

Family and Youth Involvement in the Child and Family Services Review Process (CFSR)

- Collaborating During the Child and Family Services Reviews. The Children’s Bureau (CB) designed the CFSRs as a vehicle for promoting change through collaboration. Families, children, and youth served by child welfare are critical partners in this work. Family-centered and community-based practices are integral to improving outcomes for children and families. As such, collaboration with families, including young people, is important in identifying and assessing strengths and barriers to improved outcomes.
- CFSR Onsite Review Items. The CFSR uses the [Onsite Review Instrument](#) to review and rate the state child welfare system performance related to Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being.¹ While many items on the instrument look at the engagement of families, children, and youth, there are a few that should be highlighted as specifically looking at the quality of engagement.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. This outcome is to determine if appropriate services were provided to the family to prevent entry (or re-entry) into foster care and if risk and safety assessments were conducted to assess and address the family’s needs related to planning for the safety of their children.

To achieve positive outcomes in safety planning, states often employ strategies to support the family having access to a responsive and reliable caseworker who is able to build an open and trusting relationship. Furthermore, family group decision-making, family team meetings or other engagement processes very early on may support the achievement of reunification or reduction of risk much more quickly or prevent the child ever having to be removed.

Well-being Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 (1355.34(b)(1)(iii))

Well-being Outcomes include: (A) families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs; (B) children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs; and (C) children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. The CFSR Well-Being outcomes are clearly linked to the experience, satisfaction, and engagement of families, children, and youth.

A critical component of the items rated under well-being is the state’s ability to assess that the needs of parents, children, and youth are being met. Quality assessments are based on understanding the needs of a family and supporting the provision of services needed to address those needs. More importantly, quality assessments begin by asking the family, child, or youth what services they think they need and capitalizing on family strengths and natural networks of support.

¹ For more information on R3 CFSR Outcomes and Systemic Factors, please see: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_quick_reference_list.pdf.

- **Case-Related Interviews.** Through the CFSR review process, the Children’s Bureau wants to gain a full understanding of what occurred that affected child and family outcomes in a particular case. As part of the review process, case-related interviews are conducted with families, children, and youth about their perspectives of how they are engaged with their case and case planning. These interviews are critical to understanding what has occurred in the case, confirm case record documentation, collect information that might be missing from the record, and obtain input about case participants’ experiences.
- **Stakeholder Interviews.** Stakeholder interviews are part of the onsite review phase of the CFSR. This includes interviews with partners who are knowledgeable about the statewide functioning of the agency, and must include families and youth being served by the agency. Specifically, for the systemic factor of “service array” CB uses information from both the statewide assessment and the onsite review via stakeholder interviews to determine substantial conformity. Families, children, and youth know far better than any other group or organization, the services that must be available to them to assist them in providing for their own needs.