

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR) *Caseworkers Make A Difference*

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New York State
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This quarterly newsletter is for frontline caseworkers and supervisors who are working with children and families to improve outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being. The newsletter 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 (CFSR)?

The CFSR, conducted by the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is an assessment of a state's performance related to child welfare. States are assessed in the areas of child protective, foster care, adoption, family connections and support, and independent living services.

The review is administered by the Children's Bureau, part of HHS, in collaboration with the state and is conducted in two parts: a [Statewide Assessment](#) and an [onsite review](#).

The [Statewide Assessment](#), which is done by the state 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 New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) conducted over forty focus groups to collect input from child welfare professionals. This information was included in the final written report submitted in March 2008.

After the Statewide Assessment, a team from the Children's Bureau and OCFS jointly conducted an onsite review during the week of May 5, 2009. This included case record reviews, interviews with youth and families engaged in services, and interviews with community stakeholders (e.g., courts, community agencies, foster families, caseworkers and service providers). The goal was for the Children's Bureau to get a complete picture of our performance rather than relying solely on data.

Once the [onsite review](#) is 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. OCFS submitted the state's PIP on May 1, 2009, and is currently waiting approval from the Children's Bureau.



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Safety, Permanency, Well-being

The Program Improvement Plan

New York State's PIP has three main focus areas that may sound familiar to you: Safety, Permanency/Well-being, and Workforce Development.

Safety

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;
- providing for the safety of children while in foster care.

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.

Permanency/Well-being

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.

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. 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 among siblings who are not placed together? 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?

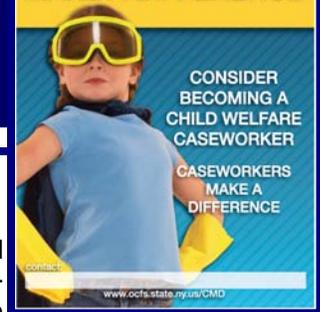
Well-being

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.

Workforce Development

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Workforce Development

As anyone who works in child welfare knows, a well-trained, competent and supported workforce is key to improving outcomes for children and families. Although not specifically measured by the CFSR, OCFS has made a commitment to focus on workforce development over the next several years. This includes the following initiatives:

- **Provide support for effective supervisory practice.**

In collaboration with the Northeast and Caribbean Implementation Center (NCIC), we will work with administrative and frontline supervisors at local district and voluntary agencies to strengthen their supervisory practice. The goal is for supervisors to consistently support and develop caseworkers while continuing to focus on quality of practice, productivity and outcome achievement.

- **Provide support for recruitment and retention of qualified child welfare staff.**

We have partnered with the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) and the New York Public Welfare Association to implement a recruitment and retention campaign called “Caseworkers Make a Difference.” The Governor’s proclamation of 2009 as the “Year of the Child Welfare Caseworker” kicked off the campaign in April.

Additionally, we are collaborating with COFCCA and the Social Work Education Consortium (SWEC) to focus on the workforce needs in voluntary agencies. The Child Welfare Workforce Initiative (CWWI) will have voluntary agencies analyze data and take steps to identify strategies for sustainable system changes that will support workforce improvements.

- **Promote a team approach to casework and supervision.**

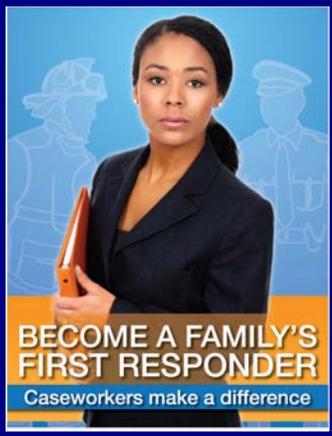
We continue to support the use of team casework and group supervision in those districts participating in the Teaming initiative. The Teaming Model pilot began in early 2007 and seven local districts are currently participating in the pilot with one or two units; another nine counties are in the planning phase. The goal is to increase caseworkers’ satisfaction with their jobs and reduce feelings of isolation.

- **Distribute funds for the hiring of additional CPS caseworkers and supervisors.**

In response to the “New York State Child Welfare Workload Study Final Report” submitted in December 2006, OCFS will distribute \$1,682,600 in local assistance funds to local districts. These funds are intended to help districts achieve (or move closer to achieving) the recommended CPS caseload size of 12 active investigations per month, per caseworker. Additionally, the funds are intended to bolster the supervision available to CPS caseworkers.

- **Portable Technology.**

Local districts and voluntary agencies providing care to children in foster care have been offered laptops to be assigned to casework staff for use in documenting their casework. The laptops are seen as a valuable tool to assist workers in the timely recording of required casework contacts with children on their caseload. Additionally, in the 2009 -2010 State Budget \$940, 000.00 has been allocated to continue the Portable Technology Demonstration projects. The project is limited once again to child protective services staff.



Caseworkers Make A Difference

Your Feedback Welcome

As you can see, there are numerous areas that are evaluated by the Children's Bureau using the CFSR, as well as areas we have independently targeted for improvement.

Improvements in New York State's performance lies mostly in the work done by frontline caseworkers and supervisors.

This newsletter is intended to keep you up to date on the latest practice initiatives and information associated with the CFSR. For additional information on the CFSR or for copies of the reports noted in this newsletter, please visit the CFSR website at <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/dps/cfsr>.

Your feedback on how best to implement needed changes is welcomed. As OCFS moves forward, this quarterly newsletter will continue to provide you with updates relating to the CFSR and New York State's Program Improvement Plan.

Comments and suggests may be sent to:

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