

# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)

## Frequently Asked Questions About the Child and Family Services Reviews: October 2003 (ABA)

### **General Questions**

#### **What are the child and family services reviews?**

The child and family services reviews assess child protective services, foster care, adoption, activities to promote safe and stable families, and independent living services. They examine the outcomes of services provided to children and families served by State child welfare agencies, and the systemic factors that affect State agencies' ability to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. The reviews are conducted through a partnership between the Federal Government and State governments.

#### **Why were the reviews established?**

The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA) authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to review State child welfare programs to ensure conformity with the State plan requirements of titles IV-B and IV-E of the SSA.

Historically, child welfare reviews have focused on case record documentation (process) rather than on the capacity of State or local child welfare service agencies to create positive outcomes for children and families. Additionally, past reviews have not provided States with the opportunity to make improvements before financial penalties were imposed. Since March 25, 2002, when the child and family services reviews were codified at 45 CFR 1355, the Federal Government changed its approach to assessing State child welfare programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act.

#### **Who administers the reviews?**

The Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), administers the reviews.

#### **Who is involved in the reviews?**

The reviews are conducted through a partnership between the Federal Government and State governments. The Federal review team comprises Children's Bureau staff, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office staff, and trained consultants selected from a national pool. A National Review Team, comprising Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff, provides leadership to the review teams in planning for and conducting the reviews.

The State review team comprises State central office and local office staff, and representatives of the State's external partners with whom the agency was required to consult in developing its title IV-B State plan. During the onsite review component, Federal and State staff work in partnership to conduct case record reviews and case-related and stakeholder interviews.

Johnson, Bassin & Shaw, Inc. manages the Child Welfare Review Project, which supports the Children's Bureau in managing the reviews. The project coordinates five review planning conference calls with each State, trains consultant reviewers who supplement the Federal review team, provides logistical support to consultant reviewers when they are selected to participate in a review, disseminates information to the review team, and tracks the review outcomes.

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## **What is the goal of the child and family services reviews?**

The goal of the reviews is for the Federal Government to help States improve child welfare services by examining outcomes for children and families who receive services and assessing the systemic factors that affect a State's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children and families.

The Federal Government will accomplish the following through the reviews: (1) ensure State conformity with Federal child welfare requirements, (2) determine what actually is happening to children and families as they engage in State and local child welfare services, and (3) assist States in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

Through the reviews, the Federal Government also seeks to capture information on State child welfare agencies' strengths and areas needing improvement and to promote practice principles believed to support improved outcomes for children and families. These include family-centered practice, community-based services, individualized services that respond to the unique needs of children and families, and strengthening parental capacity to protect and provide for their children. Click here to link to the handout Practice Principles and Approaches

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/hand-2.htm>

## **What are the child and family outcomes and systemic factors that are addressed by the reviews?**

The child and family services reviews assess for the following child and family outcomes and systemic factors:

### I. Outcomes

#### \* Safety Outcomes

Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.

#### \* Permanency Outcomes

Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

#### \* Child and Family Well-Being Outcomes

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.

### II. Systemic Factors

#### \* Statewide Information System

#### \* Quality Assurance System

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- \* Case Review System
- \* Agency Responsiveness to Community
- \* Service Array and Resource Development
- \* Staff and Provider Training
- \* Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

For more information, click here to link to the Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/index.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.pdf>

For instruments in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

For 45 CFR 1355 in:

HTML [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/fed\\_req/fr012500.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/fed_req/fr012500.htm)

PDF [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/fed\\_req/fr012500.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/fed_req/fr012500.pdf)

## **Which States are being reviewed, and when?**

Between Federal fiscal years (FYs) 2001 and 2004, all States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico will undergo a child and family services review. Thereafter, subsequent reviews will be conducted at 2-5 year intervals, on the basis of whether the State was determined to be in substantial conformity in the initial review. Click here to link to the schedule of the FY 2003 and 2004 reviews <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/geninfo/staterev.htm>

## **How are the reviews structured?**

There are two phases to the reviews: (1) the Statewide Assessment, which the State conducts during a 6-month period before the onsite review, and (2) the onsite review. The information gathered from the first two phases of the review process is used to assess the State's conformity with the requirements in titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (SSA). States determined to be out of conformity must develop a Program Improvement Plan.

In the first phase of the review, the State members of the review team complete the Statewide Assessment, using statewide aggregate data and other qualitative information to assess the impact of State policies and practices on the children and families being served.

During the second phase, the onsite review, a Federal and State team examine the outcomes for a sample of children and families served by the State. The onsite review, which takes place in three sites, includes case record reviews; case-related interviews with service providers and children and families engaged in services; and interviews with community stakeholders, such as the courts and community agencies, foster families, caseworkers, and service providers.

