant to the identified outcome areas? How did the state determine which family characteristics and needs are relevant to the problem?

4. What systemic barriers are relevant to the identified outcome areas? These could include staffing barriers, e.g., recruitment, caseload size; organizational support/service barriers, e.g., lack of appropriate services; insufficient number of foster homes; or leadership barriers, e.g., lack of buy-in from local child welfare directors, conflicting state-court relationships. How did the state determine which systemic barriers are relevant to the problem?

*Helpful Hint: It may be helpful to examine the population(s) that is not experiencing the identified problem, e.g., children who **are** reunified within 12 months; children who **are not** re-entering care, to understand how this population may be different from those experiencing the problem.*

At the end of this process, states should be able to summarize the key child, case, and family characteristics and needs of their target populations as well as the relevant systemic issues that may be affecting their identified outcomes. The state uses this information to inform the intervention selection process.

STEP 5: DEVELOP OBJECTIVES AND SELECT INTERVENTIONS

The purpose of Step 5 is to develop objectives and select appropriate interventions to meet the needs and challenges and achieve the goals identified in Step 2.

Objectives are broad approaches to achieving goals. Objectives are a helpful way to group related interventions that are intended to implement a particular improvement. Each objective may have more than one intervention.

Interventions are the specific child welfare practices, programs, or policies and enhancements to infrastructure that will be used to make the improvements.

Step 5 also includes discussion of the work necessary to assess the fit of proposed interventions, adapt any intervention, and/or develop new interventions needed to meet the state's goals.

A. Identify and Develop Objectives

Identify one to three objectives to achieve the goals. Objectives are broad, may affect more than one child and family outcome and/or systemic factors, and could include one or more interventions. Consider:

1. What potential objectives may help to achieve the goals?

2. Describe each objective. How will it contribute toward accomplishing the identified goal(s)?

3. How does each objective fit with major state, direction? Does the objective align with a federally funded discretionary grant, title IV-E waiver, or consent decree?

B. Identify and Examine Potential Interventions

<u>Identifying Interventions</u>

Identify potential intervention(s) for each objective. It may be helpful to characterize interventions as ***evidence-supported, adapted***, or ***new.***

Evidence-supported Interventions: For each objective, what are the evidence-supported interventions that address the priority needs/areas of concern addressed in the identified goals and objectives?

Adapted Interventions: For each objective, what evidence-supported interventions can be adapted by the state to address the priority needs/areas of concern addressed in the identified goals and objectives?

New Interventions: When, after careful exploration, the state is unable to identify an evidence-supported intervention that can be implemented "as is" or adapted, what new intervention is being considered to address the priority needs/areas of concern addressed in the identified goals and objectives?

Helpful Hint: Many resources are available for identifying possible interventions, such as child welfare clearinghouses and websites (e.g., Child Welfare Information Gateway, California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse); capacity building or T/TA websites and resources; relevant journals and evaluation reports; and peer networks.

For each potential intervention the state is considering, what are the core components of each identified intervention?

Core components are the essential building blocks of each intervention. They include the principles, functions, activities, or elements of the intervention that address the identified problem and are essential to achieving the outcomes desired.

Who will receive the identified intervention (e.g., children, families, foster parents, caseworkers, supervisors)?

Helpful Hint: The recipients of an intervention may be different from the target populations whose outcomes the state is trying to improve through the CFSP and CFSR-PIP goals. In order to change practice, a relevant intervention could be a new training curriculum on a particular topic for caseworkers and supervisors. Ultimately, the goal is to improve outcomes for children and families, but in this example, the intervention is targeted at caseworkers and supervisors.

C. Examine Effectiveness of Potential Evidence-Supported Interventions

When considering evidence-supported interventions, consider:

1. How will the identified interventions address the needs of the target populations?

2. What are the specific short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes the state intends to improve through each intervention?

3. What is known about the effectiveness of the intervention the state is considering?

   - Are there research and evaluation findings linking the intervention to improvements in the outcomes the state is intending to affect?

   - If there are no (or insufficient) research and evaluation findings readily available, what additional evidence is the state using to inform its decision?

4. Has the intervention been shown to be effective and culturally appropriate for the specific target populations identified ?

5. Would the intervention need to be further developed or adapted in order to be culturally responsive and successfully implemented within the state's child welfare system?

   - If adaptation is necessary, what steps is the state taking to ensure that any program changes are evidence-informed?

- Will the state be working with child welfare experts experienced in the intervention during the adaptation process?

- What program adaptation activities are needed?

  Helpful Hint: Be very cautious when deciding to adapt an intervention. Conversations should be held about the decision and whether the adaptation is truly necessary. Careful consideration should be given to what changes are proposed, how they may affect the intervention's core components, and the extent to which a change creates a deviation from the intervention's original logic model or theory of change.

