Webinar Series

CCWIS Self-Assessment Tools Part I

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Philip Breitenbucher: All right, Welcome to today's webinar. We see that many of you are still joining the webinar, so we're going to get started in about one minute. But we do thank you for being here and we'll get started in just a minute. Thank you. Welcome to the Child Welfare Information Technology Systems Managers and Staff Webinar Series brought to you on behalf of the Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. My name is Philip Breitenbucher and I'm your host for today's webinar. Today's discussion is entitled CCWIS Technical Assistance and Self-Assessment Tools and Monitoring Reviews, Part One. The second part of this webinar series will be presented on Tuesday, November 9th. We'd like to encourage active participation throughout today's webinar. And there are several ways that you can participate in today's webinar. First, you can submit your questions. We ask that you submit those or type those into the question and answer feature that's located at the bottom or top of your screen in the ribbon, it should look like an icon similar to the one on the right of my screen here. You can also use the raise hand feature on your computer or even on your phone. And we will unmute your line. Please monitor your chat if you do raise your hand, we will chat with you privately just to be sure you're ready to ask that question live. And then we will unmute your line and call on you to ask your question. If you've joined us by phone today, you may also raise your hand by just pressing *9. And that will also allow us to see that you've raised your hand.

After today's webinar, you can continue to ask questions by emailing those to ccwis.questions@acf.hhs.gov. In addition to asking questions and being involved in our discussions, which there will be several opportunities in which we'll pause and ask for questions and ask for you to engage in some discussion. You'll also have an opportunity to participate in three polling questions throughout the webinar. And then at the conclusion of the webinar, when you exit out of today's webinar, you'll also see a pop up with a brief survey that should only take about a minute or less even, which we'd love to have your feedback on your experience from today's webinar.

So, let's go ahead and get started. And we're going to ask for your participation here in our audience poll number one. What is the primary role that you play in relation to CCWIS at your agency, please select one of these. We know that many of you actually have multiple roles, so just maybe your primary, just so we can get to know you a bit better. Is your primary role in information technology, project management, child welfare program, quality assurance, or maybe something else. We'll give you just a few more seconds to respond to that, and then we'll go ahead and close it out. Pause 4:38:00-4:45:00

Okay. Thank you for your participation. That looks like the majority of you - about 42% - have stated that your primary role is with information technology, which aligns with the, you know, the audience of this. And then second would be about a quarter of you with a child welfare program. About 18% of project management, and about 14% in other, some other primary role at your agency. So once again, thank you for participating in that poll. It does help us get to know you a bit better and will help our presenters and our panelists tailor their messaging better to you. We're going to go now to our audience poll number two. Which best describes your familiarity with technical bulletin number seven, which is CCWIS Technical Assistance, Self-assessment Tools, and Monitoring Reviews. You can please pick one of these, select one of these. I've read the Technical Bulletin. I've briefly skimmed the Technical Bulletin. I know about it, but I've not read it yet. Or what is Technical Bulletin seven? We'll go ahead and give you just another couple moments to respond to that poll and then we'll continue on. Pause 5:56:00-06:10:00

Alright, fairly split here. So a third of you have read it. A little over a quarter of you've skimmed it. Another quarter of you have, know about it, but haven't had the chance yet to read it. And 15% of you haven't really heard of it yet. So, we'll give you a good introduction to that. So, for our panelists today, which I'm going to introduce now, you have a pretty varied audience, which is great. So, your presenters, you're going to hear first from Tresa Young, who is the Director of the Division of State Systems. You'll also hear from Alex Kamberis, the federal contract support with the Division of State Systems and then also David Baker, who's also a federal contract support. And I've introduced myself. I'll be your moderator. My name is Phil Breitenbucher. And with that, it's my pleasure to now hand things over to Tresa.

Tresa Young: Thanks Phil. Today we are going to talk about CCWIS technical bulletin seven. And Phil went through the long name of it, which is Technical Assistance, Self-assessment Tools and Monitoring Reviews. But you'll also hear us refer to this document as master review technical bulletin. So, we'll either refer to it sometimes as Technical Bulletin seven or the master review document. And if you've, I'm glad some of you had a chance to read it. So, hopefully you will be able to engage and ask questions, as Phil said, because that always makes it a better webinar and helps us understand the concerns that you have. We were wondering if folks felt a little intimidated by the Technical Bulletin. It's a lot of pages and it has a lot of the self-assessment tools at the end of the document. Based on feedback that we received from the states, we went ahead and included quite a bit of technical assistance in the Technical Bulletin itself, as well as the self-assessment tools. So, hopefully that's helpful to you. And when you see a lot of that material, you realize that the majority of it really is technical assistance.

So, today we will be discussing the Technical Bulletin in a little bit more detail than we have previously.

And as Phil noted, we do have a part two webinar, which is on the 9th and it will focus more on the tools themselves. So, some of you may have been able to listen into a similar presentation that we did at ISM. We were, It was great to get to see some of you in person. And we also had two states that we were very thankful who presented with us. And today we didn't include those states. We know folks are very busy. But again, it's important for you to engage in the conversation. And if folks who have either participated in the review or if you haven't participated in one, please feel free to ask questions and make comments as we go along.

So, the Technical Bulletin describes a range of technical assistance options and it describes how we are changing the way we think about compliance. Moving away from compliance for the sake of complying per se, and thinking more about compliance as continuous improvement and continuous support of the program. So, it is a change of paradigm from, you know, am I in or out of compliance to how do I know if I'm doing what I, you know, a good job or if I'm meeting the program needs. And the whole point of building these systems is to help improve service delivery. And so, one of the themes I think you'll hear throughout this presentation is just the constant focus on how do we know if what we're building is improving service delivery. Next slide, please.

So, one of the things we wanted to talk about is just some of the lessons that we learned from SACWIS that helped informed the CCWIS rule as well as the review process. And I'm not sure how many of you participated in SACWIS reviews, At ISM when we ask that question it was about half the audience. So, I was surprised honestly that there were that many folks who have. And the feedback that we received really was mixed. Often the reviews happened after the system was built and the corrective action plan that was a result of that review went on for many years. And over time it became stale and it was out of date for what the program staff are really needing or what was most important to the program staff. So, we wanted a process that is broader and is moving away from prescriptive functions and more toward, again, how are we assessing whether or not we are improving service delivery and whether the system that is being built complies or - for lack of a better word - is, meets, you know, what you described in your advanced planning document. When you tell us what you're, how you're going to build the system, what you're going to build, and when you give us updates about how that's going.

