

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report: Illinois Child and Family Services Review
January 2010

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Illinois. The CFSR is the Federal Government's program for assessing the performance of State child welfare agencies with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. It is authorized by the Social Security Amendments of 1994 requiring the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promulgate regulations for reviews of State child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families within HHS.

The Illinois CFSR was conducted the week of August 10, 2009. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from April 1, 2008, to August 14, 2009. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR data period ending March 31, 2008
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 31 cases in Cook County, 17 cases in McLean County, and 17 cases in Winnebago County
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys

Background Information

The CFSR assesses State performance with regard to its substantial conformity with seven child and family outcomes and seven systemic factors. For the outcome assessments, each outcome incorporates one or more of the 23 items included in the review, and each item is rated as a Strength or Area Needing Improvement based on the results of the case reviews. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent or more of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. The evaluation options for these outcomes are "substantially achieved," "partially achieved," or "not achieved." For a State to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent or more of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. Two outcomes—Safety Outcome 1 and Permanency Outcome 1—also are evaluated based on State performance with regard to six national

data indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, both the national standards for each data indicator and the case review requirements must be met.

There are 22 items that are considered in assessing the State’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors. Each item reflects a key Federal program requirement relevant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) for that systemic factor. An item is rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement based on whether State performance on the item meets the Federal program requirements. A determination of the rating is based on information provided in the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders held during the onsite CFSR. Additional information may come from other Federal reports or assessments.

Overall performance on each systemic factor is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor. For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 3 or 4) or “not in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 1 or 2). Specific requirements for each rating are shown in the table below.

Rating the Systemic Factor

Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
1	2	3	4
None of the CFSP or program requirements is in place.	Some or all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome or systemic factor must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan to address the areas of concern associated with that outcome or systemic factor.

Because many changes were made in the CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State’s performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the first round. Key changes in the process that make comparing performance difficult across reviews are the following:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items
- Changes in criteria for specific items to increase consistency and to ensure an assessment of critical areas such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents

The specific findings regarding the State's performance on safety and permanency outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in table 2. Table 3 presents the State's performance with regard to the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. In the following section, key findings are summarized for each outcome and systemic factor. Information also is provided about the State's performance on each outcome and systemic factor during the Federal fiscal year 2003 CFSR.

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes

The 2009 CFSR identified the following areas of high performance with regard to the State's achievements in the outcomes and items assessed during the review:

- Items pertaining to the timeliness of investigations, foster care reentry, and proximity of children's placements to parents were rated as a Strength for the State.
- Although the State's performance on Well-Being Outcome 2 pertaining to children receiving services to meet their educational needs, and Safety Outcome 1 pertaining to families having enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs, did not reach the 90- or 95-percent level required for achievement of substantial conformity with the outcome, at least 80 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having been substantially achieved these outcomes.
- Although the State's performance on the items pertaining to repeat maltreatment, stability of foster care placements, placement with siblings, caseworker visits with children, meeting the educational needs of children, and meeting physical and mental health needs of children did not reach the 90- or 95-percent level required for an overall rating of Strength, at least 80 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for these items.

HHS acknowledges the hard work and progress of the State of Illinois in making positive changes in its practice and in enhancing services to children and families served by the child welfare system. Despite the State's commitment to continuous quality improvement, these efforts have not yet resulted in needed changes across all outcome areas.

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with any of the outcomes, and the State did not meet any of the national standards for the data indicators. The CFSR identified the following concerns with regard to the State's performance in achieving the desired outcomes for children and families:

- The State is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situation), with the outcome substantially achieved in only 12.5 percent of applicable cases.
- The State is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs), with the outcome substantially achieved in only 43.1 percent of applicable cases.
- The State is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 (The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved), with the outcome substantially achieved in 55.0 percent of applicable cases.