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States found not to be in substantial conformity on any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors under review must develop and implement a PIP to address those. Click here to link to the Program Improvement Plan and Matrix in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/im/im0204a1.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/pipfinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/im/im0204a1.pdf>

## **What are the steps in the child and family services review process?**

The child and family services review process comprises a series of steps through which the Federal Government supports State child welfare agencies in planning for and conducting the reviews, and addressing the review outcomes, as necessary. Click here to link to the handout Steps in the Review Process <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/hand-3.htm>

## **What is the period under review?**

During the onsite review component, reviewers examine State child welfare cases drawn from a particular period. The period under review corresponds to the beginning of the period used to draw the foster care sample from Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and extends through the date of the onsite review.

## **What national standards are used to evaluate a State's substantial conformity in the reviews?**

The Federal Government developed standards against which certain statewide data indicators, submitted by State child welfare agencies, are evaluated during the child and family services reviews. Click here to link to the Information Memorandum on the National Standards in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/im/im0107.htm>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/im/im0107.pdf>

## **Questions About the Review Teams**

### **What is the role of the Federal Government in the reviews?**

The child and family services reviews are administered by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). A Federal Team Leader designated by the Children's Bureau is assigned to provide guidance to the review team throughout the review process. The Federal Government also assigns a staff member from the appropriate ACF Regional Office to assume a leadership position for the review. These two Federal Team Leaders (one from the National Review Team and one from the ACF Regional Office) have responsibility for the following:

- \* Serving as liaisons with State leadership in planning review activities
- \* Ensuring that the Statewide Assessment and accompanying data are sent to the State on a timely basis and received back in time to plan the onsite review
- \* Preparing an analysis (preliminary assessment) of the Statewide Assessment 30 days before the onsite review and recording it on the Summary of Findings Form for distribution to the review team (ACF lead)
- \* Planning the details of the onsite review with State and ACF Central Office representatives, including arranging conference calls, as needed, and transmitting review procedures to State liaisons

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- \* Ensuring that Local Site Leaders are aware of their responsibilities during the onsite review
- \* Coordinating the development, revision, circulation, and release of the Final Report of the review
- \* Working with State child welfare agency staff as they develop their Program Improvement Plan

## **What is the role of the State child welfare agency staff in the reviews?**

The State works closely with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Central and Regional Office staff in planning and implementing the reviews. Specifically, the State has responsibility for the following:

- \* Providing overall management of the State's review in collaboration with the ACF Regional Office staff
- \* Assigning a lead State staff person to serve as liaison with the ACF Regional Office
- \* Participating in the review planning conference calls with the ACF Central and Regional Office staff
- \* Identifying internal and external members of the State review team and providing information about those individuals to the ACF Regional Office
- \* Developing a plan for involving agency staff in, and training them about, the child and family services reviews, in collaboration with the State Team Training Project managed by Johnson, Bassin & Shaw, Inc.
- \* Completing a Statewide Assessment in collaboration with the State's external partners in the title IV-B planning process
- \* Identifying local review sites, including the State's largest metropolitan area, in consultation with the ACF Regional Office and on the basis of information from the Statewide Assessment
- \* Assigning Local Site Coordinators in each of the three local sites selected for the review
- \* Ensuring that all Local Site Coordinators have copies of review-related materials and understand their role in preparing for and managing the onsite review. (Click here to link to the Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual in:  
HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/index.htm>  
Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.doc>  
PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.pdf>
- \* Working with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff to select cases for review
- \* Consulting with the ACF Regional Office staff and Local Site Coordinators about logistical arrangements for the review, including providing recommendations to the Child Welfare Review Project for lodging for the Federal team in the three sites and the exit conference site, making and paying for lodging arrangements for State Team members, and identifying and paying for meeting space for other review-related activities. (The Child Welfare Review Project handles lodging for Federal staff and consultants, and transportation arrangements for consultants only.)

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- \* Scheduling State-level stakeholder interviews
- \* Overseeing the work of the Local Site Coordinators in each of the three designated sites under review

## **What are the responsibilities of the Local Site Coordinators?**

- \* Providing an orientation to local child welfare agency staff about the review
- \* Ensuring that workers assigned to the families whose case records are selected for review are available and scheduled for case-related interviews
- \* Scheduling and confirming interviews with those individuals involved in a case who were selected to be interviewed, and providing them with an orientation about the purpose of the review
- \* Scheduling and confirming local stakeholder interviews and informing those persons about the purpose of the review, scheduling and confirming any planned focus groups or other meetings that will be a part of the local review activities, and preparing a review week schedule. (Click here to link to the handout Tips for Creating Onsite Review Schedules <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/schesample.htm>)
- \* Preparing maps or other written directions for reviewers to help them get to the scheduled appointments
- \* Reserving space for case record reviews, interviews, and other planned meetings
- \* Assembling all case records to be reviewed so that they will be accessible and ready for review at the beginning of the review week
- \* Securing releases of information or confidentiality forms, as necessary, to permit review team members to access case records or to interview individuals associated with a case

