

## Section 1: Training Curriculum

## **Chapter 1: The CFSR Process**

Improving Safety, Permanency, and  
Well-Being of Children through  
Improved Outcomes and Systemic  
Factors

## Legislative Context

- 1994 amendments to the Social Security Act authorizing DHHS to review for “substantial conformity” with State plan requirements for titles IV-B and IV-E.
- January, 2000 Final Rule to establish a new approach to monitoring State child welfare programs
- Invitation to comment was published in November 2005.
- Final notice for Round Two measures, composites and national standards was published in June 2006.

### Legislative Context

The child and family services reviews, authorized by the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA) and administered by ACF, provide a unique opportunity for the Federal government and State child welfare agencies to work as a team in assessing States' capacity to promote positive outcomes for children and families engaged in the child welfare system. Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355 implement the requirements for the Child and Family Services reviews. States will be assessed for substantial conformity with certain Federal requirements for child protective, foster care, adoption, family preservation and family support, and independent living services.

Traditionally, reviews have focused primarily on assessing State agencies' compliance with procedural requirements, as evidenced by case file documentation, rather than on the results of services and States' capacity to create positive outcomes for children and families. In addition, reviews have not provided States with opportunities for making improvements before penalties have been imposed.

On January 25, 2000, the DHHS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* to establish a new approach to monitoring State child welfare programs. Under the rule, which became effective March 25, 2000, States will be assessed for substantial conformity with certain Federal requirements for child protective, foster care, adoption, family preservation and family support, and independent living services. The Children's Bureau, part of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within DHHS, is administering the new review system.

On November 7, 2005 DHHS published in the *Federal Register* a invitation to comment on proposed data composites, performance measures, and measure as described in the announcement. Final notice of the data measures, data composites, and national standards to be used in Round Two was published in the *Federal Register* on June 7, 2006.

## Central Principles of the CFSR

- Collaborative effort between the State and the Federal government
- Use of multiple sources to assess State performance
- Covers outcomes and systemic factors
- Addresses both strengths and needs
- Promotes best practice principles
- Emphasizes accountability

### Central Principles of the CFSR

The child and family services reviews are based on a number of central principles and concepts, including the following:

- **Collaborative effort between the State and the Federal government.** The child and family services reviews are a collaborative effort between the Federal and State Governments. A review team composed of both Federal and State staff conducts the reviews and evaluates State performance.
- **Use of multiple sources to assess State performance.** The review team collects information from a variety of sources to make decisions about a State's performance. These sources include a Statewide Assessment, completed by State members of the review team; statewide aggregate data; onsite reviews of a sample of case records and case-related interviews with children, parents, foster parents, and caseworkers and other professionals knowledgeable about a case; and interviews with State and community stakeholders.
- **Covers outcomes and systemic factors.** The reviews examine State programs from two perspectives. First, the reviews assess the outcomes of services provided to children and families. Second, they examine systemic factors that affect the agency's ability to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.
- **Addresses both strengths and needs.** The reviews are designed to capture both State program strengths and areas needing improvement. With a strong emphasis on program improvements, the reviews identify the strengths of State programs that can be used to make improvements in other program areas, where needed.
- **Promotes best practice principles.** The reviews promote States' use of practice principles believed to support positive outcomes for children and families, such as family-centered practice, community-based services, individualizing services that address the unique needs of children and families, and strengthening parental capacity to protect and provide for children.

- **Emphasizes accountability through potential for financial penalties.** The reviews emphasize accountability. While the review process includes opportunities for States to make program improvements before having Federal funds withheld because of nonconformity, there are significant penalties associated with the failure to make the improvements needed to attain substantial conformity.

## The CFSR Process

- Statewide Assessment (completed 6 months prior to on-site review)
- Onsite review
- Program Improvement Plan (PIP)
- Potential for financial penalties

Details are provided in the updated CFSR Procedures Manual

### **Overview of the CFSR Process**

Each child and family services review is a two-stage process that comprises a Statewide Assessment and an onsite review of child and family service outcomes and systemic factors.

The State and its external partners complete a statewide assessment with respect to the outcomes and systemic factors using AFCARS and NCANDS data. This process begins six months prior to the onsite review and is completed two months prior to onsite review.

The onsite review is held to further explore and corroborate the findings of the statewide assessment (incorporating information from the statewide assessment and other sources).

