



Child and Family Services Reviews

Arkansas

Final Report

2016



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

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Final Report: Arkansas Child and Family Services Review

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CF SR) for the state of Arkansas. The CF SRs enable the Children's Bureau to: (1) ensure conformity with certain 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. Federal law and regulations authorize the Children's Bureau, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, to administer the review of child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CF SRs are structured to help states identify strengths and areas needing improvement in their child welfare practices and programs as well as institute systemic changes that will improve child and family outcomes.

The findings for Arkansas are based on:

- The statewide assessment prepared by the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and submitted to the Children's Bureau on March 25, 2016. The statewide assessment is the state's analysis of its performance on outcomes, and the functioning of systemic factors in relation to title IV-B and IV-E requirements and the title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan
- The results of case reviews of 150 cases (90 foster care, 58 in-home, and 2 in-home differential response) conducted via a State Conducted Case Review process in 30 offices, with 3 counties or offices randomly selected, to represent each of the 10 geographic service areas in Arkansas, between April 1, 2016, and September 30, 2016
- Interviews and focus groups with state stakeholders and partners, which included:
 - Attorneys Ad Litem and CASA representatives
 - Attorneys representing the agency
 - Child welfare agency senior managers, including executive staff, program managers, and area directors
 - Child welfare supervisors and caseworkers
 - Foster and adoptive licensing staff
 - Foster and adoptive parents
 - Judges
 - Members of the Crimes Against Children Division, including executives, investigators, and supervisors
 - Parents
 - Public/private agency training staff

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- Quality assurance (QA) staff
- Recruitment and retention staff
- Representatives from the court system and Court Improvement Project
- Representatives from the Office of Chief Counsel
- Service providers and placement providers
- Tribal representatives
- Youth advisory board
- Youth served by the agency

In Round 3, the Children’s Bureau suspended the use of the state’s performance on national standards for the 7 statewide data indicators in conformity decisions. For contextual information, Appendix A of this report shows the state’s performance on the 7 data indicators. Moving forward, the Children’s Bureau will refer to the national standards as “national performance.” This national performance represents the performance of the nation on the statewide data indicators for an earlier point in time. For the time periods used to calculate the national performance for each indicator, see 80 Fed. Reg. 27263 (May 13, 2015).

Background Information

The Round 3 CF SR assesses state performance with regard to substantial conformity with 7 child and family outcomes and 7 systemic factors. Each outcome incorporates 1 or more of the 18 items included in the case review, and each item is rated as a Strength or Area Needing Improvement based on an evaluation of certain child welfare practices and processes in the cases reviewed in the state. With two exceptions, an item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90% or more of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. Because Item 1 is the only item for Safety Outcome 1 and Item 16 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95% Strength rating applies to those items. For a state to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95% or more of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome.

Eighteen items are considered in assessing the state’s substantial conformity with the 7 systemic factors. Each item reflects a key federal program requirement relevant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CF SP) for that systemic factor. An item is rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement based on how well the item-specific requirement is functioning. A determination of the rating is based on information provided by the state to demonstrate the functioning of the systemic factor in the statewide assessment and, as needed, from interviews with stakeholders and partners. For a state to be in substantial conformity with the systemic factors, no more than 1 of the items associated with the systemic factor can be rated as an Area Needing Improvement. For systemic factors that have only 1 item associated with them, that item must be rated as a Strength for a determination of substantial conformity.

The Children’s Bureau made several changes to the CF SR process and items and indicators relevant for performance based on lessons learned during the second round of reviews and in response to feedback from the child welfare field. As such, a state’s performance in the third round of the CF SRs is not directly comparable to its performance in the second round. Appendix A provides tables presenting Arkansas’s overall performance in Round 3. Appendix B provides information about Arkansas’s performance in Round 2.

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I. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

Arkansas 2016 CFSR Assessment of Substantial Conformity for Outcomes and Systemic Factors

None of the 7 outcomes was found to be in substantial conformity.

The following 4 of 7 systemic factors were found to be in substantial conformity:

- Statewide Information System
- Quality Assurance System
- Agency Responsiveness to the Community
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Children's Bureau Comments on Arkansas Performance

The following are the Children's Bureau's observations about cross-cutting issues and Arkansas' overall performance:

Since the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group's assessment of the Arkansas child welfare system and the DCFS in 2015, the state has partnered with stakeholder workgroups to develop strategies to respond to recommendations to enhance workforce development, improve constituent engagement with internal and external stakeholders, and expand resources. Information gathered during this assessment and from the workgroups can be utilized in conjunction with these CFSR findings to develop the state's strategic plan. These endeavors can assist Arkansas in making meaningful advances in achieving outcomes in safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families, as well as in strengthening systems.

The CFSR results highlighted that the state needs to focus on improving its safety-related practices. The case review showed that the agency does not regularly respond to reports of abuse and neglect in a timely manner and does not consistently make timely face-to-face contact with alleged child victims. Case review results identified areas of concern pertaining to initial and ongoing assessment and management of safety and risk. The agency developed adequate safety plans and appropriately managed those plans in less than half of the cases. There were differences in safety-related practices across foster care and in-home cases, with stronger practice in the foster care cases. Reviewers also saw that in many of the in-home cases, there were extended periods when the families and children had no visits from DCFS case workers or from service providers. Without any identified safety or risk concerns or the provision of services, it was unclear whether these cases should remain open.

Permanency outcomes were a challenge for the state. Permanency Outcome 1 was the lowest performing outcome. The case review results identified areas needing improvement in setting timely and appropriate goals for children in foster care and achieving permanency even though court reviews and permanency hearings are being held frequently. Concurrent planning was occurring in some of the cases reviewed. However, the general lack of concurrent planning contributes to not achieving timely permanency in

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many cases. The CB encourages the state and the courts to work collaboratively in assessing the barriers that exist in achieving timely and appropriate permanency.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of children in the Arkansas foster care system. Stakeholders reported that the increase has stressed the agency's placement resources, and this was evident in the cases reviewed. Although Arkansas has recruitment initiatives in place, the lack of appropriate placement resources to meet children's needs remains an issue. Despite the agency's preference to keep children in their counties of origin, Arkansas noted in the statewide assessment that the increase in the foster care population has resulted in the placement of a relatively large number of children outside of their home counties. Placement of a child outside of his or her home county can contribute to a lack of parental involvement in case planning, less frequent caseworker visitation with the parents and child, and challenges in maintaining important connections. This was evident in the case review results, which showed that Arkansas is not performing well in preserving connections for children and in parental engagement. Arkansas implemented a practice of assigning two caseworkers (primary and secondary) to cases where children are placed away from their home counties. While this is a promising practice approach, the case reviews identified challenges regarding the roles and responsibilities of each of these workers and concerns with the frequency and quality of communication between the workers and the sharing of case information.

Another concern identified through the case review was the lack of comprehensive and accurate assessments of children and families' needs and the failure to provide appropriate services to meet the identified needs. Case review results found that the agency's efforts to assess families were stronger than efforts to provide services to meet identified needs. This may be attributed, in part, to the state's focus on strengthening its assessment practice through the IV-E waiver project. In addition, the review results show differences in the agency's practices when working with mothers and fathers. Across all outcomes, practice was stronger when working with mothers. The review also found that assessments and provision of services to children in foster care tended to be stronger than for children remaining in their homes. The state should continue to explore how its current initiatives support practice improvement and, at the same time, the state should work to address the larger systemic issue of ensuring that services are available, accessible, and tailored to meet the individualized needs of families.

The CF SR identified concerns with the service array and accessibility of services, especially in the rural areas of the state that affected service provision. According to information in the statewide assessment and stakeholders, parenting classes often are not individualized, and counseling and mental health services often are not effective. Stakeholders confirmed that the lack of effective substance abuse services resulted in inaccurate assessments, misdiagnoses, and ineffective treatment. The case review findings showed ineffective use of substance abuse treatment resources as courts routinely ordered assessments and random drug testing, even when substance abuse was not indicated as a safety or risk concern. When substance abuse treatment was an identified service need, the agency struggled with concerted efforts to engage parents in services and to identify barriers. In a significant number of cases reviewed, there was an over-reliance by the agency and the courts on substance abuse monitoring to determine case plan compliance that resulted in the cancellation of parent-child visits and negatively affected family reunification efforts. This affected the state's performance with regard to effective case planning with families and achieving timely permanency.

Positive outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system are directly affected by the workers and supervisors in the field. Arkansas has historically struggled to maintain a strong workforce and has regularly faced high rates of turnover and

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vacancies. As a result, workers are not able to ensure the safety of children, comprehensively assess families' needs, or effectively engage them in case planning to achieve timely and appropriate permanency. As the state continues to work on recruiting and retaining qualified staff, it also needs to focus on training them adequately.

Arkansas has invested time and resources into obtaining a better understanding of its organizational system. The state is committed to using continuous quality improvement practices to identify strengths and address areas that need improvement in an evolving child welfare system. The state has undergone a rigorous assessment process, and the Children's Bureau recognizes Arkansas' transparency during the CFSR. This effort will have a positive effect on the state's ability to develop effective program improvement through stakeholder involvement and to share data and analysis when implementing program and practice improvements.

The systemic factors of Agency Responsiveness to the Community and Quality Assurance System were both found to be functioning in substantial conformity. At multiple levels within the organization, Arkansas engages and consults with internal and external stakeholders in planning and in the development of the IV-B state plan. The state is able to use data and information from its quality assurance system to inform that work. Additionally, Arkansas has collaborated with many federal or federally assisted programs to coordinate the delivery of services to clients of DCFS. Stakeholders highlighted many areas of success regarding their collaborations with the state. The meaningful relationships and open communication the state has with stakeholders has the potential to positively influence the delivery of services to the families and children. The state can build upon these strengths to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for Arkansas's children and families.

II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

For each outcome, we provide performance summaries from the case review findings. The CFSR relies upon a case review of an approved sample of foster care cases and in-home services cases. Arkansas provides an alternative/differential response to, in addition to a traditional investigation of, incoming reports of child maltreatment or children in need of services. Where relevant, we provide performance summaries that are differentiated between foster care, in-home, and in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

This report provides an overview. Results have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Details on each case rating are available to DCFS. The state is encouraged to conduct additional item-specific analysis of the case review findings to better understand areas of practice that are associated with positive outcomes and those that need improvement.

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

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Safety Outcome 1 using the state's performance on Item 1.

State Outcome Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 69% of the 88 applicable cases reviewed.

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Safety Outcome 1 Item Performance

Item 1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports received during the period under review were initiated, and face-to-face contact with the child(ren) made, within the time frames established by agency policies or state statutes.

State policy requires that DCFS initiate the child maltreatment investigation immediately and no later than 24 hours after receipt of a report from the Child Abuse Hotline for Priority I allegations and reports alleging neglect as defined by Garrett's Law § 12-18-103. Priority I reports are excluded from the 24-hour response requirement if the most recent allegation of sexual abuse is more than 1 year ago or the alleged victim does not currently have contact with the alleged offender. Priority II reports are initiated within 72 hours of receipt unless the Child Abuse Hotline has diverted the report to the Differential Response pathway. Investigations are considered initiated when, as age appropriate, the investigator conducts a face-to-face interview with the alleged victim outside the presence of the alleged offender, or the investigator has otherwise met due diligence.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 1 because 69% of the 88 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

For performance on the safety statewide data indicators, see Appendix A.

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

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Safety Outcome 2 using the state's performance on Items 2 and 3.

State Outcome Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 60% of the 150 cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 68% of the 90 foster care cases, 47% of the 58 in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 in-home services alternative/differential response case.

Safety Outcome 2 Item Performance

Item 2. Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children's entry into foster care or re-entry after a reunification.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 2 because 55% of the 42 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

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- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 59% of the 32 applicable foster care cases and 40% of the 10 applicable in-home services cases.

Item 3. Risk and Safety Assessment and Management

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 3 because 61% of the 150 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 70% of the 90 applicable foster care cases, 47% of the 58 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

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

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Permanency Outcome 1 using the state's performance on Items 4, 5, and 6.

State Outcome Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 36% of the 90 applicable cases reviewed.

Permanency Outcome 1 Item Performance

Item 4. Stability of Foster Care Placement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether the child in foster care is in a stable placement at the time of the onsite review and that any changes in placement that occurred during the period under review were in the best interests of the child and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal(s).

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 4 because 70% of the 90 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

Item 5. Permanency Goal for Child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 5 because 64% of the 89 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

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Item 6. Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 6 because 58% of the 90 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

For performance on the permanency statewide data indicators, see Appendix A.

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

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Permanency Outcome 2 using the state's performance on Items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

State Outcome Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 43% of the 90 applicable cases reviewed.

Permanency Outcome 2 Item Performance

Item 7. Placement With Siblings

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 7 because 47% of the 58 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

Item 8. Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father,¹ and siblings is of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationship with these close family members.

¹ For Item 8, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification. The persons identified in these roles for the purposes of the review may include individuals who do not meet the legal definitions or conventional meanings of a mother and father.

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- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 8 because 64% of the 69 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- In 71% of the 41 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation with a sibling(s) in foster care who is/was in a different placement setting was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.
- In 70% of the 60 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation between the child in foster care and his or her mother was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.
- In 61% of the 31 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation between the child in foster care and his or her father was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.

Item 9. Preserving Connections

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to maintain the child's connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 9 because 49% of the 89 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

Item 10. Relative Placement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to place the child with relatives when appropriate.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 10 because 70% of the 84 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

Item 11. Relationship of Child in Care With Parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father² or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation.

² For Item 11, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification.

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- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 11 because 48% of the 61 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- In 48% of the 58 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her mother.
- In 47% of the 30 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her father.

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

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Well-Being Outcome 1 using the state's performance on Items 12, 13, 14, and 15.

State Outcome Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 39% of the 150 cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 42% of the 90 foster care cases, 31% of the 58 in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

Well-Being Outcome 1 Item Performance

Item 12. Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency (1) made concerted efforts to assess the needs of children, parents,³ and foster parents (both initially, if the child entered foster care or the case was opened during the period under review, and on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family, and (2) provided the appropriate services.

³ For Sub-Item 12B, in the in-home cases, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers with whom the children were living when the agency became involved with the family and with whom the children will remain (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adoptive parents). In the foster care cases, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification; however, biological parents who were not the parents from whom the child was removed may also be included, as may adoptive parents if the adoption was finalized during the period under review. A rating could consider the agency's work with multiple applicable "mothers" and "fathers" for the period under review in the case.

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- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12 because 43% of the 150 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12 was rated as Strength in 46% of the 90 foster care cases, 36% of the 58 in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

Item 12 is divided into three sub-items:

Sub-Item 12A. Needs Assessment and Services to Children

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12A because 72% of the 150 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12A was rated as a Strength in 77% of the 90 foster care cases, 64% of the 58 in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

Sub-Item 12B. Needs Assessment and Services to Parents

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12B because 44% of the 129 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12B was rated as a Strength in 46% of the 69 applicable foster care cases, 40% of the 58 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.
- In 58% of the 122 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts both to assess and address the needs of mothers.
- In 44% of the 99 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts both to assess and address the needs of fathers.

Sub-Item 12C. Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12C because 89% of the 80 applicable foster care cases were rated as a Strength.

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Item 13. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made (or are being made) to involve parents⁴ and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 13 because 51% of the 141 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 52% of the 81 applicable foster care cases, 48% of the 58 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.
- In 69% of the 93 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve child(ren) in case planning.
- In 62% of the 121 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve mothers in case planning.
- In 48% of the 90 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve fathers in case planning.

Item 14. Caseworker Visits With Child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the child(ren) in the case are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 14 because 64% of the 150 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 72% of the 90 foster care cases, 50% of the 58 in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

Item 15. Caseworker Visits With Parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers⁵ of the child(ren) are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals.

⁴ For Item 13, in the in-home cases, “Mother” and “Father” are typically defined as the parents/caregivers with whom the children were living when the agency became involved with the family and with whom the children will remain (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adoptive parents). In the foster care cases, “mother” and “father” are typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification; however, biological parents who were not the parents from whom the child was removed may also be included, as may adoptive parents if the adoption was finalized during the period under review. A rating could consider the agency’s work with multiple applicable “mothers” and “fathers” for the period under review in the case.

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- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 15 because 48% of the 128 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 50% of the 68 applicable foster care cases, 43% of the 58 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.
- In 59% of the 121 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of caseworker visitation with mothers were sufficient.
- In 43% of the 88 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of caseworker visitation with fathers were sufficient.

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

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Well-Being Outcome 2 using the state's performance on Item 16.

State Outcome Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 85% of the 93 applicable cases reviewed.

Well-Being Outcome 2 Item Performance

Item 16. Educational Needs of the Child

Purpose of Assessment: To assess whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children's educational needs at the initial contact with the child (if the case was opened during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis (if the case was opened before the period under review), and whether identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 16 because 85% of the 93 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

⁵ For Item 15, in the in-home cases, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers with whom the children were living when the agency became involved with the family and with whom the children will remain (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adoptive parents). In the foster care cases, "Mother" and "Father" is typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification; however, biological parents who were not the parents from whom the child was removed may also be included, as may adoptive parents if the adoption was finalized during the period under review. A rating could consider the agency's work with multiple applicable mother and fathers for the period under review in the case.

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- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 87% of the 79 applicable foster care cases and 71% of the 14 applicable in-home services cases.

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

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Well-Being Outcome 3 using the state's performance on Items 17 and 18.

State Outcome Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 66% of the 130 applicable cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 71% of the 90 applicable foster care cases, 54% of the 39 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 1 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response case.

Well-Being Outcome 3 Item Performance

Item 17. Physical Health of the Child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the physical health needs of the children, including dental health needs.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 17 because 81% of the 113 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 83% of the 90 foster care cases and 74% of the 23 applicable in-home services cases.

Item 18. Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the children.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 18 because 68% of the 94 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 75% of the 63 applicable foster care cases, 53% of the 30 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 1 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response case.

III. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

For each systemic factor below, we provide performance summaries and a determination of whether the state is in substantial conformity with that systemic factor. In addition, we provide ratings for each item and a description of how the rating was determined. The CFSS relies upon a review of information contained in the statewide assessment to assess each item. If an item rating cannot be determined from the information contained in the statewide assessment, the Children's Bureau conducts stakeholder interviews and considers information gathered through the interviews in determining ratings for each item.

Statewide Information System

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Item 19.

State Systemic Factor Performance

Arkansas is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The one item in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

Statewide Information System Item Performance

Item 19. Statewide Information System

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The statewide information system is functioning statewide to ensure that, at a minimum, the state 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.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 19 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information and data in the statewide assessment demonstrated that the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or has been within the immediately preceding 12 months) in foster care are available for more than 93% of the children in foster care. DCFS's Quality Assurance (QA) vendor provides support for timeliness of data entry through monthly emails to the field offices reminding them to complete all data entry for the prior month. Staff activities at multiple levels of the agency use information system reports to monitor accuracy of required data elements. Stakeholders reported that supervisors regularly use management reports to review, verify, and take action to correct inaccurate data. Stakeholders noted that permanency goals and the child's demographic and placement information is inadequate or missing in less than 10% of the cases and that placement information is routinely entered within 24 hours.

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Case Review System

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

State Systemic Factor Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Three of the 5 items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

Case Review System Item Performance

Item 20. Written Case Plan

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The case review system is functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a written case plan that is developed jointly with the child's parent(s) and includes the required provisions.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 20 based on information from the statewide assessment. Arkansas agreed with this rating and felt that additional information collected during stakeholder interviews would not affect the rating.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas presented results of a case record review showing that sufficient effort to involve parents in case planning occurs in only 50% of cases.

Item 21. Periodic Reviews

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The case review system is functioning statewide to ensure that a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 21 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas provided data from the Court Improvement Program information system (DNet) showing that a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than once every 6 months and that 90% of children entering foster care during the first half of federal fiscal year (FFY) 2015 had review hearings within 6 months of case opening. Periodic reviews are held, on average, every 3 months for cases that remain open for more than a year. The majority of stakeholders confirmed that subsequent periodic reviews occur frequently, usually every 3 months. Arkansas provided information gathered from focus groups showing that periodic reviews include the required provisions.

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Item 22. Permanency Hearings

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The case review system is functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body that occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 22 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas presented data from DNet showing that initial permanency hearings are held within 12 months of case opening and subsequent permanency hearings are held on average every 8 to 9 months thereafter. Stakeholders confirmed that permanency planning hearings are held every 12 months for all children in foster care and that the hearings address the required judicial determinations.

Item 23. Termination of Parental Rights

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The case review system is functioning statewide to ensure that the filing of termination of parental rights proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 23 based on information from the statewide assessment.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas provided results from recent case reviews demonstrating that filing of termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings occurred in accordance with required provisions in over 90% of the cases reviewed. Arkansas provided information collected from focus groups conducted across the state that corroborated the case review findings.

Item 24. Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The case review system is functioning to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 24 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and confirmed in stakeholder interviews showed that Arkansas does not have a standardized process for providing notice of hearings to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care. Stakeholders described methods for notification that vary statewide. Stakeholder information indicated that the ability of foster parents to exercise their right to be heard varies across jurisdictions. Stakeholders stated that generally foster parents can provide information to the caseworker, CASA, or attorney ad litem to convey to the courts, but formal procedures to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relatives of caregivers have a right to be heard does not appear to be in place.

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Quality Assurance System

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Item 25.

State Systemic Factor Performance

Arkansas is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The one item in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

Quality Assurance System Item Performance

Item 25. Quality Assurance System

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The quality assurance system is functioning statewide to ensure that it (1) operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 25 based on information from the statewide assessment.
- Information in the statewide assessment showed that all five functional components of continuous quality improvement delineated in Information Memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-12-07 are functioning in all counties. Arkansas collects and analyzes data and information to evaluate interventions, the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, and state performance measures.

Staff and Provider Training

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 26, 27, and 28.

State Systemic Factor Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. One of the three items in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

Staff and Provider Training Item Performance

Item 26. Initial Staff Training

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The staff and provider training system is functioning statewide to ensure that initial training is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions.

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- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 26 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas described the initial training requirements for state staff and private providers and presented data on the number of staff who complete the training. However, the data did not reveal the percentage of staff who complete the initial training within the required time frame, or whether staff are assigned cases before completing initial training. Stakeholders reported that in areas with high turnover or vacancy rates, caseworkers are assigned cases before completing initial training and the state has difficulty implementing the mentoring and coaching aspects of initial training. Stakeholders also stated that the distance from staff job site to training sites, the lag time between the start date for new hires and the dates when training is offered, and the lack of individualized program track trainings (with the exception of hotline staff and supervisor training) are barriers.

Item 27. Ongoing Staff Training

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The staff and provider training system is functioning statewide to ensure that ongoing training is provided for staff⁶ that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 27 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas described the state's ongoing training requirements that are based on an employee's specific job function. The state also has required annual trainings and mandatory trainings on new programs or initiatives. Data presented in the statewide assessment showed that depending on job classification and training topic, 62% to 77% of staff complete these trainings. Stakeholders identified the distance between staff's job sites and training locations, large caseloads, and lack of training to address specific to casework specialties as barriers for staff in meeting ongoing training requirements.

Item 28. Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The staff and provider training system is functioning statewide to ensure that training is occurring statewide for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of state licensed or approved facilities (that

⁶ "Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, includes all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP. "Staff" also includes direct supervisors of all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

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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.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 28 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas described the state's uniform initial and ongoing training requirements for public and private foster homes. Initial training is a part of the licensing process. Failure to meet ongoing training requirements results in the inability to place additional children in the home until the requirement is satisfied. Stakeholders said that foster parents generally think the pre-service and ongoing training is useful and helps the participants to understand the system. Stakeholders suggested that ongoing training could be improved by tailoring the training to meet the individual needs of foster parents and the special needs of the children in their homes. Stakeholders provided information on initial and ongoing training requirements for child care institution staff. Private providers have internal mechanisms in place to ensure that agencies are in compliance with training requirements. The Placement and Residential Licensing Unit (PRLU) of the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education annually reviews a sample of personnel files of all child care institutions to monitor training requirements.

Service Array and Resource Development

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 29 and 30.

State Systemic Factor Performance

Arkansas is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. None of the items in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

Service Array and Resource Development Item Performance

Item 29. Array of Services

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The service array and resource development system is functioning to ensure that the following array of services is accessible in all political jurisdictions covered by the CFSP: (1) services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, (2) services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, (3) services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and (4) services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 29 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during stakeholder interviews confirmed that the state has a basic array of services, but the services are not readily accessible to children and families in all jurisdictions of the state. Significant differences were noted between services offered in the metro areas and those available within the rural areas of the state.

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Gaps and/or waitlists for services were identified for transportation services, post-adoption services to prevent re-entry into care, housing, mental/behavioral services for children and youth with severe behavioral problems, services for hearing-impaired children, quality drug and alcohol assessments, psychological evaluations in many rural areas, and quality parenting classes. There are also gaps and/or waitlists for services and mentors for youth transitioning out of care.

Item 30. Individualizing Services

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The service array and resource development system is functioning statewide to ensure that the services in Item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 30 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected from stakeholders during interviews showed that the service array and resource development system does not ensure individualized services that meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency. Stakeholder opinions varied on whether services are individualized to meet the needs of children and families. Several stakeholders described a “cookie-cutter” approach to service identification and provision, while others reported that services are identified and provided to meet the individual needs of children and families. Stakeholders agreed that services to address the individualized needs of children with severe mental/behavioral health needs and stabilize their placements, individualized parenting classes, culturally competent services, services for Spanish and Marshallese-speaking families, and substance abuse treatment for parents, are often not available statewide or are difficult to obtain.

Agency Responsiveness to the Community

The Children’s Bureau assesses the state’s performance on this systemic factor using the state’s performance on Items 31 and 32.

State Systemic Factor Performance

Arkansas is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Both items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

Agency Responsiveness to the Community Item Performance

Item 31. State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The agency responsiveness to the community system is functioning statewide to ensure that, in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, 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, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 31 based on information from the statewide assessment.

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- In the statewide assessment, the state referenced information from the CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) on the numerous ongoing stakeholder groups with whom the agency engages in discussion and planning. The CFSP and APSR illustrated that information gathered from stakeholders is shared with DCFS executive staff on an ongoing basis to assist in developing strategies to enhance staff skills and improve practices with families and relationships with community partners. Consultation and engagement of stakeholders occurs statewide and at multiple levels of the organization.

Item 32. Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The agency responsiveness to the community system is functioning statewide to ensure that the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 32 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders demonstrated that the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs administered by the following state entities: Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services, Division of Youth Services, Division of County Operations, Office of Child Support Enforcement, and Medicaid. The state reported that service delivery is coordinated with the various divisions administering Transitional Employment Assistance/Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Medicaid, Food Stamps, the Social Services Block Grant, and other federal entitlement programs.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 33, 34, 35, and 36.

State Systemic Factor Performance

Arkansas is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Three of the four items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention Item Performance

Item 33. Standards Applied Equally

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds.

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- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 33 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders showed that Arkansas has processes in place to ensure that the state and other licensed agencies, including child care institutions, comply with state standards for initial licensing and re-evaluations. The Child Welfare Agency Review Board (CWARB) and the PRLU ensure that licensing standards are applied equally to all licensed foster homes, child placing agencies, and child care institutions. The CWARB reviews all requests for alternative compliance and all approved alternative compliance is monitored by the PRLU.

Item 34. Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning statewide to ensure that 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.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 34 based on information from the statewide assessment.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas presented information demonstrating that the criminal convictions that preclude licensure as a foster or adoptive parent are consistent with § 471(a)(20)(A) of the Social Security Act. The state's provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children includes an individualized evaluation to determine whether the child(ren) can remain in the home when safety issues are identified and when implementing a safety plan is appropriate. Children are removed and placed into an approved setting, if safety and welfare standards cannot be met and the children cannot safely remain in the home.

Item 35. Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed is occurring statewide.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Strength for Item 35 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas referenced the diligent recruitment plans in the CFSP and APSR that reflect a recruitment strategy that combines the approved IV-E Waiver initiative and the state's Diligent Recruitment Grant. DCFS implemented this targeted recruitment program statewide to recruit and support a pool of available resources for families in the highest-need communities to serve the population most in need. Arkansas uses data on the child age, race, gender, and reason for removal as a component of recruitment planning. Stakeholders provided detailed recruitment plans reflecting a

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local analysis of the characteristics of children in need of homes by area and the corresponding analysis of available foster and adoptive homes.

Item 36. State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements

Description of Systemic Factor Item: The foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide.

- Arkansas received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 36 based on information from the statewide assessment. Arkansas agreed with this rating and felt that additional information collected during stakeholder interviews would not affect the rating.
- In the statewide assessment, Arkansas acknowledged that the state does not have sufficient data to fully assess how effectively the state uses cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children. Moreover, the state did not have data demonstrating whether Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) home studies were completed timely.

Appendix A: Summary of Arkansas 2016 CFSR Performance

**Appendix A
Summary of Arkansas 2016 Child and Family Services Review Performance**

I. Ratings for Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being Outcomes and Items

Outcome Achievement: Outcomes may be rated as in substantial conformity or not in substantial conformity. 95% 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.

Item Achievement: Items may be rated as a Strength or as an Area Needing Improvement. For an overall rating of Strength, 90% of the cases reviewed for the item (with the exception of Item 1 and Item 16) must be rated as a Strength. Because Item 1 is the only item for Safety Outcome 1 and Item 16 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95% Strength rating applies.

SAFETY OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN ARE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, PROTECTED FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
Safety Outcome 1 Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	Not in Substantial Conformity	69% Substantially Achieved
Item 1 Timeliness of investigations	Area Needing Improvement	69% Strength

SAFETY OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE SAFELY MAINTAINED IN THEIR HOMES WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
Safety Outcome 2 Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	Not in Substantial Conformity	60% Substantially Achieved
Item 2 Services to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care	Area Needing Improvement	55% Strength
Item 3 Risk and safety assessment and management	Area Needing Improvement	61% Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Arkansas 2016 CFSR Performance

PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN HAVE PERMANENCY AND STABILITY IN THEIR LIVING SITUATIONS.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
Permanency Outcome 1 Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	Not in Substantial Conformity	36% Substantially Achieved
Item 4 Stability of foster care placement	Area Needing Improvement	70% Strength
Item 5 Permanency goal for child	Area Needing Improvement	64% Strength
Item 6 Achieving reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement	Area Needing Improvement	58% Strength

PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2: THE CONTINUITY OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS IS PRESERVED FOR CHILDREN.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
Permanency Outcome 2 The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children	Not in Substantial Conformity	43% Substantially Achieved
Item 7 Placement with siblings	Area Needing Improvement	47% Strength
Item 8 Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	Area Needing Improvement	64% Strength
Item 9 Preserving connections	Area Needing Improvement	49% Strength
Item 10 Relative placement	Area Needing Improvement	70% Strength
Item 11 Relationship of child in care with parents	Area Needing Improvement	48% Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Arkansas 2016 CFSR Performance

WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1: FAMILIES HAVE ENHANCED CAPACITY TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S NEEDS.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
Well-Being Outcome 1 Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs	Not in Substantial Conformity	39% Substantially Achieved
Item 12 Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents	Area Needing Improvement	43% Strength
Sub-Item 12A Needs assessment and services to children	Area Needing Improvement	72% Strength
Sub-Item 12B Needs assessment and services to parents	Area Needing Improvement	44% Strength
Sub-Item 12C Needs assessment and services to foster parents	Area Needing Improvement	89% Strength
Item 13 Child and family involvement in case planning	Area Needing Improvement	51% Strength
Item 14 Caseworker visits with child	Area Needing Improvement	64% Strength
Item 15 Caseworker visits with parents	Area Needing Improvement	48% Strength

WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN RECEIVE APPROPRIATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
Well-Being Outcome 2 Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	Not in Substantial Conformity	85% Substantially Achieved
Item 16 Educational needs of the child	Area Needing Improvement	85% Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Arkansas 2016 CFSR Performance

WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN RECEIVE ADEQUATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
Well-Being Outcome 3 Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	Not in Substantial Conformity	66% Substantially Achieved
Item 17 Physical health of the child	Area Needing Improvement	81% Strength
Item 18 Mental/behavioral health of the child	Area Needing Improvement	68% Strength

II. Ratings for Systemic Factors

The Children’s Bureau determines whether a state is in substantial conformity with federal requirements for the 7 systemic factors based on the level of functioning of each systemic factor across the state. The Children’s Bureau determines substantial conformity with the systemic factors based on ratings for the item or items within each factor. Performance on 5 of the 7 systemic factors is determined on the basis of ratings for multiple items or plan requirements. For a state to be found in substantial conformity with these systemic factors, the Children’s Bureau must find that no more than 1 of the required items for that systemic factor fails to function as required. For a state to be found in substantial conformity with the 2 systemic factors that are determined based on the rating of a single item, the Children’s Bureau must find that the item is functioning as required.

STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Statewide Information System	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	In Substantial Conformity
Item 19 Statewide Information System	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Arkansas 2016 CFSR Performance

CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Case Review System	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
Item 20 Written Case Plan	Statewide Assessment	Area Needing Improvement
Item 21 Periodic Reviews	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
Item 22 Permanency Hearings	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
Item 23 Termination of Parental Rights	Statewide Assessment	Strength
Item 24 Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Quality Assurance System	Statewide Assessment	In Substantial Conformity
Item 25 Quality Assurance System	Statewide Assessment	Strength

STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Staff and Provider Training	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
Item 26 Initial Staff Training	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

Appendix A: Summary of Arkansas 2016 CFSR Performance

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Item 27 Ongoing Staff Training	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
Item 28 Foster and Adoptive Parent Training	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength

SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Service Array and Resource Development	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
Item 29 Array of Services	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
Item 30 Individualizing Services	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	In Substantial Conformity
Item 31 State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR	Statewide Assessment	Strength
Item 32 Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Arkansas 2016 CFSR Performance

FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	In Substantial Conformity
Item 33 Standards Applied Equally	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
Item 34 Requirements for Criminal Background Checks	Statewide Assessment	Strength
Item 35 Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
Item 36 State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements	Statewide Assessment	Area Needing Improvement

III. Performance on Statewide Data Indicators⁷

The state's performance is considered against the national performance for each statewide data indicator and provides contextual information for considering the findings. This information is not used in conformity decisions. State performance may be statistically above, below, or no different than the national performance. If a state did not provide the required data or did not meet the applicable item data quality limits, the Children's Bureau did not calculate the state's performance for the statewide data indicator.

Statewide Data Indicator	National Performance	Direction of Desired Performance	RSP*	95% Confidence Interval**	Data Period(s) Used for State Performance***
Recurrence of maltreatment	9.1%	Lower	7.1%	6.5–7.7%	FY13–14
Maltreatment in foster care (victimizations per 100,000 days in care)	8.50	Lower	10.77	8.91–13	14A–14B, FY14

⁷ In October 2016, the Children's Bureau issued Technical Bulletin #9 (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cfsr-technical-bulletin-9>), which alerted states to the fact that there were technical errors in the syntax used to calculate the national and state performance for the statewide data indicators. The syntax revision is still underway, so performance shown in this table is based on the 2015 Federal Register syntax.

Appendix A: Summary of Arkansas 2016 CFSR Performance

Statewide Data Indicator	National Performance	Direction of Desired Performance	RSP*	95% Confidence Interval**	Data Period(s) Used for State Performance***
Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care	40.5%	Higher	58.5%	57%–60%	12B–15A
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12-23 months	43.6%	Higher	52.6%	49.7%–55.5%	14B–15A
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 24 months or more	30.3%	Higher	28.5%	25.8–31.5%	14B–15A
Re-entry to foster care in 12 months	8.3%	Lower	6.7%	5.7%–7.9%	12B–15A
Placement stability (moves per 1,000 days in care)	4.12	Lower	8.35	8.09–8.63	14B–15A

* **Risk-Standardized Performance (RSP)** is derived from a multi-level statistical model and reflects the state's performance relative to states with similar children and takes into account the number of children the state served, the age distribution of these children, and, for some indicators, the state's entry rate. It uses risk-adjustment to minimize differences in outcomes due to factors over which the state has little control and provides a more fair comparison of state performance against national performance.

** **95% Confidence Interval** is the 95% confidence interval estimate for the state's RSP. The values shown are the lower RSP and upper RSP of the interval estimate. The interval accounts for the amount of uncertainty associated with the RSP. For example, the CB is 95% confident that the true value of the RSP is between the lower and upper limit of the interval.

*****Data Period(s) Used for State Performance** : Refers to the initial 12-month period and the period(s) of data needed to follow the children to observe their outcomes. The FY or federal fiscal year refers to NCANDS data, which spans the 12-month period October 1 – September 30. All other periods refer to AFCARS data. "A" refers to the 6-month period October 1 – March 31. "B" refers to the 6-month period April 1 – September 30. The 2-digit year refers to the calendar year in which the period ends.

Appendix B: Arkansas 2008 CFSR Key Findings

Appendix B Summary of CFSR Round 2 Arkansas 2008 Key Findings

The Children's Bureau conducted a CFSR in Arkansas in 2008. Key findings from that review are presented below. Because the Children's Bureau made several changes to the CFSR process and items and indicators relevant for performance based on lessons learned during the second round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a state's performance in the third round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the second round.

Identifying Information and Review Dates

General Information
Children's Bureau Region: 6
Date of Onsite Review: January 28, 2008–February 1, 2008
Period Under Review: October 1, 2006, through February 1, 2008
Date Courtesy Copy of Final Report Issued: December 5, 2008
Date Program Improvement Plan Due: January 22, 2009
Date Program Improvement Plan Approved: July 1, 2009

Highlights of Findings

Performance Measurements
A. The State met the national standards for three of the six standards.
B. The State achieved substantial conformity with none of the seven outcomes.
C. The State achieved substantial conformity with two of the seven systemic factors.

Appendix B: Arkansas 2008 CFSR Key Findings

State's Conformance With the National Standards

Data Indicator or Composite	National Standard	State's Score	Meets or Does Not Meet Standard
Absence of maltreatment recurrence (data indicator)	94.6 or higher	95.3	Meets Standard
Absence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care (data indicator)	99.68 or higher	99.45	Does Not Meet Standard
Timeliness and permanency of reunifications (Permanency Composite 1)	122.6 or higher	145.1	Meets Standard
Timeliness of adoptions (Permanency Composite 2)	106.4 or higher	97.8	Does Not Meet Standard
Permanency for children and youth in foster care for long periods of time (Permanency Composite 3)	121.7 or higher	130.7	Meets Standard
Placement stability (Permanency Composite 4)	101.5 or higher	68.0	Does Not Meet Standard

State's Conformance With the Outcomes

Outcome	Achieved or Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity

Appendix B: Arkansas 2008 CFSR Key Findings

Outcome	Achieved or Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity

State's Conformance With the Systemic Factors

Systemic Factor	Achieved or Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Statewide Information System	Achieved Substantial Conformity
Case Review System	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Quality Assurance System	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Staff and Provider Training	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Service Array and Resource Development	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Achieved Substantial Conformity
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity

Appendix B: Arkansas 2008 CFSR Key Findings

Key Findings by Item

Outcomes

Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
Item 1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment	Area Needing Improvement
Item 2. Repeat Maltreatment	Strength
Item 3. Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-entry Into Foster Care	Area Needing Improvement
Item 4. Risk Assessment and Safety Management	Area Needing Improvement
Item 5. Foster Care Re-entries	Strength
Item 6. Stability of Foster Care Placement	Area Needing Improvement
Item 7. Permanency Goal for Child	Area Needing Improvement
Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship, or Permanent Placement With Relatives	Area Needing Improvement
Item 9. Adoption	Area Needing Improvement
Item 10. Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	Area Needing Improvement
Item 11. Proximity of Foster Care Placement	Strength
Item 12. Placement With Siblings	Area Needing Improvement
Item 13. Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	Area Needing Improvement
Item 14. Preserving Connections	Area Needing Improvement
Item 15. Relative Placement	Area Needing Improvement
Item 16. Relationship of Child in Care With Parents	Area Needing Improvement
Item 17. Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents	Area Needing Improvement

Appendix B: Arkansas 2008 CFSR Key Findings

Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
Item 18. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	Area Needing Improvement
Item 19. Caseworker Visits With Child	Area Needing Improvement
Item 20. Caseworker Visits With Parents	Area Needing Improvement
Item 21. Educational Needs of the Child	Area Needing Improvement
Item 22. Physical Health of the Child	Area Needing Improvement
Item 23. Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child	Area Needing Improvement

Systemic Factors

Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
Item 24. Statewide Information System	Strength
Item 25. Written Case Plan	Area Needing Improvement
Item 26. Periodic Reviews	Strength
Item 27. Permanency Hearings	Strength
Item 28. Termination of Parental Rights	Area Needing Improvement
Item 29. Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers	Area Needing Improvement
Item 30. Standards Ensuring Quality Services	Strength
Item 31. Quality Assurance System	Area Needing Improvement
Item 32. Initial Staff Training	Area Needing Improvement
Item 33. Ongoing Staff Training	Area Needing Improvement
Item 34. Foster and Adoptive Parent Training	Area Needing Improvement
Item 35. Array of Services	Area Needing Improvement
Item 36. Service Accessibility	Area Needing Improvement
Item 37. Individualizing Services	Area Needing Improvement
Item 38. Engagement in Consultation With Stakeholders	Strength

Appendix B: Arkansas 2008 CFSR Key Findings

Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
Item 39. Agency Annual Reports Pursuant to CFSP	Strength
Item 40. Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs	Strength
Item 41. Standards for Foster Homes and Institutions	Strength
Item 42. Standards Applied Equally	Area Needing Improvement
Item 43. Requirements for Criminal Background Checks	Strength
Item 44. Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes	Area Needing Improvement
Item 45. State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements	Strength