## **What are the responsibilities of the Child Welfare Review Project?**

- \* Recruits individuals with experience in the child welfare field to be consultant reviewers, who serve as members of the Federal team during the onsite reviews. (The consultants are part of a national pool of prospective consultants who are recruited and trained by the Child Welfare Review Project.)
- \* Designs and conducts trainings for consultants on their role in the onsite reviews.
- \* Designs and conducts training of cross-State participants.
- \* Schedules and facilitates a series of five review planning conference calls per State, beginning 9 months before the onsite review, with the Children's Bureau, ACF Regional Office, and State child welfare agency staff.
- \* Approximately 3 months before the onsite review, provides the ACF Regional Office with the names and profiles of consultants who have indicated an availability to participate in the onsite review and who, if they have participated in a review, have met the Children's Bureau criteria for participation in future review. The ACF Regional Office selects consultants from that list to supplement the Federal Onsite Review Team.

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- \* Obtains the site assignments from the ACF Regional Office, and makes logistical arrangements for the consultant reviewers, for example, transportation and lodging. The project also makes lodging arrangements for other Federal members of the Onsite Review Team and coordinates these arrangements with State staff to ensure that the Federal and State members of the Onsite Review Team are housed in the same location.
- \* Produces and distributes the Review Information Package to all review team members approximately 2 weeks before the onsite review (upon receipt of review-related information from the ACF Regional Office and the State). The package includes logistical information and other materials needed to prepare review team members for the review.
- \* Produces copies of the review instruments and any other information needed by review team members during the review week; sends these to the attention of the NRT Team Leader and NRT Local Site Leader to arrive at the local sites the week before the onsite review.
- \* Assists the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office in tracking the status of the reviews.

## **Who should serve as State review team members?**

State review team members should include staff of the central and local State child welfare agency offices and external representatives with whom the State was required to consult in developing its title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan. The external partners may include university social work educators, advocates, coordinators of State child welfare initiatives or projects, tribal representatives, and staff of private and public agencies.

## **How do the Federal and State review team members work together?**

The reviews are conducted through a partnership between the Federal Government and State governments. The Federal Team Leaders work with the State staff person who serves as the State lead for the review. They manage the overall review week on site and conduct the stakeholder interviews. Federal and State staff also serve as Local Site Leaders at each of three sites being reviewed.

Other Federal and State team members work together in pairs to conduct case record reviews and case-related interviews and to complete the Onsite Review Instrument. Review team members also participate in the local site entrance and exit conferences, local and overall team debriefings, and overall exit conference.

## **What is the role of the Team Leaders, the Local Site Leaders, the Local Site Coordinators, and the other review team members during the onsite reviews?**

The Federal Team Leaders provide overall guidance and serve as the liaisons to the State Team Leader during the review week; they also complete the Summary of Findings Form and conduct the overall exit conference. The State Team Leader provides information and guidance related to the State system and policies. The Federal and State Team Leaders also conduct State-level stakeholder interviews.

During the onsite review, the review team is divided into smaller "local" teams that are assigned to three geographical sites in the State. The Federal and State Local Site Leaders at each site are responsible for managing the case record reviews, case-related interviews, and debriefings and for determining findings for the site.

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Local Site Leaders in each of the three sites conduct quality assurance reviews of all completed review instruments to ensure that they contain accurate and complete information. The overall Team Leaders for the review conduct a second quality assurance review of completed instruments in all three sites to ensure consistency in case ratings across the three sites.

State staff also serve as Local Site Coordinators, who work with the State lead to plan and manage logistical arrangements during the onsite review.

Other review team members conduct case record reviews and case-related interviews, complete the Onsite Review Instrument for each case reviewed, and participate in debriefings and exit conferences. (Click here to link to the handout Roles and Responsibilities of the Review Team <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/hand-4.htm>)

## **Are the review teams diverse and representative of the population served by the State?**

The Children's Bureau makes every effort to ensure that the Federal review teams include members who are skilled in child welfare practice and are representative of the population served by the State. In addition, the Bureau actively solicits consultant reviewers through national child welfare organizations representing professionals of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The Children's Bureau also encourages States to select State review team members who are representative of the population served by the State.

## **Who are the consultants who serve as peer reviewers during the onsite reviews?**

Consultants are child welfare professionals who are recruited and trained by the Child Welfare Review Project, managed by Johnson, Bassin & Shaw, Inc. They supplement the Federal review team.

