

# Children Family Services Review (CFSR)

MARCH 05, 2013

This document is a comprehensive guide for anyone working with children and families to improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes. The guide is intended to share the latest in practice and news related to the Child and Family Services Review.

## What is the Child and Family Services Review?

The federal government created the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in response to the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The CFSR is an assessment of a state's performance related to child welfare. All States are assessed in the areas of child protection, foster care, adoption, family connections and independent living services. Much of the CFSR looks at outcomes data and other sources to assess each State's ability to achieve 1) Safety, 2) Permanency, and 3) Well-being for children and families.

Specifically, the CFSR is conducted by the Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

in collaboration with each state. The CFSR is conducted in two parts: a Statewide Assessment and an Onsite Review. Region IX is based in San Francisco and is responsible for leading the CFSR in California.



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## Statewide Assessment

Each state completes a self analysis of its child protective services, foster care and adoption programs. The Statewide Assessment begins with a review of the state's data profile, which indicates a state's performance on safety, permanency and well-being as compared to the National Standard.

Each state is then required to identify its strengths and

areas needing improvement related to their child welfare practice. The Statewide Assessment is designed to enable states to gather and document information that is critical to analyzing their capacity and performance.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) utilized its Statewide Assessment to:

- Guide site selection by

ACF and CDSS for the onsite review.

- Provide an overview of the state child welfare agency's organization, capacity, and performance for the Onsite Review Team.
- Facilitate identification of issues that need additional clarification before or during the onsite review.

## Statewide Assessment Continued...

- Serve as a key source of information for rating the CFSR system factors.
- Enable the State and our stakeholders to identify early in the CFSR process the areas potentially needing improvement and to begin developing the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) approach.
- Educate stakeholders about the State's strengths and needs, and enlist their support in developing and making program improvements.
- Inform stakeholders and the public about the improvements/progress the state has made since the previous Statewide Assessment.
- Openly share with stakeholders and the public the areas that the state child welfare agency has identified as continuing to need improvement.



**California's latest Statewide Assessment was completed December 2007.**

## Onsite Review

The Onsite Review for each state is conducted by a federal/state team combination in three counties. By federal rule, one of the sites must be the county that is home to the state's largest metropolitan subdivision. The other two are jointly selected by the State and ACF. This team evaluates the state's performance by:

- Reviewing case records;
- Interviewing children, youth, and families engaged in services; and
- Interviewing other stakeholders, such as the courts and community agencies, foster families, caseworkers, supervisors, and service providers.

Federal/state team members interviewed youth, family members, court representatives, service providers, caseworkers and other local stakeholders also as part of this process. In addition, 65 cases were reviewed for compliance with federal child welfare requirements. Once the onsite review was completed, states that haven't achieved substantial conformity in all areas of the review are required to develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of nonconformity. California's latest Onsite Review was conducted February 2008 in Los Angeles, Fresno and Santa Clara Counties.

## What is Safety, Permanency and Well-Being in the CFSR?

### Safety

The CFSR assesses whether children are safely maintained in their home whenever possible and appropriate, as well as our effectiveness in reducing the risk of harm to children in foster care and those receiving services in their homes. First and foremost, children must be protected from abuse and neglect. This includes protecting from future abuse or maltreatment those who have been abused or maltreated, and providing for the safety of children while in foster care.



## Permanency

When assessing permanency, the CFSR looks at how well the state promotes permanency and stability in a child's living situation. This includes:

- preventing placement through the provision of preventive services;
- if placement is necessary, minimizing the number of moves a child experiences;
- effectiveness of the state in establishing timely, appropriate permanency goals for children when they enter foster care;
- effectiveness of the state in helping children achieve timely permanency goals of reunification, guardianship or permanent placement with a relative;
- when adoption is appropriate, how effective is the state in achieving it in a timely manner;
- how timely is the state in establishing other planned permanent living arrangements (permanency resources for youth aging out of care); and
- how effective is the state in preventing multiple foster care entries.

