

# Fact Sheet

for SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT PROFESSIONALS

## HISTORY of the REVIEWS

The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act authorize the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to review state child and family service programs to ensure conformity with the requirements in titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The Children's Bureau, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, administers the review system, known as the Child and Family Services Reviews.

In 2000, the Children's Bureau published a final rule in the Federal Register to establish a process for monitoring state child welfare programs. Under the rule, states are assessed for substantial conformity with federal requirements for child welfare services.

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico completed their first review by 2004 and their second review by 2010. After each review cycle, or "round," no state was found to be in substantial conformity in all of the seven outcome areas and seven systemic factors. States developed and implemented Program Improvement Plans after each review to correct those areas not found in substantial conformity.

The third round of reviews runs from 2015 to 2018.



## PURPOSE

The Child and Family Services Reviews enable the Children's Bureau to: (1) ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements; (2) determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and (3) assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

The reviews are structured to help states identify strengths and areas needing improvement within their agencies and programs. Ultimately, the goal of the reviews is to help states improve child welfare services and achieve the following seven outcomes for families and children who receive services:

### Safety

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

### Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for families.

### Family and Child Well-Being

- 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.



The reviews also assess the following seven systemic factors that affect outcomes for children and families:

- statewide information system
- case review system
- quality assurance system
- staff and provider training
- service array and resource development
- agency responsiveness to the community
- foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention

## *The* **REVIEWS and OPPORTUNITIES for SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT PROFESSIONALS**

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The Child and Family Services Reviews evaluate the effectiveness of the entire child welfare delivery system, including how related systems such as mental health agencies, the courts, and substance abuse treatment providers work together to ensure positive outcomes for children in the system and their families. The reviews ask whether the state child welfare agency made concerted efforts to provide or arrange for appropriate services, such as those needed to ensure children's safety and enhance parents' ability to provide care and supervision. For example, if a parent's substance abuse disorder is associated with the neglect that brought the case to the attention of the agency, then substance abuse treatment would be an appropriate and required service.

The reviews assess state efforts to address the overall mental/behavioral health needs of children, which may include needs relating to substance abuse by the children and/or their parents, through exploration of questions such as:

- Did the agency conduct an assessment of the children's mental/behavioral health needs initially and on an ongoing basis to inform case planning decisions?
- Did the agency provide appropriate services to address the children's mental/behavioral health needs?
- How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that services are accessible in all jurisdictions that assess

and address child and family needs for a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents, and help children achieve permanency?

- How well is the service array and resource development system functioning statewide to ensure that such services can be individualized to meet child and family needs?

In addition to using the reviews as a learning tool by studying and applying the results from each round of reviews, substance abuse treatment professionals may participate directly in the review process in a variety of ways. Possible opportunities for substance abuse professionals include participating in the development of the statewide assessment; serving on a review team to help review cases and conduct interviews; or participating in the development of the Program Improvement Plan. Substance abuse professionals should engage with state child welfare administrators to determine how they could assist in the work to improve outcomes for families with substance use disorders. In addition to direct participation, substance abuse professionals should consider what data and information (e.g., the number and outcomes of referrals from the child welfare agency) at their disposal would be most helpful to inform the development of the statewide assessment and/or Program Improvement Plan.





## FINDINGS FROM *the* REVIEWS

The Child and Family Services Reviews record the primary reason a child welfare case was opened during the period under review. These reasons may include substance abuse by the parents or the child. Information reported during the first two rounds of reviews on the reasons for agency involvement validated the commonly held belief that parental substance use disorders were a major factor in opening child protective services cases. The reviews also found a lack of sufficient substance abuse treatment services for both parents and children in many states. In some states, collaborative work between the child welfare agency and substance abuse treatment agencies was identified as a strength, and family drug courts helped to ensure the provision of treatment services and closer monitoring of clients. Program Improvement Plan development emphasized the need to train child welfare staff on substance abuse issues and competency-based curricula on related issues in some states, along with the need to include substance abuse professionals on specialized teams working with families.



## MORE INFORMATION

Substance abuse treatment professionals can learn about the review process by becoming familiar with the outcomes of their state's last review. State Final Reports, which include findings for mental health services for each state, are available on the Child Welfare Monitoring section of the Children's Bureau Web site at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews>.

An analysis of state-by-state details on substance abuse issues from the first round of reviews is provided in "A Review of Alcohol and Other Drug Issues in the States' Child and Family Services Reviews and Program Improvement Plans," available at <http://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/files/SummaryofCFSRs.pdf>.

Another resource for learning more about the reviews and substance abuse issues is the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW), a service of the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, and the Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau's Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. NCSACW maintains an extensive library of resources on the intersection of alcohol and other drug, child welfare, Tribal child welfare, and family court systems. The NCSACW website, <http://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov>, provides a wide range of online resources. In addition, NCSACW has developed online tutorials for substance abuse counselors and child welfare workers.

Additional information on the reviews is available on the Children's Bureau's website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/monitoring/child-family-services-reviews> or from the Child Welfare Reviews Project, JBS International, Inc., 5515 Security Lane, Suite 800, North Bethesda, MD 20852; 301-565-3260; e-mail: [cw@jbsinternational.com](mailto:cw@jbsinternational.com). Round 3 resources are available at <https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105>.