- Items 8, 9, and 10 pertaining to the timeliness of achieving the goals of reunification, guardianship, and placement with relatives (item 8), adoption (item 9), and other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA) (item 10) were rated as Strengths in only 12 percent, 11 percent, and 50 percent of applicable cases, respectively.
- Item 7 pertaining to the appropriateness of the permanency goal for the child was rated as a Strength in only 37.5 percent of the cases.
- Item 16 pertaining to the relationship of the child in care with parents was rated as a Strength in only 38 percent of applicable cases.
- Item 20 pertaining to caseworker visits with parents was rated as a Strength in only 43 percent of applicable cases.
- Item 18 pertaining to child and family involvement in case planning was rated as a Strength in only 48 percent of applicable cases.
- Item 17 pertaining to assessing and meeting the needs of the child, parents, and foster parents was rated as a Strength in 55 percent of the cases.

The State's low performance with regard to these CFSR outcomes and national data standards may be attributed in part to the following key factors:

- Although the State successfully operates the Statewide Provider Database, available services are insufficient to meet the needs of children and families throughout the State, particularly Downstate. In addition, there is an insufficient number of providers throughout the State who will accept Medicaid.
- The State does not make concerted efforts to involve parents, particularly fathers, in case planning, visitation, or permanency planning.
- There are a variety of barriers to achieving permanency for children, including barriers within the agency and in the courts. Challenges begin at the point of determining appropriate permanency goals for children in a timely manner and extend throughout multiple elements of the case process, resulting in delayed achievement of reunifications, guardianships, adoptions, or OPPLA.
- There is an insufficient number of foster homes throughout the State.

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Systemic Factors

With regard to systemic factors, Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factors pertaining to Statewide Information System; Quality Assurance (QA) System; Staff and Provider Training; Agency Responsiveness to the Community; and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The State is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factors pertaining to Case Review System or Service Array and Resource Development.

I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two items. One pertains to the timeliness of initiating a response to a child maltreatment report (item 1), and the other relates to the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment within a 6-month time period (item 2). Safety Outcome 1 also incorporates two national data indicators for which national standards have been established. These data indicators measure the absence of maltreatment recurrence and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 85.7 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 83 percent of applicable Cook County cases, 100 percent of applicable McLean County cases, and 80 percent of applicable Winnebago County cases. The State did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to the absence of maltreatment recurrence or the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care.

The 2009 CFSR found that the State was effective in initiating a response to maltreatment reports within the timeframes established by State policy and, in the majority of cases reviewed (81 percent), there was an absence of maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period. However, concerns were raised regarding the repeat maltreatment experienced by some children.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that the State was not effective in preventing the recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month period.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented a regional and statewide review process to examine certain allegations, decision-making, and service choices in investigations
- Implemented changes to the State's statewide information system to ensure the accurate coding of information regarding the date of occurrence of repeat maltreatment
- Convened a workgroup to make recommendations for changes to the Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol, safety plan policies, and procedures
- Implemented changes to the State Central Registry to improve documentation, staffing, and accuracy of investigations

The State did not meet all of its improvement goals by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two items. One item (item 3) assesses State efforts to prevent children's removal from their homes by providing the family with services to ensure children's safety while they remain in their homes. The other item (item 4) assesses efforts to manage safety and reduce risk of harm to children in their own homes and in their foster care placements.

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 70.8 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 61 percent of applicable Cook County cases, 88 percent of applicable McLean County cases, and 71 percent of applicable Winnebago County cases.

The 2009 CFSR found that, in most cases (77 percent), the agency was effective in providing services to the family to prevent the child's removal from the home and, in most cases (72 percent), in conducting initial and ongoing risk and safety assessments to ensure the child's safety. However, the 2009 CFSR identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- Children remaining in their own homes continued to be at risk either because services were not provided or because the services that were provided did not target the key safety concerns.
- There was a lack of ongoing safety and risk assessments.
- There were continued risk concerns in the home that were not addressed and/or monitored by the agency.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- DCFS was not consistent in providing appropriate services to families to protect children in the home and prevent their removal.
- DCFS was not consistent in making concerted efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children.
- There was a lack of comprehensive risk and safety assessments.
- There was a lack of diligent monitoring of children's safety while they were in residential and group care facilities.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed and implemented policy and procedures directly related to intact family services
- Conducted an annual review of the intact family service array
- Promoted the System of Care (SOC) program to focus on stabilizing placements for children with behavioral health concerns
- Established the Residential Monitoring Unit to continuously assess the safety and well-being of youth in residential care