D. Assess Fit of the Intervention

Alignment

For each intervention the state is considering, assess how well the proposed intervention is aligned with the state's context. Here it may be useful to revisit the questions asked in Step 2 that were used to understand the state's current context to identify opportunities for building upon existing strengths and maximizing resources.

Capacity

In assessing the fit of a proposed intervention, the state will need to consider their current capacity to implement the intervention. This should include a high-level review of the anticipated level of internal and external stakeholder buy-in, and the needed infrastructure requirements, such as human resources, training, coaching and mentoring, administrative systems, policies, and financial resources. This high-level review may assist the state in ruling in or ruling out proposed interventions. More in-depth conversations on capacity can occur once specific interventions are selected (see Step 6).

E. Developing New Interventions

In some circumstances, there may not be existing interventions that will help the state achieve its identified goals and objectives, and the state may choose to develop a new intervention. If the state is choosing to do so, consider:

1. What would be the core components of the new intervention?

2. Who would receive the intervention?

3. How might the intervention address the needs of the relevant target population(s)?

4. Does the state have the resources and support—refer back to D.

5. What would be the specific short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes the state intends to improve through the intervention?

6. What evidence and experts would the state use to inform the development of this intervention?

Helpful Hint: Before a new intervention is developed, significant research should be conducted to ensure that a relevant practice, program, service, or policy does not exist in the child welfare field that could inform the state's work. States should consider testing newly developed interventions before implementing them statewide and be attentive to any indications that the intervention may cause harm. It is particularly critical when implementing a new intervention to consider the process and fidelity measures discussed later in Step 8.

F. Finalize Intervention Selection and Articulate Theory of Change

Having carefully considered each possible intervention, the state selects the intervention(s) that is most appropriate. For each identified intervention, the state clearly articulates its theory of change for why the selected intervention is likely to achieve its intended outcome.

The ***theory of change*** is essentially a concise explanation that logically illustrates how and why the activities associated with each intervention will address the identified problem and help the state accomplish the desired short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes for that intervention.

STEP 6: ASSESS READINESS TO IMPLEMENT INTERVENTIONS

The purpose of Step 6 is for the state to assess its readiness to implement the selected interventions before beginning implementation. It is also to identify the infrastructure development and technical assistance required.

A. Assess Buy-In

<u>Leadership Buy-In</u>

To assess leadership buy-in, the state considers:

1. To what extent is senior leadership strongly supportive of the identified interventions?

2. To what extent is senior leadership willing and able to shape and lead the change effort for each of the selected interventions? How committed is senior leadership to establishing and communicating each of the selected interventions as top priorities of the agency?

3. To what extent will state leadership take action throughout the implementation process to make this change fully successful?

4. Have the pivotal points when leadership may need to take specific action to fully engage internal and external partners been identified?

Interventions are often rolled out at the county and local levels. The buy-in and support of child welfare leadership at these levels are integral to a successful implementation effort. Private child welfare agency leadership is also important in states that contract out key components of their child welfare services.

1. To what extent are county, local, and/or private child welfare agency leaders supportive of the selected interventions?

2. How committed are they to successfully implementing these interventions in their agencies/jurisdictions?

3. How has this been assessed?

4. What strategies are in place to facilitate additional buy-in of these key leaders, as appropriate?

Internal and External Partner Buy-In

Consider:

1. How has the state assessed buy-in for each of the selected interventions?

2. To what extent do internal/external partners understand the reasons behind making these changes?

3. To what extent are internal/external partners convinced of the value of each selected intervention?

4. Has the state gathered information from internal/external partners to understand how they might be affected by the change?

5. What additional steps need to be taken to gain full support for the interventions and address any concerns preventing full support? For example, has the state considered additional strategies for outreach, engagement, and consensus building?

6. Has the state identified internal/external champions and developed strategies to best use them to engender support for the interventions?

B. Identify the Infrastructure and Resources Required

Consider what infrastructure and resources are required to introduce, implement, and sustain the intervention. This discussion should include identifying which of the resources are readily available and which need to be put in place:

Human Resources

- Staffing needs (numbers needed for service delivery as well administrative support, including any redistribution of staff, as needed)
- Changes to job requirements
- New competencies needed by staff and supervisors
- Changes to supervision requirements
- Implications for union agreements

Helpful Hint: Clearly define and communicate roles for all staff, supervisors, leadership, providers, and other partners within each intervention. All people responsible for implementing the interventions should be clear about the purpose of the intervention and their role in the process.