## **Who selects consultants to participate in the onsite reviews, and what is their role?**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office staff select consultants for the reviews, in consultation with the Children's Bureau. The consultants participate in case record reviews and case-related interviews, debriefings, and the entrance and exit conferences during the onsite review, and complete an Onsite Review Instrument for each case they review.

## **Are States involved in selecting consultants who participate in the State reviews?**

The State is provided with a list of consultant reviewers before the review. The State reviews the list to ensure that none of the consultants have a conflict of interest in serving as reviewers for that State. Consultant activities that are considered as creating a potential conflict of interest include the following:

- \* The consultant has lived or worked in the State during the year prior to the child and family services review.
- \* The consultant provided technical assistance to the State child welfare agency during the year prior to the child and family services review.
- \* The consultant participated in a lawsuit or other legal action against the State child welfare agency.

Staff of the National Resource Centers funded by the Children's Bureau, and other technical assistance providers who may be working with the State, also are not included on the review team to avoid possible conflicts of interest.

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## **What is the cross-State participant program?**

The Children's Bureau established the cross-State participant program to provide State child welfare agency representatives with the opportunity to participate in a child and family services review in another State before the review in their own State. The intent of the program is to support child welfare agencies in building staff capacity to manage a child and family services review.

To be considered to serve as a cross-State participant, individuals must be experienced in child welfare; accountable to the State child welfare agency that they will represent on an administrative, policy, or training level; and engaged in assisting the State agency in planning for and managing the child and family services review.

State child welfare agency administrators may request cross-State participant slots in reviews by contacting their Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office. The ACF Regional Office representative then forwards candidate names and short biographies to the cross-State participant liaison at the Children's Bureau. Once selected, cross-State participants must attend a training sponsored by the Federal Government before serving as a reviewer in another State. States must assume responsibility for the travel costs associated with State staff attending the training and onsite review.

During the onsite review, cross-State participants conduct case record reviews and case-related interviews, complete Onsite Review Instrument, and participate in debriefings and the entrance and exit conferences.

## **May State agency staff participate in or observe reviews of other States?**

State agency staff may participate in another State's onsite review through the cross-State participant program; they may not observe a review.

## **Questions About Review Planning**

### **How does the Federal Government engage States in planning for the reviews?**

The Children's Bureau hosts an initial conference call with States several months before the fiscal year in which they will be reviewed. Following that call, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office staff contacts the State lead to discuss next steps. The State then participates in a series of at least five review planning conference calls before the onsite review.

Click here to link to the handout Conference Call Guidelines

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/conferencecall.htm> which describes the focus of the calls and the action necessary between each.)

### **Who manages the logistical arrangements for the onsite reviews?**

The State is responsible for managing the logistical arrangements for the three local sites at which the onsite review takes place, including providing space for review team members to review case records and to conduct entrance and exit conferences. State staff also schedule the case-related and stakeholder interviews.

The Child Welfare Review Project manages the logistical arrangements for the Federal staff (hotel only) and consultants (transportation and hotel).

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## **Should the State arrange for special receptions or events during the review week?**

The Federal Government discourages States from hosting receptions, meals, or special events associated with the child and family services review. Federal staff must pay for meal functions in which they participate while on Government business.

## **Questions About Review-Related Training and Technical Assistance**

### **What type of assistance is available to the States as they begin planning for the review?**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office staff provide guidance to States during the review planning process, the onsite review, and the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) process. The Child Welfare Review Project, managed by Johnson, Bassin & Shaw, Inc., facilitates five review planning conference calls between the Federal and State staff, and States are encouraged to be in regular contact with their ACF Regional Office liaison. States should check the Children's Bureau Web site regularly for new information related to the reviews. Click here to link to the Children's Bureau <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb> Web site.)

The ACF Regional Office also works with States to ensure access to technical assistance, which is available from the Children's Bureau-funded National Resource Centers. (Click here to link to more information about the National Resource Centers <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/links/index.htm>)

To the extent possible, a State should coordinate its review-related technical assistance needs with other program improvement efforts under way in the State, emphasizing the implementation of the State's 5-year title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan. States may decide which providers of technical assistance can best address their needs.

When long-range technical assistance is needed, it should focus on building capacity within the State. For that reason, States are encouraged to develop relationships with existing local community and professional organizations that may become sources of ongoing technical assistance. States might do so, for example, through the following:

- \* Using intra-State university social work programs for training and evaluation needs
- \* Engaging community groups as consultants or advisors to improve the agency's responsiveness to the community
- \* Coordinating the agency's improvement plans with similar plans developed through other publicly or privately funded initiatives in the State
- \* Using existing advocacy or consumer groups as consultants on policy development and practice issues

States also may arrange directly with the ACF Regional Offices for technical assistance through the following:

- \* Peer State consultation and assistance
- \* National organizations and foundations
- \* Private providers and agencies

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\* National experts

## **Do State review team members receive training before the child and family services reviews?**

Before the onsite review, the Children's Bureau provides training to the State agency staff through the State Team Training Project managed by Johnson, Bassin & Shaw, Inc.