A Final Report is prepared within 30 calendar days of the onsite review, or resolution of any discrepancies in information collected during the Statewide Assessment and onsite review. The Final Report includes the written determination of substantial conformity for each of the outcomes and systemic factors reviewed.

States determined not to have achieved substantial conformity in one or more of the areas assessed will be required to develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan addressing the areas of nonconformity. The Children's Bureau will support the States with technical assistance and monitor implementation of their plans.

## Statewide Assessment

- Review period is one federal fiscal year
- Prepared by a team of State agency officials and external partners
- Provides an analysis of outcome achievement using AFCARS and NCANDS data
- Provides an analysis of the child welfare system

### Statewide Assessment

The statewide assessment is the first phase of the CFSR process. It provides States an opportunity to examine data relating to their programs and to consider the data in light of programmatic goals and outcomes for children and families served by the State. The statewide assessment requires State review team members to consider the State's success in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. The assessment process leads to identification of the areas where the State is performing well and those areas that need further examination through the onsite review.

- Section I of the statewide assessment requests general information about the State agency.
- Section II focuses on State child welfare agency characteristics and requires narrative responses on systemic factors, based on data to the extent available to the State.
- Section III includes data profiles for the safety and permanency outcomes, including the statewide aggregate data indicators used to determine substantial conformity<sup>1</sup>.
- Section IV requires a narrative assessment of the outcome areas based on the data profiles in section III.
- Section V requires the State to assess its strengths and needs and identify issues and locations for further examination through the onsite review.

The statewide assessment must be completed in collaboration with State representatives who are not staff of the State agency, pursuant to 45 CFR 1355.33 (b). Those individuals

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<sup>1</sup> The data profiles in section III are based on the AFCARS and NCANDS data transmitted by the States to ACF. The profiles are provided by the Children's Bureau to the State when the State initiates its statewide assessment.

should represent the sources of consultation required of the State in developing its title IV-B Child and Services State plan. The names of external representatives who participated in developing the statewide assessment must be listed in section V of the instrument.

The instrument is available electronically through the Children's Bureau Web site at [www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb).

## On-Site Review

- Based on statewide assessment
- At least 3 sites across the state
- Sample ranging across all program areas
- Review 75 cases on-site
- Interviews with local and State level stakeholders for systemic factors

### **On-Site Review**

After the Statewide Assessment, an onsite review of the State child welfare program is conducted by a joint Federal-State team. The onsite portion of the review includes the following: (1) case record reviews; (2) interviews with children and families engaged in services; and (3) interviews with community stakeholders, such as the courts and community agencies, foster families, and caseworkers and service providers.

The on-site review is one week in duration.

## Program Improvement Plans

- Findings
  - Preliminary findings issued at exit conference
  - Official findings issued within 30 days
- Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)
  - States not in substantial conformity must complete a program improvement plan.
  - Two year process
- Penalties

**Findings:** The ACF Regional Office lead for the review works closely with the Federal contractor responsible for the Final Report to prepare the report within 30 calendar days of the onsite review or resolution of any discrepancies in information collected during the Statewide Assessment and onsite review. The Final Report includes the written determination of substantial conformity for each of the outcomes and systemic factors reviewed.

At the end of the onsite review, States determined not to have achieved substantial conformity in one or more of the areas assessed will be required to develop and implement Program Improvement Plans addressing the area(s) of nonconformity. The Children's Bureau will support the States with technical assistance and monitor implementation of their plans.

**Program Improvement Plans (PIPs):** States are required to submit a program Improvement Plan if found out of conformance on any one of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors subject to review.

The State implements the approved PIP and receives technical assistance during this period through sources identified in the plan. The ACF Regional Office monitors implementation of the plan through quarterly reports submitted by the State and other methods identified in the plan.

States that do not achieve their required improvements successfully will sustain penalties as prescribed in the Federal regulations.