So, again, I mean, the overarching theme, I think for the review process again is on good outcomes, providing accurate and reliable data and how we use the data. And making sure that the system is designed in such a way that it can be shared with other states who might benefit from it. Next slide, please.

So, you'll be hearing common themes throughout the webinar. We really want our technical assistance process to add value, to help agencies identify issues early on, and to strengthen how the information technology staff and program staff work together, as well as with key stakeholders, such as foster parents or youth with lived experience. And how are we working together over time to continuously improve rather than just create a system and sort of have it, have it be done quote, and have it be compliant, quote. We know some of you are concerned based on feedback you've already given us about needing to rely on a pretty prescriptive or stringent compliance process to be able to take to your legislature and say, we have to do this because the feds say we have to do that. And I understand that some folks have that concern. But I don't think we really lose the ability to do that through this new process. We always have the ability to hold the states accountable to the requirements through the APD and through even these TA review processes. But we want the compliance process itself to be lightweight and hopefully most of the key issues to be dealt with ahead of time.

So again, we really want this process to be proactive and we want to take the requirements seriously as the system is being built and really think about how is the system demonstrating value and impacting service delivery. Next slide.

This slide illustrates the continuum of technical assistance opportunities and how they relate to what will become the compliance assessment review. We've begun to refer to that as the CAR. And while we are concerned about the CAR, we’re equally concerned about providing effective technical assistance. Sorry about that, we're getting a bomb threat, a bomb threat that's been cleared so we don't need to worry. But anyway, you might hear some funny noises during the presentation. So anyway, as I was saying, we are equally concerned about the effectiveness of our technical assistance as we are the compliance review or the compliance process. And again, we want the technical assistance process to really help us know, is the system being built as we expected that it would. Perhaps some of you have other ideas about different ways that we can provide technical assistance. And we are open to hearing that feedback from you. So again, whether it's today in the notes or other times that you would want to give us feedback, we are very open to it. Next slide, please.

The Technical Bulletin has a section that describes trigger events, for lack of a better word, and, you know, when it might be a good time to engage in technical assistance activities. And some of these might be common. You may just want help on a specific issue. Or maybe you're developing a request for proposal and you would like specific technical assistance around the RFP. Maybe you've finished one module and you want to have a design review and a program review on that one module before you get too far into the implementation. The good news is that you have the ability to negotiate timing and scope of the review. We can incorporate activities into regular monitoring calls or based on a schedule that makes sense to you, one that will have the best impact. Next slide, please.

And some of these triggers that are on this slide are kind of when a problem arises. But I want us to also think, you know, technical assistance doesn't necessarily have to be because of a problem or a bad outcome. We can look at technical assistance, again, as a way to improve and build upon the work and to make sure basically that what we're building is meeting the needs. But these triggers, you know, again, are the most common kinds of things that you might see. Like maybe, maybe you didn't achieve what you thought you would, that you told us you would in the APD, maybe you had a barrier or something that happened. Or maybe you're getting near the end of development and you want a TA monitoring review that will kind of be a mock review or will be a precursor to what the CAR would be. So again, you can deal with, we can resolve those issues before you actually have your CAR and be in good shape by the time the CAR would come. Next slide, please.

So again, key themes for the review process is we want it to be flexible. We need it to be able to support any CCWIS model and any implementation model. We want the organizations, the agencies, to have significant influence on the timing and what we actually review. And we want it to be an adaptive process that we're constantly approving how effective we're building the systems and how are we sharing the lessons that we've learned? And one other thing on this slide that's important is we have a tendency, I think, to think the review or TA process only relates to systems that are new, new system builds. But it is important for systems that are transitioning to understand the requirements, to think about, are there gaps? Do I need technical assistance on any of these areas? So, it isn't just for new systems, this really applies to new and transitioning systems. Next slide, please.

So, these TA activities are meant to be iterative and incremental. Each step should build on the prior step. And at the end of the day, the federal and the state team should have a good idea of where they stand before the compliance review or the CAR is ever completed. And again, hopefully the body of evidence that the state and federal staff have agreed upon and have been reviewing throughout the technical assistance process, will put both, you know, both parties in a good position to be well-prepared for the CAR. But we really need you to engage to make sure that that happens. And we need to be willing to try to do new things and think about how to do our work differently. Next slide, please.

So finally, this one is really important too - we want a collaborative process. We want to move away from a process that folks may feel is a gotcha kind of process. And we want to think about what does it mean for our process to be collaborative? It really means I think that we have joint, we have joint commitment and a mutual understanding of the work that's being done and what still needs to be done. And we have agreed upon measures - because you're kind of looking at those tools and thinking about how would I show evidence that I'm meeting this requirement - that we're having an agreed upon way, basically that the state plans to do that, again, before it is time for an actual CAR process. And again, we're looking at, is the system keeping pace with changing program needs? And can we support and work with other federal reviews? So, if information on technology is coming up as a barrier, a problem another federal reviews, then we want to make sure that we have alignment and that we're supporting those program needs. Next slide.

Okay, We're going to stop just for a little bit and see if there are any questions - I see chat that's come in, but I'm Phil, do we have any questions in the queue?

Philip Breitenbucher: Yeah. But I just want to remind folks that you can submit your questions in a couple of different ways. First, if you'd like to type us a question or submit it in writing, use the Q&A feature that's typically on the top of your screen, there's a Q&A button there. You can submit a question that way. You can even do that anonymously. You're also able to raise your hand and use that feature as well and we will be able to unmute your line. And you can ask your question live. So, we welcome your questions and comments. And I think we do have, team, I think we have a question that's come in and we'd like to read that.

Alex or David?

David Baker Oh, sorry. Yeah. We have a question about whether or not the deck will be available after the presentation. Yes, the deck will be shared after the presentation immediately, but also it will go through a 508 compliance process and be posted on our Division of State System website once that is complete and we will use our listserv to announce when that is done.

I also would like to clarify, Tresa mentioned something about a bomb threat and just to appease people, I got a few texts about that. It's not in her building at the federal building we work at. Before COVID, there was a bomb threat, but we're all remote workers, and so we are all safe. But you may, at various points hear an alarm blaring drive our speakers, that situation has changed or not changed. But rest assured we are all safe.

