

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

Final Report
Oregon Child and Family Services Review
February 2008

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Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Oregon. 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, which require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 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 (CB) of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Oregon CFSR was conducted the week of September 10, 2007. The period under review for the case reviews was from April 1, 2006, to September 10, 2007. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Children, Adults and Families Division (CAF) of the Oregon Department of Human Services
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB, which provides State child welfare data for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2003, FY 2004, and FY 2005
- Reviews of 65 cases (41 foster care cases and 24 in-home services cases) at three sites throughout the State, including 31 cases in Multnomah County, 17 cases in Deschutes County, and 17 cases in Marion County
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders, including but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys

All 65 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review. The key characteristics of the 65 cases reviewed are presented in the Table of Case Characteristics on the following page.

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to Oregon's performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table that presents the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of Oregon's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State's first CFSR review in FY 2001, the State's status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Differences in findings across the sites included in the Onsite Review are described when noteworthy. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate. The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

Table of Case Characteristics

Case Characteristics	Foster Care Cases 41*	In-Home Cases 24*
When case was opened/child entered foster care		
Open prior to the period under review	29	11
Open during the period under review	12	13
Child entered foster care during the period under review	12	**
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than age 10	26 (63%)	**
At least 10 but younger than 13	3 (7%)	**
At least 13 but younger than 16	8 (20%)	**
16 and older	4 (10%)	**
Race/Ethnicity		
African American (non-Hispanic)	4 (10%)	**
White (non-Hispanic)	24 (59%)	**
Hispanic (of all races)	4 (10%)	**
American Indian or Alaska Native	1 (2%)	**
Asian	1 (2%)	**
Two or more races	7 (17%)	**
Primary reason for opening case		
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	15 (37%)	7 (29%)
Physical abuse	4 (10%)	3 (12.5%)
Sexual abuse	2 (5%)	1 (4%)
Medical neglect	2 (5%)	0
Mental/physical health of parent	5 (12%)	0
Mental/physical health of child	0	1 (4%)
Substance abuse by parent	7 (17%)	9 (37.5%)
Child's behavior/child in juvenile justice system	3 (7%)	0
Domestic violence in child's home	3 (7%)	2 (8%)
Other (mother requested assistance via the hotline because she was without formula, diapers, money, food stamps, or WIC services)	0	1 (4%)

*The CFSR usually includes 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home services cases. However, during the Onsite Review, it was discovered that one of the in-home services cases involved a child who was in foster care. Therefore, the case was designated as a foster care case.

**Information on these characteristics for in-home services cases is not provided because all children in the family are considered in these cases.

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

In the Outcomes section of the CSFR Final Report, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement is assigned to each of the 23 indicators (items) reviewed. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. In addition to the item ratings, States are evaluated with regard to performance on seven outcomes, each of which incorporates one or more of the individual items. The evaluation options for these outcomes are Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, and Not Achieved. For a State to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent 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 seven national data indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, the national standards for each data indicator must be met as well as the case review requirements. A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of concern identified for that outcome.

ACF has established a very high standard of performance for the CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our country's most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable. The standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being. This is consistent with the goal of the CFSR to promote continuous improvement in performance on these outcomes.

It should be noted, however, that States are not required to attain the 95 percent standard established for the CFSR Onsite Review at the end of their PIP implementation. ACF recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often are time-consuming to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with ACF to establish a specified amount of improvement or to determine specified activities for their PIP. That is, for each outcome or item that is rated as an Area Needing Improvement, each State (working in conjunction with CB) specifies the following: (1) how much improvement the State will demonstrate and/or the activities that it will implement to address the areas needing improvement and (2) the procedures for demonstrating the achievement of these goals. Both the improvements specified and the procedures for demonstrating improvement vary across States. Therefore, a State can meet the requirements of its PIP and still not perform at the 95 percent (for outcomes) or the 90 percent (for items) levels established for the CFSR.

The second round of the CFSR is intended to assess a State's current level of performance by once more applying the high standards and a consistent, comprehensive, case-review methodology. The results of this effort are intended to serve as the basis for continued PIPs addressing areas in which a State still needs to improve, even though prior PIP requirements may have been achieved. The goal is to ensure that program improvement is an ongoing process and does not end with the closing of a PIP.

In the following sections, information is provided pertaining to how the State performed on each outcome in the first round of the CFSR. If the outcome was not substantially achieved during the first round, the key concerns observed at that time are identified as well as the strategies implemented in the PIP to address those concerns. This discussion also focuses on whether the key concerns that emerged in the first CFSR continued to be present in the second review, or whether those concerns were addressed but other concerns emerged.

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, particularly with regard to comparisons of data indicators or percentages regarding Strength and Area Needing Improvement ratings. Key changes in the CFSR process that make it difficult to compare performance across reviews include, but are not limited to, 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 enhance consistency and ensure an assessment of critical areas, such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents in planning for their children

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome SI: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	6	8	11	25	62.5
Partially Achieved	3	1	2	6	15.0
Not Achieved or Addressed	2	0	7	9	22.5
Total Applicable Cases	11	9	20	40	
Not Applicable	6	8	11	25	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards:					
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	National Standard (%)			State's Percentage	Meets Standard
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	94.6 or higher			90.2	No
	99.68 or higher			99.35	No

Status of Safety Outcome 1

Oregon did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 62.5 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance varied across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 89 percent of Marion County cases compared to 55 percent of Multnomah and Deschutes County cases.