## Outcomes

- A. Safety**
  - S1.** Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect
  - S2.** Children are maintained in their own home whenever possible and appropriate
- B. Permanency**
  - P1.** Children have permanency and stability in their living situations
  - P2.** The continuity of family relations and connections is preserved for the children
- C. Well-Being**
  - WB1.** Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs
  - WB2.** Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs
  - WB3.** Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

### Outcomes

The CFS Reviews evaluate outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. The seven outcomes assessed in the CFSR incorporate 23 indicators or "items." The seven outcomes are:

#### **Safety**

- S1.** Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect
- S2.** Children are maintained in their own home whenever possible and appropriate

#### **Permanency**

- P1.** Children have permanency and stability in their living situations
- P2.** The continuity of family relations and connections is preserved for the children

#### **Well-Being**

- WB1.** Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs
- WB2.** Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs
- WB3.** Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

It is important to note that State Data Profiles (and the related National Standards) address only safety and permanency.

In the second round of the CFSRs, within Safety Outcome 1, there are 2 measures and within Permanency Outcome 1, there are 4 composites.

### An Aside: Outcomes vs. Standards

- The National Standards for the CFSRs assess performance in two of the Outcome measures
  - **S1.** Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect; and
  - **P1.** Children have permanency and stability in their living situations

### Outcomes vs. Standards

Sometimes, there is confusion about the term “outcomes” and how it relates to the national standards. In the CFSRs, as mentioned above, there are seven outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being that states are assessed. Case record reviews, interviews with children and families, and interviews with community stakeholders are used to assess whether or not a State is in substantial conformity on each of those outcomes. However, for two out of the seven outcome measures, the Children’s Bureau uses performance relative to these national standards, as well as information from case reviews and stakeholder interviews, to determine a State’s substantial conformity.

The national standards for the CFSRs assess performance in these two outcome measures:

- **S1.** Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect; and
- **P1.** Children have permanency and stability in their living situations

In the first round of the CFSRs, there were 6 measures that were compared to national standards, two for S1 and four for P1. In the second round of the CFSRs, there are two measures associated with S1 and four composites that are associated with P1.

## Systemic Factors

- A. Statewide information system
- B. Case review system
- C. Quality assurance system
- D. Staff training
- E. Service array
- F. Agency responsiveness to the community
- G. Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruiting and retention

### **Systemic Factors**

There are seven systemic factors assessed as part of the CFSR. These factors address aspects of State child welfare agency *operations* that are relevant to achieving the desired outcomes for children and families. The systemic factors pertain to the following:

- A. Statewide information system;
- B. Case review system;
- C. Quality assurance system;
- D. Training for child welfare staff, foster parents, and adoptive parents;
- E. Service array;
- F. Responsiveness of the agency to the community; and,
- G. Licensing, recruitment, and retention of foster and adoptive parents.

## Addition of Data Composites

- Round One used single data measures for which national standards were established.
- Round Two uses data composites that incorporate a wider range of performance areas relevant to a particular child welfare domain.
- A composite measure is made up of separate components to reflect the general area that is assessed by the data.

### **Addition of Data Composites**

ACF views the CFSR as a dynamic process. They made ongoing improvements after each year of the first round of reviews in response to their experiences in the field and to suggestions from State child welfare agency administrators. After completion of Round One, ACF contracted with a consultant to study the CFSR and make further suggestions regarding potential revisions to the process. Based on input from a workgroup, the consultant presented a set of suggestions for ACF. One of those suggestions was to replace the existing CFSR single data measures for which national standards were established with data composites that incorporate a wider range of performance areas relevant to a particular child welfare domain. ACF determined that making this change would enhance the quality of the CFSR.

## Why Composites?

- Composites incorporate measures that are related but also have a unique contribution to overall performance in a particular area.
- Composites allow the assessment of a broad range of performance in a particular area without increasing the number of measures that have national standards.
- Composites incorporate a range of performance. Consequently, a State may perform very well in one measure and not so well in another measure and still achieve the national standard.

### Why Composites?

After Round One of the CFSR process, ACF learned that the individual measures used in round one were very helpful in understanding those aspects of the different areas they measured, i.e., time to reunification, time to adoption, placement stability, and foster care re-entries. However, all of these areas are more complex than any single indicator can explain. These areas are multi-dimensional and it is helpful to Federal and State staff to expand the data as much as possible in order to capture the different dimensions of each area and, thus, try to provide more insights into what particular practices are driving the outcomes for children in foster care. ACF also realized that simply reunifying children within a given period of time is not sufficient to provide permanency for the child, and therefore they added the re-entry measure to the reunification composite. ACF also learned that they needed to focus attention on those children who had been in foster care for long periods of time, as well as children newly entering foster care, and they therefore added a composite to address that population of children.

