



Child and Family Services Reviews

Procedures Manual

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

¹ Title IV-B Child and Family Service Plan (ACYF-CB-PI-14-03), Mar. 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), Aug. 27, 2012, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/im1207.pdf>.

- 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 both 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 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 to achieve positive results with respect to the outcomes and systemic factors that are 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. The Children's Bureau's 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 A.²

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

² See also "Collaborating During the Child and Family Services Reviews," Appendix B, *CFSR Procedures Manual*, Sept. 2014; Title IV-B Child and Family Service Plan (ACYF-CB-PI-14-03), Mar. 5, 2014.

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 and stakeholder interviews, as necessary. (Reference: Chapter 2, Statewide Assessment, and Chapter 6, Stakeholder Interviews).

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; and
 - 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; and
- 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 and Tribes, partners and stakeholders to identify early in the review process the areas potentially needing improvement and to begin developing their program improvement approach; and
- 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 statewide assessment, as is the case throughout the review process, is conducted by the state in collaboration with partners both internal and external to the child welfare agency. It 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 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 (see Title IV-B Child and Family Service Plan (ACYF-CB-PI-14-03), Mar. 5, 2014, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1403.pdf>).

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 make revisions to the Statewide Assessment Instrument before the final version is due 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 is designed to enable 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 that were 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; and
- 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.

The Statewide Assessment Instrument and instructions are available electronically 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 that 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; and
- 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 in the Statewide Assessment Instrument, and update as necessary, that assessment and the data/analysis supporting it.

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 (see "Guidance on Potential Data and Information That Can Be Used To Assess Systemic Factor Functioning," at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_round3_guidance_data.pdf).

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.

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/information reported through the statewide assessment.

The combination of this information is used to make determinations of 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 Resources tab at <http://cfsrportal.org>. The review instruments are 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

There are two ways of conducting onsite reviews for the Child and Family Services Reviews. The first path 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 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 (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) may conduct their own case reviews, using the federal Onsite Review Instrument, of 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 frame, 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.

Traditional Case Reviews

States engaged in traditional Child and Family Services Reviews onsite case 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 whether the state will pursue the State Conducted Case Review path or the Traditional Review path. 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 path.

Preparatory Activities	State Conducted Case Reviews	Traditional Reviews
Explore case review paths with the state	Ongoing Children’s Bureau and state activities, as needed, to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state’s review path 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state’s review path 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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
Statewide assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State submits Statewide Assessment Instrument drafts, as able • State submits the final Statewide Assessment Instrument 2 months before the onsite review period • Children’s Bureau provides state with information on needed stakeholder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State submits Statewide Assessment Instrument drafts, as able • State submits the final Statewide Assessment Instrument 2 months before the onsite review period • Children’s Bureau provides state with information on needed stakeholder

Preparatory Activities	State Conducted Case Reviews	Traditional Reviews
	interviews approximately 1 month after receiving completed Statewide Assessment Instrument	interviews approximately 1 month after receiving completed Statewide Assessment Instrument
Sampling activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 one 1 month per each month of the review period. This is the time during which state identifies the sample in accordance with case review criteria approved by the Children’s Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 metro • Select in-home (25) and foster care (40) sample cases • Total of 65 cases
Onsite review scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State or Children’s Bureau draws the sample and 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 Bureau to incorporate Children’s Bureau participation and oversight into 6-month review plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 end of review week debriefings in local sites

General Preparatory Activities

Explore Review Process Paths

To decide which review path 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 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; and
- State’s ability to meet Children’s Bureau case review criteria, if not already in place, by time frames established by Children’s Bureau.

Letter of Intent

After exploring the opportunity, each state should formally communicate which review path 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 but need only communicate the state’s review path selection. For a state choosing to conduct its own case review, the letter will 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; and
- The Children’s Bureau and the state to collaboratively engage in effective planning and negotiate the Children’s Bureau’s participation before, during, and after the review period.

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
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

Transmittal of State Data Profiles

The Children’s Bureau transmits 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 path 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 addresses the following key elements of the onsite case review process:

- Status of the review preparations and state case review process
- 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 will notify the state of the systemic factors that require additional information from stakeholder interviews, approximately 1 month following the receipt of the statewide assessment. If possible, stakeholder interviews should be scheduled during regular work hours during the time that 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 consumer stakeholders. The Children’s Bureau and the state should finalize a schedule of stakeholder interviews at least 2 weeks before their occurrence. (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 timeframes indicated in the table on page 15.

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 that there are 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 criteria on which the Children's Bureau's decision is based cover three 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 planning to implement one before the case review period, must submit a plan to the Children's Bureau to meet all aspects of the requirements, which 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; and
- 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 during the months 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; and
- 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 2 months before the state's 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 this document as well as Chapter 4 for sampling guidance.)

Sampling Activities

Onsite reviews and state improvement planning require reliable forms 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 to 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 point 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 the 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—e.g. data quality, 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—Initial Determinations of Substantial Conformity—for more information about debriefings.

Preparation for the Traditional Review Process

Preparation for the Traditional Review includes selecting cases to be reviewed, preparing case records for review, scheduling case-related and stakeholder interviews, assembling the reviewers and 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;
- Making local arrangements for meeting space, meal options, lodging, and transportation as needed; and
- 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, but 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 2 months 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.)

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 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 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 path. 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:

- Both staff of the state's public child welfare agency and external partners are included; and
- 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 will 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 (e.g. 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

All electronic and paper case records to be reviewed should be made available at the review sites in their entirety, 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 orderly 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 team 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 record 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, Onsite Review Instrument, 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, maps or other written directions to the interview sites and provide these to reviewers. 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 their 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. (See Case-Related Interview Guides and Instructions at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_interview_guides.pdf).

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

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 conference. The informal entrance conference 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 the *Procedures Manual*, instruments, and guides;
- Preparing maps and other written directions for review team members 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, debriefing, 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, both in-person and telephonic;
- Ensuring that the technical requirements for the Web-based Onsite Review Instrument are met, including making Internet connections and power sources available; and
- 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—Initial Substantial Conformity—for more detail 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 path. 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 pursue conducting their own case reviews for these purposes. After the state and Children's Bureau have determined whether the reviews will be conducted by the state or via the traditional path, 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 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 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. In some states, regions or districts instead of counties are used 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 abridged file of foster care cases can be transmitted to the Children's Bureau as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or other commonly used spreadsheet file.

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 to the random samples.

In-Home Services Sampling Frames

The sampling frame for in-home services cases must include cases opened for services for at least 45 consecutive days during, or which began a 45-day consecutive period during, the sampling period (the latter allowing for in-home services cases to complete the 45-day period after the sample period ends within the period under review). This frame also 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; and
- 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, 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 longer during any portion of the review period to support the elimination of such cases from the sample.

In preparing the 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 to 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; and
- 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 the 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” (see http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_review_criteria.pdf):

- An in-home services case open for fewer than 45 consecutive days during the period under review;
- 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; and
- 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 more traditional case 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 conducted 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" at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/case_review_criteria.pdf.

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 make the decisions and arrangements described below:

- 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 there is an insufficient number of in-home services or foster care cases 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 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 five in-home services cases for the two nonmetropolitan 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 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 paths that relate to case review sampling:

Case Review Sampling Elements by Review Path

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Support 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Support 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
Representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consist 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consist 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of 3 review sites • Sufficiency of oversample • Case elimination process
Case elimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must follow Children’s Bureau case elimination criteria • Must consult with Children’s Bureau regarding any state-specific case elimination criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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

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. The expectations that are inherent in the instrument can be found in consulting the "Reviewer Brief – Understanding the Federal Expectations for Rating Cases," at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_reviewer_brief.pdf on quality assurance support).

Reviewers must gather and analyze available information through the case file review and interviews of key case participants to rate each item appropriately. 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 provided 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 that are 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.

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 is 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 Onsite Review 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; and
- The family's caseworker (when the caseworker has left the agency or is no longer available for interview, it will be 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.

In-Home Cases

All children in the family home must be included.

Foster Care Cases

- Target child must be included.
- Other children in the family home are optional per reviewer's request, 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 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 a biological parent indicated a desire during the period under review 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 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, it is suggested 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 thoroughly review case record documentation. 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. It is strongly recommended 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 that they can highlight questions that they plan on asking as well as develop additional questions that may be needed.

Quality Assurance on the Onsite Review Instrument

As part of the Child and Family Services Reviews process and to promote national consistency, the Children’s Bureau engages in quality assurance activities regarding the Onsite Review Instrument to ensure that 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 instruments, the information contained therein, and the ratings so that the Children’s Bureau can rely on the data to make final conformity determinations, and states can use them to inform practice improvement. As such, 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.

Strong quality assurance processes for the Onsite Review Instruments 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; and

- Viewing practice assessment as part of a fair and equitable process based on standardization and objectivity.

All cases reviewed, regardless of review path, will undergo two levels of quality assurance. Initial quality assurance ensures that reviewers are accurately rating cases and properly applying federal instructions and must be conducted on all cases. Secondary oversight ensures consistency among all cases reviewed within the state and across all states.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Onsite Review Instrument quality assurance process extends the collaborative approach that the Children’s Bureau and the state employ throughout the Child and Family Services Review. Conducting quality assurance is a responsibility shared by both the state and 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 path 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; and
 - 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 of the Onsite Review Instrument 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 (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) detail the minimum requirements for state-conducted case review quality assurance processes, including the provision of 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.

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.

The process the state uses to complete quality assurance activities associated with the cases being reviewed for Child and Family Services Review purposes 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 be different—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 Onsite Review Instrument and how the state is conducting quality assurance on cases. It is important that Children's Bureau participation in quality assurance activities take place 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.
- The number and selection of the cases of which the Children's Bureau will conduct secondary oversight across the review period and after initial quality assurance activities are complete to gain insight into:
 - The accuracy and consistency of ratings across the review period; and
 - Any trends in ratings or changes in ratings across the review period
- 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.
- Appropriate methods and timing of feedback and continued consultation on the strength of the state's quality assurance process.

The Children's Bureau provides support consistent with the state's quality assurance needs. In states with little experience with the Onsite Review Instrument and/or in conducting quality assurance, the Children's Bureau's participation in quality assurance processes may be more frequent and/or more intensive based on the areas of challenge the Children's Bureau identifies from a review of completed cases.

The Children's Bureau encourages states conducting their own case reviews to consider all or parts of the standardized path the Children's Bureau will take with states engaging in Traditional Reviews.

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 onsite or remotely, for:

- Accuracy of ratings and/or changed ratings and resolution of disputed ratings
- Challenging areas of the Onsite Review Instrument
- National consistency

Initial Quality Assurance of the Onsite Review Instrument in Traditional Onsite Case Reviews

During Traditional Reviews, Local Site Team members 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 provide secondary oversight of a selection of cases to ensure rating consistency and accuracy across the review site. Finally, the Children's Bureau, in consultation with the state, reconciles and resolves any case rating changes needed.

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 also are responsible for communication with the overall State Team Leaders as rating issues arise. This communication should include a joint assessment for the reasons for any rating issues, and how these could be addressed going forward. At least 1 month before the onsite review, the Children's Bureau and the state work together to agree upon 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.

The Children's Bureau will assign a quality assurance pair, comprising both 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 Onsite Review 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 any 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 Onsite Review Instrument, that needs to be gathered through interviews;
- Discussing the reviewer’s approach to the interviews and adjustments that may be necessary based upon the interviewee’s needs; and
- 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 role initial quality assurance plays 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’s Onsite Review Instrument Quality Assurance Guide at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_ga_guide.pdf, and this manual provide guidance on how to cross-check information, including ensuring adherence 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 any child safety concerns uncovered during the review of the case record or via 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 onsite or remotely, for:

- Accuracy of ratings, changed ratings, and resolution of disputed ratings
- Challenging areas of the Onsite Review Instrument
- National consistency

The Children's Bureau will conduct secondary oversight of cases in the same manner, regardless of review type.

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. Interviews obtain information regarding how the systemic factors are functioning to supplement the data/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. Information from the stakeholder interviews in combination with the data/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 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/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 the statewide assessment and the onsite review via stakeholder interviews to determine substantial conformity (See Chapter 2, Statewide Assessment).

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, these will be conducted during the onsite review process by the federal-state team.

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 (Reference: (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 Service Reviews.)

When identifying the stakeholder interviews needed, it is important to determine what information, in addition to the data/information presented in the statewide assessment, is needed for the Children's Bureau to make substantial conformity determinations. 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 work hours during the time that 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, Preparing for the Onsite Review Process, 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 can be accessed at

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_cfsr_siq.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. (Information on the preparation of the Program Improvement Plan is available in Volume 2 of the Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures 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 the 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 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 Children's Bureau's official determinations of substantial conformity 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, or 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; and
- Discuss next steps.

Traditional Case Review Path

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.

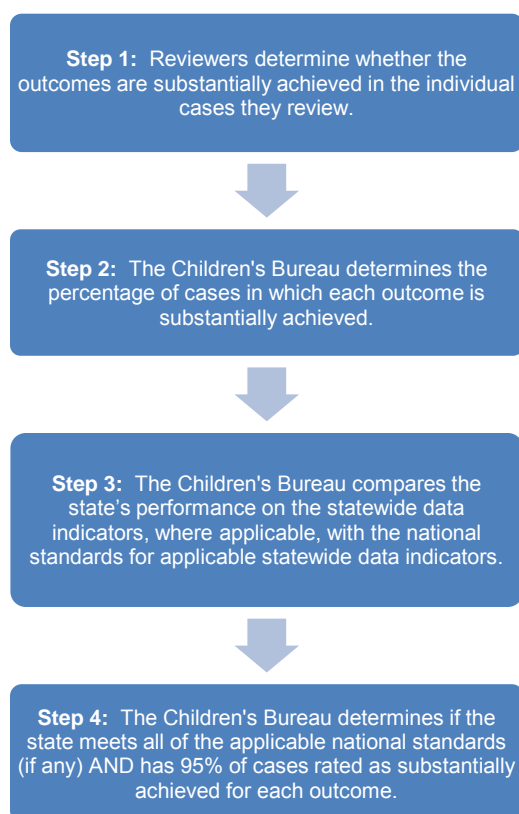
State Conducted Case Review Path

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. (See “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. (See Chapter 3 for more information on the onsite review process and Chapter 5 for more information on the Onsite Review Instrument.) The instrument lists the items that reviewers examine in assessing achievement of each outcome. For each case, once the reviewer(s) 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 Onsite Review Instrument, outcomes are rated 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 chart on substantial conformity in Appendix A for more detail.

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 if 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/information that is relevant and on point with respect to the totality of the item?
- Does the data/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/information the state provided so that the Children's Bureau may rely on the data/information?
- Does the state assert (or at least not contravene/contradict) that the data/information represents their statewide performance on the systemic factor item?

If the Children's Bureau can respond "yes" to the information in the statewide assessment on the above factors, 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/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 fail 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, 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 of achievement 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 that the Children's Bureau has 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; and 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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Appendix A

Child and Family Services Reviews: Pathway to Substantial Conformity

The table below shows how the Children’s Bureau determines whether a state is in substantial conformity with the Child and Family Services Reviews outcomes and systemic factors. Section 1 of the chart provides information on the outcomes (and the items and statewide data indicators within each), how we rate the items, how we determine substantial achievement for each case reviewed, how the data indicators are factored in, and substantial conformity with the outcomes is determined.

Section 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.

Section 1: Outcomes

Outcome	Items & Ratings	Statewide Data Indicator
<p>Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect</p>	<p>In 95% of the applicable cases... Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment is rated as a strength</p>	<p>For maltreatment in foster care, the state is no different or below the national standard of 8.04 victimizations per 100,000 days in foster care AND For recurrence of maltreatment, the state is no different or below the national standard of 9.0%</p>
<p>Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>NA</p>

Outcome	Items & Ratings	Statewide Data Indicator
<p>Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</p>	<p>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</p> <p>OR</p> <p>There are strength ratings for items 4 and 6 and item 5 is not applicable</p>	<p>For Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Foster Care, the state is no different or above the national standard of 40.4%</p> <p>AND</p> <p>For Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care 12 to 23 Months, the state is no different or above the national standard of 43.7%</p> <p>AND</p> <p>For Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care 24 Months or More, the state is no different or above the national standard of 30.3%</p> <p>AND</p> <p>For Re-Entry to Foster Care in 12 Months, the state is no different or below the national standard of 8.3%</p> <p>AND</p> <p>For Placement Stability, the state is no different or below the national standard of 4.12 moves per 1,000 days in foster care</p>
<p>Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</p>	<p>In 95% of the applicable cases...There is a strength rating for <i>at least one</i> of the following items</p> <p>AND</p> <p>There is an area needing improvement in <i>no more than one</i> of the following items:</p>	<p>NA</p>

