

May 15, 2023

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-27-23**

The purpose of this All County Information Notice (ACIN) is to disseminate information to county child welfare agencies, county probation placement agencies, Tribes and the comprehensive child welfare stakeholder community regarding Round 4 of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). This ACIN also describes opportunities for the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Tribal partner, county, and stakeholder participation in the review. The information outlined in this ACIN highlights key changes to the review process, which emphasize stakeholder engagement, the advancement of racial equity, diversity and inclusion, and the use of evidence in the continuous quality improvement (CQI) cycle.



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**GAVIN NEWSOM**  
GOVERNOR

May 15, 2023

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-27-23

TO:

ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
ALL CHILD WELFARE STAFF  
ALL CHILD WELFARE STAKEHOLDERS  
ALL COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
ALL COUNTY CHILD WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL TRIBES

SUBJECT: CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW ROUND FOUR  
INTRODUCTION

REFERENCE: [45 C.F.R. §§ 1355.10 – 1355.36 CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW FEDERAL REGULATIONS; EXEC. ORDER NO. 13985, 86 Fed.Reg. 7009 \(January 25, 2021\); ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICES I-40-14, I-84-16, and I-51-22](#)

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## **BACKGROUND**

The CDSS is committed to making system changes related to child welfare programs that strengthen children and families by improving services that address safety, permanency and well-being. To ensure organizational activities reflect this, a mandatory assessment of each state's performance is conducted through a multi-phase process approximately every five years. This collaborative process between the Children's Bureau (CB) of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and each state's staff is known as the CFSR. Established by the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act, the CFSR allows the CB to determine conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E and to enhance each state's capacity to continue meeting intended outcomes for children and families. Through the CFSR, the CB also assesses each state's programs implemented under Titles IV-B and IV-E related to child protection, foster care, adoption, family preservation and family support, and independent living services. These outcomes are accompanied by systemic factors that, when functioning properly, promote the best experience for children and families.

## **CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW PROCESS**

Each round of the CFSR is its own quality assurance process and builds on the lessons learned from the previous round. Every round contains a Statewide Assessment (SWA), Onsite Review, Final Report issued by the CB, and Program Improvement Plan (PIP). In Round 4, California has been approved to conduct its own case review process as a component of the state led self-assessment. Evidence collected in each phase helps accurately assess whether a state is in substantial compliance with federal requirements and helps states monitor what is happening with families receiving child welfare services. Once California receives the Final Report issued by CB, which contains a summary of findings from the SWA and Onsite Review, PIP strategizing and execution can commence. Each state will develop and implement a PIP to address areas not in substantial conformity. A timeline of California's participation in these activities is attached.

### ***Statewide Assessment***

The SWA allows states to identify strengths and monitor areas of improvement. An examination of the state's current performance on the CFSR data profile initiates the data collection process. The CDSS received the CFSR data profile on February 28, 2023. The data profile is a collection of administrative data from Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System and provides a synopsis of how well California is doing in specific quantitative outcome areas. This phase also includes evidence gathering through collaboration with child welfare agency partners to analyze child welfare systemic factor performance. Evidence collected helps inform the CB on child welfare programs and

practices to understand how well the systems are functioning. Information captured provides insight for subsequent phases of the CFSR.

### ***Onsite Review***

The Onsite Review of the child welfare program is conducted by a joint federal-state team. Over a six-month period beginning October 1, 2023, and ending March 31, 2024, the CDSS and counties will complete a sample of case reviews to establish a baseline of performance in CFSR case review items. Included in this phase are case reviews with key case participants and, as necessary, interviews with system stakeholders and partners. Stakeholder interviews are determined based on the information provided in the SWA. California uses the federal Onsite Review Instrument tool when conducting case reviews and submits findings to the CB. The CDSS actively understands and promotes the immense value qualitative case reviews add to state and county child welfare and probation CQI processes. Integration of qualitative case reviews with administrative data analysis allows for a deeper, more specific understanding of county and statewide practices, policies, and procedures from the perspectives of various case participants, including case-carrying social workers and probation officers, parents, caregivers, and children and youth. For more information regarding qualitative case reviews and the CQI process, refer to [ACIN I-40-14](#). The CDSS will work with counties on continued implementation of CFSR Case Reviews statewide. Additional guidance will be released outlining the current CFSR Case Review policies and procedures.

### ***Reporting Findings and Program Improvement Plan***

Using the results from the Statewide Assessment and Onsite Review, the CB issues a final report to the state identifying whether substantial conformity was met for each outcome measure and systemic factor. A PIP is developed to address areas of nonconformity. This provides an opportunity to develop, implement, and monitor a state-specific plan to strengthen the functioning of systemic factors and improve outcomes. California has a 2-year PIP implementation period and a subsequent post-PIP evaluation period, to make the agreed upon improvements and avoid federal financial penalties. A subsequent communication regarding the PIP will be issued prior to submission of the PIP to ACF.

## **CHANGES FOR ROUND 4**

The CFSR Round 4 will have a heightened focus on using data and evidence to identify disparities in service outcomes. Round 4 provides specific guidelines to support the state in gathering high quality data as well as recommendations for utilizing a broad range of evidence sources to address equity and inclusion, strengthen outreach and stakeholder engagement, and CQI efforts.