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations

Six items are incorporated in the assessment of Permanency Outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all of the foster care cases reviewed. The items pertain to State efforts to prevent foster care reentry (item 5), ensure placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establish appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner as well as seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining items focus on an assessment of State efforts to achieve permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, or permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9) or to ensure that children who have a case goal of OPPLA are in stable long-term placements and are adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

Permanency Outcome 1 also incorporates four national data indicators for which national standards have been established. These data indicators measure the timeliness and permanency of reunification, the timeliness of adoptions, permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods, and placement stability.

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in only 12.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 5 percent of Cook County cases, 20 percent of McLean County cases, and 20 percent of Winnebago County cases. In addition to case review findings, Illinois did not meet the national standards for any of the data indicators pertaining to Permanency Outcome 1.

The 2009 CFSR found that the State was effective in preventing foster care reentry and, in the majority of the cases (85 percent) the State effectively maintained children in stable placements. However, the 2009 CFSR identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- The child's permanency goal was not appropriate and/or not established in a timely manner.
- There was a lack of effort by the agency to achieve reunification, where appropriate.
- The agency had not sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA.
- There was a lack of concerted effort to achieve the goal of adoption in a timely manner, where appropriate, due in part to delays in the TPR process and a lack of effort to finalize adoption after TPR was achieved.
- There was a lack of concerted effort to provide the child with Independent Living (IL) services, where appropriate.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- DCFS was not consistent in making concerted efforts to ensure children's placement stability while in foster care.

- DCFS was not consistent in establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- DCFS was not consistent in making concerted efforts to achieve children’s permanency goals in a timely manner.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented the Integrated Assessment (IA) program, the Child and Youth Investment Team (CAYIT), and the Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM)
- Developed the concurrent planning and reunification model
- Implemented mechanisms to ensure timely movement of cases through the Cook County court system
- Restructured foster care contracts to support the ability of caseworkers to deliver comprehensive and timely reunification planning and services
- Designed a system to track children with a goal of substitute care pending TPR
- Developed systems, including tracking and assessments, to support the provision of appropriate services to older youth
- Created a voluntary community-based support program for foster parents in Cook County
- Increased the use of foster parents as resource families for birth parents working toward reunification with their children
- Strengthened overall juvenile court practices related to the achievement of timely adoptions

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six items that assess State performance with regard to placing children in foster care near their parents and close relatives (item 11); placing siblings together (item 12); ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and promoting relationships between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 55.0 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 40 percent of Cook County cases, 60 percent of McLean County cases, and 80 percent of Winnebago County cases.

The 2009 CFSR found that the State was effective with regard to placing children in close proximity to their parents. In the majority of cases (87 percent), the State placed siblings together in foster care and, in many cases (75 percent), the State made concerted efforts to ensure that the connections of children in foster care were maintained. However, the 2009 CFSR identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- In Winnebago County, children were not placed consistently with their siblings.
- The frequency and quality of visitation between children in foster care and their parents (particularly fathers) and siblings were insufficient to meet the needs of the children and families.
- The agency had not made concerted efforts to ensure that the connections of children in foster care were maintained consistently.
- The agency had not made concerted efforts to search for either maternal or paternal relatives as potential placement resources.
- The agency had not made concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with the mother or father while the child was in foster care.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 during its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- DCFS was inconsistent in its efforts to ensure that visitation between parents and children was of sufficient frequency to meet children's needs.
- DCFS was inconsistent in its efforts to ensure that relatives, particularly paternal relatives, were located and assessed as potential placement resources.
- DCFS was inconsistent in its efforts to ensure that the parent-child relationship of children in foster care, particularly the child's relationship with an absent or noncustodial parent, was supported and strengthened.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Increased the use of foster parents as resource families working with birth parents, and provided reimbursement to foster parents for the facilitation of sibling visits
- Increased the use of the diligent search process as a mechanism for locating relatives
- Expanded the Intensive Relative Search Project in Cook County for youth with a goal of independence
- Implemented the IA program to assess and address the parent-child relationship
- Restructured foster care Purchase of Service (POS) contracts to support caseworkers in ensuring that visitation requirements were met
- Implemented the Fatherhood Initiative

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs

Well-Being Outcome 1 incorporates four items. One item pertains to State efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and that the necessary services are provided to meet identified needs (item 17). A second item examines State efforts to actively involve parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two

remaining items examine the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in only 43.1 percent of cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 19 percent of Cook County cases, 65 percent of McLean County cases, and 65 percent of Winnebago County cases. In addition, the outcome was substantially achieved in 45 percent of the foster care cases and 40 percent of the in-home services cases.

