



PENNSYLVANIA Child & Family Services Review EXPRESS

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



A Closer Look at the Statewide Assessment

Welcome to the second 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.

Please congratulate Allegheny and Northumberland as the sites selected to join Philadelphia for the Onsite Review!

As you may remember, the first step of the CFSR is the Statewide Self Assessment. The purpose of the Assessment is for each state to assess the strengths and needs of their child welfare system. In April 2007, a group of key stakeholders were brought together to form the CFSR steering committee. The stakeholders come from all parts of the Commonwealth and represent public and private agencies within the Child Welfare and Juvenile

Former foster youth and parent advocates also are members of the committee.

Part of the Assessment includes an analysis of Pennsylvania's progress with meeting national standards for seven outcomes and the twenty-three specific indicators associated with them. The Quality Service Reviews (QSR) were the primary source of this information. The seven systemic factors, which are overarching system-wide issues that impact the achievement of the outcomes are also evaluated. For example, the "Case Review" factor examines family involvement in the case planning process, Court Hearings held in a timely manner, Termination of parental rights proceedings, and caregivers involvement in Court Hearings.

The committee sought to elicit as much feedback as possible

by conducting focus groups throughout the state and developing an online survey. In all, more than 20 focus groups were conducted and over 400 surveys completed. After months of work, the first draft of the Assessment is complete and has been submitted to the Federal Government for feedback.

Pennsylvania was able to report on the significant initiatives and programs implemented in the last five years designed to improve outcomes for children and families. Some of the highlights that Pennsylvania can be proud of include the many family engagement initiatives and county developed Quality Assurance efforts that have improved outcomes for children and families.

Important Dates

Period Under Review

- Now - 7/28/08

Statewide Assessment

- Due - 5/26/08

Onsite Review

- Starts - 7/28/08

Community Spotlight: Pennsylvania Families Incorporated

PFI is a federally funded SAMHSA Statewide Family Network Grant. Pennsylvania has a multitude of family organizations that function in all systems of care (mental health, drug and alcohol, children and youth, foster care, juvenile justice, education, etc.). Each organization has its own mission and purpose and may be allied with a national organization that focuses on the concern that the group shares. Each organization sponsors events that include training, fundraising, education, and public awareness.

As a statewide family network PFI shares the common concerns about children and their special needs, brings the organizations together and uses the power of all the families to bring change in the community, counties and the state. PFI provides information and referral that is useful to families and providers about events, research findings, and ongoing initiatives at every level of government in all child serving systems. PFI partners with the University of

Pittsburgh/WPIC in the Pennsylvania Youth and Family Institute that will bring high-fidelity Wrap-around services to all counties over the next five years. PFI maintains a list of support groups across the state to assure that families who need support can find a group that will meet their needs. PFI encourages the participation of youth and family in all meetings related to the development or reorganization of children's services. www.pafamiliesinc.com

Interview with a Round One County — Montgomery

What was your Round One experience like?

Like nothing I had experienced in child welfare before! It was definitely intense and all-consuming. We started prep, in conjunction with the state, about a year in advance. It was stressful and yet, fun and rewarding at the end. We were lucky enough to have a hefty budget from the state to use to prepare for the long week of reviews and thus, had some fun with 'goodie bags', food plans, and thank you gifts for the long hours and hard work of the staff. Prepare for canceling vacation time and putting in long days before and during the review. The actual week of the review is exhausting, busy, interesting and rewarding - the hard prep work pays off.

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

Nothing can replace good organization and preparation. We tabbed all cases chosen with notes explaining which question on the review tool a certain document answered. It was time consuming but allowed us to thoroughly review each case in advance, but more

importantly, the reviewers frequently commented on how helpful the tabs were to them. Remember that reviewers are from other counties and states and child welfare is not consistent in how to document and file. Talk to your staff often about the review, its purpose and the impact from the outcome. The staff need to feel a part of the process from the beginning and supported in their role so they feel comfortable when talking with reviewers. The same is true of your foster parents and provider agencies, so involve them in discussions whenever possible. We also met monthly with the other counties chosen and OCYF staff. These meetings included the various assigned county and state CFSR staff and was very helpful in allowing idea sharing and support during the tiring process. Finally, my advice is to not reinvent the wheel. Those of us who went through this first can be a tremendous resource to you. We have tools we developed that can be tweaked for your use - take advantage of whatever any of us have from Round one!

What impact has CFSR had on your county?

Interaction between the reviewers and the staff was invaluable. It resulted in

the staff feeling 'heard' regarding their hard work for kids and families in child welfare. Everyone in the agency will feel pressure but they also need to feel safe so that they can talk freely to the review team. The CFSR stakeholder interviews provided foster parents, child welfare staff, and private agency staff with the ability to voice their dedication to the safety of children. This resulted in an increased awareness of the importance of the work being done and an increase in the knowledge by all involved of what it takes to provide for the safety, well-being and permanence of kids. Our agency was uplifted by the positive feedback and results of the review and felt a renewed energy toward improving how we do things to meet the needs of the families and kids in Montgomery county. Engaging fathers and other relatives more, utilizing PLC and SPLC, looking more closely at 'well-being' issues in cases where they were not the primary referral reason all were directly related to the outcome of the CFSR. The agency focus and mission evolved to meeting new standards and outcome measures. While the CFSR process was grueling, the results were predominantly positive.

Q & A with Marilou Doughty,

Montgomery County

Director of Social Services 610-278-5800

Helpful Hints—Courtesy of PCYA

This section will highlight the On-site Review Instrument (ORI). The ORI is the document that reviewers will use to assess both placement and in-home cases.

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from Abuse and Neglect

Item 1. Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment

While we got a “Substantial Conformity” score for Safety Outcome 1 in the 1st Round, this item was rated as an “Area Needing Improvement” due to a number of the reports in

the sample not meeting state timelines.

The first determination for this item is whether the case is applicable; that is, during the Period Under Review (PUR) was a report received on the family? If so, how many during the life of the case? during the PUR?

What are the state timelines for initiating investigations?

Of reports received during the PUR, how many were not investigated according to state timelines? if any, what were the reasons?

Of reports received during the PUR, how many child subjects of the report were not seen face-to-face according to state timelines? if any, what were the reasons?

Were any of the circumstances that prevented meeting state timelines beyond the control of the agency?

PA’s differentiation between CPS and GPS will have to be carefully explained and documented, as will our differential response, as many states don’t operate this way.

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 this website - childwelfare.gov.