While children are in foster care, states are expected to take certain steps toward promoting and preserving family relationships and connections.

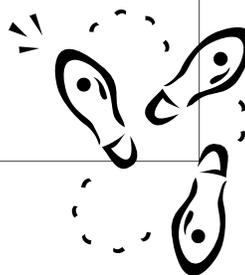
- Are children being placed close to their parents or in their own communities?
- Are diligent efforts made to place siblings together?
- Are states planning and facilitating visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings who are not placed together as well?
- Are states making an effort to preserve important connections (e.g., neighborhood, faith, school, tribe, and friends) for these children?
- Are states trying to identify relatives who could be placement resources for children entering care?

## Well-being

Well-being and permanency go hand-in-hand. When assessing well-being, the CFSR determines whether states have:

- made concerted efforts to assess the needs of children, families and foster parents they serve;
- involved parents (including non-custodial) and children in the case planning process;
- conducted face-to-face visits as often as needed with parents (including non-custodial) and children in foster care or who are receiving preventive services at home as often as needed; and
- sufficiently met the physical, mental health and educational needs of these children.

**Permanency is not just about the end result or goal; it is also about the steps taken along the way to promote well-being for children and youth.**



**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**

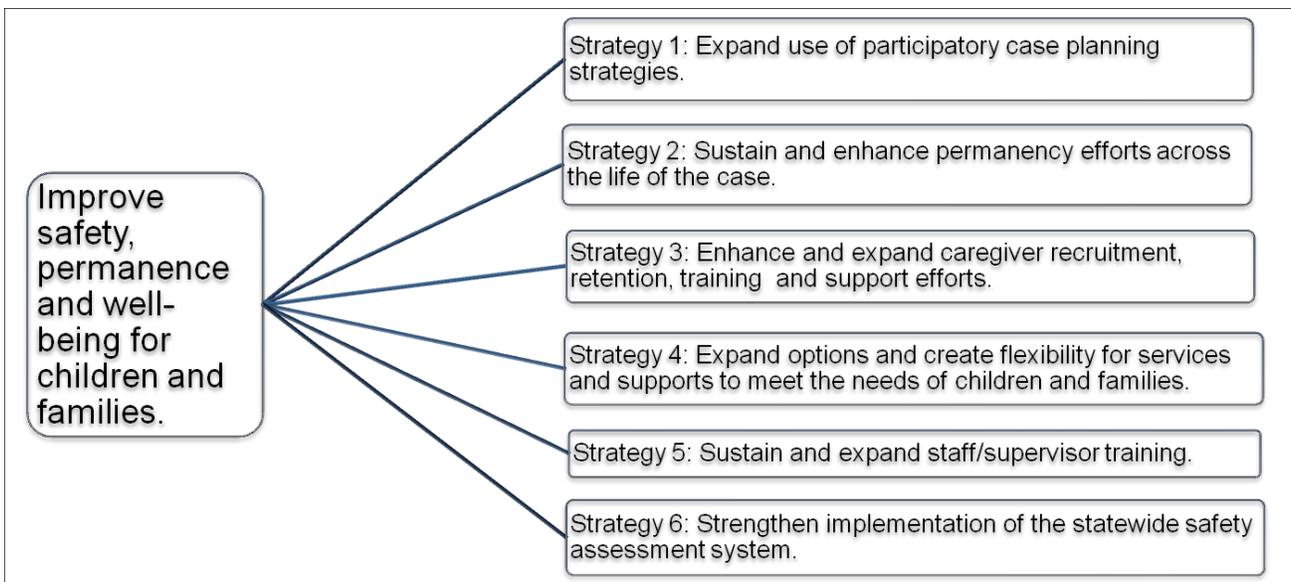
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## Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

The PIP addresses the three integral areas of the CFSR: Safety, Permanency, and Well-being. Within these three broad domains there exist seven outcomes and seven systemic factors. States whose data do not meet the national standard in the CFSR are put on what is essentially a probationary status and required to develop a PIP to address their shortcomings. The PIP allows states to identify issues that contribute to nonconformity and plan steps to improve performance on the data indicators in question.