## **What does the State Team Training cover?**

The training focuses on the onsite component of the review and provides an overview of the Onsite Review Instrument, which is used to review cases and document findings. Participants then apply the instrument to a "mock case" to gain practical experience in conducting the case record reviews. The training also provides an overview of conducting case-related interviews and debriefings, determining findings, and participating in entrance and exit conferences.

## **Who should participate in the State Team Training?**

The State Team Training is designed for State review team members who will be participating in the State's onsite review (managing or conducting case record reviews and case-related interviews). All such State team members (including alternates) must participate in the training before serving as a leader or reviewer during the onsite component of the State's child and family services reviews. States are encouraged to invite to the training only agency staff and external partners who will participate in the onsite review.

## **What is the time commitment associated with the State Team Training?**

The training is a 1-day event, beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 5 p.m. Participants are provided a 45-minute midday break for lunch on their own, during which they may take time to purchase lunch and then continue to work on their training assignments. Participants are encouraged to make arrangements for coverage of their responsibilities by other staff during the training to avoid interruptions that will result in their missing parts of the training.

Participants also are encouraged to read the child and family services review materials before the training to learn about the reviews' purpose and approach. Click here to link to the Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/index.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.pdf>

It is also helpful for participants to familiarize themselves with the Onsite Review Instrument and to apply it to one of their cases before the training. Click here to link to the instrument in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

## **When and where does the State Team Training take place?**

The training takes place approximately 2 weeks before the onsite review at a mutually agreed-upon location within the State (typically, the State capital or near the location of the State child welfare agency, if different).

The State Team Training Project discusses the selection of a date and location for the training with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office staff and State Team Lead during one of the five scheduled review planning calls. Typically, decisions about the training date and location are made very early in the State's review planning process.

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## **Who is responsible for making the logistical arrangements for the State Team Training?**

The State Team Training Project staff manage the logistical arrangements for the training, including securing meeting space, preparing and shipping meeting materials, and providing refreshments for breaks (lunch is not provided during the training).

The project staff work with the State to determine the best location for the training; some States elect to hold the training at the State training facility (a room that can accommodate 35-40 people at large round tables is needed), and others recommend a nearby hotel. If the training is held at the training facility, the State lead needs to designate a contact person at the facility with whom the project staff can coordinate arrangements (for example, identify nearby vendors to supply refreshments). If the training is held at a local hotel, the project staff make all of the logistical arrangements.

The project staff place a hold on a sufficient number of sleeping rooms for Federal and project staff; the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) staff need to call the hotel directly to confirm their accommodations.

The lead State staff person for the child and family services reviews coordinates the State review team members' lodging arrangements; the project is not able to book or pay for lodging for the State team members.

## **Who is responsible for the costs associated with the State Team Training?**

The State Team Training Project is responsible for the following costs associated with the training: meeting space, refreshments, equipment, supplies, training materials, and training team expenses.

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office is responsible for the costs associated with ACF staff travel to the training (mileage, train, airfare, lodging, and per diem).

The State is responsible for the costs associated with State review team members' travel to the training (mileage, train, airfare, lodging, and per diem).

## **What is the role of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office and State Team Leader regarding the State Team Training?**

The Children's Bureau designed the child and family services reviews as a partnership between the Federal and State staff. Just like the other components of the review, the State Team Training is conducted in partnership with the ACF Regional Office staff and the State Team Leader.

At least one representative of the ACF Regional Office responsible for a State review should be present during the State Team Training (typically the lead ACF staff person for the State review). The State agency staff person responsible for managing the child and family services review also should attend the training.

## **How can the State agency prepare its team to participate most effectively in the State Team Training?**

State agency staff should come to the training with a basic understanding of the child and family services reviews and familiarity with the Onsite Review Instrument. (Click here to link to the instrument in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

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The lead State staff person for the review might do the following to help the team prepare for the training and the onsite review:

- \* Meet with the entire review team to discuss the child and family services review process (philosophical approach, steps in the process, Federal and State roles) and to explain how the State will manage the process.

- \* Encourage the staff to review the child and family services reviews materials, including the Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual.