Any other questions at this time?

Philip Breitenbucher: I think there was one that had come in earlier.

David Baker: If there is, I cannot see it. I'm sorry. I see that one about the, sharing the slide deck. I don't see another one.

Can you go ahead and read it?

Philip Breitenbucher: You know what, we will go ahead and come back to that. And right now though, Alex, I think we will turn things over to you. Again, just want to encourage our audience to continue to submit those questions. And we'll have a place a little bit further on just in a few minutes which we'll pause again and take those questions. So, Alex, go ahead and take it away.

Alex Kamberis: Hi everyone. All right. Now, after Tresa talked to you about all the different changes in this new process, one of the slides she covered earlier talked about a continuum of TA services. And my part of this presentation will be going over the four components of the continuum. The first being TA activities, which we see as capacity-building. Next slide, please.

So, TA activities are what you're most familiar with, they are phone calls that we do on a regular basis. They are geared towards providing early support in our range of activities to states. These are low risk opportunities for us to grow from each other. There are many times we learn about new technologies or new processes, ourselves, and so we find these very beneficial to us, as well. And the whole idea behind these activities are for continuous improvement on both of our parts. Next slide, please.

So, here are a few examples of key activities as we see them. And many of these you're familiar with. We have the regular phone calls. We have different technical bulletins and toolkits that we put out along with webinars like the one we're on right now. We've also given orientation and CCWIS, for CCWIS agencies use when new staff at states or tribes are hired just to give them background information on not only their agency, but what some of the rules are. I do want to put a plug in for some of our other options. We have a listserv that you can join, see your federal analyst if you're not receiving them. You can submit questions to our inbox there at ccwis.questions. We also have a C-swap, which is our software repository, where some states have already uploaded different code or different examples of functionality in their systems that are shareable by any state who is a member of C-swap. And something I'd also like to mention in the C-swap we have what are called state technology profiles. A very common question we get are, for example, I'm using X software, what other states use this software? Well the technology profiles are meant to be just the place you find that kind of information. Right now, a few states have loaded theirs, but we encourage you to go ahead and do that. It's a great way to find out who else is doing similar work to yourselves. Next slide, please.

Alright, next on the continuum we have what are the self-assessment tools. And we will do much more in depth on these tools on our November 9th webinar, the second part in the series. But I will briefly cover the intent, intent for these tools. And we see these tools as a way to operationalize the CCWIS regulations and help define program requirements so that CCWIS systems can achieve those goals espoused in the regulations. Next slide, please.

So - sorry my dog had a few things to say. These are voluntary tools that we see as being useful to states to identify potential risks and issues for compliance down the road. So as states or tribes are completing these tools, it's a way to self-assess where might be the trouble spots, where might be program-related or technology design-related issues that could use some more attention. Early feedback from several pilot states that have used these tools are very positive. One of the key things I've learned from their feedback is that they wish they had done these early in the process, even in the planning stages. So, we have been sharing that when talking about other states, that there's no reason these have to be done after design or production, they can be done even in planning. And frankly, at any phase of the project as a way to take a status check of where you are in your process. These are not tools that are meant to be completed just by an IT team or just by a program team, many of the questions and goals on these tools take a team to answer. And hopefully IV-E agencies can come together and look at these and complete the tools and self-identify where some of those areas are and then reach out to the Division of State Systems so we can provide some TA or peer-to-peer connections if needed. Next slide, please.

So, here are the tools that we plan - there are 15 in total, nine in the system column and six on the program column. Eleven of them have been published, the link to that will be at the end of this presentation. The ones with asterisks are still in development and we hope to publish those in the near future. And I will leave you with for the self-assessment tools that we encourage you to use these and we think that they'll be helpful in resolving compliance issues early and reduce burden and potential findings in the compliance review down the road. By doing them early, it gives agencies and ACF time to resolve some of the issues that may come up. Alright. Next slide please.

Next on the continuum of TA is what we're calling TA monitoring reviews. These are opportunities for early identification of potential compliance issues and builds upon the self-assessment tools so that we can look at individual modules or entire systems to see where might a potential concern lie. But at the same time they're learning opportunities for both us and you to see what may be needed, what may be needed on the program side, on the IT side, project management side. We see the monitoring reviews as an opportunity to avoid some of the pitfalls of the past when systems were reviewed after deployment. By doing monitoring reviews early in the project, we won't get, repeat the situation from years ago where you build your system, it's done and then the problem is found. We do not have the resources to come in and do a TA monitoring review for every module. But feedback from some pilot states has suggested that maybe the first module is especially important to make sure design and programmatic requirements are being met.

During these monitoring reviews, we'll look at any self-assessment tools that you may have completed. Maybe some issues have even been resolved by the time we get there for a monitoring review. But we see the self-assessment tools as a roadmap for some of the questions we might ask in the demonstrations we see. We think that these cannot be done without close cooperation between ACF and IV-E agencies. So, our intent is to collaborate and negotiate agenda topics, demonstration topics, what modules we'll look at. These monitoring reviews are tended to be supportive technical assistance opportunities and not full compliance checks. So, the idea is that we will be providing TA even while we were doing the demonstrations and reviews. Next slide, please.

So, we see these as being iterative as you develop future modules. We may come in again. You may request that we come in. Some states have already been doing that. We have tackled this remotely and on-site. And frankly, there are pros and cons of both approaches. But we'll work with you to negotiate the best approach for your particular project. There are pros and cons to doing it both ways. And finally, we get a lot of questions about this. We will issue a summary letter, but no formal response or action plan will be needed from the agency. We may bring it up on follow-up calls and discuss some of the items. But unlike SACWIS reviews or a formal compliance review, these monitoring reviews are simply meant to identify the strengths, identify risks or issues, and find TA opportunities for the future. Next slide, please.

Alright. And finally, the last stage of the continuum is the CCWIS assessment review or the CAR. Tresa mentioned this a little bit earlier. But this phase of the continuum is about compliance and system integration. As agencies build their modular systems, we want to come in and make sure that all the pieces fit together and program outcomes are being achieved and design outcomes are met. Next slide, please.

While we're still working on some of the details for the CAR process, we do anticipate conducting a formal compliance review no earlier than one to two years after CCWIS is fully operational. Because we've done monitoring reviews in advance, we will try to focus on risks and issues identified in the self-assessments or previous monitoring reviews as a launching point. But again, as I just mentioned, with an overall focus on the cohesion and integration of the different modules.

