



PENNSYLVANIA CFSR EXPRESS

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A collaborative effort between Federal, State, & Local Stakeholders to enhance the lives of children & families



Overview and Philosophy

Welcome to the first edition of the Pennsylvania CFSR Express! Our goal is to provide meaningful information about the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) to help improve outcomes for children and families.

Federal legislation established the authority for the CFSR review process. In 1994, Congress passed amendments to the Social Security Act authorizing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through the Children's Bureau, to review State child and family service programs to ensure State conformity with titles IV-B and IV-E.

Subsequently, the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, or ASFA, influenced the design of the reviews by emphasizing the child welfare goals of safety, permanency, and family well-being.

Seven outcomes associated with these goals, as well as seven systemic factors are measured by the CFSR. The two-pronged approach to evaluating each state includes a Statewide Self Assessment and an Onsite Review.

All states completed the 1st round of CFSRs between 2001 & 2004. PA completed its first review in 2002.

We are currently writing our Statewide Self Assessment for the 2nd round and preparing for the onsite review scheduled for July 28—August 1, 2008.

The onsite review team measures performance by reviewing the case record and interviewing key participants from a selected sample of cases from three counties. The largest Metropolitan

area in each state is always selected as one of the sites (Philadelphia for PA).

States who are not found in "substantial conformity" in all areas are required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) within 90 days of receiving the Final Report from the Children's Bureau. The PIP outlines each state's strategies to improve all areas identified as needing improvement. The focus is on statewide program improvement and is not limited to the three counties participating in the onsite review.

The remaining two sites have not been confirmed by the Children's Bureau, but PA plans to recommend two of the following: Allegheny, Lackawanna, Northumberland, or Venango.

Important Dates

Period Under Review

- Now - 7/28/08

Statewide Assessment

- Due - 5/26/08

Onsite Review

- Starts - 7/28/08

For Youth By Youth

Pennsylvania's Youth Summit: Partner for Change 2008 is being held at the PA Child Welfare Training Program on March 25 and 26, 2008.

The Pennsylvania Youth Summit is an opportunity for youth and key stakeholders to *partner for change*.

Our vision is to ensure youth are given a voice and proactively participate to improve the systems and services that have impacted them during substitute care.

Our mission is to help in preparing the Statewide Self Assessment, to be engaged in the onsite review, and to assist in the development of the State's Program Improvement Plan.

Youth who want to make a difference in the Child Welfare System, Key Stakeholders, Independent Living Coordinators, Private Providers, and Foster Parents are all invited to the Youth Summit.

Please contact Brandie Gilbert at 717-795-9048 to register.

— Alyshea Santos

"Youth who want to make a difference in the Child Welfare System,"

OVER

Interview with a round one county — Philadelphia

What was your Round One experience like?

It was very, very, very intense and exhausting before and during our round one review. The collaboration between OCYF and our county was excellent. We were fortunate to have a core group of very competent and committed colleagues who worked as a team. Be prepared to be flexible but remember to have a strong action plan right down to the smallest of details.

What advice would you give other counties preparing for the onsite review?

Bring as many colleagues into the discussion/conversation as possible. This is especially true for senior management staff but also for others. There is a lot of preparation work that keeps expanding. The more of the ‘right folks’ that understand, own and have full buy-in as the county readies themselves for the onsite review the better. Also, you need to reach out to external stakeholders and partners as they play a key role during the onsite review during stakeholder interviews.

Next be prepared to dedicate specific staff with full time dedication to the CFSR prep work. This should not be just another part-time assignment. The level of details in getting ready for the actual review is very high. Finally, there needs to be a core group of staff who understand the onsite instrument and what the review team is looking for and where to find it in the county or provider records. Even though case specific interviews are an integral part of the process, knowing where the information is documented is crucial.



“Safety, Permanency and Well-being and what they really mean are now household words in child welfare and in our county.”

What impact has CFSR had on your county?

Safety, Permanency and Well-being and what they really mean are now household words in child welfare and in our county. That was not the case before the 1st round. In the areas that showed the need for improvement - such as engaging fathers and child and family involvement in case planning, they are now desired cornerstone competencies in practice. Administrative data is being used more widely than several years ago. Ultimately, I want to believe that the vulnerable and at-risk children and families we serve are receiving more focused services. Also, in our county, Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC) has become a real 3rd permanency option that has resulted in more children exiting the system who otherwise would remain in foster and kinship care for longer periods of time.

Q & A with Thomas J. Mudrick,
Director of Quality Assurance
Philadelphia DHS
(215)683-4154

Helpful Hints—Courtesy of PCYA

This section will highlight the Onsite Review Instrument. The 82 page Onsite Review Instrument is the document that reviewers will use to assess both placement and in-home cases.

Each pair of reviewers (one state & one Federal) will have two or three cases to thoroughly review in three days. Sixty-five cases will be reviewed in Pennsylvania.

Keep in mind that, unlike most QA or licensing reviews, this instrument will allow the reviewer to use information from interviews to fill in the blanks in the case record. In

this context, if it isn’t written down, maybe it did happen.

The face sheet is one of the first opportunities to make the reviewer’s lives easier (always a good idea as you don’t want it to be a “test” to see if they can find needed information in the record).

The face sheet sets up and populates certain data throughout the document, so having that information right up-front and accurate is very helpful- to the point of having a sheet prepared with just that information on it (and maybe placement history for those cases)

While the reviewers will be focusing on the Period Under Review, some items require an examination of the life of the case. Therefore, the entire file should be prepared for review.

The instrument is formatted into three sections; safety, permanency, and well-being. Twenty-three items are listed within these sections that provide specific instructions to help the reviewers identify strengths and areas needing improvement. A copy of the instrument can be obtained at www.pcya.org.

Note: These hints are intended to provide a brief overview of the tool from the perspective of a consultant reviewer. For comprehensive information please visit ACF’s website @ childwelfare.gov.