The 2009 CFSR found that, in many cases (80 percent), the State ensured that caseworkers' visitation with children in foster care was sufficient to meet their needs. However, the 2009 CFSR identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to assess and address the service needs of parents in both foster care and in-home services cases.
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to involve children, mothers, and fathers in case planning in both the foster care and in-home services cases, although children in the foster care cases and mothers in the in-home services cases were more likely to be involved.
- The agency did not consistently make concerted efforts to ensure that caseworker visits with children in the in-home services cases were conducted with sufficient frequency to meet the children's needs.
- The frequency and quality of caseworker visits with parents in both foster care and in-home services cases were not sufficient to ensure the child's safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 during its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- DCFS did not consistently make concerted efforts to assess the needs of, and provide services to, children, parents, and foster parents.
- DCFS did not consistently make concerted efforts to involve children and parents, particularly fathers, in case planning.
- DCFS did not consistently make concerted efforts to establish face-to-face contact with children and parents with sufficient frequency and quality to ensure children's safety and promote attainment of case goals.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented the following programs: IA, CAYIT, CFTM, SOC, and an intensive stabilization program for older youth
- Evaluated alcohol and other drug abuse services
- Implemented the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Instrument for youth and developed systems to support appropriate provision of services to older youth

- Improved the diligent search process to locate and engage birth parents and implemented the Fatherhood Initiative
- Updated policy and provided training on caseworker visitation
- Created a voluntary community-based support program for foster parents

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs

Only one item is incorporated under Well-Being Outcome 2. It pertains to State efforts to assess and meet the educational needs of children in foster care and, when relevant, children in the in-home services cases (item 21).

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 91.1 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 91 percent of Cook County cases, 100 percent of McLean County cases, and 83 percent of Winnebago County cases. Also, the outcome was substantially achieved in 94 percent of the applicable foster care cases and 80 percent of the applicable in-home services cases.

The 2009 CFSR found that the educational needs of children in foster care were being appropriately and adequately assessed and addressed. However, in a few cases, the agency was not effective in addressing educational needs for children.

Illinois was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that DCFS was not consistent in its efforts to assess children’s educational needs and provide appropriate services to meet those needs.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Created an Educational Passport to track educational needs and services
- Coordinated work between the local area networks and the Educational Access Project to provide timely education-related advocacy and support
- Implemented the IA, which includes an assessment of educational needs

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

This outcome incorporates two items pertaining to State efforts to assess and meet the physical health (item 22) and mental health (item 23) needs of children in foster care and children in the in-home services cases, if relevant.

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 78.6 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 82 percent of Cook County cases, 73 percent of McLean County cases, and 77 percent of Winnebago County cases. In addition, the outcome was substantially achieved in 82.5 percent of the foster care cases and in 69 percent of the applicable in-home services cases.

The 2009 CFSR found that, in the majority of cases (80 percent), the physical and dental health needs of children were appropriately assessed and adequately addressed. In addition, in the majority of cases (89 percent), the mental health needs of children were appropriately assessed and adequately addressed. However, there was concern that, for some children, physical, dental, and mental health needs were not appropriately addressed, particularly for children in the in-home services cases.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 during its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that DCFS did not consistently make concerted efforts to meet children's physical and mental health needs. Meeting mental health needs was a particular concern, as was the inadequate number of health providers that accept Medicaid.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented the IA, including an assessment of physical and mental health needs
- Established links with vision care centers to provide children with options for vision care
- Implemented the DCFS Children's Mental Health Plan
- Implemented the CAYIT and SOC programs
- Established a partnership among DCFS, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Public Aid to create a single entry point for foster parents to access crisis and psychiatric services

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Statewide Information System

Substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System is determined by whether the State is operating an information system that can provide accurate and timely information pertaining to the status, demographic characteristics, location, and case goals for the placement of every child in foster care.

