

Fact Sheet

for PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

What are the CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEWS?

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) 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 CFSRs also assess the following seven systemic factors that affect outcomes for children and families:

- 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 REVIEWS PROCESS

The CFSR begins with a statewide assessment. The statewide assessment is prepared by the state and provides information on how the state is doing on the safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and systemic factors. Next is the onsite review where a joint federal-state team reviews the state child welfare program. The onsite review process includes:

- Looking at children's case files and interviewing children, parents, the caseworker, and other people involved in the case
- Holding stakeholder interviews with people involved in the child welfare system to look at how the system is working as a whole

After reviewing all the data and information received, the Children's Bureau determines how well the state is doing in meeting federal requirements and whether the children and families are having good outcomes. The state develops and implements a Program Improvement Plan to address those areas needing improvement. States must successfully complete their plans to avoid financial penalties.

OPPORTUNITIES *for* PARENT AND CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT

The CFSRs bring people together who can make a difference in state child welfare systems. Hearing from parents and caregivers about their first-hand experiences is important. Information that parents and caregivers give about their experiences can help child welfare agencies make changes to strengthen their work with families.

As a parent or caregiver, you can be involved in the CFSR process by taking part in one of the two types of interviews:

- 1. Case-related interviews** give you a chance to share how well the agency provided services to you and your family. The information you provide is confidential and will not be shared with your caseworker. Your information will not have any impact on your case. Your feedback will help improve child welfare services for all children and families getting child welfare services. For case-related interviews, you may be asked questions such as:
 - Were services provided to you in your home to help you safely care for your child? What were those services?

- If your child was placed in foster care, did you have the chance to provide the names of relatives with whom your child could be placed? Was your child placed with a relative?
 - If your child was in foster care, how often did you visit your child? Was there anything that would have made visits better for you and your child?
 - Were you involved in your child's medical appointments while your child was in foster care?
 - How often did you talk with your caseworker? Where did visits with your caseworker happen? Did the caseworker ask you about your needs?
- 2. Stakeholder interviews** look at how the system is working as a whole. This is a group interview. Parents and caregivers in a stakeholder interview may be asked:
 - Were you able to talk to your caseworker about your case plan? Did the worker listen to your ideas and put some of your suggestions into the plan?
 - What was your experience with getting the services that you needed?
 - Were services provided in a language that you understood?
 - Were you able to get to the services?
 - Were services coordinated to make it easier for you to get what you and your family needed?

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

The voice of families is critical to the CFSR process. Making changes that help children and families begins with understanding what families working with the child welfare system are experiencing. We hope you will speak out and tell us about your experience.

MORE INFORMATION:

For more information, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews> or e-mail JBS International, Inc.'s Child Welfare Reviews Project at cw@jbsinternational.com. CFSR resources can also be found at <https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105>.