We will issue a formal report, unlike with the monitoring reviews and responses will be addressed by agencies through the APD process. Next slide, please.

Here are just a few things that we'll be looking at, may look at during a CAR and each project is different. So, these may not apply to all projects. But one of our primary goals is to make sure that program goals and outcomes are being met. That's why these CCWIS systems are being built, is to support the program. We're also looking at previous risks identified through the monitoring review and self-assessment process. And we are also looking at design and making sure these are done modularly and follow the CCWIS design requirements outlined in the regulations. And a few other bullets there.

So, I have one more slide and then we'll take some questions. Next slide, please. Thank you. This is just a sample timeline. It's just meant to visually represent what Tresa and I've been talking about. If you start on the left side, we anticipate that once an agency submits a planning ADP, they can start using those self-assessment tools - even before frankly. All the way through RFP and contract negotiations and developing the first module. The red dots there for monitoring and design reviews and subsequent monitoring reviews are meant to be iterative and can happen more than once. Perhaps the first module is a good point, but there are other opportunities, as well, once a system is being built.

This is all followed by a formal CAR. And hopefully the goal is a CCWIS compliant system. And then we'll continue to do ongoing monitoring reviews as new program requirements are released, technology improves just to ensure continued compliance. But again, this is just a sample timeline, every project will be different. Those with transitioning systems may be far into this already and there are nuances there. But we will now go to the next slide and take a few questions.

Philip Breitenbucher: Awesome thank you, Alex. And we did have a few questions that have come in while you were speaking. And so, the first one, pretty straightforward here - it says how can I get the link for C-swap and any link related to IT system information for other possible similar states.

Alex Kamberis: So, we can provide, your federal analysts can provide that to you or we can put that out in our listserv message. But it has also, if you go to our website on the ACF website for the Division of State Systems, we have a link there. Once I'm done talking, I could go find it and copy paste it into the chat so you can have it now, just to get started. As far as the second part of your question about other states, not every state has completed those technology profiles. So, at the moment, it's only limited to those states who have completed that. But some states in the past have chosen to send questions out to our listserv, asking other states questions and that is also another option.

Or ask your federal analysts and they may know of another state that is doing it. So, at the moment, the technology profiles is growing and we hope it to be robust enough so that could meet that need that you identified in your question.

Philip Breitenbucher: Great, Thank you. And so, so we can look for that link in the chat in just a few moments. Here's a, here's another question. Do we have an estimated publication date for the tools that are still in development? That may be a bit tricky.

Tresa Young: We don't, but I can say that the eligibility tool is the next one that will be published and it's pretty far along. So, I think you'll be expecting to see that one, hopefully by the end of, before the end of the year. But we do need to go through several reviews, but I think that one is far along. Actually the child welfare contributing agency one is pretty far along, as well. We know that that has been a pain point and that we need to provide additional technical assistance on that issue. So, we've been looking into some of those areas before we release that self-assessment tool. But those two, I think are pretty far along. And finance and the exchanges I think are going to be longer because they, frankly, they still need quite a bit of work. So, those will be definitely after the first of the year and will take some time for us to complete.

Philip Breitenbucher: Great. Thank you very much, Tresa. One more question here, or maybe a couple, but here's the next one. How can I ensure which self-assessment tools are applicable to our project and which are not applicable? Any rules of thumb?

Tresa Young: I think it probably depends on what functions you said are going to be in your CCWIS first of all. So, for the program requirements, those are pretty consistent. The agency needs to be able to complete their federal reports. And as we've said, we're going to be looking for infrastructure for how the project incorporates constant feedback and delivers functionality of value so that, those overarching themes would impact any, any project. So, the overarching tools such as the user experience, data quality, the design review, reporting - those are going to apply, I think, across the board. And then for the individual program ones, I think I would look up the functions, is this a function that the system is going to support or that I've said that the system will support in my APD. But, I really think the other way is to really think about what do you have the most concerns about? When you as a project team are thinking through the project and how it's going, you know, honestly, I think I would think about where do I think the biggest issue is or where might I be the most concerned and thinking about asking for help there. Because again, as much as we can be proactive, the better it will be for everyone. So, I hope that helps.

Philip Breitenbucher: Yeah, thank you very much. We do have a question. We have a hand raised here from Maddie. It looks like are you able to, it looks like you're off mute. If you want to go ahead and just ask a question or comment.

Webinar attendee: Thank you. So, I have a question regarding the CAR. Like, after two years after a fully CCWIS operational. So, the question is like, is it after go live, I consider or it maybe my module developed, but it's not yet go live. Can I count as a fully operative CCWIS because we're not implementing anymore on that particular module?

Tresa Young: I think we envisioned that the whole system would be operational. And again, the reason we're doing that is because we want to see how integrated the system is. And you know, if we maybe did a design review early on for your first module but we really don't have a sense of the modules that come after that. That's why it is important for us to look at the system as a whole entity. And that really is the focus of the CAR, you know, is the system at large, as well as does the agency have ongoing ways to keep the system current, to keep the system supporting the program needs and outcomes. If you're concerned about like, you've done one module and you would like to have a review of it, my suggestion would be to ask for a monitoring review. Basically, the requirements are going to be the same. Requirements are on the tools. So, if you do well in a monitoring review, then you should do well - assuming that the system is integrated and you're following through - all the way through the development for the CAR.

Webinar attendee: Thank you.

Philip Breitenbucher: Awesome. Thank you so much. I think we have time for this one more question and then we'll go ahead and continue on with the discussion, the presentation. There's a question here. If a state is doing a TA demonstration of a particular module, is the expectation that the state would provide the self-assessment tool for that module, as well as the self-assessment tools for design, user experience, etc. as relates just to that module?

Tresa Young: It's a good question. I think these are the kinds of issues - when we say that you have influence and that we would negotiate the scope - I think that's what we do mean. You could ask for one simple, very focused type of activity. Or we have a recent state who wanted us to look at their first module in terms of the program need, which happened to be intake, or in this case, intake. And then they wanted a design review of that module. And then we also decided to go ahead and include user experience because user experience is just such a critical issue and making sure that the system really is easy to use and functioning the way that we intend for it to. So, that's just one suggestion. But these are, you know, you would be able to look at again, what's going on in your project. Where do you feel like the most assistance is needed? What is your team ready to share? And how much time does the team - the state team, as well as the federal team - need to invest to do this well. So, I think you would have influence over what we do and how we do it.