Oregon also did not meet the national standards for the two data indicators relevant for Safety Outcome 1. These indicators pertain to the absence of maltreatment recurrence and absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

Oregon did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1 during its first CFSR conducted in Federal FY 2001. In the 2001 CFSR, Item 1: Timeliness of investigations was rated as an Area Needing Improvement, and the statewide data indicator for repeat maltreatment did not meet the national standards. The data indicator for maltreatment of children in foster care met the national standards at that time, although this was determined through resubmission of data after the Onsite Review and before PIP approval. The following key concerns were noted in the 2001 CFSR:

- A lengthy screening process delayed assignment of cases to an intake caseworker.
- There was inadequate documentation in the case files of the intake and investigation timelines.
- Repeat maltreatment was found in some of the in-home services cases.

To address these concerns, Oregon implemented the following strategies during its PIP:

- Developed specialized data reports regarding timeliness of investigations and repeat maltreatment and disseminated them to the field to be used to monitor performance in these areas
- Revised agency policy to ensure consistent practice with regard to screening maltreatment reports and determining dispositions
- Supported implementation of new policies and practices through developing online applications of the new tools and procedures and incorporating them into the agency's information technology system
- Provided staff training for the current staff on new policies and incorporated this training into the training for new caseworkers

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

The key concerns identified in Oregon's 2001 CFSR were not found in the 2007 CFSR for Safety Outcome 1. In particular, few cases in 2007 involved concerns regarding the timeliness of the screening process and assigning cases for investigation. The key concerns identified in the 2007 CFSR pertained to a lack of timely initiation of investigations. Most (77 percent) of the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for timeliness of investigation involved reports that were given a 5-day timeframe for initiation of response.

In addition, according to the Statewide Assessment, Oregon has changed its policy regarding the timeframe for initiating an investigation. In the past, the timeframe started at the point that the referral was assigned to an investigative caseworker. At the time of the onsite CFSR, the policy was that the timeframe started at the point of receipt of the report.

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 1 are presented below.

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

___ Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 40 (62 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable when there were no child maltreatment reports during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with the State child welfare agency policy requirements.

Oregon policy states that, upon receipt of an allegation of abuse or neglect, a screener determines whether a child protective services (CPS) assessment is required or the allegation can be closed at screening. If a CPS assessment is required, the screener determines the timeline for the CAF response. This can be either (1) within 24 hours of receipt of the report (immediate response) or (2) within 5 calendar days of receiving the report (response required). Oregon requires that the CPS worker make face-to-face contact with the alleged victim, his or her siblings, his or her parent or caregiver, and other children and adults living in the home within the prescribed timeframe of either 24 hours or 5 days. Oregon also noted in its policy document that agency policy was revised in March 2007 to set the expectation that all reports of abuse and neglect receive a 24-hour response. If the 5-day response is applied, the screener must document that the child is safe.

The results of the assessment of item 1 are presented in the following table:

Item 1	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	6	9	12	27	67.5
Area Needing Improvement	5	0	8	13	32.5
Total Applicable Cases	11	9	20	40	
Not Applicable	6	8	11	25	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Marion County cases, 60 percent of Multnomah County cases, and 55 percent of Deschutes County cases.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was made within the timeframes required by State policy or law. It was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when the investigation was not initiated within the required timeframes. In 3 (23 percent) of the 13 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement, the report had been assigned as an "immediate response" (the investigation must be initiated within 24 hours). In 10 (77 percent) of the 13 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement, the report had been assigned as a "response required" (the investigation must be initiated within 5 days).

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 67.5 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for an overall item rating of Strength. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Oregon's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Although some stakeholders who commented on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the agency responds in a timely manner to abuse and neglect reports, they also noted that, in some situations, there can be delays in responding if there is a need for a Spanish interpreter or if the investigation must be coordinated with law enforcement. Some stakeholders noted that while some branch offices have very positive coordination with law enforcement, others do not and do not always follow the protocols in place. Several stakeholders also expressed concerns about the lack of feedback from the agency regarding whether reports that stakeholders have made are accepted and the results of the investigation.

Stakeholders reported that the new policy requires that the clock (with respect to the 24-hour or 5-day requirements) begins at the time that the initial call comes in. They noted that, in the past, the clock did not begin until the screening was completed. Stakeholders also indicated that the agency has developed a dashboard report so managers can review the response times in their locations.

Several stakeholders expressed concern about the agency practice of screening out maltreatment reports on youth, particularly if they are 16 or 17 years old. These stakeholders noted that when these youth are reported to the agency as alleged victims of abuse or neglect, the agency rarely responds.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Oregon met the timeliness performance measure on only 66.7 percent of the cases reviewed in its 2001 CFSR. In response to this finding, the agency implemented several new measures as part of its PIP. The Statewide Assessment reports that a September 2006 statewide case review found that item 1 was met in 87.2 percent of the cases reviewed, and the January 2007 review found that item 1 was met in 82.4 percent of the cases reviewed. In February 2007, the Oregon Repository –

