

# Fact Sheet

## HISTORY of the CFSRS

The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act authorize the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to review state child and family service programs to ensure conformity with the requirements in titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The Children's Bureau, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, administers the review system, known as the Child and Family Services Reviews.

In 2000, the Children's Bureau published a final rule in the Federal Register to establish a process for monitoring state child welfare programs. Under the rule, states are assessed for substantial conformity with federal requirements for child welfare services.

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico completed their first review by 2004 and their second review by 2010. After each review cycle, or "round," no state was found to be in substantial conformity in all of the seven outcome areas and seven systemic factors. States developed and implemented Program Improvement Plans after each review to correct those areas not found in substantial conformity.

The third round of reviews runs from 2015 to 2018.



## PURPOSE

The Child and Family Services Reviews enable the Children's Bureau to: (1) ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements; (2) determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and (3) assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

The reviews are structured to help states identify strengths and areas needing improvement within their agencies and programs. Ultimately, the goal of the reviews is to help states improve child welfare services and achieve the following seven outcomes for families and children who receive services:

### Safety

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

### Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for families.

### Family and Child Well-Being

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.



The reviews also measure state performance on seven systemic factors, including the effectiveness of (1) the statewide child welfare information system; (2) the case review system; (3) the quality assurance system; (4) staff and provider training; (5) the service array and resource development; (6) the agency's responsiveness to the community; and (7) foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention.

## *The* REVIEWS PROCESS

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The federal government conducts the reviews in partnership with state child welfare agency staff. Consultant reviewers may supplement the federal review team. Each Child and Family Services Review is a two-stage process consisting of a statewide assessment and an onsite review of child and family service outcomes and program systems. For the statewide assessment, the Children's Bureau prepares and transmits to the state a data profile that contains aggregate data on the state's foster care and in-home services populations. The data profiles allow each state to compare certain safety and permanency data indicators with national standards determined by the Children's Bureau. States evaluate their performance on the outcomes and systemic factors in the statewide assessment.

After the statewide assessment, a joint federal-state team conducts an onsite review of the state child welfare program. The onsite review portion of the Child and Family Services Review includes (1) case reviews; (2) interviews with children and families engaged in services; and (3) interviews with community stakeholders, such as courts, community agencies, foster families, caseworkers, and service providers. The extent of stakeholder interviews

may vary depending on the information previously provided in the statewide assessment.

For Round 3, states meeting certain criteria may conduct their own case reviews and case-specific interviews using the revised federal Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions, and submit the results to the Children's Bureau in lieu of a more traditional review conducted in a one-week time frame.

At the end of the onsite review, states determined not to have achieved substantial conformity in all the areas assessed must develop and implement Program Improvement Plans addressing the areas of nonconformity. The Children's Bureau supports the states with technical assistance and monitors implementation of their plans. States must successfully complete their plans to avoid financial penalties for nonconformity.

## MORE INFORMATION

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Additional information on the reviews is available on the Children's Bureau's website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews> or from the Child Welfare Reviews Project, JBS International, Inc., 5515 Security Lane, Suite 800, North Bethesda, MD 20852; 301-565-3260; e-mail: [cw@jbsinternational.com](mailto:cw@jbsinternational.com). Round 3 resources are available at <https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3044>.