Click here to link to the manual in: HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/index.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.pdf>

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PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

Click here to link to the training handouts that include tips for reviewers

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/handlist.htm>

- \* Meet with the State review team members (in person or by teleconference) the week before the training to do the following: (1) update them on the status and preliminary findings of the State's child and family services review (for example, from the Statewide Assessment), (2) encourage them to re-review the Onsite Review Instrument, and to apply the instrument to a case record from their caseload, and (3) facilitate a question-and-answer period about the reviews and the training. Click here to link to the Onsite Review Instrument in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

The State lead also might consider developing a mock case record by removing the names and other identifying information from a case record. This could be used by staff who are not currently managing a caseload to practice applying the Onsite Review Instrument to a case. (Click here to link to the instrument in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

- \* Participate in a conference call with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office lead staff person for the State's review and the State Team Training Project staff before the training. The State lead should use this call to raise questions about the training or to discuss other issues specific to the State that would be useful for the training team to know before the training.

- \* Communicate to the State review team members about the training and ask them to make arrangements to be able to participate fully in the training (for example, requesting coverage for caseload issues that might arise the day of the training).

# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)

## **How can I find out more about the State Team Training?**

Call or e-mail the State Team Training Project at (301) 565-3260 or [cw@jbs1.com](mailto:cw@jbs1.com)

## **Questions About the Onsite Review**

### **Where does the onsite review take place within the State, and how are those sites selected?**

The major metropolitan area, based on population, is one of the three sites for the onsite review in each State; the State, in conjunction with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office and Children's Bureau staff, selects the other two sites on the basis of information gathered through the Statewide Assessment.

### **What takes place during the onsite component of the review?**

The onsite component of the child and family services reviews is designed to assess child protective services, foster care, adoption, activities to promote safe and stable families, and independent living services. During the onsite review, pairs of review team members conduct case record reviews and case-related interviews to examine outcomes for children and families served by child welfare agencies. In addition, Team Leaders and Local Site Leaders conduct stakeholder interviews to examine systemic factors that affect State agencies' ability to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

### **What type of information is provided to review team members before the onsite review?**

Review team members receive a Review Information Package approximately 1 week before the onsite review. The package contains the Statewide Assessment, the Preliminary Assessment, State policies related to the review, a list of Federal and State review team members, and a review fact sheet (which provides the location of, and directions to, the State agency; hotel and travel information; and the names of the Team Leaders and Local Site Leaders).

### **How is the onsite review week structured?**

The Local Site Leader provides to review team members a review week schedule at the entrance conference, which is the first activity of the review week. An overview of a typical review week schedule is as follows:

Monday: Entrance conference, case record reviews and case-related interviews, stakeholder interviews, and daily debriefing

Tuesday: Case record reviews and case-related interviews, stakeholder interviews and daily debriefing

Wednesday: Case record reviews and case-related interviews, stakeholder interviews and daily debriefing

Thursday: Case record reviews and case-related interviews, stakeholder interviews, local team debriefing, completion of local Summary of Findings Form, local exit conference, and travel, as necessary, to the State exit conference.

Friday: Review team debriefing (discussion of preliminary findings) and State exit conference

Click here to link to a more detailed sample review week schedule-

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/schesample.htm>

# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)

## **How are cases reviewed during the onsite review?**

Reviewers obtain information about the cases selected for the onsite review by reviewing the written or electronic case records and conducting interviews with people involved with, or knowledgeable about, the case. The case record reviews are conducted by pairs of Federal and State reviewers, with each pair reviewing approximately three cases during the review week; each case is rated and documented on an Onsite Review Instrument. Click here to link to the instrument in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

Following the case record review, reviewers conduct interviews with the child(ren), parents, foster parents, case managers, and other professionals knowledgeable about the case. The case-related interviews are not "customer satisfaction surveys." Rather, they provide an opportunity for reviewers to confirm case record documentation and to collect supplemental information needed to complete the Onsite Review Instrument.

Typically, States schedule interviews with school-age children; younger children may be observed by the reviewer during interviews with biological or foster parents. Reviewers also should use their professional judgment when interviewing children; the best interests of the child should always be the priority during the interview process. No child should be forced to participate in an interview. Click here to link to the handout Conducting Case-Related Interviews <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/hand-8.htm>

Reviewers must obtain sufficient information from the case records and from the interviews to respond accurately and thoroughly to the questions in the Onsite Review Instrument, to document the responses to the items, and to justify the ratings assigned to the outcomes.

## **How are cases selected for review?**

Each State review involves an assessment of 30-50 case records. The cases reviewed include child protective services (in-home) cases and foster care cases. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office collaborates with the State to determine the number and composition of the sample of case records to be selected for the child and family services review, on the basis of information provided in the Statewide Assessment.

The sample of cases reviewed consists of 150 foster care cases and 150 in-home cases. The foster care cases are selected randomly from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data submitted by the State for a defined sampling period, after the sites have been selected and the composition of the sample has been determined. If a child was in foster care for at least 24 hours during the sampling period, and reported in AFCARS, the child's case is eligible to be considered for the review sample.