For California, the latest report by ACF indicated that it did not achieve substantial conformity with any of the seven outcomes reviewed. With regards to systemic factors, the state was found to be in substantial conformity with two of the seven factors. Consequently, the state implemented a PIP during a two-year period; July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2011. As part of this plan, California agreed to meet certain federal outcome benchmarks by a certain time, or face financial sanctions. The PIP contains six broad strategies as illustrated in Figure 1 below. These strategies continue to build on existing relationships and programs to improve the child welfare system, subsequently improving the lives of children and families.

**Figure 1: Strategies**



### Where We Are Today

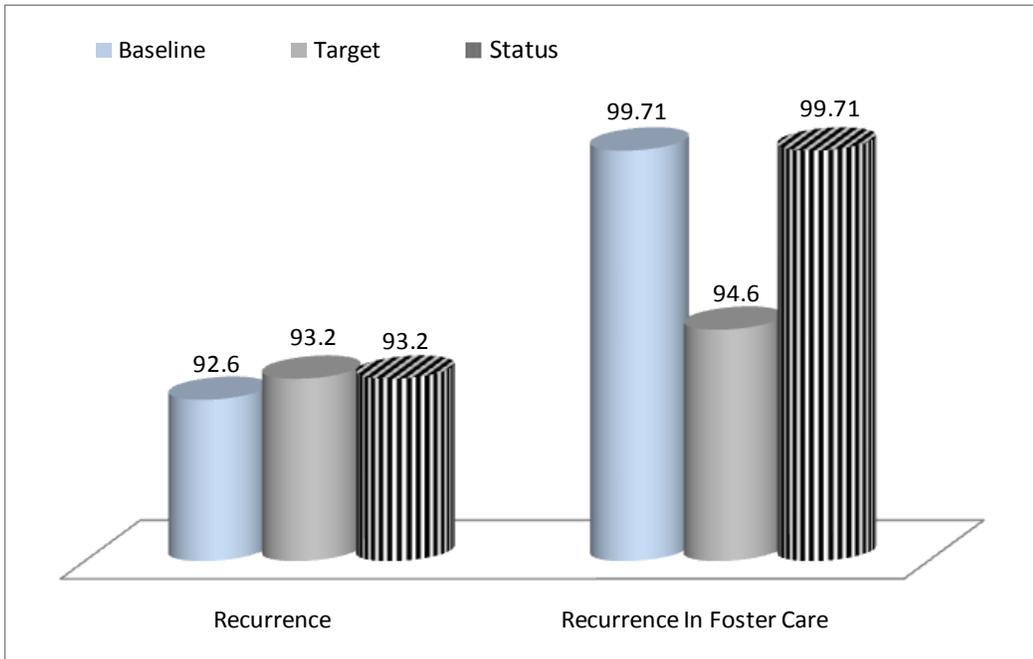
By the end of the two-year PIP (June 30, 2011), California met all six strategies and action steps associated with each strategy and 17 of the 17 data measures. The state has (not officially) achieved the targeted measurement in Placement Stability, which constitutes one of four composites in Permanency Outcome 1. The state had a 12 month non-overlapping data period ending September 2012 to demonstrate achievement of this goal. In the event that the target for improvement was not met, ACF would have commenced withholding an estimated \$4.9 million.

### PIP Data

Following are two bar charts. Chart A indicates how California performed in the PIP in the areas of Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence and Absence of Maltreatment of Children in Foster care. Chart B contains performance on Permanency Composites 1-4. In both Chart A and B, the “Baseline” is a reference with which to compare future results (a sort of starting point). The “Target” is the negotiated improvement goal between ACF and CDSS. The “Status” indicates the number/percent at which we achieved the goal during the PIP.