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State's primary child welfare information systems can readily identify the legal status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for every child in foster care.

Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Case Review System

Five items are included in the assessment of State performance for the systemic factor of Case Review System. The items examine development of case plans and parent involvement in that process (item 25), the consistency of 6-month case reviews (item 26) and 12-month permanency hearings (item 27), implementation of procedures to seek TPR in accordance with the timeframes established in ASFA (item 28), and notification of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers about case reviews and hearings to be held regarding the children in their care and about their right to be heard in those proceedings (item 29).

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State is holding periodic reviews and permanency hearings in a timely manner. In addition, the State has a process for notifying caregivers of the reviews and court hearings involving the children in their care. However, the 2009 CFSR identified the following concerns:

- Although Illinois makes concerted efforts to ensure that every child has a case plan, information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that parents are not consistently involved in case planning.
- Although Illinois has a process for TPR proceedings, information in the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that this process is not in compliance with the provisions of ASFA.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- In many of the cases reviewed, case plans did not reflect the needs and problems identified in the assessment process.
- Case plans were not consistently developed jointly with the child's parents, particularly fathers.

- There were barriers to pursuing TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA, including the extensive screening process that agency attorneys must conduct in order to file a TPR petition.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented a CFTM process and the Fatherhood Initiative to increase the involvement of parents in case planning
- Implemented mechanisms to help ensure timely approval of permanency goal changes and timely movement of cases through the Cook County court system

The State met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Quality Assurance System

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of QA System is based on whether the State has developed standards that ensure the safety and health of children in foster care (item 30) and whether the State is operating a statewide QA system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement (item 31).

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children. In addition, the 2009 CFSR determined that the State is operating an identifiable QA system.

Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Staff and Provider Training

The systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training incorporates an assessment of the State's training provided to new caseworkers (item 32), the ongoing training provided to agency staff (item 33), and both initial and ongoing training provided to foster and adoptive parents (item 34). This systemic factor does not assess the training of service providers other than child welfare agency staff unless the service providers are private agency caseworkers operating under a contract with the State who have full case management responsibilities.

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. The 2009 CFSR determined that Illinois provides a Foundations Training course for new caseworkers, licensing staff, investigators, and their supervisors that supports the goals and objectives of the CFSP and prepares participants for their job duties. In addition, Illinois provides ongoing training for

caseworkers and supervisors. The State also provides initial and ongoing training for foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of child care institutions.

Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Service Array and Resource Development

The assessment of the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development incorporates answers to three questions: Does the State have in place an array of services that meet the needs of children and families served by the child welfare agency (item 35)? Are the services accessible to families and children throughout the State (item 36)? Can services be individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and family served by the child welfare agency (item 37)?

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State has a comprehensive array of assessment and treatment services to meet the needs of children and families. However, the 2009 CFSR identified the following concerns:

- Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that, although Illinois has programs in place to facilitate access to needed services, in many jurisdictions there are waiting lists for key services such as parenting classes, IL services, health services, and mental health services, and in some areas, particularly Downstate, some of these services are not available.
- Although the State has developed various mechanisms and has flexible funding to individualize services, information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State does not have the capacity to provide linguistically appropriate services consistently to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking families.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- Although the State allocated significant resources to services, the level of existing services did not meet the needs of children and families involved in the child welfare system.
- There were significant service gaps, including the following: appropriate out-of-home placement resources, particularly for adolescents; children's mental health services; culturally responsive services; and services to address family issues of substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence.
- Services were not accessible in all parts of Illinois, and in some areas where services were available, there were long waiting lists to access the services.
- The DCFS assessment process was not consistently effective in identifying the unique needs of children and families, and there was a lack of individualization of services in Cook County.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Conducted an assessment of services available to address developmental needs, educational needs, physical health needs, and mental health needs
- Implemented contractual enhancements with providers to improve service accessibility and ensure accountability of services being provided to children and families

The State met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community incorporates an assessment of the State's consultation with external stakeholders in developing the CFSP and producing annual reports (items 38 and 39) and the extent to which the State coordinates child welfare services with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population (item 40).