Philip Breitenbucher: Awesome. Thank you so much. We're going to go ahead and move forward in our presentation here. And I'm going to turn things over to David now. David.

David Baker: Thank you, Phil. First, I want to let folks know in addition, they may hear barking dogs, they may hear construction work next door, which I just can’t control, but hopefully it doesn't happen, it's quiet right now. But in this section, the topics for agency consideration, we're going to go over some of the questions that agencies may want to consider in the different stages of system development. For instance, planning development, implementation, maintenance and operations. The reason we've kind of broke them out this way is we want agencies to consider these questions incrementally. At this stage, what's really appropriate rather than wait until the systems up and running and they’re preparing for review. This way by doing it at different stages, in early stages, it can actually be a lot easier to make fixes because requesting assistance and making changes, as you know, is generally easier, faster, and cheaper in the earlier stages of a project rather than later stages. Next slide, please.

Let's start with the one in planning. First, I want to make some general comments that apply to all these slides. You will notice that there are a lot of questions here. And actually, this is actually a subset of the questions that you will find in the Technical Bulletin. Now, I want to emphasize, it's not expected that you are going to answer all these questions and submit answers to us. These are really for your consideration in these different areas. You may, after reviewing the questions, decide you need to focus or prioritize or address only several of them. Or you may decide that you want to request TA on one of the issues.

And just because you, on the other hand, you may decide you want to address one of these issues, but that doesn't mean you have to request TA. You may determine that it's easier and more effective to handle it via an internal approach such as maybe assigning a task to vendors, maybe hiring an IV and E specialist, or perhaps reassigning some of your own resources or bringing on additional resources to address an issue. Now, rather than read through this list, I'm just going to focus a little bit on a couple of them that I just wanted to bring to your attention. One I wanted to mention was is the agency considering and documenting CCWIS design requirements. If you're in planning, if you haven't looked at the CCWIS design score sheet and Technical Bulletin, we have, this is a good time to look at it because it will help you plan for ensuring your system will meet the CCWIS design requirements. It could actually be very helpful in helping to draft a statement of work or requirements for an RFP.

Another one I want to focus on is the agency collaborating with child welfare contributing agencies, in other words, CWCAs or other stakeholders, including and especially counties in a county administered system. This is really good to get started early to develop these relationships. If you need to set up things, agreements are MOUs that establish data exchange or other understandings between the programs, it's very good at this point that you can start to establish roles and expectations for how these stakeholders will be involved in the development of the project, in the testing of the project. And, particularly with CWCAs this is so important because involving CWCAs early on will help you in the planning stage, determine the project's scope, timeline, and the resources you'll need for the project. For example, how many CWCAs do you have? If you just have a few, it may be a lot simpler than if you're dealing with a whole host of them. Is the plan for all the CWCAs to be using the CCWIS? There you would take a different approach and your schedule would look a lot different than if you are going to go the route of having CWCAs using their own systems which require the bidirectional data exchange, which was CCWIS. So, those are just some of the issues to think about during the planning phase. Next slide, please.

In development, you can see there's another whole host of questions. But here I just really wanted to point out that some of the questions carry forward some of the same issues are still relevant in later stages. For instance, the whole issue of does the CCWIS meet the design and exchange requirements? This, of course, is very important in development. You want to be checking in regularly to see, okay, does our development meet those requirements, do our exchanges meet the requirements as you're going through that development. You don't want to wait until the end to do that. You want to check in again and again. And once again, are stakeholders involved and consulted as a project evolves. In other words, it's not enough to just set up those MOUs at the beginning. You want them to have, for a successful project, we've discovered that your stakeholders have to have an active role throughout the project.

For example, if new functionalities develop, the project team can go back to the stakeholders and validate that approach. It's really important to have open and effective communication with the stakeholders so they have opportunities to provide input and to alert staff to changes that may affect the system. For example, if there are new laws or policies that are coming down the pike, it's very helpful if they have a direct channel to the project so they can alert to, alert the project to these changes and discuss the impact these policies and laws may have upon system development. And the same thing if there are new technical or security constraints coming from the state as a whole.

Moving on to the next slide, please. On implementation. One of the key things to think about here when you're implementing is to check, is the CCWIS supporting your program requirements. Are you getting the information you need for outcomes? Is it supporting effective service delivery, for example, are recommended services procured? Are they tracked? And are the results of the services documented?

A general one, which you probably hear a lot of, but it's still very, very important - is the CCWIS efficient, economical, and effective? This is really a general one, but it's something you should ask throughout. It's obviously closely related to the first requirement we discussed, supporting program requirements because you want to make sure the system is supporting your program. You can ask yourself, are we collecting the data we need not only for service delivery but for outcomes, for management, for other purposes that other stakeholders need. And then of course, is the system easy to use? Is it following established workflows? But yet, is it flexible enough so that if you have to diverge from that workflow for some unexpected reason, it can accommodate those variations in practice. And another one is

I'm sorry, that was just a message from Alex and I thought I might have to look at, but I think I don't have to. Another one that's very important is the change management process. This of course, is very critical as you're going through roll out because you want to make sure everyone is prepared for roll out, that rollout goes smoothly. It's especially important if you're doing a smooth change over from a legacy system - maybe an old SACWIS system - to a new system, the change management will involve the training, perhaps on new ways to do business. If the CCWIS is being implemented at the same time that some changes in how business processes are done, you want to make sure that that is clearly explained so that folks aren't sort of doubly confused not only by the system, but by the change in how they do business. To help manage change, it's important to have a process to gather feedback from users during the rollout and make adjustments as necessary. There could be all sorts of unexpected things that can happen during roll out and you want to have a way to find out about this quickly and be flexible and respond to them. Your change management can also include building support for the system with a process to inform users of changes they've requested or bugs they've reported. It's very helpful if users know they're being heard, that when they report a bug or they make a suggestion for a change, that they get some feedback as to what's happening with that so they feel that their input is valued. Next slide, please.

Then when you get to operations and maintenance, there's a whole host of different questions, but they're very, very critical. One being is the CCWIS being kept current to meet new data collection exchange or practice requirements. This is a point that we've been making again and again, that the system and compliance is not a once and done.