**CHART A.**

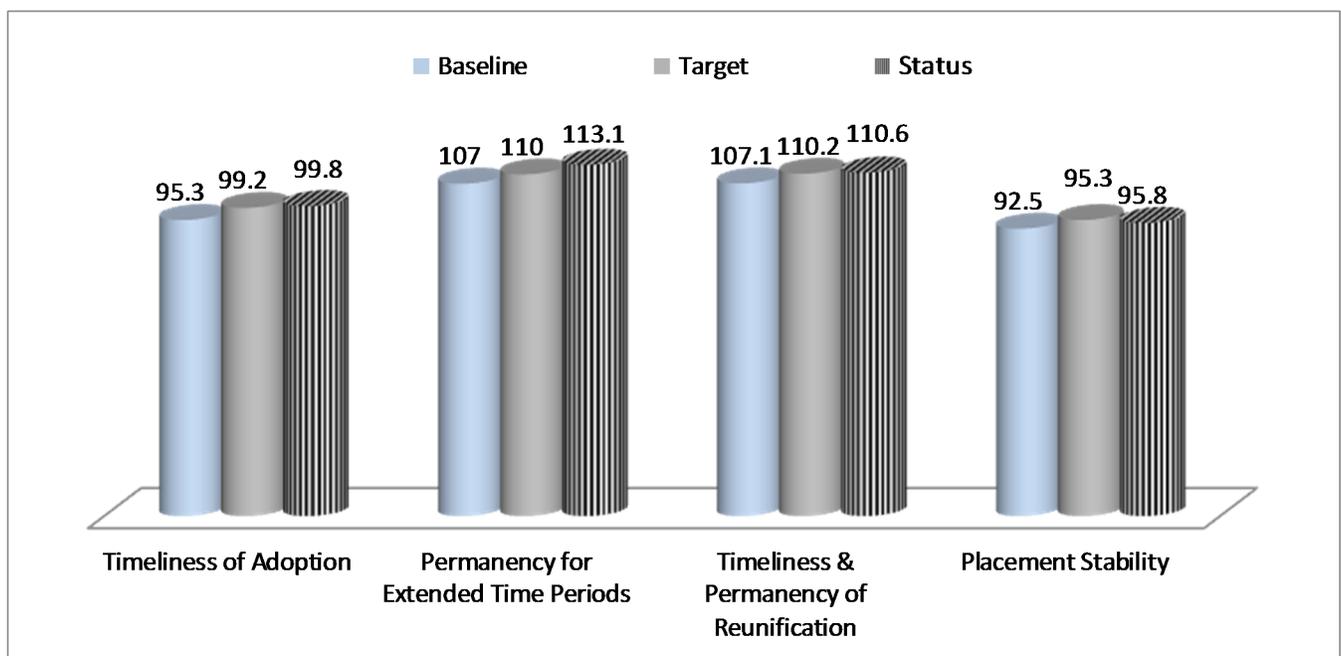
Safety: Percent of Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence and Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence in Foster Care



**Met 100%  
of Safety  
Targets**

**CHART B.**

California has met Permanency Composites 1-3. Composite 4: Placement Stability was met as of the latest data: FFY 2012ab. If the state had not succeeded in meeting the goal during the 12 month non-overlapping period following the PIP, the State would have faced a withholding of funds of approximately \$4.9 million.



**Met 100% of State Targets**

**Table A**

State Measure	Baseline	Target	Status
Outcome: Safety 1, Item 1: <i>Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment</i>	94.5%	94.7%	Target Met (94.7%)
Permanency Outcome 1, Item 10: <i>Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement</i>	14.7%	14.4%	Target Met (13.8%)
Outcome: Well-Being 1, Item 17: <i>Needs and services of child, parent and foster parent (Wraparound Services)</i>	5.4%	5.6%	Target Met (5.9%)
Outcome: Safety 2, Item 3: <i>Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal (Family Strengths and Needs Assessments Completed)</i>	61.8%	62.3%	Target Met (63.8%)
Outcome Safety 2, Item 4: Risk of harm to child (Risk Assessments completed within 65 days prior to case closing)	60.1%	60.6%	Target Met (62.2%)
Outcome: Safety 2, Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren) (Safety Assessments completed within 65 days prior to case closing)	22.8%	23.2%	Target Met (24.0%)
Outcome: Permanency 1, Item 7: Permanency goal established in a timely manner	72.5%	75.6%	Target Met (75.6%)
Outcome: Well-being, Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning (Revised 02/2011)	56.70%	57.0%	Target Met (57.06%)
Outcome: Permanency 2: Measurement of Action Step 2.1 – Family Finding	31.32%	31.91%	Target Met (39.91%)
Outcome: Well-being 1, Item 19: Caseworker Visits with Child	83.2%	85.0%	Target Met (85.82%)
Outcome: Well-being 1, Item 20: Caseworker Visits with Parents	63.1%	65.5%	Target Met (70.34%)