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State engages in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders in the development of the goals and objectives of the CFSP and in the preparation of the Annual Progress and Services Report. In addition, Illinois DCFS coordinates services with the services and benefits of other programs to meet the needs of children and families.

Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

The assessment of this systemic factor focuses on the State's standards for foster homes and child care institutions (items 41 and 42), the State's compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks for foster and adoptive parents (item 43), the State's efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of foster children (item 44), and the State's activities with regard to using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements for waiting children (item 45).

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The 2009 CFSR determined the following:

- The State has implemented standards in statute and policy for foster homes and child care institutions.
- The same licensing standards are applied to all DCFS and POS licensed foster homes and child care institutions.

- The State complies with Federal criminal background clearance requirements for prospective foster and adoptive parents and all adults in licensed foster and adoptive placements.
- The State has a targeted, localized Diligent Recruitment Plan to develop placement resources that mirror the ethnicity and race of children in foster care.
- The State uses several cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate the timely placement of children, including the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children and **AdoptUsKids**.

Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CF SR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Table 1. Illinois 2009 CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings			Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved*	Met National Standards?	Rating**	Percent Strength
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	85.7	Met 0 of 2		
Item 1. Timeliness of investigations				Strength	96
Item 2. Repeat maltreatment				ANI	81
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	70.8			
Item 3. Services to protect children in home				ANI	77
Item 4. Risk of harm				ANI	72
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	12.5	Met 0 of 4		
Item 5. Foster care reentry				Strength	100
Item 6. Stability of foster care placements				ANI	85
Item 7. Permanency goal for child				ANI	37.5
Item 8. Reunification, guardianship, and placement with relatives				ANI	12
Item 9. Adoption				ANI	11
Item 10. Other planned permanent living arrangement				ANI	50
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	55.0			
Item 11. Proximity of placement				Strength	100
Item 12. Placement with siblings				ANI	87
Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	61
Item 14. Preserving connections				ANI	75
Item 15. Relative placement				ANI	67
Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	38

* 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

** Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANI). For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases must be rated as a Strength.

Table 2. Illinois 2009 CFSR Ratings for Child and Family Well-Being Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings		Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved	Rating**	Percent Strength
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs	No	43.1		
Item 17. Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents			ANI	55
Item 18. Child/family involvement in case planning			ANI	48
Item 19. Caseworker visits with child			ANI	80
Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents			ANI	43
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive services to meet their educational needs	No	91.1		
Item 21. Educational needs of child			ANI	91
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	No	78.6		
Item 22. Physical health of child			ANI	80
Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of child			ANI	89

* 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

** Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANI). For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases reviewed for the item (with the exception of item 21) must be rated as a Strength. Because item 21 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95-percent Strength rating applies.

Table 3. Illinois 2009 CFSR Ratings for Systemic Factors and Items

Systemic Factors and Items	Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Statewide Information System	Yes	4	
Item 24. The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or, within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care			Strength
Case Review System	No	2	
Item 25. The State provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions			ANI
Item 26. The State provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review			Strength
Item 27. The State provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter			Strength
Item 28. The State provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act			ANI
Item 29. The State provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child			Strength
Quality Assurance System	Yes	4	
Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children			Strength
Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented			Strength
Staff and Provider Training	Yes	4	
Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services			Strength
Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP			Strength
Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children			Strength

Systemic Factors and Items	Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Service Array and Resource Development	No	2	
Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency			Strength
Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP			ANI
Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency			ANI
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Yes	4	
Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP			Strength
Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, Annual Progress and Services Reports delivered pursuant to the CFSP			Strength
Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population			Strength
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	Yes	4	
Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards			Strength
Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds			Strength
Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children			Strength
Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed			Strength
Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children			Strength

* Scores range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 means that the factor is not in substantial conformity. A score of 3 or 4 means that the factor is in substantial conformity.

** Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANI).