



Child and Family Services Reviews

Vermont

Final Report

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
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Final Report: Vermont Child and Family Services Review Report Re-Issued: 2017

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Vermont.¹ The CFSRs 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 CFSRs 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 Vermont are based on:

- The statewide assessment prepared by the Vermont Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division (FSD), and submitted to the Children's Bureau on April 15, 2015. 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 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home cases) conducted via a "Traditional Review" process at Burlington, Bennington, and St. Johnsbury, Vermont, during the week of June 15, 2015
- Interviews and focus groups with state stakeholders and partners, which included representatives from Administrative Review Boards, the court system, the Court Improvement Project, law enforcement and the Department of Public Safety, child welfare training partnership, attorneys, child welfare senior managers, child welfare caseworkers, parents, foster and adoptive parents, information system staff, resource coordinators and licensing specialists, quality assurance staff, service providers, and youth served by the agency

In Round 3, the Children's Bureau suspended the use of the state's performance on the 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

¹ The Children's Bureau suspended the use of the state's performance on the national standards for the 7 statewide data indicators in conformity decisions. This re-issued report does not contain any changes to the case review and systemic factor functioning results issued in the prior version of the state's Final Report.

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indicators. Moving forward, the Children's Bureau will refer to the national standards as "national performance." This 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). As a result, Vermont's Final Report is being reissued (see footnote 1).

Background Information

The Round 3 CFSR assesses state performance with regard to substantial conformity with 7 child and family outcomes and 7 systemic factors. Each outcome incorporates one 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 (CFSP) 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 CFSR 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 CFSRs is not directly comparable to its performance in the second round. Appendix A provides tables presenting Vermont's overall performance in Round 3. Appendix B provides information about Vermont's performance in Round 2.

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I. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

Vermont 2015 CFSR Assessment of Substantial Conformity for Outcomes and Systemic Factors

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

The following 2 of 7 systemic factors were found to be in substantial conformity:

- Statewide Information System
- Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Children's Bureau Comments on Vermont Performance

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

The identification and involvement of relatives was a positive factor in many of the Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being Outcomes. Vermont used relative resources to facilitate stable placements, achieve permanency goals, ensure safety, maintain significant connections for children removed from their homes, facilitate parent-child visits, and coach parents to enhance children's well-being. FSD was effective in placing siblings together when possible, and ensuring that siblings placed in different foster homes had frequent contact. The review also highlighted collaborative efforts by FSD to engage school systems, parents, foster parents, and community providers to address children's educational and mental health needs. FSD also made significant efforts to ensure that children's physical and dental health needs were met.

Many stakeholders reported caseload challenges for the agency and the court, which they attributed to increased removals resulting from parental substance abuse and the heightened public and media focus on children in need of services raised by recent child fatalities. Vermont has not yet been able to shift resources to address these issues, resulting in a limited availability of services, particularly to address substance abuse. The Children's Bureau notes that these issues affect the agency's and court's abilities to meet safety needs and achieve timely permanency for children.

A number of cases in the in-home sample involved children who were subject to conditional custody orders. Such children are not in foster care, but are placed in the custody of a non-parental caregiver under FSD's supervision. In the review, safety and well-being were often rated as Areas Needing Improvement for children in these custody situations. Since these are in-home cases, permanency outcomes were not applicable; however, the Children's Bureau noted that there was not a clear understanding of whether and how such children would return to their homes or achieve another form of legal permanency in their living situations. The Children's Bureau believes that the agency and court should clarify each entity's expectations, responsibilities, and procedures for ensuring appropriate decisions about safety, permanency, and well-being for the children in these cases.

Areas of challenge for both in-home and foster care cases included assessment of risk and safety and managing those risks; assessing the needs of parents; and caseworker visits with parents. Another challenging area for the state was with regard to permanency and stability for children. Frequently, the cases were rated as Areas Needing Improvement for these items because

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permanency goals were not established and achieved in a timely manner, and there was a lack of placement stability. The review indicated that even where Vermont is able to file petitions to terminate parental rights in a timely manner, there are delays in court hearings on termination of parental rights petitions, which slows children's achievement of permanency.

The Children's Bureau notes that the two systemic factors in which the state is in substantial conformity could be further leveraged to address other areas that need improvement. Vermont's statewide information system readily identifies the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in out-of-home placements, and the agency uses multiple processes to assure that data are accurate and timely. FSD also has developed a culture of open engagement with its stakeholders. The state convenes regular stakeholder and partner meetings and consultations on standing topics and challenges. Stakeholder interviews confirmed that stakeholder involvement is an ongoing and continuous process in Vermont. By using the data system to uncover additional information about the children in need of services and further engaging stakeholders, the state could bring together information and facilitate stakeholder support to address the five systemic factors not in conformity—Case Review System; Quality Assurance System; Staff and Provider Training; Service Array; and Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention.

Finally, we note that although FSD has made significant gains in its Quality Assurance System, the agency does not currently have a fully functioning case review system in place. We encourage the state to continue its efforts to build capacity to conduct case reviews on a continuous basis and implement an agency-wide CQI vision and operating principles.

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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. Vermont 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 services, 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 FSD. 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

Vermont is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 72% of the 29 applicable cases reviewed.

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 for accepted reports, the agency commence a child safety intervention within 72 hours of the date and time the report is taken as an intake. For an investigation, "commence" means that staff will interview the child, or if the child is nonverbal, observe the child. An interview solely by law enforcement does not substitute for investigation commencement. For an assessment, "commence" means that staff will contact the person identified in the intake as responsible for the child's welfare and interview the child, or if the child is nonverbal, observe the child within 5 days of the initial contact unless the staff can verify that the child is safe through an independent, objective professional source such as a physician, child care provider, or teacher. If staff can verify that the child is safe through the independent professional source, staff must interview or observe the child before the assessment is concluded in 45 days.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 1 because 72% of the 29 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

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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

Vermont is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 57% of the 65 cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 67.5% of the 40 foster care cases, 29% of the 21 in-home services cases, and 100% of the 4 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 2 because 97% of the 32 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 93% of the 14 applicable foster care cases, 100% of the 15 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 3 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response 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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 3 because 57% of the 65 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 67.5% of the 40 foster care cases, 29% of the 21 in-home services cases, and 100% of the 4 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.

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State Outcome Performance

Vermont is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 35% of the 40 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).

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 4 because 75% of the 40 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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 5 because 57.5% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 6 because 67.5% of the 40 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

Vermont is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 80% of the 40 applicable foster care cases reviewed.

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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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 7 because 90% of the 20 applicable foster care 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,² and siblings is of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationship with these close family members.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 8 because 76% of the 34 applicable foster care cases were rated as a Strength.
- In 69% of the 13 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 89% of the 28 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 83% of the 18 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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 9 because 85% of the 40 applicable foster care cases were rated as a Strength.

² 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.

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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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 10 because 80% of the 35 applicable foster care 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 father³ or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 11 because 77% of the 30 applicable foster care cases were rated as a Strength.
- In 82% of the 28 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 72% of the 18 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

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

The outcome was substantially achieved in 37% of the 65 cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 47.5% of the 40 foster care cases, 19% of the 21 in-home services cases, and 25% of the 4 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

³ 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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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, 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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12 because 52% of the 65 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 55% of the 40 foster care cases, 48% of the 21 in-home services cases, and 50% of the 4 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

Item 12 is divided into three sub-items:

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

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12A because 75% of the 65 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12A was rated as a Strength in 80% of the 40 foster care cases, 62% of the 21 in-home services cases, and 100% of the 4 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

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

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12B because 56% of the 59 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12B was rated as a Strength in 59% of the 34 applicable foster care cases; 52% of the 21 applicable in-home services cases; and 50% of the 4 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.
- In 75% of the 56 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts both to assess and address the needs of mothers.⁴

⁴ 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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- In 56% of the 48 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

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12C because 81% of the 31 applicable foster care cases were rated as a Strength.

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 parents⁵ and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 13 because 60% of the 65 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 72.5% of the 40 applicable foster care cases, 38% of the 21 applicable in-home services cases, and 50% of the 4 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.
- In 71% of the 42 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve child(ren) in case planning.
- In 80% of the 56 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve mothers in case planning.
- In 60% of the 45 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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 14 because 63% of the 65 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 80% of the 40 foster care cases, 29% of the 21 in-home services cases, and 75% of the 4 in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

⁵ 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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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 fathers⁶ of the child(ren) are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 15 because 39% of the 59 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 50% of the 34 applicable foster care cases, 19% of the 21 applicable in-home services cases, and 50% of the 4 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.
- In 57% of the 56 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of caseworker visitation with mothers were sufficient.
- In 38% of the 45 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

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

The outcome was substantially achieved in 88% of the 41 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

⁶ 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 mothers and fathers for the period under review in the case.

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the case was opened before the period under review), and whether identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 16 because 88% of the 41 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 87.5% of the 32 applicable foster care cases, 87.5% of the 8 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 1 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response 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

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

The outcome was substantially achieved in 74% of the 57 applicable cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 72.5% of the 40 applicable foster care cases, 69% of the 13 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 4 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 17 because 87% of the 46 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 85% of the 40 foster care cases, 100% of the 2 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 4 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response 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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 18 because 74% of the 43 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

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- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 77% of the 30 applicable foster care cases, 64% of the 11 applicable in-home services cases, and 100% of the 2 applicable in-home services alternative/differential response cases.

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 CFSR 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

Vermont 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

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 19 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the Statewide Assessment, Vermont provided information on its data integrity process and data indicating that the demographic information, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is, or within the immediately preceding 12 months has been, in foster care were largely complete. Additional information received from stakeholders during stakeholder interviews revealed that Vermont's information system was identifying the status, demographics, location, and goal for children in placement.

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.

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State Systemic Factor Performance

Vermont 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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 20 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided case review data on a small sample of cases for a recent 6-month period showing that mothers participated in the development of the case plan 67% of the time and fathers participated in the development of the case plan 65% of the time. The Statewide Assessment Instrument did not provide data or information as to whether case plans were developed for children in foster care. Additional information received from stakeholders during stakeholder interviews indicated that case plans were typically in place and confirmed that parental involvement in the development of the case plan was inconsistent.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 21 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided information from a 6-month period showing that periodic reviews occur no less frequently than every 6 months. Information received from stakeholders during stakeholder interviews confirmed that periodic reviews routinely occur at least every 6 months either by court or by administrative review, and that these reviews addressed the required elements for a periodic review. Information from the stakeholder interviews also indicated that FSD conducts a periodic review of the case plan at the 11-month mark to prepare for the permanency hearing.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 22 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.

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- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided recent data indicating that 95% of the initial permanency hearings were held within 13 months of the child coming into custody. Information received from stakeholders during stakeholder interviews indicated that initial and ongoing permanency hearings are occurring on a timely basis for the vast majority of children in care. The Court Improvement Project (CIP) is collecting data on the timeliness of permanency hearings. CIP data showed that in FY 2014 subsequent permanency hearings were timely in 75% of the cases and the majority of the remaining hearings were completed within 2 to 3 weeks of the 12-month mark. CIP is considering how to determine why permanency hearings are not occurring timely in a minority of the cases. Vermont calculates timeliness of the permanency hearing using the date of the child's placement into foster care and not the earlier of the date of the first judicial finding that the child has been subjected to child abuse or neglect or the date that is 60 days after the date on which the child is removed from the home.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 23 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Data presented in the statewide assessment and information collected through stakeholder interviews consistently indicated that termination of parental rights proceedings are routinely being filed within 15 of 22 months or that a compelling reason was documented in the case record. Vermont monitors compliance with this provision in the following three ways: (1) the FSD uses reports to track the length of time a child has been in care to ensure that either termination of parental rights is filed or a compelling reason is documented in the case record; (2) the administrative review board reviews for compliance with this provision for children in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months during the periodic review and notes in the case plan if termination of parental rights is not filed; and (3) the CIP tracks the timeliness of filing for termination of parental rights.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 24. Findings were determined based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.

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- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided data on a sample of cases from a recent 6-month period. In this sample, case plan review facilitators indicated that caregivers attended case plan reviews approximately 75% of the time. Information in the statewide assessment did not address whether caregivers of children in foster care are notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or permanency hearing held with respect to the child. Information received from stakeholders during stakeholder interviews indicated that while caregivers typically receive notice of reviews and hearings and are given opportunities to participate in reviews, caregivers do not consistently have a right to be heard at court hearings. Stakeholders also reported that the caregiver's opportunity to be heard could vary based on the court and the request of the birth parents.

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

Vermont is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The one item in this systemic factor was rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

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 is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is (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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 25 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided information documenting that some elements of a functioning quality assurance system were established in the last several years through the creation of a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) steering committee and through the review of and reporting on key performance measures. Information received from stakeholders during stakeholder interviews confirmed information in the statewide assessment that FSD lacks a qualitative case review process for identifying the quality of services and the strengths and needs of the service delivery system.

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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

Vermont is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. One of the 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.

- Vermont 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, Vermont explained the new employee orientation for FSD workers, and provided information on the Foundations for Family Centered Practice curriculum and additional trainings for resource coordinators and staff providing services to children and families. Information collected through stakeholder interviews identified concerns about the routine functioning of this systemic factor item; specifically, that the training is not available in a timely manner for new caseworkers before they assume a full caseload; that participation in training is not effectively tracked; that there are no time frames for initial training requirements; and that there is not a robust assessment of whether the training addresses the basic skills and knowledge required for staff in their positions.

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 staff⁷ that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

⁷ "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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- Vermont 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, Vermont provided data and information that listed the requirements for ongoing training, the topics for ongoing training for caseworkers and supervisors, and the number of caseworkers and supervisors who participated in ongoing training. Information collected during stakeholder interviews identified concerns with the routine functioning of this systemic factor item. Vermont has established ongoing training requirements for staff and offers training on a variety of topics. However, tracking the completion of training is lacking and evaluation of the effectiveness of training that occurs outside of the Child Welfare Training Partnership is insufficient.

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 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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 28 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided data demonstrating that caregivers routinely receive initial and ongoing training pursuant to established policy requirements and time frames and that the initial and ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children. Information gathered through stakeholder interviews confirmed that the systemic factor item was routinely functioning for foster parents, adoptive parents, kin, guardians, and child care facility staff. The state tracks whether training requirements are met as part of the licensing or relicensing process for resource parents and providers.

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

Vermont 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

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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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 29 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont described the array of services provided through contracts with various providers across the state. Information gathered through stakeholder interviews confirmed the scope of the service array and indicated that there were challenges in the accessibility and availability of certain services in all jurisdictions covered by the CFSP. Stakeholders identified significant waiting lists for substance abuse treatment and noted that mental health, substance abuse services, transportation, and housing were not available and accessible in all jurisdictions.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 30 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont described how the state individualizes services, particularly for mental health and wraparound services. However, information collected through stakeholder interviews indicated that this systemic factor item is not routinely functioning because the individualization often depends on the availability of funds and therefore occurs on a limited basis. Additionally, stakeholders noted limitations in meeting the needs of families with unique cultural needs or when language barriers existed.

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

Vermont is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Both of the 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

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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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 31 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont described meetings and ongoing consultations with stakeholders and partners on standing topics, and engagement with groups focused on specific challenges, such as foster care entry rates and a review of child safety in light of recent child fatalities. Information gathered during stakeholder interviews confirmed that the state engages in ongoing consultation with stakeholders in implementing provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs. Stakeholders described involvement and engagement at the community, district, and state levels and with key partners such as the courts, foster and adoptive parent association, youth advisory board, coalition of residential programs, Tribal partners, local community services providers, and citizen review panel.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 32 based on information from the statewide assessment.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided information demonstrating that the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services and benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population. As examples, FSD noted coordination and partnership with economic services, child development and Head Start, and education to address, health, educational stability, and housing.

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

Vermont is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Two of the items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

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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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 33 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided data and information describing the process for licensing and monitoring child care institutions and foster homes, including relative homes. Information collected during stakeholder interviews indicated that this systemic factor item is routinely functioning and that the state's standards are applied equally by the Licensing Unit and Residential Licensing and Special Investigations Unit. A limited number of variances are allowed for non-safety issues such as the size of the bedroom, and for some relative care providers who do not receive title IV-B/IV-E funding.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Strength for Item 34 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided the state's policy for conducting criminal background checks. Information gathered during stakeholder interviews confirmed that this systemic factor item is routinely functioning. The Licensing Unit indicated that waivers are not granted for safety issues. Other concerns are addressed as part of the family home study and could involve follow-up with other professionals to verify that issues are resolved. Individuals applying to be foster or adoptive parents who have prior abuse/neglect findings with the agency must appeal the findings and have the records expunged. Criminal background checks are completed timely in concert with the Department of Public Safety. The state acknowledges that additional attention is needed to encourage relatives to get fingerprints completed timely to facilitate the background check.

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.

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- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 35 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont provided data on the race and ethnicity of children and foster parents and information on the state's localized approach to recruitment. Information gathered during stakeholder interviews confirmed that there is not a statewide coordinated approach to recruitment, that the district recruitment coordinators are not using data to inform recruitment, and that capacity issues at the state and local levels are a barrier to providing a more comprehensive approach to recruitment.

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.

- Vermont received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 36 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- In the statewide assessment, Vermont indicated that the state does use cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanency within the state. Information gathered during stakeholder interviews confirmed that the state's recruitment coordinators work across the districts and with a private agency to locate and facilitate permanent placements. However, there are issues with the state's timely response to Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children requests for studies from other states. Recent data show that it takes on average 3.75 months to complete studies, which exceeds the 60-day requirement.

Appendix A: Summary of Vermont 2015 CFSR Performance

Summary of Vermont 2015 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	72% Substantially Achieved
Item 1 Timeliness of investigations	Area Needing Improvement	72% 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 when possible and appropriate	Not in Substantial Conformity	57% Substantially Achieved
Item 2 Services to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care	Strength	97% Strength
Item 3 Risk and safety assessment and management	Area Needing Improvement	57% Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Vermont 2015 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	35% Substantially Achieved
Item 4 Stability of foster care placement	Area Needing Improvement	75% Strength
Item 5 Permanency goal for child	Area Needing Improvement	57.5% Strength
Item 6 Achieving reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement	Area Needing Improvement	67.5% 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	80% Substantially Achieved
Item 7 Placement with siblings	Strength	90% Strength
Item 8 Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	Area Needing Improvement	76% Strength
Item 9 Preserving connections	Area Needing Improvement	85% Strength
Item 10 Relative placement	Area Needing Improvement	80% Strength
Item 11 Relationship of child in care with parents	Area Needing Improvement	77% Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Vermont 2015 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 children's needs	Not in Substantial Conformity	37% Substantially Achieved
Item 12 Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents	Area Needing Improvement	52% Strength
Sub-Item 12A Needs assessment and services to children	Area Needing Improvement	75% Strength
Sub-Item 12B Needs assessment and services to parents	Area Needing Improvement	56% Strength
Sub-Item 12C Needs assessment and services to foster parents	Area Needing Improvement	81% Strength
Item 13 Child and family involvement in case planning	Area Needing Improvement	60% Strength
Item 14 Caseworker visits with child	Area Needing Improvement	63% Strength
Item 15 Caseworker visits with parents	Area Needing Improvement	39% 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	88% Substantially Achieved
Item 16 Educational needs of the child	Area Needing Improvement	88% Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Vermont 2015 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	74% Substantially Achieved
Item 17 Physical health of the child	Area Needing Improvement	87% Strength
Item 18 Mental/behavioral health of the child	Area Needing Improvement	74% Strength

II. Ratings for Systemic Factors

The Children's Bureau determines whether a state is in substantial conformity with federal requirements for the seven 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 one 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 Vermont 2015 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 and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
Item 21 Periodic Review	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
Item 22 Permanency Hearing	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
Item 23 Termination of Parental Rights	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	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 and Stakeholder Interviews	Not In Substantial Conformity
Item 25 Quality Assurance System	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

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
Item 27 Ongoing Staff Training	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

Appendix A: Summary of Vermont 2015 CFSR Performance

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
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 and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
Item 32 Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs	Statewide Assessment	Strength

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	Not In Substantial Conformity
Item 33 Standards Applied Equally	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength

Appendix A: Summary of Vermont 2015 CFSR Performance

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
Item 34 Requirements for Criminal Background Checks	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
Item 35 Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
Item 36 State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

III. Performance on Statewide Data Indicators⁸

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	10.3%	8%–13.2%	FY12–13
Maltreatment in foster care (victimizations per 100,000 days in care)	8.50	Lower	5.61	3.4–9.27	13A–13B, FY13
Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care	40.5%	Higher	35.7%	32.1%–39.4%	11B–14A

⁸ 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 Vermont 2015 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 in foster care 12-23 months	43.6%	Higher	48.3%	42.5%–54.3%	13B–14A
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 24 months or more	30.3%	Higher	32.1%	26.4%–38.6%	13B–14A
Re-entry to foster care in 12 months	8.3%	Lower	14%	10.3%–18.8%	11B–14A
Placement stability (moves per 1,000 days in care)	4.12	Lower	6.01	5.56–6.49	13B–14A

* **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: Vermont 2007 CFSR Key Findings

Appendix B Summary of CFSR Round 2 Vermont 2007 Key Findings

The Children's Bureau conducted a CFSR in Vermont in 2007. 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: 1
Date of Onsite Review: April 9–13, 2007
Period Under Review: April 1, 2006, through April 9, 2007
Date Courtesy Copy of Final Report Issued: July 16, 2007
Date Program Improvement Plan Due: October 15, 2007
Date Program Improvement Plan Approved: October 1, 2008

Highlights of Findings

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

Appendix B: Vermont 2007 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	96.0	Meets Standard
Absence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care (data indicator)	99.68 or higher	99.86	Meets Standard
Timeliness and permanency of reunifications (Permanency Composite 1)	122.6 or higher	107.7	Does Not Meet Standard
Timeliness of adoptions (Permanency Composite 2)	106.4 or higher	106.5	Meets Standard
Permanency for children and youth in foster care for long periods of time (Permanency Composite 3)	121.7 or higher	114.2	Does Not Meet Standard
Placement stability (Permanency Composite 4)	101.5 or higher	64.0	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

Appendix B: Vermont 2007 CFSR Key Findings

Outcome	Achieved or Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	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	Achieved 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	Achieved Substantial Conformity

Appendix B: Vermont 2007 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	Strength
Item 13. Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	Area Needing Improvement

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Item	Strength or 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
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

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Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
Item 27. Permanency Hearings	Strength
Item 28. Termination of Parental Rights	Strength
Item 29. Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers	Area Needing Improvement
Item 30. Standards Ensuring Quality Services	Area Needing Improvement
Item 31. Quality Assurance System	Strength
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	Strength
Item 38. Engagement in Consultation With Stakeholders	Strength
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

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Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
Item 42. Standards Applied Equally	Strength
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