### Where We Are Headed

During PIP implementation and now, CDSS and partner organizations continue to labor with an unparalleled fiscal shortfall. The 2010 State Fiscal Year (SFY) budget contained \$80 million in reduction to child welfare service's local assistance and the 2011 budget began after the longest budget stalemate in the state's history. The current budget deficit of approximately \$25 billion complied with the currently proposed budget is likely to result in additional reductions, leading to continued struggles at the county level to positively maintain their child welfare and family services programs.

Even in these grim financial times, the state has accomplished implementing a timely and for the majority a very successful PIP. The state continues to build on existing momentum to continue improving safety, permanency and well-being for children and families as evidenced by the putting through the passage of AB 12 (California's Fostering Connections to Success Act) and the development of the California Partners for Permanency Project (CAPP) to reduce long-term foster care.



**California is a State  
Oversight, County  
Administered System**

## Potential Revisions

In response to objections by stakeholders across the country regarding the CF SR's lengthy process of assessment, review, reports and program improvement plans (in addition to other concerns) ACF asked for public comments in the April 5, 2011 edition of the Federal Register (Vol.76, No. 65). ACF recognizes that after the second round of reviews, it is time to re-assess the original review process for Title IV-B and IV-E programs through the CF SR and is interested in learning about improvements that might be instituted.

Stakeholders including state staff, tribal leaders, judges, families, youth and other interested parties were invited to share their input into the CF SR system. To that end, the ACF requested that stakeholders answer very specific questions, keeping in mind how they would envision a federal review process that: (1) meets the statutory requirements; (2) holds child welfare agencies accountable for achieving positive outcomes for children and families; and (3) continuously improves the quality of their systems.

The latest CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW, TECHNICAL BULLETIN #6 dated February 4, 2013, provided information regarding initiation of Child and Family Services Review (CF SR) Round Three directly as follows:

*"Rounds One and Two of the CF SRs took place for all 50 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico during Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2001-2004 and FFYs 2007-2010 respectively. On April 5, 2011, the Children's Bureau (CB) published a Federal Register notice (76 FR 18677) soliciting comments from the States, Tribes, and other stakeholders about how the CF SRs might be improved to benefit child and family outcomes. Based on the comments received from the public, the CB is currently in the process of evaluating the CF SR process for Round Three.*

*Since the CB is in the process of evaluating the CF SR process, states should disregard any projected years for Round Three CF SRs listed in previous documents or guidance that we provided. These include projected start dates in, but are not limited to, a document titled the "Status of Program Improvement Plans and Subsequent Child and Family Services Reviews" that was posted on the CB website. States should not initiate statewide assessments for the purposes of Round Three CF SRs until notified to do so by the CB.*

*We strongly encourage States to review the information contained in ACYF-CB-IM-12-07 regarding establishing and maintaining continuous quality improvement (CQI) systems in State child welfare agencies. We also encourage states to continue their efforts to improve child and family outcomes, agency practices and systems."*

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**You can find further information and updates at our website:**

**[WWW.CHILDSWORLD.CA.GOV/PG1520.HTM](http://WWW.CHILDSWORLD.CA.GOV/PG1520.HTM)**

**Or by sending an email to: [Alba.QuirozGarcia@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Alba.QuirozGarcia@dss.ca.gov)**