

Child and Family Services Review

What is the Child and Family Services Review?

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is an evaluation of a state's child welfare system to determine how well the system performs in promoting outcomes for the safety, permanency, and well-being for children.

A federally-mandated process, the CFSR is intended to focus states on results and performance improvement. At such, the CFSR will continue to drive significant change in child welfare agencies nationwide.

New Jersey experienced its first CFSR in 2004, and has begun its second CFSR cycle.

What are the criteria under review?

The criteria examined through the CFSR fall into three categories:

Category 1 - Outcomes

Safety

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

Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living arrangements
- Continuity of family relationships and connections are preserved for children.

Well-Being

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

Category 2 - Systemic Factors

- **Statewide Information System** – computerized collection of data
- **Case Review System** – case plans, case reviews, permanency hearings and termination of parental right petitions.
- **Quality Assurance System** – systematic review of performance
- **Staff and Provider Training** – initial, ongoing, and training for resource parents, state agency staff, and staff of contract agencies
- **Service Array** – services to support child safety, permanency and well-being
- **Agency Responsiveness to Community** – coordination and collaboration of services
- **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**

Category 3 - National Data Indicators

- Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence
- Absence of Abuse/Neglect in Foster Care
- Timeliness and Permanency of Reunification
- Timeliness of Adoption
- Permanency for Children and Youth in Foster Care for Long Periods of Time
- Placement Stability

What is the process for the CFSR review?

There are four key stages in the CFSR process:

Stage 1 - Statewide Assessment

This assessment involves a collaborative effort among the many child welfare system stakeholders to study state performance in the CFSR criteria. In this second CFSR cycle, the assessment will include developments and updates since the prior CFSR as well as current status in the criteria. A report of findings regarding the state's performance in each area is developed. This self-assessment report details findings, key strengths, and key opportunities for improvement.

Stage 2 - On-Site Review

A week-long on-site review is conducted by a joint Federal/State team. This team will be divided among three county sites and one site in Trenton. The county teams will conduct a comprehensive review of 65 cases (total statewide), including file reviews and interviews with key participants, e.g. children, parents, resource parents, caseworkers, and providers. At each county site as well as in Trenton, a series of interviews and focus groups will be held with stakeholder representatives.

Stage 3 - Final Report

Based on the statistical and qualitative data gathered through the Statewide Assessment and on-site review, the federal government prepares a report of findings. This report details whether the state is in "substantial conformity" with each CFSR criterion. The report also highlights Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs) related to each outcome and systemic factor.

Stage 4 - Program Improvement Plan (PIP):

In response to the Federal report of findings, the state and federal government develop a Program Improvement Plan, or PIP to addresses criteria in which the state was found to

not be in “substantial conformity.” The PIP outlines strategies the state will implement to improve performance, along with responsibility and timeframes for each.

Who participates in the CFSR process?

All phases of the CFSR call for collaboration among child welfare system partners and stakeholders. Participants throughout all phases include: child welfare agency staff, children and families, youth, judiciary and court staff, advocates, service providers, resource families, other public and private agency staff, university professionals, and the community.

We recognize the CFSR as an opportunity to improve our work with children and families, and appreciate the participation and support of all our stakeholders in this process.

When is New Jersey’s CFSR?

New Jersey officially began its second CFSR cycle on July 1, 2008. Currently, New Jersey is involved in conducting the Statewide Assessment stage of the review, working with a variety of stakeholders.

The on-site portion of this CFSR is scheduled to occur March 30 – April 3, 2009.

How can I learn more about New Jersey’s CFSR?

For more information on New Jersey’s CFSR, which will be posted as it becomes available, go to <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/home/childdata/njfederal/>

Please also visit the U.S. Administration for Children and Families Web site:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/index.htm>