The child welfare environment is constantly changing. Technology is constantly changing, which means that the system has to be flexible and you sort of always have to have your ear to the ground to see what changes are coming and make the adjustment to the CCWIS to make sure it is supporting current needs and current state, tribal and federal reporting needs. And this is also really a reminder that we may review at any time even after a CCWIS has been reviewed, we may come back later to see if how it's supporting additional legislation.

Does the agency use and rely on statewide data from the CCWIS to support program evaluation and outcome performance? This is really a good marker of the effectiveness and utility of the system, if you can kind of look at this and see if it's doing that. In other words, really is a system doing what you intended it to do in these sort of large goal areas. And if not, it's a good opportunity to step back and think creatively about what needed changes have to be made to improve the system and what enhancements are needed to better support the program. So, that really when you're in maintenance and operations, as we all know, it's a continual cycle of evaluation, assessment and needed improvements to the system. Next slide, please.

The next section I'm going to discuss is preparing for technical assistance. You'll see once again, when we move into this, we have a long list of potential activities to prepare for TA. Once again, this doesn't mean you need to do them all. It’s not to suggest you must do everything on this list when you request TA. It's really far from that. These are possible activities to be reviewed, considered, and decided upon when you're setting up TA.

The point we really want to make here is that TA is set up as a collaboration between your agency and ACF. So, it's very helpful to like, go through these when you’ve decided on what TA you want and work with ACF and decide, okay, this one would be helpful. This one we don't need now. Just so that you make sure that the TA you get is comprehensive and yet targeted at what you need.

So, clearly a good place where you want to start is, first thing when you're asking for TA, what is it you need TA on and what do you hope you get out of it? For instance, are you doing this because you're going to have to work with CWCAs? Maybe this is something completely different and it's important for you to demonstrate to your legislature your progress and to be able to justify your need for additional funding. You could also just do TA request as sort of a sanity check, like you've been working on a module for a while and you really want to have a review to make sure it's on check. Or really, a check on compliance to make sure your plan is going to address program needs and CCWIS requirements altogether.

Let's move on to the first example of an area of where we have a list of activities and that comes under documentation and product updates. One of the first ones - and we've covered this before, but it's really worth mentioning again - is it's very helpful to complete the voluntary self-assessment tools. And we will go into this more on November 9th, but really this documentation can be useful for many purposes, not just assessing at the end and at different points in the system development.

Another important point is to sort of take your APD and ensure that the system as designed, is designed as described in the APD, and identify possible discrepancy. Now it's not unusual for plans to change. I mean, folks know when they are submitting as needed and annual updates that they'll report on changes in plans. So, it's not problematic it's changed, it's just important that you want to keep the APD up to date and keep ACF informed on the changes. Because your analysts, when you're requesting TA will likely look at your APD to kind of get a sense of where you are specifically if you're asking about a module. So, you want to make sure that's up to date or if it's not that they know it so that the TA is appropriately targeted. Next slide, please.

Most of the TA will require some sort of schedule and agenda. Here is where you have your opportunity when doing the scheduling agenda to negotiate the topics and activities that will be there. This you'll do with your analyst. And so, this is another place where you'll kind of look through the list of the things you want to do and you can put that on the agenda. You want to establish a scope for the activities as we talked about before. What are the goals and expectations for the TA, that will help you decide what topics you want to address. What do you, what do you want to get out for it? Why in the world or why did you ask for what was, what was the purpose?

Moving on to the next category. The participation in TA is very, very important. You want to make sure that you have active representation from program and project teams and technical teams during key conversations and demonstrations. It's really a good idea to include folks who worked on the self-assessment tools. And I'll say folks plural because really, as Alex mentioned earlier, really, doing a self-assessment tool is not something that just one person can sit down and do. It really requires the outlook, perspectives and experience of a variety of folks. Before the TA, you'll want to communicate with the stakeholders, with the participants and share what is expected during the review.

If they’re being asked to participate like in a demo, explain what the demo is like. Explain what their role is or what you would like them to do. Why are you asking them to participate? Do they have the technical expertise, and so, we may be asking questions about the architecture or do they have a strong programmatic background, and so they'll be able to answer questions where we’re trying to understand how the workflow and they can, and these people can explain that this is, this is our programmatic approach, this is, these are our requirements, that's why we've had to do it this way.

And for instance, one thing you want to make sure you're doing - we actually do it ourselves - is if we're going to be interviewing users, it's very important to convey to them that we're interviewing them about the system and their experience with it, and their reactions to it. We are not evaluating their work performance. It's also been very helpful, we've discovered on reviews, if the project team has previously reviewed stakeholder and user feedback in advance so that you’re aware of the issues that we may be hearing about, this is very helpful because if you're already aware of them, you can often come up with a plan or a prioritizing of how you want to deal with them. And that's very helpful because then if we start to discuss them, you can just kind of lay that out and it just makes things move much, much faster. Can you move on to the final slide in this section, please?

Demonstrations, which we've mentioned a little bit before. One of the questions I want to focus on here is one of the toughest ones. And that is anticipating questions that the federal analyst may ask. Just so you know, despite your best efforts, you won't anticipate all the questions. You'll have a team there who will come at it from different points of view. But it does help if you have some idea of the questions. And once again, the self-assessment tools are really helpful here because they cover each of the modules in quite a bit of detail, even if it's kind of at a higher level. So, it'll give you a sense of the things that we would be focusing on. Another point, maybe you may have had issues that came up with, in your calls with your analyst about a certain module that you've been addressing. You can be sure that those would then come up if there are particular pain points to address.

That said and as I mentioned, we're likely to, the team is likely to ask a lot of questions that may interrupt a beautifully planned demonstration, this does not mean that the demo did not go well. This is very common for us to ask questions and kind of get off track. And we've sometimes seen that folks who have worked very hard in the demo feel that, that somehow, they had just done something wrong because they didn't have all that ready. That's not the case at all. What we found is when we ask those questions, the information we get is very, very helpful that's been provided.

That said, it's very likely that you won't have the answer to some of the questions at your fingertips. That's fine. We can note and revisit. We also don't expect the person who's actually driving the demo to have all the answers to the question. It's really encouraged that the experts who are in the audience, the participants that you've selected, can jump in and ask questions.