The sample of in-home cases is selected randomly from a list of in-home service cases that were open for services for at least 60 days during the sampling period, including cases that were subsequently closed. (Click here to link to the Information Memorandum on Sampling Periods <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/im/im0106.htm> ; click here to link to the Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/index.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/procman/manual.pdf>

# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)

The State prepares, and submits to the ACF Regional Office at least 60 days before the onsite review, a list of cases that were open for in-home services in the sites to be reviewed for at least 60 days during the sampling period, including cases that were subsequently closed. The ACF Central Office then randomly selects 150 cases from the universe provided by the sites to be reviewed. This list of cases, along with 150 foster care cases randomly selected from AFCARS from the sites to be reviewed, is provided to the State by the ACF Regional Office.

The ACF Central and Regional Offices work with the State to determine the number of cases to be reviewed. The State selects the cases from the two master lists, beginning with case number one and continuing in consecutive order, eliminating only those in-home cases that were not open for services for at least 60 days during the sampling period and in-home cases in which any child in the family entered foster care subsequent to the sampling period. In some situations, cases may be eliminated from both the in-home and foster care sample lists, such as when the family is known to have relocated to another State or when interviews with key parties cannot be conducted because of the family's unwillingness or unavailability. States should consult with their ACF Regional Office staff regarding cases that are skipped or deleted from the sample lists.

Once the determination of cases is final, States must submit to their ACF Regional Office documentation as to why any cases were not included in the sample to be reviewed.

## **How are case-related interviews scheduled?**

The State child welfare agency is responsible for designating Local Site Coordinators, who schedule the interviews. The interviews should not exceed 1 hour; schedulers should allow time for travel between interviews.

## **Where are the case-related interviews conducted?**

For the convenience and comfort of the individuals to be interviewed, interviews typically are scheduled in their office or home. The State also may arrange, as appropriate, for a central interview location on a case-by-case basis. When distance is an issue, interviews may be conducted by telephone on a case-by-case basis.

## **What is a stakeholder interview?**

Stakeholders are community or State representatives who are knowledgeable about the functioning of the State child welfare agency, such as local foster parent associations and service providers. The purpose of stakeholder interviews is to gather information about how the systemic factors under review generally affect outcomes for children and families. The stakeholder interviews are not designed to gather case-specific information. Stakeholders are interviewed at the State and local site levels; information from these interviews is documented on the Stakeholder Interview Guide. Interviews with certain stakeholders are required as part of the onsite review, and interviews with others are optional. In planning for the review, either the State, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office, or the ACF Central Office may request interviews with specific stakeholders if their input is deemed critical to evaluating the State's performance. Click here to link to the Stakeholder Interview Guide in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/stakeholder.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/stakeholder.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/pdfs/stakeholder.pdf>

## **What role do the State reviewers play in the stakeholder interviews?**

State review team members typically conduct case-related interviews; the Federal and State Team Leaders or Local Site Leaders generally carry out the stakeholder interviews.

# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)

## **Is information gathered through the reviews confidential?**

Review team members must consider all information learned through the onsite review as confidential. Review team members are expected not to share this information with others, including colleagues and the media.

If asked about confidentiality during the case-related interview process, review team members should explain to interviewees that information from the interviews is used collectively to report the findings, and that comments are not attributed to specific individuals.

## **What is the purpose of the entrance and exit conferences?**

The purpose of the local entrance conference is to provide review team members with an orientation about the review week and the local site and to orient local administrators and staff to the review activities. This includes an overview of the State policies, case record structure, review week schedule, and other issues relevant to the site.

The purpose of the local exit conference is to provide a brief summary of the preliminary findings for that site to the local child welfare administrator.

The purpose of the State exit conference is for the Team Leaders to provide a brief summary of the preliminary review findings to the State child welfare administrator.

## **What is the purpose of the debriefings?**

Each local site review team meets daily to debrief. The debriefings are designed to ensure that all team members are using the correct process to rate their cases and to promote consistency in reviewer ratings. This process is critical to conducting an equitable review of each State child welfare agency.

The daily debriefings also provide review team members with the opportunity to report to the Local Site Leader issues for their attention and resolution, such as challenges in completing the review process or special issues that arose during the case record reviews or interviews.

## **Who attends the daily debriefings?**

Only review team members for the local site participate in the daily debriefings; the overall Team Leaders also participate if they visit the site during the review week.

## **Who attends the exit conference?**

The National Review Team Federal Team Leader leads the State exit conference, and the entire review team is expected to be present, unless otherwise advised by the Team Leader.

The State agency determines who else is invited to participate (for example, other State agency staff or external partners).