Outcome	Items & Ratings	Statewide Data Indicator
	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	
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 <i>no more than one</i> 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
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

Section 2: Systemic Factors

Systemic Factor and Items	Substantial Conformity Determination
<p>Systemic Factor 1: Statewide Information System Item 19: Statewide Information System</p>	<p>The information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that <i>the one required item</i> is functioning as required.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>The information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that <i>no more than one of five items</i> for this systemic factor fails to function as required.</p>
<p>Systemic Factor 3: Quality Assurance System Item 25: Quality Assurance System</p>	<p>The information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews, if necessary, must indicate that <i>the one required item</i> is functioning as required.</p>
<p>Systemic Factor 4: Staff and Provider Training Item 26: Initial Staff Training Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training</p>	<p>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 <i>no more than one of the three items</i> for this systemic factor fails to function as required.</p>
<p>Systemic Factor 5: Service Array and Resource Development Item 29: Array of Services Item 30: Individualizing Services</p>	<p>For the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the information obtained from the statewide assessment and/or stakeholder interviews must indicate that <i>no more than one of the two items</i> for this systemic factor fails to function as required.</p>
<p>Systemic Factor 6: Agency Responsiveness to the Community Item 31: State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs</p>	<p>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 <i>no more than one of the two items</i> for this systemic factor fails to function as required.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>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 <i>no more than one of the four items</i> for this systemic factor fails to function as required.</p>

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 the collaboration in assessing the effectiveness of child welfare agencies in serving children and families. It continues with the 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 CF SR,” which is included as an appendix to Volume 2 of the *CF SR Procedures Manual* and contains information that may be helpful in considering how to collaborate more generally in advancing state child welfare programs. The information below covers:

1. Overarching Principles of Child and Family Services Reviews Collaboration
2. Child and Family Services Reviews Collaborative Partners
3. The Collaborative Process
4. Engaging Collaborative Partners
5. Evidence of State Collaboration With Tribes, Partners, and Stakeholders During the Child and Family Services Reviews
6. Monitoring Stakeholder Involvement
7. Technical Assistance in Support of State Collaborative Efforts
8. 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 the Child and Family Services Reviews collaborative process include the following:

- 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 state. This includes partnering with organizations that directly serve children, youth, and families and those whose actions impact 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 Part 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. These include Head Start, the Family and Youth Services Bureau; the Office of Family Assistance—and the Child Care Bureau within that Office; the Administration on Developmental Disabilities]; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention with 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 whom 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 will 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, onsite review, and Program Improvement Plan.

- **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, as well as ensuring 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 for those with whom they have collaborated.
- **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 will 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 its 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 the 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, they 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 during the Child and Family Services Reviews process.
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 NYTD (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 those. 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

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Engagement of other partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
Needs assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state agency 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, Court Improvement Program, Children's Justice Act, consent decrees, and other agency needs assessment efforts. • Data are compiled, analyzed, and used by the state and Tribes, partners, and stakeholders on a regular basis, such as quarterly, and shared with others whenever possible.

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Joint strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)/Chafee/ Court Improvement Program/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.
Sharing of resources and structural changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 other partners, agency data or ongoing evaluations of progress noted through the Quality Assurance process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. For the Child and Family Services Reviews, this might include, for example, engagement in Program Improvement Plan implementation and monitoring, and involvement in Child and Family Services Reviews-related activities between 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.
Policies/laws/regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes are made to policies without collaboration with key Tribes, partners and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Elements of Collaboration	Evidence of Limited or No Collaboration	Evidence of Strong Collaboration
Research/data/evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no process for sharing data among Tribes, partners and stakeholders in support of the planning and evaluation of programs and services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) Web sites 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 Plan 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 Child and Family Services Reviews-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/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 or 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 their 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, partner, and stakeholders during the statewide assessment, onsite review, and Program Improvement Plan development? Which Tribes, partner, and stakeholders are they planning to consult with, how will they do so (for example, through focus groups, meetings, or Web sites), 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 are they planning to involve, how will they 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/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 the 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 the commitment of time and the availability of 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 TA 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, youth, and the courts. State child welfare agency staff managing the Child and Family Services Review process will 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 the following:

- 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 for 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 the following, for example:

- 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 the following activities:

- 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; the documents should help them understand the benefits of the Child and Family Services Reviews to their efforts to support children and families
- 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

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 Memoranda of Agreement. Through these agreements, the state agency and Tribes agree to work together to address child welfare policies and practices needing improvement. A Memoranda 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 earlier 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 the following:

- 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 will impact 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 Child and Family Services Reviews process to enhance their collaboration with the courts. In addition, the scope of the Court Improvement Program, as amended and reauthorized by the PSSF Amendments of 2001 (Public Law 107- 133), was expanded to (1) include improvements that the highest court deems 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 a corrective action plan, as necessary, in response to findings about the state child welfare system identified by the Child and Family Services Reviews.)

The IM shares information about the special efforts that the Children's Bureau will make to foster collaboration between courts and state child welfare agencies. We remind states that the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 added several new objectives to the Child and Family Services Reviews-related efforts to promote court-child welfare agency collaboration: (1) appropriated funds for two new grants designed 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 Courts³

Statewide Assessment

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

- Engaging the Chief Justice early in the process by notifying them 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 documents should help them understand the benefits of the Child and Family Services Reviews to their operation and to children and families.
- 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 Terminations of Parental Rights that are pending.
- Engaging court personnel in cross-training opportunities.
- 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.

³ Adapted from *How and Why To Involve the Courts in Your Child and Families 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.

- 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 the following activities:

- 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 to 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 the following activities:

- Providing the Chief Justice and other juvenile or family court judges with a copy of the Final Report
- 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 the Court Improvement Program re-assessments
- Developing sustainable, regularly scheduled meetings to address challenges/problems that affect children’s permanency 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 Child and Family Services Reviews process by identifying and then working with existing youth organizations and advisory boards. These might include the following, for example:

- 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:

- 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 the following activities:

- 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 to those youth 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.
- 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.
- 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 survey 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 to 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 the following activities:

- 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 Child and Family Services Reviews materials targeted to their age group and role in the process.
- Conducting stakeholder interviews with youth (and providing to 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 these activities:

- 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

Category	Measure Title	Measure Description	Denominator	Numerator	Exclusions and Notes	Risk Adjustment
Safety	Maltreatment in Foster Care	Of all children in foster care during a 12-month period, what is the rate of victimization per day of foster care? <i>For national standard calculation, uses AFCARS periods 2013A and 2013B and NCANDS FY2013 Child File.</i>	Of children in foster care during a 12-month period, the total number of days these children were in foster care as of the end of the 12-month period ^a	Of children in the denominator, the total number of substantiated or indicated reports of maltreatment (by any perpetrator) during a foster care episode within the 12-month period ^b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a state provides incident dates, records with an incident date occurring outside of the removal episode will be excluded, even if report dates fall within the episode. • Complete foster care episodes lasting <8 days are excluded. • Any report that occurs within the first 7 days of removal is excluded. • Victims age 18 or more are excluded, as well as youth in foster care at 18 or more. For youth who start out as 17 years of age and turn 18 during the period, any time in foster care beyond his/her 18th birthday is not counted in the denominator. • Cases are matched across AFCARS and NCANDS using AFCARS ID. 	Age at entry (for children entering) or age on first day of the 12-month period (for children already in care)

Category	Measure Title	Measure Description	Denominator	Numerator	Exclusions and Notes	Risk Adjustment
Safety	Recurrence of Maltreatment	Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment during a 12-month period, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment within 12 months of their initial report? <i>For national standard calculation, uses NCANDS FY 2012 and FY 2013 Child Files.</i>	Number of children with at least one substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment in a 12-month period	Number of children in the denominator that had another substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment within 12 months of their initial report.	Relies primarily on the report date to determine whether the maltreatment occurred in the first 12-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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If subsequent report is within 14 days, we do not count it. • If incident date indicates that two reports refer to the same incident, we do not count it. • If report date is before the first 12 months, we exclude it. • Youth age 18 or more are excluded from the measure. 	Age at initial victimization
Permanency	Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Foster Care	Of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care? ^c <i>For national standard calculation, uses AFCARS periods 2011B through 2013A</i>	Number of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period	Number of children in the denominator who discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care and before turning 18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in foster care < 8 days are excluded • Children who enter foster care at age 18 or more are excluded • Trial home visit adjustment is applied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at entry • State's foster care entry rate