It's also helpful if you can - as you kind of know your system so well - if you can sort of at the outset communicate system problems, processes and procedures that aren't working as designed so that we just kind of know those and kind of can set those aside and move on. And that's also helpful because you can explain how you prioritize why you're addressing certain issues at a certain time. And please don't think that just because we notice something and bring it up that it must immediately be addressed. In many cases, project staff have outlined the criteria they use for prioritizing issues and provide a very solid rationale for why they're not addressing the issue we brought up now. It may be that it affects very few people or there's a, a larger initiative such as AFCARS 2020 that needs to be dealt with first.

It's also though, you want to demonstrate that the system reflects your business processes and meets program needs. In other words, show us the good stuff. Show us your innovative ideas. Share your successes. Share the rationale for going in a particular direction. And once again - we’ve repeated it so many times - but completing the self-assessment tools can really help. It'll help structure the demo and it'll help you identify possible risks and issues. Now the next slide. Are there any questions?

Philip Breitenbucher: Alright. Thank you very much, David. We have just a moment for, to take a question or two. If Alex, is there a question that you might have at this point?

Alex Kamberis: Hi, can you hear me?

Philip Breitenbucher: Yes, we can. Thank you.

Alex Kamberis: Alright. Great. Yeah. We received a question asking for the self-assessment tools if there was any formal compliance related to the self-assessment tool. And, I just want to remind everyone that they are voluntary tools. Many of the questions are such that we will probably be looking at them during compliance review down the road. But the intention of the self-assessment tools is early identification of potential risks or issues so the VI-E agency can resolve them early in the process before they can become an issue down the road. So, while they are not compliance documents, they certainly refer to potential compliance related topics. For example, design, the design self-assessment tool, we list the CCWIS requirements for design. And the same with any of the other tools. So, I hope I answered that question. Thanks, Phil.

Philip Breitenbucher: Thank you. We have one more and then I think we're going to move forward in our wrap-up discussions and hear from Tresa Young again. But before we get there, there's a question that just has come in and I'll throw this to the team and to the panel to respond - how far in advance should we begin planning or requesting a review from our federal analyst?

Anybody want to take that?

Tresa Young: It probably depends on the scope of the review. I think the design reviews do tend to take quite a bit of preparation, at least based on the early pilots that we've done. And I can't remember, Alex, maybe you could jump in in terms of where we were trying to start, but we were thinking, I think three to six months ahead of time. Is that right? You know, at least for the design.

Alex Kamberis: For the design, yeah.

Tresa Young: Yeah.

Philip Breitenbucher: Well, thank you very much. Appreciate that. Alright. Let's go ahead and move forward and, Tresa, I'll turn things back to you.

Tresa Young: Thank you. Next slide, please.

So, in the Technical Bulletin, there is one page that is actually a long list of potential barriers to compliance. And we did this really because out of some of the concern that folks had, again, of not knowing exactly what's on the compliance review process. And again, they're pretty, for lack of a better word, big ticket items, big overarching things. So again, they reflect the regulation. And as Alex said, most of the compliance requirements and issues are on those self-assessment tools. So, if you have, again, thought about the type of evidence that you want to show particularly in the front part of those tools, which is the program goals, the program outcomes, because that is challenging really for all of us. You know, some states have done more work with that than others in terms of thinking about their functions and how they support the outcome or their CCWIS model, you know how, how it supports the outcomes. So, again, I don't think you should be intimidated by seeing that long list because thinking through how you're going to deal with them and talking with your analyst about, okay, this is how we're interpreting this and this is how we plan to show compliance for this. Is this adequate? Do you have concerns? Do you have suggestions?

So again, it's to put you in a pretty comfortable spot. But, we did include this overarching list of probably the most common kinds of barriers.

Again, we are focusing on does the state have infrastructure of people and technical resources in the long-term to continually show progress, continually improve services, and make sure that the system is current. We, you know, we will always ask, we will always want to know how the project is seeking feedback and how it's being used to actually impact what's being developed. Again, how did we know that what is being built is meeting the need? And as David mentioned, if a change happens, how easy is it to modify the system? Or, you know, if the users need changes, how long is it in the queue before they can see some of those changes?

And again, we're going to be looking at what you've told us you're doing in your APD. So the APDs really are important. They're kind of like a contract with the federal government. I mean, it's kind of saying this is what we want to accomplish. This is our plan. And yes, there may be some deviations. But we really want to see progress and what's being deployed. And whether there really is a unified vision between the different stakeholders and the program and IT staff and the vendors for the project for how it's being implemented. Next slide, please.

We thought we would add something, you know, what, what do we need from you? Again, we don't want the review process to be something that is done to you. We want it to be something that is done with you. And the only way that we can do that, again, is if folks are brave or willing to show up and to talk to us about what they think is going well, where they are concerned, you know, where they think they need help. So, we would ask that you look at the tools and that you begin to use them. And that as you’re identifying areas that you have concern about, that you're asking for advice and guidance from your analysts. And again, we are all learning, we're trying to create an open learning environment. So your analyst may have to take it back. And we try not to do that all the time. But you may have discovered something that we hadn't worked through or haven't thought through. And even in their early pilots, based on the feedback that we've gotten from each of the states, we have quantified the things as, as we've gotten some of that feedback. So, we need you to, to look at them, tell us, you know, if they're helpful, tell us what parts of them are helpful. If you don't understand something, let us know what you don't understand.

As we mentioned before, we want technical assistance to be useful to you. So, we are thinking about different mechanisms that we can use to measure the effectiveness of the technical assistance that we provide. And we need your help in thinking through are there better ways for us to support some of this work?

And tell us what you think about the compliance review process. You know, we want to make sure again that we're addressing issues before it's time for a CAR. But, if you have strong thoughts or you have strong opinions or fears around the compliance review process, please share those with us, you know, talk to the, talk to us about what those are.

And, I think as we said before, we will be continuing to work on these tools. And we will be continuing to improve them based on your feedback. So, one of the things, and I'm sure Phil's going to talk about it here in a minute, but an early thing, which seems really like a simple thing, but I would appreciate it if you would take the time to do it. We do have a satisfaction survey for the webinar and we have a couple of more polling questions.

Again, these are geared toward helping us assess the effectiveness of our work and what we can do to partner with you to get the outcomes that we all want to see. Next slide, please.

So again, these key themes, we want the process to be flexible so that it can adapt to different CCWIS models and implementations. We've emphasized the importance of involving program staff and stakeholders to demonstrate how their ongoing feedback is being utilized to impact the system and how it's developed. And again, we want an incremental and continuous improvement process. We need to create an environment where we're open with one another to admit when things are going well and share when they're not going so well, what we're struggling with. Next slide, please.

And these are some references. Hopefully you're already familiar with some of these. The first one is the Technical Bulletin itself, which has the self-assessment tools as attachments. We have general IT guidance. And so, if you've not taken the time to look at those, It's really helpful if you do, there's lots of good information out on our website, as well as we do post most of our webinars. It takes a little while for them to get posted to make them 508 compliant. But if you miss some or if you want to know, hey, does something exist, there might be something actually out on the website. So, it's worth taking a look. And then we did do a specific webinar on design requirements last January, it's hard to believe, I think January or February, that time has gone by. But that is out there and it's, I think it's very helpful. So, if you haven't looked at that, take the time to do that. Next slide.

Philip Breitenbucher: Wrong button. There we go. And just a, before we jump into this poll question, I just wanted to note that we have added the, these references, these resources to the chat. So, if you'd like to download those now you can do so from the chat. You'll see both files, a zip file and then, and then the technical bulletin also there in the chat, which you can go ahead and download if you are interested in that. And then this will be our last poll for the webinar today. And we, again, appreciate your feedback. And in the same tone as Tresa was saying, we really do want your feedback and your participation. So, here's the final poll. Are there specific self-assessment tools you would like us to cover in depth during a future webinar. You can select up to three of these. We'd really love to hear your feedback. The poll is open now, so let us know which of these would be most helpful to you. Alright, we'll give you just a couple more seconds to give us your feedback. We can see many of you have already responded. Thank you very much for participating. We appreciate that. And for the rest will give you just a couple more seconds. And then we'll go ahead and begin closing out the poll. Okay, so here are the results. And we'll take this back to the team and, and really take a closer look at this. But it looks like about half of you would like a more in-depth webinar on some of the program tools - intake, investigations, case management. Another big percentage of you, nearly 40% of you, would like a webinar on child welfare contributing agencies. Definitely been high on the radar for some time now. Thank you for that. Another big portion of you provided feedback saying you'd like a webinar on data quality. And again, more than a third of you also would like a webinar on exchanges. So, we appreciate all that feedback.

And we're going to move now to our final questions and discussion period. And there is a question that's come in, a couple of questions. And we do have just a few minutes for questions, so we'll take these. So, here's the first question and I'll throw this to our panel today. Are there costs involved to use TA services that the state agencies need to pay for?

Tresa Young: No, not right now. We have been fortunate, we can't meet every need, as Alex said, we have limited resources just like the state does, but we really are trying to look at unique needs and we've been able to arrange some services that are unique, that are specific. And so that's why it's important to have the conversations and talk about what is the greatest need. But right now, we do not charge for technical assistance. It's a partnership that we have with you and we ask for your time. And we ask -which all of you, most of you want to do a good job and you're very concerned about these issues which, which we're glad we'd like to partner with you on these things, but no, we don't have a cost.

Philip Breitenbucher: Great, thank you. Alright, And then another question, what role should IT vendors play in states TA?

Tresa Young: So far, we have been talking with the state and sort of agreeing on how vendors will or will not be involved. In the olden days, we used to not involve vendors, you know, unless it was something very specific and ultimately, we do hold the state accountable. We don't want to get in the middle of disagreements or issues with a vendor. Our agreement, basically, is with the state. And we want to preserve that relationship that we, that our partner really is the state. That said, you know - or that, or the tribe. I know tribes aren't developing CCWIS systems for the most part, but they could be developing IT systems.

In terms of vendors, there may be some specific areas where you want to include them. So, we have had some vendors in some of the design discussions. If we're getting into quite a bit of depth about the architecture or having them show us, sometimes they're giving us copies of code or we're going in and looking at very specific parts of how they are documenting information and some of those tools with the newer platforms states are doing that within, within the tools that, within the platforms, you know, some of the tools that the platforms have. So, it is something that we would discuss with you. You know, if we had a situation where a vendor was involved and we had concerns about it, it's also not uncommon for us to say we'd like to take this up with the state and maybe have some time without the vendor present. So, if you do include the vendor, you should know that during the presentation we may or I'm sorry, during the review process, we may ask for the vendor to excuse themself or ask to have some specific time with the state. But again, this is something we negotiate with you and as we talked about, who participates, working that out ahead of time, we would have agreement on how we would do that.

Philip Breitenbucher: Wonderful. Well, thank you so much. It looks like you've answered all the questions we've received so far today. I wanted to just again thank our panel for a wonderful presentation. And I wanted to just again offer Tresa or Alex or David if you have any final thoughts before we begin wrapping up today's presentation.

Tresa Young: I guess the one thought I have is just appreciation for the states who have engaged so far. I mean, many of you were instrumental in giving us feedback on the tools that had been developed so far. It's still not too late. Like I said, we are, we are very interested in feedback. So, if you didn't give feedback -and it doesn't have to be all good feedback - you know, I mean, we, we welcome that and we appreciate that. But again, we need, we need real feedback to improve if there are concerns. So, just, we would welcome feedback and appreciate again the time and effort that states have already given us to develop this process.

Philip Breitenbucher: Excellent. Alright, well, thank you. I also just want to thank everyone for attending today's webinar. And again, we want to continue to get some feedback from you. There'll be a survey that opens up in just a moment, but you can also, we also encourage you to contact your assigned analysts if you have any suggestions or feedback or questions or any kind of issues. And if you're unsure who your analyst is, you can find them on the website that we have posted here, which is on our training and technical assistance page and there are state and tribal assignments. So, we want to make that available to you. We also are excited to present part two of this webinar series, which will be on Tuesday, November 9th from 2 to 3:30 Eastern time. So, we hope that all of you will join us for that.

Again, thank you to our panelists. Thank you to everyone that attended today's webinar. We do appreciate that. We'd ask that you complete your satisfaction survey at the conclusion of this so we can get your much valued feedback. The survey will take actually much less than five minutes, probably more like one minute to complete. The results will be used to improve technical assistance and webinar content. Content to support you and your agencies who are building the Child Welfare Information Systems. All the questions are voluntary and your responses will remain anonymous. And with that, that will conclude today's webinar. We do appreciate your attendance and your feedback. Thank you all for being here today and thanks for your service to children and families.

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