Training, Coaching, and Mentoring

- Initial training
- Ongoing training and support (supervision or coaching) until the practice becomes a routine way of working
- Modifications required to integrate this practice into the state training system, such as a training academy
- Coaching, consulting with, and supporting supervisors to facilitate clinical supervision
- Strategies for peer learning and support (e.g., a shared learning collaborative, online platforms or forums)

Administrative Infrastructure

- New or modified contracts with service providers
- Tangible requirements such as physical space or transportation

Automated Systems

- Modifications to automated systems, such as the state's SACWIS system, to capture intervention information or forms and assessment tools used in the intervention

Policies and Regulatory Requirements

- Existing policy and regulatory requirements that support implementation
- Existing policy or regulatory requirements that could be barriers to implementation
- New policies, regulations, procedures, and intervention guides needed to support implementation

Financial Resources

- What are the start-up costs associated with each intervention? Consider key elements such as curriculum development, proprietary costs associated with certain evidence-based practices, acquisition and implementation of assessment tools and instruments, required space, initial training, and staff and salary implications.
- What are the ongoing costs to support implementation?
- What funding sources will be leveraged to support identified costs?
- How will costs be supported? For example, will there be a need for additional funding and/or will the state be able to shift funding? Will the state need to modify its cost allocation plan or other federal plans to access available federal support?

C. Training and Technical Assistance

Effective T/TA provides targeted support to build the capacity needed to achieve program goals and improve outcomes. T/TA should be customized, data informed, results driven,

and accountable. The desired outcome for T/TA should be clearly defined, measurable, and aligned the state's theory of change.

To identify required T/TA, it may be helpful to revisit Step 2, where needs were assessed; Step 4, which focused on understanding the target population; and Step 5, which identified and examined interventions including core components, and reviewed the state's theory of change. The state's efforts in each of these stages should help define the T/TA needed to successfully implement each intervention and the primary recipients of the T/TA. T/TA includes T/TA provided from any source, not only that which is Children's Bureau-supported.

D. Cumulative Effect

Consider the timing, roll-out, and full implementation of all of the selected interventions that will be implemented during this same time period. The state considers whether:

1. The supports are adequate for all of the interventions throughout the time period; and

2. Any ripple effects related to the identified infrastructure, resources, or T/TA needs.

PHASE 2—PLANNING

In this phase, the state puts needed support in place, designs monitoring and feedback loops, and plans implementation.

STEP 7: CREATE THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The purpose of Step 7 is to develop and document the implementation plan. This involves documenting the goals identified in Step 3, the target population(s) identified in Step 4, and the objectives, selected interventions, and core components identified in Step 5. Using the results of the readiness assessment completed in Step 6, the state develops the implementation plan by documenting for each intervention the actions to be taken, including the actions needed to put the necessary supports in place; the time frames; and sequencing of key actions.

> *Helpful Hint: The state may want to consider a project management tool such as a Gantt chart to capture all of the program development and implementation activities that need to occur throughout the implementation period.*

For each intervention, the state includes both interim benchmarks and a timetable for achieving the objective over the implementation period. These benchmarks should contain sufficient detail to support reporting on progress the state is making in implementing improvements in subsequent years. Benchmarks may be stated in terms of implementation milestones, such as key activities completed and/or process measures and interim targets for improvement of outcome measures.

A. Infrastructure Support

In Step 6, the state identified the infrastructure supports and resources needed to successfully implement the interventions. These included leadership supports, human resources, administrative supports, automation systems, policies, and financial supports. Document those actions steps and time frames for accomplishing activities needed to put the necessary supports and resources in place.

<u>Leadership Supports</u>

Ensure that leadership is updated on and supportive of all the selected interventions. Initiate additional leadership activities to support implementation of the interventions.

1. Is leadership at all levels of the organization knowledgeable about the selected interventions?

2. Does leadership understand new roles and responsibilities?

3. Has leadership bought into all of the required action steps and timeframes?

4. Have leaders communicated to internal and external partners the reasons for the new interventions and the intended benefits to children and families?

Administrative Supports and Resources

Consider which of the required resources and supports are in place, which require further development, and how gaps will be addressed:

1. Have job descriptions and required competencies been developed? Have staff been designated, hired, or contracted?

2. Has the training curriculum for each intervention been developed? Are trainers identified? Has training been scheduled? Has the state considered its patterns of worker turnover and attrition and how this might affect the implementation of the interventions? How is the state addressing this important workforce dimension?

3. When will required changes to physical supports be in place; e.g., space and equipment, for staff and families?

4. When will required changes to the data system occur?

5. Will the case review system be used to capture additional information about the intervention? If so, is it ready?

6. When will required changes to legal and policy framework(s) or practice standards occur?

B. Sequence Interventions

Given the infrastructure and resources needed for each intervention, use the information to design an implementation plan. The implementation plan sequences the interventions so the actions and resources needed for each intervention build on or support one another and are not overwhelming to field staff or others affected by the change.

1. Which interventions will the state pursue at the beginning of the time period and when will other interventions be added?

2. What did the state consider when sequencing the interventions?

3. How were decisions made about where to test and when to scale up interventions?

4. Has the state identified any potential barriers to implementation and how these potential barriers may affect the timing and roll-out of the interventions?

