

# **Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Fact Sheet for Governors**

## **History and Purpose**

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) are conducted by the Children's Bureau, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to help States improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families who receive services through the child welfare system. The CFSRs monitor States' conformity with the requirements of title IV-B of the Social Security Act. The first round of reviews took place between 2000 and 2004 and all States were required to implement Program Improvement Plans (PIPs). The second round of reviews began in early spring of 2007. The CFSRs are an important tool that enables the Children's Bureau to: (1) ensure conformity with Federal child welfare requirements; (2) determine what is actually happening to children and families receiving child welfare services; and (3) assist States in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

Specifically, the CFSRs measure seven outcomes and seven systemic factors. The outcomes measured include whether children under the care of the State are protected from abuse and neglect; whether children have permanency and stability in their living conditions; whether the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children; whether families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs; and whether children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. The systemic factors measured by the CFSRs include the effectiveness of the State's systems for child welfare information, case review, and quality assurance; training of child welfare staff, parents, and other stakeholders; the array of services that support children and families; the agency's responsiveness to the community; and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. Significant financial penalties may be assessed for failure to make the improvements needed to achieve substantial conformity.

## **Findings from the First Round of CFSRs**

All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico completed their first review by 2004. No State was found to be in substantial conformity in all outcome areas and systemic factors measured by the CFSRs. Since that time, States have been implementing their PIPs to correct those areas not found in substantial conformity. A new round of reviews began in spring 2007.

## **A Resource for Oversight**

The CFSRs provide greater transparency about how systems in the state are operating. They increase public knowledge and scrutiny by important stakeholders in the State. States learn about each others' systems by analyzing the results of the CFSRs. The end result of the CFSRs is to focus the system on real outcomes, not just on process issues.

State leadership is required to make investments in improving the system. The CFSRs offer States a new way to manage their child welfare systems: a focus on continuous improvement. The reviews can provide a valuable source of specific information for Governors through the following:

- National benchmark: The reviews offer a set of national standards against which the State child welfare agencies' performance is assessed.
- Comprehensive results: The reviews provide a comprehensive picture of the State system by using a Statewide Assessment of the child welfare data in addition to an onsite review of individual case records and interviews with stakeholders, caseworkers, parents, and children.
- Results and process: The reviews provide information about both the outcomes for children and families and the underlying systemic factors that influence those outcomes.
- Framework for reform: The PIP provides a structured and targeted plan for improving conditions for children and families in the child welfare system. It addresses areas deemed as needing improvement during the review. The next round of reviews will determine whether the State has made adequate improvements and, if necessary, significant financial penalties will be assessed for those areas not in conformity with requirements.

### **How Governors Can Support the Reviews**

Governors can support their State child welfare agency in participating fully in the reviews through a range of activities. Senior staff to a Governor, for example, may:

- educate the State legislature about the State's performance on the first CFSR and the State's PIP implementation process;
- assign a liaison from the Governor's office to the State child welfare agency during the review process to keep the Governor informed about the process;
- arrange for a briefing to the Governor's cabinet members and other key staff to share information about the reviews;
- provide support to the State agency administrator in meeting the time and labor obligations associated with the review process; and
- assist in developing the State's PIP.

## **More Information**

Governors and their staff can obtain more information about the reviews, including reports from the first round, on the Child Welfare Monitoring section of the Children's Bureau Web site at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/index.htm#cfsr.](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/index.htm#cfsr)