Category	Measure Title	Measure Description	Denominator	Numerator	Exclusions and Notes	Risk Adjustment
Permanency	Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care 12-23 Months	Of all children in foster care on the first day of a 12-month period who had been in foster care (in that episode) between 12 and 23 months, what percent discharged from foster care to permanency within 12 months of the first day of the 12-month period? <i>For national standard calculation, uses AFCARS periods 2013B and 2014A</i>	Number of children in foster care on the first day of a 12-month period, who had been in foster care (in that episode) between 12 and 23 months.	Number of children in the denominator who discharged from foster care to permanency within 12 months of the first day of the 12-month period and before turning 18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children age 18 or more on the first day of the 12-month period are excluded Trial home visit adjustment is applied 	Age on first day
Permanency	Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care 24 Months or More	Of all children in foster care on the first day of a 12-month period, who had been in foster care (in that episode) for 24 months or more, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of the first day of the 12-month period? <i>For national standard calculation, uses AFCARS periods 2013B and 2014A</i>	Number of children in foster care on the first day of a 12-month period, who had been in foster care (in that episode) for 24 months or more	Number of children in the denominator who discharged from foster care to permanency within 12 months of the first day of the 12-month period and before turning 18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children age 18 or more on the first day of the 12-month period are excluded Trial home visit adjustment is applied 	Age on first day
Permanency	Re-Entry to Foster Care in 12 Months	Of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, who discharged within 12 months to reunification, live with relative, or guardianship, what percent re-enter foster care within 12 months of their discharge? ^a <i>For national standard calculation, uses AFCARS periods 2011B through 2014A</i>	Number of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period and discharged within 12 months to reunification, live with relative(s), or guardianship.	Number of children in the denominator who re-enter foster care within 12 months of their discharge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in foster care < 8 days are excluded. Children who enter or exit foster care at age 18 or more are excluded, If a child has multiple re-entries within 12 months of their discharge, only his first re-entry is selected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age at exit State's foster care entry rate

Category	Measure Title	Measure Description	Denominator	Numerator	Exclusions and Notes	Risk Adjustment
Permanency	Placement Stability	Of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, what is the rate of placement moves per day of foster care? <i>For national standard calculation, uses AFCARS periods 2013B and 2014A</i>	Of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, the total number of days these children were in foster care as of the end of the 12-month period ^d	Of children in the denominator, the total number of placement moves during the 12-month period ^e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in foster care < 8 days are excluded Children who enter foster care at age 18 or more are excluded. For youth who enter at 17 years of age and turn 18 during the period, any time in foster care beyond his/her 18th birthday or placement changes after that date are not counted. The initial removal from home (and into care) is not counted as a placement move. 	Age at entry

Notes

The letters ‘A’ and ‘B’ are shorthand for the six-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 six-month period ends. For example, 2014A refers to the six month period of 10/1/2013 through 3/31/2014.

^a For example, if during the 12-month period there were two children 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 there were two children 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 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	<p>Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State planning and preparation • Identifying key state and federal contacts and roles in the review <p>Review joint planning discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 PIP process • Inclusion of additional internal or external stakeholders in the CFSP-CFSR/PIP implementation team, if needed <p>Overview of state timelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submittal of Statewide Assessment Instrument • Program Improvement Plan submittal • State policies, procedures, and other materials <p>Statewide Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Schedule additional call to discuss the Statewide Assessment Instrument, if necessary <p>Data Profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State performance on national standards • Data quality and accuracy <p>Questions/Other issues to address in next call</p> <p>Next steps</p>
State Conducted Case Reviews	<p>Status of case review process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 three 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review teams • Debriefing process

Conference Call #3

Conference call #3 should be held no later than one 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and follow-up from call #2 • Confirmation and finalization of stakeholder interviews • Questions/Other issues to address • Next Steps
State Conducted Case Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation and finalization of federal participation in onsite review activities and oversight
Traditional Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation and finalization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Site selection and scheduling – Sampling and case elimination process – Review teams – Case specific interview schedules • State team training