## **Questions About Reviewing Case Records**

### **How many cases are reviewed during the onsite component of the review?**

Approximately 50 cases are reviewed in each State. In some situations, a fewer number of cases, between 30 and 50, may be agreed upon by the State and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). No fewer than 12 cases are reviewed in two of the sites; the remaining cases are reviewed in the major metropolitan area. Each review team pair assigned to review case records typically examines three cases.

# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)

## **How are the outcomes of case record reviews and interviews documented?**

Reviewers note the appropriate information on the Onsite Review Instrument, which was developed by the Children's Bureau as a tool for documenting case-related information from case record reviews and interviews. Click here to link to the Onsite Review Instrument in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

## **What approach should the review team pairs typically take in reviewing a case?**

Each pair of review team members determines the most effective approach to reviewing case records given their skills and style. Local Site Leaders also can provide guidance on strategies for conducting the case record reviews.

Some teams choose to divide the Onsite Review Instrument into sections. Each partner then focuses on the items in their section, while noting areas in which their partner may find information for their part of the instrument.

Others choose to work together; one partner takes the lead in identifying the information needed while the other looks through the record. The lead then documents the information found, while the other partner looks for information to complete the next item. Click here to link to the handout *Reviewing Case Records and Completing the Onsite Review Instrument*

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/hand-7.htm>

## **How should the Onsite Review Instrument be completed?**

Reviewers should answer all key questions and use the exploratory questions to ensure that they are capturing key information about each case. The documentation for each case must justify the ratings; therefore, reviewers should do the following when completing the Onsite Review Instrument:

- \* Document the source of information (case record, case-related interview).
- \* Focus information collection activities on the period under review, except when instructed by the Onsite Review Instrument to review the entire case history. Click here to link to the instrument in:  
HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>  
Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>  
PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>
- \* Flag questions on the instrument to ask children or parents/foster parents, caseworkers, and other professionals who are knowledgeable about the case.
- \* Note areas in which information is incomplete, missing, or conflicting. Supplement existing or missing information by asking the Local Site Leader to arrange for interviews with specific individuals, if not already scheduled.
- \* Complete the instrument after finishing the case record review and case-related interviews.
- \* Note clearly the reason(s) for the findings and ratings.
- \* Give examples of strengths and weaknesses to support the ratings.

# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)

\* Use the Quality Assurance Checklist to inspect each completed Onsite Review Instrument. Click here to link to the instrument in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

## **How do reviewers know where to find information in the case record?**

Each State organizes its child welfare case records differently. At the local site entrance conference, the State lead describes to review team members the structure of the State's case records.

In addition, in most instances, the State member of each review team pair will be familiar with the State's case record format.

## **How do reviewers use State policy during the onsite review?**

Review team members rate cases using the Onsite Review Instrument; most items in the instrument are assessed against Federal law, regulation, or policy. In some instances, as noted in the Onsite Review Instrument, items are rated against State policy. State policies relevant to the reviews are sent to the review team members to become familiar with before the onsite case record review and stakeholder interviews. The State child welfare agency lead for the review also discusses these policies at the local entrance conference. Click here to link to the instrument in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/onsitefinal.pdf>

## **Why are juvenile justice cases part of the sample of cases reviewed?**

Some States serve children in the juvenile justice system directly through their child welfare systems or through Title IV-E agreements between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. If juvenile justice cases are part of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), they are included in the universe of foster cases from which the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) selects the sample. If the juvenile justice and child welfare programs are administered by the same State agency, juvenile justice in-home cases may also be included in the universe from which the in-home sample is selected. The ACF Regional Office and ACF Central Office provide guidance to the State regarding when to include juvenile justice cases in the review.

## **What should review teams do if they cannot reach consensus on a case rating?**

Each review team pair should work together to address differences by re-reviewing the case record materials and information obtained through the case-related interviews. When pairs experience challenges after conducting these activities, they should request to meet with the Local Site Leader for guidance.

## **Questions About Post-Onsite Review Activities**

### **How is the State informed about the findings of the child and family services review?**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office sends a courtesy copy of the draft report to the State within 30 days following completion of the onsite review, which serves as the State's notification regarding substantial conformity. When there are discrepancies between the State's data and the findings of the onsite review, these timeframes may be extended.

# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)

## **How does the State address those areas in which they are out of conformance with Federal regulations?**

The State is required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that addresses each of the areas in which it is found to be out of conformance. The State must submit the PIP to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office for approval within 90 calendar days from the date that the State receives written notification from the ACF Regional Office that it is not operating in substantial conformity in any one of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors. The State must work with the ACF Regional Office and members of the child and family services review team to develop the content of the PIP. Click here to link to the Program Improvement Plan and Matrix in:

HTML <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/im/im0204a1.htm>

Word <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/pipfinal.doc>

PDF <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/im/im0204a1.pdf>

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# CFSR Frequently Asked Questions (ABA)