## Data Composites and Measures for CFSR Round 2

- Expanding the scope of data will provide a more effective assessment of State performance.
- Will provide a more holistic view of performance than a single measure can achieve.
- Will ensure that the data component of a State's performance with regard to a particular domain will not depend on one measure.

### **Data Composites and Measures for CFSR Round 2**

Expanding the scope of data will provide a more effective assessment of State performance.

- For example, expanding the scope of data pertaining to the timeliness of reunification will address various performance areas relevant to this domain, including the permanency of the reunification.

Data composites will provide a more holistic view of State performance in a particular domain than a single data measure can achieve.

- For example, the current CFSR measure of timeliness of adoptions considers the percentage of children adopted within 24 months of entering foster care, but not children's experiences with regard to the timeframes between key points in the adoption process, such as the time from termination of parental rights (TPR) to a finalized adoption.

Data composites will ensure that the data component of a State's performance with regard to a particular domain will not depend on one measure.

- For example, a State's performance regarding the data composite for the domain of timeliness to adoption may be uneven, with performance higher in one area than in another. However, overall performance on the composite may be high. Thus, the data composite will account for both the strengths and weaknesses that a State exhibits within a particular domain.

<b>Substantial Conformity</b>	
ROUND 1 (Then)	ROUND 2 (Now)
6 Statewide data indicators meet national standard	2 Statewide data indicators and 4 Statewide composites meet national standard
Outcomes must be substantiality achieved in 90% of the cases reviewed onsite for the State to be in substantial conformity on the outcome.	Outcomes must be substantiality achieved in 95% of cases reviewed onsite for the State to be in substantial conformity on the outcome.

### **Substantial Conformity**

In CFSR Round 1, there were six statewide data indicators that were compared to the national standard. In Round 2, there are two Statewide data indicators and four statewide composites that are compared to the national standard.

In Round 1, States were required to substantially achieve the outcome in 90% of the cases reviewed on-site to be considered in substantial conformity. In Round 2, States will be required to substantially achieve the outcome in 95% of the cases reviewed on-site to be considered in substantial conformity.

## Data Indicators from CFSR Round 1

### **CFSR Safety Outcome 1—Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect:**

- Repeat maltreatment—*Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting period, 6.1 percent or less had another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period.*
- Maltreatment of children in foster care—*Of all children who were in foster care during the reporting period, 0.57 percent or less were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member.*

### **Data Indicators from CFSR Round 1**

The following performance measures and national standards were used during the first round of the CFSR as part of the assessment of a State's substantial conformity with CFSR Safety Outcome 1—Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect:

*Repeat maltreatment—Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting period, 6.1 percent or less had another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period.*

*Maltreatment of children in foster care—Of all children who were in foster care during the reporting period, 0.57 percent or less were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member.*

## Data Indicators from CFSR Round 1

### **CFSR Permanency Outcome 1—Children have permanency and stability in their living situations:**

- Timeliness of reunification—Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, 76.2 percent or more were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.
- Re-entry into foster care—Of all children who entered foster care during the reporting period, 8.6 percent or less were re-entering foster care in less than 12 months of a prior foster care episode.
- Timeliness of adoption—Of all children who exited foster care to a finalized adoption, 32 percent or more exited foster care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.
- Placement stability—Of all children who have been in foster care for less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, 86.7 percent or more have had no more than two placement settings.

### **Data Indicators from CFSR Round 1**

The following performance measures and national standards were used as part of the assessment of a State's substantial conformity with CFSR Permanency Outcome 1—Children have permanency and stability in their living situations:

*Timeliness of reunification—Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, 76.2 percent or more were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.*

*Re-entry into foster care—Of all children who entered foster care during the reporting period, 8.6 percent or less were re-entering foster care in less than 12 months of a prior foster care episode.*

*Timeliness of adoption—Of all children who exited foster care to a finalized adoption, 32 percent or more exited foster care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.*

*Placement stability—Of all children who have been in foster care for less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, 86.7 percent or more have had no more than two placement settings.*

## Data Indicators from CFSR Round 2

### **CFSR Safety Outcome 1 – Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.**

#### Safety Measure 1: Recurrence of maltreatment.

Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated abuse or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting year, what percent did not experience another incident of substantiated or indicated abuse or neglect within a 6-month period?

#### Safety Measure 2: Maltreatment of children in foster care.

Of all children in foster care during the reporting period, what percent were not victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment by foster parents or facility staff members?

### **Data Indicators from CFSR Round 2**

Two individual measures rather than composites will be used as part of the assessment of substantial conformity with CFSR Safety Outcome 1. These measures are the following:

Safety Measure 1: Recurrence of maltreatment. Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated abuse or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting year, what percent did not experience another incident of substantiated or indicated abuse or neglect within a 6-month period?

Safety Measure 2: Maltreatment of children in foster care. Of all children in foster care during the reporting period, what percent were not victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment by foster parents or facility staff members?

These measures are similar to those used in the first round of the CFSR, except their complements are used. In other words, the focus has shifted from the occurrence of maltreatment to the absence of maltreatment.

**Data Composites and Measures  
from CFSR Round 2**

**CFSR PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1—  
Children have permanency and stability  
in their living situations**

**Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2**

Within CFSR Permanency Outcome 1, the four individual indicators have been replaced with four composite measures.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### ***Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunifications***

- Component A: Timeliness of reunification
- Component B: Permanency of reunification

### **Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunifications.**

The principal components analysis of the measures proposed for this composite yielded a composite comprised of two components. One component pertains to timeliness of reunifications. This component includes three measures. The other component pertains to the permanency of reunifications and includes one measure. Each component has a unique score and contributes 50 percent to the final composite score. Composite scores represent the conversion of  $z$ -scores to a scale ranging from 50 to 150.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### **Composite 1, Component A: Timeliness of reunification**

**Measure 1:**

Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification in the year shown, and who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, what percent was reunified in less than 12 months from the date of the most recent entry into foster care?

**Measure 2:**

Of all children discharged from foster care (FC) to reunification in the year shown, and who had been in care for 8 days or longer, what was the median length of stay (in months) from the date of the most recent entry into FC until the date of reunification?

**Measure 3:**

Of all children entering foster care (FC) in the second 6 months of the year prior to the year shown, and who remained in FC for 8 days or longer, what percent was discharged from FC to reunification in less than 12 months from the date of first entry into FC?

### **Composite 1, Component A: Timeliness of reunification**

For the CFSR data measures, reunification occurs if the child is reported to AFCARS as discharged from foster care and the reason for discharge is either “reunification with parents or primary caretakers” or “living with other relatives.” The score for the timeliness of reunification component of Permanency Composite 1 was derived from State performance on the following measures:

**Measure 1:** Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification in the year shown, and who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, what percent was reunified in less than 12 months from the date of the most recent entry into foster care? In calculating this measure, the following children are included in the numerator: (1) children who were discharged from foster care to a reunification in less than 12 months from the date of removal from home; and (2) children who were discharged from foster care to a reunification who were reported to AFCARS as being placed in a Trial Home Visit in less than 11 months from the date of removal from the home and who remained in that placement until discharge from foster care to reunification.

**Measure 2:** Of all children discharged from foster care (FC) to reunification in the year shown, and who had been in care for 8 days or longer, what was the median length of stay (in months) from the date of the most recent entry into FC until the date of reunification? For this measure, the length of stay in foster care of a particular child was assessed in two ways: (1) the length of stay in months from the date of removal from the home to the date of discharge from foster care to reunification; or (2) the length of stay in months from the date of removal from the home to the date that the child was reported to AFCARS as being placed in a Trial Home Visit, if the trial home visit lasted longer than 30 days and was the last placement setting before the child’s eventual discharge from foster care. The score for this measure was adjusted to reflect a positive direction with higher scores indicating higher performance.

Measure 3: Of all children entering foster care (FC) in the second 6 months of the year prior to the year shown, and who remained in FC for 8 days or longer, what percent was discharged from FC to reunification in less than 12 months from the date of first entry into FC? In calculating this measure, the following children are included in the numerator: (1) children who entered foster care in the second 6 months of FY 2003 who were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care; and (2) children who entered foster care in the second 6 months of FY 2003 who were reported to AFCARS as being placed in a Trial Home Visit in less than 11 months from the date of entry into foster care and remained in the trial home visit until discharge to reunification.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### **Composite 1, Component B: Permanency of reunification.**

#### Measure 1.

Of all children discharged from foster care (FC) to reunification in the year prior to the one shown, what percent re-entered FC in less than 12 months from the date of discharge?

### **Composite 1, Component B: Permanency of reunification.**

The score for the permanency of reunification component of this composite was derived from State performance on the following measure:

Of all children discharged from foster care (FC) to reunification in the year prior to the one shown, what percent re-entered FC in less than 12 months from the date of discharge?

As noted above, the score for this measure contributes 50 percent to the final composite score. The actual score for this measure was adjusted to reflect performance in a positive direction so that a higher score reflects higher performance.

### Key Features of the Measures Within Composite 1

- Adjusted to exclude children who were in foster care for less than 8 days.
- Adjusted to include children whose last placement prior to discharge from foster care to reunification was trial home visit, if the trial home visit meets specific conditions.
- By combining all three measures in the timeliness to reunification component, there is the ability to incorporate a broader picture of State performance with regard to reunifying children in a timely manner than is possible to capture with any single measure.

#### **Key Features of the Measures within Composite 1**

Adjusted to exclude children who were in foster care for less than 8 days.

Adjusted to include children whose last placement prior to discharge from foster care to reunification was trial home visit, if the trial home visit meets specific conditions.

By combining all three measures in the timeliness to reunification component, there is the ability to incorporate a broader picture of State performance with regard to reunifying children in a timely manner than is possible to capture with any single measure.

### Key Features of the Measures Within Composite 1

- A measure on foster care re-entry is part of the reunification composite.
- The measure of foster care re-entry used in the first round of the CFSR has been revised to reflect a longitudinal analysis.
- Three measures are combined to form the “timeliness of reunification” component, thereby providing a broader picture of the States’ performance in regard to timely reunification than is possible with a single measure.

#### **Key Features of the Measures within Composite 1**

A measure on foster care re-entry is part of the reunification composite.

The measure of foster care re-entry used in the first round of the CFSR has been revised to reflect a longitudinal analysis.

Three measures are combined to form the “timeliness of reunification” component, thereby providing a broader picture of the States’ performance in regard to timely reunification than is possible with a single measure.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFR Round 2

### ***Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions***

Component A. Timeliness of adoptions of children exiting foster care.

Component B. Progress toward adoption of children who have been in foster care for 17 months or longer.

Component C: Timeliness of adoptions of children who are legally free for adoption.

### **Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions**

The principal components analysis of the performance measures proposed for the timeliness of adoption composite yielded three components. One component pertains to the timeliness of adoptions of children exiting foster care to adoption. The second component assesses progress toward adoption of a cohort of children who have been in foster care for 17 months or longer and therefore meet the ASFA time-in-foster care requirements regarding the State filing for a termination of parental rights and pursuing adoption unless there is an exception<sup>2</sup>. This may be found in section 475 (5) (E) and (F) of the Social Security Act. The third component pertains to the timeliness of adoptions of a cohort of children for who are “legally free” for adoption. Legally free means that there is a termination of parental rights for each of the child’s living parents.

Each component has a unique score and each contributes 33.3 percent to the final composite score. The contribution of the individual measures to the score for each component is determined by the results of the principal components analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> ASFA requires State child welfare agencies to file a petition to terminate parental rights and pursue adoption for a child who has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, unless an exception exists. A 17-month rather than a 15-month timeframe was chosen for the measure because, in accordance with ASFA, a child is considered to have “entered foster care” (for purposes of starting the clock for the 15 of 22 months) on the earlier of: (1) the first judicial finding that the child has been subjected to abuse and neglect, or (2) the date that is 60 days after the date on which the child is removed from the home. The 17 month time frame in the measure is used because AFCARS does not collect information pertaining to the date of the first judicial finding.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### **Composite 2, Component A. Timeliness of adoptions of children exiting foster care**

#### Measure 1.

Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption in the year shown, what percent was discharged in less than 24 months from the date of the most recent entry into foster care?

#### Measure 2.

Of all children who were discharged from foster care (FC) to a finalized adoption in the year shown, what was the median length of stay in FC (in months) from the date of the most recent entry into FC to the date of discharge?