5. What is the state's plan for addressing potential barriers and re-thinking sequencing if needed?

C. Team Membership and Local Teams

Review the composition of the planning and implementation team given the interventions that have been selected, and consider:

1. Based on the interventions selected, does the team require additional or alternative members with focused expertise?

2. Based on sequencing decisions, should the state establish an additional implementation team at the local level to direct, manage, and monitor implementation of selected intervention?

When local implementation teams are established, consider:

1. Have the roles and responsibilities for the local team(s) been clearly defined?

2. What communication protocols need to be developed to create linkages across all teams, including linkages to the overarching team?

D. Scale

In Step 3, the state determined and clearly articulated the overarching goals of the CFSP and CFSR-PIP. In Steps 4 and 5, the state refined target populations, identified objectives, and selected interventions to pursue in order to achieve the goals. While these goals reflect state-level performance, the state should consider implementing in a transformation zone or in one or two sites before scaling up in order to effectively manage implementation.

Proposed Scale

1. What is the state's proposed plan for staging the implementation of the interventions over the PIP and the 5-year CFSP period?

2. How were decisions about transformation zones/sites made and what factors did the state consider?

3. Will the scale proposed be sufficient to meet the improvement goals in a timely manner?

Criteria for Expansion

1. What is the criterion for expansion?

2. What is the process for selection of additional locations/populations for the expansion? Will the state be conducting readiness assessments at the local level? If so, what will the process look like?

3. What approach will be used to roll out interventions and how was this decided? For example, will the state be working with the developer of an identified intervention? Will the state use a "train-the-trainer" model? Another approach?

E. Managing and Monitoring Implementation Over Time

Pursuing the objectives and implementing the interventions is a dynamic process that requires ongoing managing and monitoring over the implementation period. Consider:

1. What are the critical times when extra supports may be needed?

2. What process is in place to track and monitor the implementation over time?

3. What process is in place to review the adequacy of the implementation plan over time?

STEP 8: SELECT MEASURES AND ESTABLISH METHODS FOR MONITORING

The purpose of Step 8 is for the state to establish methods for monitoring. This involves selecting process and fidelity measures; identifying the source of the data for all measures, including outcome measures; and developing feedback loops. The communication plan is updated to reflect the measures and the feedback loops that provide information on whether the interventions are operating as intended and are having the desired effect on outcomes.

A. Develop Process Measures

Process measures collect data on key activities and processes of the intervention.

Identify data and information that can be collected for each intervention to measure progress with implementation. Consider short-term and long-term process measures that can serve as indicators of success.

1. What key implementation activities should be tracked to assess progress? (Refer to the implementation plan activities and time frames identified in Step 7.)

2. What aspects of the intervention and associated processes should be measured to assess progress with implementation? For example, consider indicators like the number of referrals to an identified intervention, number of families enrolled, and services provided.

3. What implementation supports identified in Step 7 might need to be monitored particularly in the initial stages of implementation, to ensure that the supports are in functioning in the way intended? How will they be assessed?

4. What data sources will be used to capture the above information? How will the data be collected and at what intervals? Who will collect and analyze the information?

B. Develop Fidelity Measures and Assessment Processes

Fidelity measures include the formal or informal tools, instruments, or processes that states can use to assess the degree to which interventions are implemented as originally intended. It is useful to refer back to the core components of the intervention and understand the methods for assessing the degree of fidelity to each component.

Determine how the state will know the intervention(s) is being implemented as intended.

1. What protocols or processes will be used to monitor fidelity to the core components of each of the interventions? Will they be formal or informal? How did the state make these decisions?

2. Who will collect and analyze this information?

C. Identify Outcome Measures

Identify data that can be collected to determine the extent to which the intervention is affecting the desired outcome.

1. What outcome data does the state intend to use to measure the goals identified in Step 3?

2. How will the state track early performance on these outcomes in initial implementation sites and/or initial implementation populations?

3. What measures will be used to determine whether there is improvement in identified outcomes?

4. Are there any data collection or data quality issues to be considered and addressed?

> *Helpful Hint: Development and adjustment of data collection efforts take time. Planning and testing for these changes should begin early. Pay special attention to ensuring data quality and ensuring that the state has measures for assessing change in all outcomes it intends to improve through the CFSP and CFSR-PIP process.*

D. Develop Feedback Loops

Establish feedback loops to report progress, successes, barriers and lessons learned. Consider feedback loops for those implementing the intervention, those supporting the intervention, and the consumers and partners participating in and/or affected by the intervention.

1. What communication process(es) need to be put into place to ensure that the state can learn what implementers, partners, and stakeholders such as parents, youth, and families are experiencing in a timely manner?

2. Which feedback loops are needed at the local implementation level and which are needed at the state level?

3. How will results from the fidelity assessments be shared with those implementing the interventions so adjustments can be made, as needed?

4. What processes need to be put in place to ensure that the feedback is received by someone who can take action to provide supports and/or address barriers?

5. What process will be in place to ensure that bi-directional communication for responses/solutions to concerns are provided in a timely manner?

> *Helpful Hint: The state may want to use statewide and local implementation teams that meet frequently during the initial implementation stage. These teams are able to problem-solve and provide a rapid response to barriers identified as the intervention first begins.*

E. Update Communication Plan

Update the plan for communication identified in Step 1 based on the objectives and interventions selected.

PHASE 3—ACTION

In this phase, the child welfare agency, partners and stakeholders, including parents, youth, and families, begin to experience the changes, and the implementation team is engaged in continuous monitoring and improvement of the change effort.

STEP 9: INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION, ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS, AND ADJUSTMENT

The purposes of Step 9 are for the state to (1) move forward with implementation of the interventions; (2) use feedback loops and process measures to assess how well the implementation is going; and (3) make initial adjustments to address any identified challenges.

A. Begin Implementing Interventions

Referring to the implementation plan developed in Step 7, consider:

1. Is the state meeting the timelines for starting the implementation? Are any pieces behind or ahead of schedule?

2. To what extent are the resources and supports for each intervention in place? Consider administrative, staffing, and leadership supports.

B. Begin Initial Fidelity Monitoring

Using the measures identified in Step 8, consider:

1. How well is the intervention being implemented according to the model?

2. How well are the core components of the intervention being implemented? Consider key processes such as referral, intake, assessment, service provision, and follow-up.

3. To what extent are the fidelity protocols developed in Step 8 being used? Are any areas of practice not following the fidelity protocols?

4. How consistent is practice from site to site?

5. If there is no information on fidelity, what are the barriers to getting this information?

C. Begin Collecting Data On Initial Processes And Outcomes

For each intervention, use the process measures established in Step 8 to consider:

1. What are the process measures indicating? For example, how many clients are being referred, or how many are receiving services at each implementation site?

2. What are the preliminary indicators of success? Is there any indication of unintended negative consequences? Are there differences across sites? What might this indicate?

3. If initial information about implementation processes and preliminary data about children or families served is not available or reliable, what are the barriers to getting this information?

D. Begin Implementing Feedback Loops

Using the feedback loops established in Step 8, consider:

1. What feedback is being received from those implementing the intervention(s), those supporting the intervention(s), and consumers and partners implementing and/or affected by the intervention(s)?

2. What feedback is being received at each level of the agency?

3. If no feedback has been received, or feedback has only been received from some of the key groups, what are the barriers to obtaining feedback?

E. Make Initial Adjustments

Based on information from feedback loops, process measures, and fidelity monitoring, what action(s) will the state take to strengthen implementation for each intervention? Consider statewide actions as well as site-specific actions. Consider actions that address strengthening implementation supports and fidelity.

STEP 10: ASSESS IMPROVEMENT IN OUTCOMES AND ADJUST INTERVENTIONS

The purpose of Step 10 is for the state to determine whether the interventions are having the intended effect, and to make adjustments as necessary.

A. Assess Effect

To determine whether each intervention is having the intended effect and achieving outcomes, the state reviews information obtained through from the feedback loops and outcome measures. Consider:

1. To what extent is each intervention improving performance on the measures?

2. To what extent is the performance on these measures consistent from site to site?

3. Are there any unintended negative effects? If so, what are they, and how can the state mitigate or eliminate them?

B. Make Adjustments

Based on the information identified above, determine whether adjustments are needed.

> *Helpful Hint: It is important to determine the reason for the concerns or lack of progress so relevant adjustments can be made. Before making modifications to a component of the intervention, determine whether the concern/lack of progress is because of faulty, incomplete, or insufficiently supported implementation processes. Consider alternative interventions only when the state has ruled out faulty, incomplete, or insufficiently supported implementation processes.*

Address Implementation Concerns (if applicable)

1. What supports need to be put in place or strengthened to improve implementation?
2. How can fidelity to the model be strengthened? Are there barriers that need to be addressed to ensure that the intervention is being implemented as intended?
3. What adjustments can be made that will not alter the core components of the intervention and the associated likely outcomes?

Address Intervention Concerns (if applicable)

1. If implementation is proceeding with the proper supports in place and according to the practice guide (i.e., all core components are in place), why are outcomes not being achieved?
2. Do adjustments to core components need to be made? Consider adjusting core components only after determining that the proposed changes will not have a negative effect on achievement of outcomes. As adjustments are being considered, refer to the theory of change and how the original intervention was supposed to improve the intended outcomes.

STEP 11: SCALE UP AND SUSTAIN

The purpose of Step 11 is for the state to determine when an intervention is ready for expansion and to plan and implement this expansion with necessary supports in place.

In Step 7, the state identified the initial site(s) for implementation and the sequencing of sites for subsequent implementation. The state also developed criteria to determine when each intervention should be scaled up. In this final step, the focus is on reviewing the information and data from the initial site(s), identifying lessons learned, and applying the criteria to determine if, when, and how statewide expansion should occur.

A. Determine Whether Intervention Is Ready for Expansion

Analyze data and information on the initial implementation efforts to determine whether the intervention is ready for expansion based upon criteria for expansion in the Implementation Plan. Consider information received through feedbacks loops, and process, fidelity, and outcome measures (refer to Step 10).

1. Is implementation in the initial site(s) happening in a way that is consistent with the model?
2. Is the intervention having the intended benefit at the initial sites?
3. Is the intervention achieving the required improvement in CFSP or CFSR-PIP outcomes?

Consider adjustments that were made in the initial site(s):

1. Has the initial implementation site(s) had sufficient time to assess whether adjustments are having the desired benefit?

2. What do data and information show about the adjustments?

B. Assess and Adjust Implementation Plan for Expansion

Revisit roll-out schedule in Implementation Plan. Based on data and information from feedback loops and the process, fidelity and outcome measures, do the roll-out schedule and sequencing still make sense?

Adjust the expansion plan based on data and lessons learned:

1. What new supports have been identified or put in place based on the experience of initial site(s)?

2. Are those supports available for the next sites?

3. Are adjustments made to initial site(s) being incorporated into planning for the next sites?

C. Assess Supports and Implementation Activities to Prepare Next Sites

Review supports and readiness activities for the next site to determine whether the site is prepared to begin implementation activities.

1. Has a local implementation team been formed?

2. Have readiness activities taken place with staff, stakeholders, and community partners?

3. Have the successes and lessons learned from initial sites been communicated to next sites?

4. Are supports in place or planned for next sites?

D. Sustain Improvement

Determine and put in place plans and mechanisms to sustain the improvement efforts after the completion of the CFSR-PIP or achievement of the CFSP improvements.

1. How will the state know the intervention is being implemented on an ongoing basis in the intended manner to achieve positive results?

2. What processes will be in place to monitor ongoing implementation and achievement of outcomes?

Appendix F:

[State] Child and Family Services Review Round 3

Program Improvement Plan

This document provides a template states may use to submit their Program Improvement Plans to the Children's Bureau.

The state should provide the name of the state/territory below, and record the date the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is submitted to the Children's Bureau for approval. If the state is required to make revisions to the PIP, record the date the PIP was resubmitted. If the state is not required to resubmit, enter NA in the "Date Resubmitted" field. Upon approval of the PIP, the Children's Bureau will specify the date the PIP is approved, the PIP effective date, the end of the PIP implementation period, and the end of the non-overlapping year. For the "Reporting Schedule and Format," explain briefly how and when the state will report to the Children's Bureau on PIP progress.

State/Territory:

Date Submitted:

Date Resubmitted:

Date Approved:

PIP Effective Date:

End of PIP Implementation Period:

End of Non-Overlapping Year:

Reporting Schedule and Format:

Part One: Goals, Strategies/Interventions, and Key Activities

States are advised to discuss with the Children's Bureau their overall strategies for improvement and an outline of an implementation plan or work plan before submitting their proposed PIP to the Children's Bureau. An implementation or work plan is not required to be submitted to the Children's Bureau. The identification of items, key activities, and measurement should be a joint

Children's Bureau and state effort. It is necessary for the state and Children's Bureau to discuss the state's context and plans over the course of the PIP implementation period.

Goals

Instructions: Identify the improvement goal(s). Be sure to identify in the goal statement the specific outcomes, systemic factors, items, and statewide data indicators that are applicable and required to be addressed. This may be done by specifying the outcome, systemic factor, and items or statewide data indicator in parentheses following the goal statement. Include as many goals as necessary to address areas identified by the Children's Bureau as needing improvement. Number the goals for ease of reference.

Goal 1

Example:

> **Goal 1:** Improve risk and safety assessment/monitoring and family engagement (Safety 2, Well-Being 1)

Strategies/Interventions

Instructions: Briefly describe the strategy or intervention. The strategy/intervention is the implementation of specific child welfare practices, programs, or policies that will be used to make improvements. Please note whether the strategy/intervention is an evidence-based, promising research program and whether it is part of a federal grant or title IV-E demonstration waiver project. This may be specified in parentheses following the strategy/intervention. Strategies/interventions may be directed at making improvements under more than one goal. In those circumstances, the state should identify each of goals. States may find that there are more than one strategy/intervention and multiple key activities associated with each goal. Include additional strategies/interventions followed by key activities as necessary to accommodate the state's PIP, and number each strategy/intervention accordingly.

Strategy/Intervention 1

Example:

Identify three strategies for a goal, using the goal identified in the previous example:

> **Goal 1:** Improve risk and safety assessment/monitoring and family engagement (Safety 2, Well-Being 1)

Strategy 1: Expand implementation of Family Team Meetings to in-home cases in the 10 Regions in the state

Strategy 2: Develop and implement a supervisory training and coaching program focused on risk/safety management and quality caseworker visits

Strategy 3: Implement Homebuilders (evidence-based program) for use in cases that involve substance abuse and children ages 0-5

Key Activities

Instructions: Document the key activities associated with the strategy/intervention. When documenting the key activities, briefly name and describe those associated with the strategy or intervention, including a description of the target population(s) and geographic scope. Key activities are metrics such as a process measure, implementation milestone or benchmark, or interim improvement in outcomes or systemic factors. For each key activity, document the projected completion date. Include additional rows as necessary to accommodate the state's PIP and number each key activity accordingly. Key activities help the state and Children's Bureau determine whether the state is on track to make the required changes for implementation of the improvement.

Key Activity 1:

Projected Completion Date:

Key Activity 2:

Projected Completion Date:

Key Activity 3:

Projected Completion Date:

Example:

Identify 8 key activities using strategy 1 from the example above:

Strategy 1: Expand implementation of Family Team Meetings to in-home cases in the 10 Regions of the state

Key Activities:

- **Key Activity 1:** FTM facilitators hired and trained in Regions 1-4
  Projected Completion Date: MM/YYYY

- **Key Activity 2:** FTM facilitators hired and trained in Regions 5-8
  Projected Completion Date: MM/YYYY

- **Key Activity 3:** FTM facilitators hired and trained in Regions 9 and 10
  Projected Completion Date: MM/YYYY

- **Key Activity 4:** Supervisors and caseworkers trained in all Regions
  Projected Completion Date: MM/YYYY

- **Key Activity 5:** Presentations/information explaining FTM provided to key court partners (judges, parent attorneys, attorneys general, Court Appointed Special Advocates) in all Regions
  Projected Completion Date: MM/YYYY

- **Key Activity 6:** FTM operational in Regions 1-4
  Projected Completion Date: MM/YYYY

- **Key Activity 7:** FTM operational in Regions 5-8
  Projected Completion Date: MM/YYYY

- **Key Activity 8:** FTM operational in Regions 9 and 10
  Projected Completion Date: MM/YYYY

Part Two: Measurement Plan

Instructions: Refer to CFSR Technical Bulletin #8A for information on identifying which items require measurement.

Statewide Data Indicators

Instructions: Complete the following table for each statewide data indicator included in the PIP, adding as many tables as needed to capture all statewide data indicators requiring improvement. List the statewide data indicator and, if applicable, the companion measure in the first column. Identify the national standard for the data indicator in the second column. Identify the baseline for the statewide data indicator in the third column. Identify the improvement goal and, if applicable, the threshold for the companion measure in the fourth column. In the last row of the table, indicate data quality concerns or whether an alternative source of data is used to generate the safety-related data.

Statewide Data Indicator/Companion Measure	National Standard	Baseline	Improvement Goal/Threshold
[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**
Data Quality:			

Case Review Items

Instructions: Complete the following table for each case review item included in the PIP, adding as many tables as needed to capture all case review items requiring improvement *and* measurement. List the case review item in the first column. Identify the baseline for the item in the second column. Identify the improvement goal for the item in the third column. In the last row of the table, describe the data source and approach to measurement for the case review, including the time period that is represented in the baseline, the total number of cases rated (numerator) and the total number of cases rated as a Strength (denominator).

Case Review Item	Baseline	Improvement Goal
[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**
Data Source and Approach to Measurement:		

Systemic Factor Items

Instructions: Complete the following table for systemic factor items that require improvement and a quantifiable data measure, as negotiated with the Children's Bureau. Add as many tables as needed to capture the systemic factor items requiring improvement *and* measurement. In the first column, identify the systemic factor item. In the second column, identify the baseline for the data measure. In the third column, identify the improvement goal. In the last row of the table, describe the data sources and approach to measurement for the systemic factor item. Include in the description the time period that is represented in the baseline.

Systemic Factor Item	Baseline	Improvement Goal
[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**
Data Source and Approach to Measurement:		

Appendix G
[State] Child and Family Services Review Round 3
Program Improvement Plan—Progress Report

This document provides a template states may use to submit their Program Improvement Plan Progress Reports to the Children's Bureau.

The state should provide the name of the state/territory below and, in the "Reporting Period Date or Range" field, record the date or date range that the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) progress report is submitted to the Children's Bureau. Copy the PIP effective date, end of PIP implementation period, and end of non-overlapping year from the approved PIP, and enter these dates in the respective fields below.

State/Territory:

Reporting Period Date or Range:

PIP Effective Date:

End of PIP Implementation Period:

End of Non-Overlapping Year:

Part One: Strategies/Interventions and Key Activities Report

Goals

Instructions: Copy the goal(s) from the approved PIP, maintaining the same numbering sequence.

Goal 1:

Strategies/Interventions

Instructions: Copy the strategies/intervention(s) from the approved PIP, maintaining the same numbering sequence. Following each strategy/intervention, summarize overall progress, if applicable.

Strategy/Intervention 1:

Progress:

Key Activities

Instructions: Complete the following table. Insert as many tables as required to address all the key activities for each strategy/intervention in the approved PIP. For each reporting period, add the most recent state progress in completing the key activities. If key activities are not completed in accordance with the schedule, or if sufficient progress is not being made, explain the steps the state is taking to address the concerns and ensure improvement is made within the required time frames. In the first column, insert the name of each key activity. In the second column, insert the target completion date. In the third column, select the status from the options provided. If the status is "Completed," enter the date the activity was completed in the MM/YYYY format. If the status is on or ahead of schedule, select "On/ahead of schedule." If the activity is delayed or behind schedule, select "Behind schedule." A key activity that the state has completed or renegotiated in a prior reporting period is no longer applicable for the most recent progress period. If the activity is no longer applicable, select "No longer applicable." No additional progress notes are needed for activities after they are determined not applicable. In the fourth row of the table, provide a description of the successes, challenges, and next steps. If sufficient progress is not being made, provide an explanation of the steps the state is taking to address the concerns and ensure improvement is made within the required time frames. Include sufficient information to explain the status of each key activity and, as applicable, refer to the relevant section in the Child and Family Services Plan or Annual Progress and Services Report. In the remaining columns, indicate key activities that the state has completed or renegotiated in a prior

reporting period as no longer applicable for the most recent progress period. No additional progress notes are needed for such activities once they are determined to be not applicable.

Key Activity	Target Completion Date	Most Recent Status (current report date)	Most Recent Progress	Prior Report Status (prior report date)	Prior Progress
[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	☐ Completed MM/YYYY ☐ On/ahead of schedule ☐ Behind schedule ☐ No longer applicable	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	☐ Completed MM/YYYY ☐ On/ahead of schedule ☐ Behind schedule ☐ No longer applicable	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**

Part Two: Measurement Report

Performance on statewide data indicators is jointly monitored and evaluated by the Children's Bureau and the state using data profiles. The state is not required to include information on state performance on the indicators in its PIP Progress Reports. For case review and systemic factor items, the Children's Bureau may request additional supporting details to inform evaluation discussions with the state or when making a final determination of goal achievement. Additional supporting details may include but are not limited to case review result reports, distribution of Strength ratings by sites, and copies of information management reports.

Case Review Items

Instructions: For each case review item requiring improvement, complete the *Case Review Item Information* table below. Identify the case review item and the improvement goal for that item. Complete a *Performance* table for each case review item. To complete the table, enter the current data period in the first row beginning with the baseline period and update the table with information from the corresponding data period. Insert as many columns as needed to cover all of the reporting periods. Provide the total number of cases rated as a Strength in the second row; provide the total number of applicable cases for the item in the third row; and calculate the state's performance by dividing the number of cases rated as a Strength by the total number of applicable cases and insert this percentage in the fourth row. The state may add progress notes in the fifth row to provide additional information. Insert as many items and tables as required to address all the case review items requiring improvement in the approved PIP.

Case Review Item Information

Case Review Item:

Improvement Goal (%):

Performance

[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	Baseline	Reporting Period 1	Reporting Period 2	Reporting Period 3	Reporting Period 4
Data Period (insert date or range)	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]
Number of Cases Rated as a Strength	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]

[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	**Baseline**	**Reporting Period 1**	**Reporting Period 2**	**Reporting Period 3**	**Reporting Period 4**
Number of Total Applicable Cases	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**
Performance (%)	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**	**[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]**
Progress Notes:					

Systemic Factors

Instructions: For each systemic factor item requiring improvement and quantifiable measurement in the approved PIP, complete the S*ystemic Factor Information* section*.* Identify the systemic factor item, the improvement goal for that item, and the data measure being used to evaluate improvement. Complete a *Performance* table for each systemic factor. To complete the table, enter the data period being reported on in the first row beginning with the baseline period. During each reporting period, update the table with information from the corresponding data period using the approved measurement plan. If applicable, provide the numerator in the second row; provide the denominator in the third row; and calculate the state's performance by dividing the numerator by the denominator, then insert that percentage in the fourth row. You may add progress notes to provide additional information. Add as many systemic factor information sections and tables as needed to report on all systemic factor items with quantifiable measurement requiring improvement.

Systemic Factor Information

Systemic Factor Item:

Improvement Goal (%):

Data Measure:
(List the data measure being used to evaluate improvement)

Performance

[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	Baseline	Reporting Period 1	Reporting Period 2	Reporting Period 3	Reporting Period 4
Data Period	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]
Numerator	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]
Denominator	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]
Performance (%)	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]	[Cell Intentionally Left Blank]
Progress Notes:					