Advancing racial equity, diversity and inclusion remains at the forefront of child welfare efforts. [White House Executive Order 13985](#) increases the focus on promoting racial equity and helping underserved and marginalized communities through federal government assistance. To evaluate system improvement and improve equity, attention must be paid to the experiences of those who are more likely to have disparate outcomes. The review provides California an opportunity to consider and critically analyze evidence of disparities in decision-making processes, programs, and policies that may contribute to inequity in services and outcomes. Round 4 of the CFSR will concentrate on using diverse data sources to identify children and families who have been underserved, marginalized, or adversely affected by persistent poverty. Round 4 of the CFSR will address inequality in child welfare system outcomes, inform improvement efforts and implementation, and subsequent changes in child welfare practice and culture resulting from the review.

To effectively collect data on overrepresented communities within the child welfare system, incorporating the voices of families and youth with lived experiences will be a cornerstone of all phases of the CFSR Round 4. These individuals provide a unique perspective that is important for understanding what is working well and where child welfare systems could be improved. Similarly, it is important to ensure that other system partners and stakeholders participating in the CFSR are reflective of individuals and families who live in the community and are served by the system. This allows for diversifying the input in order to enhance the experience of those receiving services. System partner involvement may include service providers, judicial and legal communities, tribes, and youth and families with lived experience.

## **THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

The CFSR operates on a philosophy of CQI that, when effectively implemented, can continuously improve desired practices over time, through a data driven process. Continuous Quality Improvement is a comprehensive learning process implemented by an organization to identify, describe, and analyze strengths and problems, then test, implement, learn from and revise solutions. Continuous Quality Improvement allows counties and states to evaluate the quality of services delivered through analysis of quantitative and qualitative data throughout the continuum of care. The goal is to collect, analyze, and interpret data to support an equitable and sustainable system that encourages positive outcomes for youth and families.

## **CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW ROUND 4 COUNTY STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION**

California will be collaborating with a third-party contractor to build a durable stakeholder advisory group across California to guide the state's ongoing child welfare system reform work called "[From the Ground, Up.](#)" The group will be made up of three teams: a Core Team, which will take a project management role and oversee the administering of the project; Regional Survey Teams, which will identify relevant data and trends from their region, and Dig Teams, which will explore issues identified by the Regional Survey Teams in depth, generate causal analyses, and suggest Theories of Change and potential strategies or interventions. Opportunities to participate in each of the teams will be forthcoming, in Spring and Summer 2023. If you are interested in more information, please email [CFSR@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CFSR@dss.ca.gov) to be contacted once specific information is available.

## **CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW ROUND 4 IMPACT ON THE CALIFORNIA-CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW**

The California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) System was created with the passage of the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (Assembly Bill 636 [Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001]) in 2001 and modeled after the Federal CFSR. The C-CFSR was designed to improve outcomes for children in the California child welfare system while holding county and state agencies accountable for the outcomes achieved.

The Statewide Data Indicators evaluate the state's performance on each of the indicators as compared to the national fixed values. In Round 4, the Statewide Data indicators were adjusted to a comparison against the national performance. The national performance is how the nation as a whole performed on a given data indicator ([Child and Family Services Reviews Frequently Asked Questions: Understanding Statewide Data Indicator Calculations September 2022](#)).

The national standards, now referred to as national performance, were adjusted as follows:

<b>Outcome Measures</b>	<b>CFSR 3</b>	<b>CFSR 4</b>	<b>Goal</b>
S1- Maltreatment in Foster Care (FC)	8.50	9.07	↓
S2- Recurrence of Maltreatment	9.1 %	9.7%	↓
P1- Permanency in 12 months (Entering FC)	40.5%	35.2%	↑

<b>Outcome Measures</b>	<b>CFSR 3</b>	<b>CFSR 4</b>	<b>Goal</b>
P2- Permanency in 12 months (12-23 months in FC)	43.6%	43.8%	↑
P3- Permanency in 12 months (24+ months in FC)	30.3%	37.3%	↑
*P4- Re-entry into FC	8.3%	5.6%	↓
P5- Placement Stability	4.12	4.48	↓

\*P4 Reentry to Foster Care methodology was adjusted with Round 4. The updated methodology now reads: “Of all children who enter care in a 12-month period, who are discharged within 12 months to reunification, live with relative, or guardianship what percent reentered care within 12 months of their discharge?” Reentry to foster care now tracks the exit cohort versus the entry cohort. ([Changes in CFSR Statewide Data Indicator Performance Throughout Round 3](#))

The CFSR Round 4’s impact on C-CFSR reporting will be provided in an upcoming ACIN. Any county questions should be directed to your county System Improvement Section consultant or to the [C-CFSR@dss.ca.gov](mailto:C-CFSR@dss.ca.gov).

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the Child Welfare Learning and Evaluation Bureau at ([cfsr@dss.ca.gov](mailto:cfsr@dss.ca.gov)).

Sincerely,

**Original Document Signed By**

DAVID MCDOWELL, PH.D., Chief  
Children’s Services Quality Management Branch  
Children and Family Services Division

Attachment

cc: CWDA  
CPOC

# California CFSR Round 4 Timeline