### **Composite 2, Component A. Timeliness of adoptions of children exiting foster care**

The score for the component pertaining to timeliness of adoptions of children exiting foster care was derived from performance on the following measures:

Measure 1. Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption in the year shown, what percent was discharged in less than 24 months from the date of the most recent entry into foster care?

Measure 2. Of all children who were discharged from foster care (FC) to a finalized adoption in the year shown, what was the median length of stay in FC (in months) from the date of the most recent entry into FC to the date of discharge? The actual score for this measure was adjusted to reflect performance in a positive direction so that a higher score reflects higher performance.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### **Composite 2, Component B. Progress toward adoption of children who have been in foster care for 17 months or longer.**

#### Measure 1.

Of all children in foster care on the first day of FY 2004 who were in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, what percent was discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption before the end of the fiscal year?

#### Measure 2.

Of all children in foster care on the first day of FY 2004 who were in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, what percent became legally free for adoption in less than 6 months from the beginning of the fiscal year?

### **Composite 2, Component B. Progress toward adoption of children who have been in foster care for 17 months or longer.**

The score for the component assessing progress toward adoption of a cohort of children who meet the ASFA time-in-foster care requirements was derived from performance on the following measures:

Measure 1. Of all children in foster care (FC) on the first day of the year shown, and who were in FC for 17 continuous months or longer, what percent was discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption before the end of the year shown?

Measure 2. Of all children in Foster Care (FC) on the first day of the year shown, and who were in FC for 17 continuous months or longer, what percent became legally free for adoption (i.e., a Termination of Parental Rights was granted for each living parent) in less than 6 months from the beginning of the year shown?

Data Composites and Measures  
from CFSR Round 2

**Composite 2, Component C: Timeliness  
of adoptions of children who are  
legally free for adoption.**

Measure 1.

Of all children who became legally free for adoption during the prior year, what percent was discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption in less than 12 months of becoming legally free?

**Composite 2, Component C: Timeliness of adoptions of children who are legally free for adoption.**

The score for the component assessing timeliness of adoptions for children who are legally free for adoption was derived from performance on the following measure:

Measure 1. Of all children who became legally free for adoption during the prior year, what percent was discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption in less than 12 months of becoming legally free?

### Key Features of the Measures within Composite 2

- The timeliness of adoption composite does not include an entry cohort measure.
- The three longitudinal measures of progress toward adoption follow a cohort of children but have a more stable denominator than an entry cohort measure, and a timeframe that is consistent with the CFSR.

#### **Key Features of the Measures within Composite 2**

The timeliness of adoption composite does not include an entry cohort measure

The three longitudinal measures of progress toward adoption follow a cohort of children but have a more stable denominator than an entry cohort measure, and a timeframe that is consistent with the CFSR.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### ***Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care***

- Component A: Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended periods of time
- Component B: Growing up in foster care

### **Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care**

The principal components analysis of the performance measures proposed for the composite addressing achieving permanency for children yielded two components. One component pertains to achieving permanency for children in foster care for long periods of time, and the other pertains to the issue of children growing up in foster care and exiting to emancipation. A State's score for each component contributes 50 percent to the State's total score for this composite. As noted for the other composites, the scores for the individual components are derived from the contribution of each of the measures to the component, as determined by the coefficient resulting from the principal components analysis.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### **Composite 3, Component A: Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended periods of time**

#### Measure 1.

Of all children who were discharged from foster care in the year shown, and who were legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a Termination of Parental Rights for each living parent), what percent was discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday? A permanent home is defined as having a discharge reason of adoption, guardianship, or reunification (including living with relative).

#### Measure 2.

Of all children in foster care for 24 months or longer on the first day of the year shown, what percent was discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday? A permanent home is defined as having a discharge reason of adoption, guardianship, or reunification (including living with relative).

### **Composite 3, Component A: Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended periods of time**

The score for the component pertaining to achieving permanency for children in foster care for long periods of time was derived from performance on the following measures:

Measure 1. Of all children who were discharged from foster care in the year shown, and who were legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a Termination of Parental Rights for each living parent), what percent was discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday? A permanent home is defined as having a discharge reason of adoption, guardianship, or reunification (including living with relative).

Measure 2. Of all children in foster care for 24 months or longer on the first day of the year shown, what percent was discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday? A permanent home is defined as having a discharge reason of adoption, guardianship, or reunification (including living with relative).

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### **Composite 3, Component B: Growing up in foster care**

#### Measure 1.

In the year shown, of all children who exited foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation prior to their 18th birthday, or who reached their 18th birthday while in foster care, what percent was in foster care for three years or longer?

### **Composite 3, Component B: Children growing up in foster care**

The score for the component addressing children growing up in foster care was derived from performance on the following measure:

Measure 1. In the year shown, of all children who exited foster care with a discharge reason of emancipation prior to their 18th birthday, or who reached their 18th birthday while in foster care, what percent was in foster care for three years or longer?

In AFCARS, emancipation is defined as “the child reached majority according to State law by virtue of age, marriage, etc.” The actual score for this measure was adjusted to reflect performance in a positive direction so that a higher score reflects higher performance.

### Key Features of the Measures within Composite 3

- Inclusion of guardianship in the assessment of achieving permanency
- Longitudinal analysis of a cohort of children in foster care for 24 months or longer
- Addressing concerns regarding “legal orphans”
- Addressing the issue of children emancipated from foster care after many years in foster care

#### **Key Features of the Measures within Composite 3**

*Inclusion of guardianship in the assessment of achieving permanency:* Only a very small percentage of children are discharged from foster care to guardianship. In several States, no children are discharged from foster care to guardianship, suggesting that guardianship is not a permanency option in these States. These small numbers did not permit a separate composite or measure focusing on timeliness of achieving guardianship.

*Longitudinal analysis of a cohort of children in foster care for 24 months or longer* ACF developed a measure to assess discharges to permanency of children in foster care for 24 months or longer: The 24 month period was chosen because, nationally, about 50 percent of the children in foster care on any given day have been in foster care for about 2 years or longer. The new measure allows an assessment of what happens to these children in a 12-month time period.

*Addressing concerns regarding “legal orphans”:* ACF decided to maintain the measure because it is important for States to make concerted efforts to ensure permanency for all children for whom a termination of parental rights has been granted for each living parent.

*Addressing the issue of children emancipated from foster care after many years in foster care:* ACF revised the measure to focus on the length of time in foster care of children emancipated from foster care rather than the age at entry into foster care. Due to their criteria of having been in foster care for 3 years or longer, the revised measure excludes children who exit to emancipation who entered foster care at approximately age 15 or older. This addresses a large portion of the variation among States with regard to the age of children at the time of entry into foster care.

## Data Composites and Measures from CFSR Round 2

### ***Permanency composite 4: Placement stability***

#### Measure 1:

Of all children in foster care (FC) during the year shown, and who were in FC for at least 8 days but less than 12 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings?

#### Measure 2:

Of all children in foster care (FC) during the year shown, and who were in FC for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings?

#### Measure 3:

Of all children in foster care (FC) during the year shown, and who were in FC for at least 24 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings?

### **Permanency Composite 4: Placement stability**

The principal components analysis for this composite yielded one component that incorporates the following three measures:

Measure 1. Of all children in foster care (FC) during the year shown, and who were in FC for at least 8 days but less than 12 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings?

Measure 2. Of all children in foster care (FC) during the year shown, and who were in FC for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings?

Measure 3. Of all children in foster care (FC) during the year shown, and who were in FC for at least 24 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings?

The contribution of each measure to the composite score is determined by the results of the principal components analysis.

### Key Features of the Measures within Composite 4

- Similar to the measure of placement stability used in the first round of the CFSR.
- Includes only children who have been in foster care for 8 days or longer.
- Two additional measures were added to the composite to address the issue of placement stability for children in foster care for longer periods of time.

#### **Key Features of Composite and Measures within Composite 4**

This composite includes one measure that is similar to the measure of placement stability used in the first round of the CFSR—placement stability for children who have been in foster care for less than 12 months. The one revision to this measure is that it includes only children who have been in foster care for 8 days or longer. ACF made this revision in response to concerns expressed by respondents regarding including children in foster care for very short periods of time in the measure of placement stability. However, if a child is in care for 8 days or longer, the placement changes that occurred during the first 8 days in foster care are considered in the measure. Two additional measures were added to the composite to address the issue of placement stability for children in foster care for longer periods of time. ACF believes that placement stability is as important to the well-being of children in foster care for 2 years or longer as it is for children who have been in foster care for only a few months.