

(d) *Partial reviews based on noncompliance with State plan requirements that are outside the scope of a child and family services review.* When ACF becomes aware of a title IV-B or title IV-E compliance issue that is outside the scope of the child and family services review process, we will:

(1) Conduct an inquiry and require the State to submit additional data.

(2) If the additional information and inquiry indicates to ACF's satisfaction that the State is in compliance, we will not proceed with any further review of the issue addressed by the inquiry.

(3) ACF will institute a partial review, appropriate to the nature of the concern, if the State does not provide the additional information as requested, or the additional information confirms that the State may not be in compliance.

(4) If the partial review determines that the State is not in compliance with the applicable State plan requirement, the State must enter into a program improvement plan designed to bring the State into compliance, if the provisions for such a plan are applicable. The terms, action steps and timeframes of the program improvement plan will be developed on a case-by-case basis by ACF and the State. The program improvement plan must take into consideration the extent of non-compliance and the impact of the non-compliance on the safety, permanency or well-being of children and families served through the State's title IV-B or IV-E allocation. If the State remains out of compliance, the State will be subject to a penalty related to the extent of the noncompliance.

(5) Review of AFCARS compliance will take place in accordance with 45 CFR 1355.40.

[65 FR 4076, Jan. 25, 2000, as amended at 66 FR 58675, Nov. 23, 2001]

§ 1355.33 Procedures for the review.

(a) The full child and family services reviews will:

(1) Consist of a two-phase process that includes a statewide assessment and an on-site review; and

(2) Be conducted by a team of Federal and State reviewers that includes:

(i) Staff of the State child and family services agency, including the State

and local offices that represent the service areas that are the focus of any particular review;

(ii) Representatives selected by the State, in collaboration with the ACF Regional Office, from those with whom the State was required to consult in developing its CFSP, as described and required in 45 CFR part 1357.15(l);

(iii) Federal staff of HHS; and

(iv) Other individuals, as deemed appropriate and agreed upon by the State and ACF.

(b) *Statewide assessment.* The first phase of the full review will be a statewide assessment conducted by the internal and external State members of the review team. The statewide assessment must:

(1) Address each systemic factor under review, including the statewide information system; case review system; quality assurance system; staff training; service array; agency responsiveness to the community; and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention;

(2) Assess the outcome areas of safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families served by the State agency using data from AFCARS and NCANDS. For the initial review, ACF may approve another data source to substitute for AFCARS, and in all reviews, ACF may approve another data source to substitute for NCANDS. The State must also analyze and explain its performance in meeting the national standards for the statewide data indicators;

(3) Assess the characteristics of the State agency that have the most significant impact on the agency's capacity to deliver services to children and families that will lead to improved outcomes;

(4) Assess the strengths and areas of the State's child and family services programs that require further examination through an on-site review;

(5) Include a listing of all the persons external to the State agency who participated in the preparation of the statewide assessment pursuant to §§ 1355.33(a)(2)(ii) and (iv); and

(6) Be completed and submitted to ACF within 4 months of the date that ACF transmits the information for the statewide assessment to the State.

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(c) *On-site review.* The second phase of the full review will be an on-site review.

(1) The on-site review will cover the State's programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act, including in-home services and foster care. It will be jointly planned by the State and ACF, and guided by information in the completed statewide assessment that identifies areas in need of improvement or further review.

(2) The on-site review may be concentrated in several specific political subdivisions of the State, as agreed upon by the ACF and the State; however, the State's largest metropolitan subdivision must be one of the locations selected.

(3) ACF has final approval of the selection of specific areas of the State's child and family services continuum described in paragraph (c)(1) of this section and selection of the political subdivisions referenced in paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

(4) Sources of information collected during the on-site review to determine substantial conformity must include, but are not limited to:

(i) Case records on children and families served by the agency;

(ii) Interviews with children and families whose case records have been reviewed and who are, or have been, recipients of services of the agency;

(iii) Interviews with caseworkers, foster parents, and service providers for the cases selected for the on-site review; and

(iv) Interviews with key stakeholders, both internal and external to the agency, which, at a minimum, must include those individuals who participated in the development of the State's CFSP required at 45 CFR 1357.15(1), courts, administrative review bodies, children's guardians ad litem and other individuals or bodies assigned responsibility for representing the best interests of the child.

(5) The sample will range from 30–50 cases. Foster care cases must be drawn randomly from AFCARS, or, for the initial review, from another source approved by ACF and include children who entered foster care during the year under review. In-home cases must be drawn randomly from NCANDS or from

another source approved by ACF. To ensure that all program areas are adequately represented, the sample size may be increased.

(6) The sample of 30–50 cases reviewed on-site will be selected from a randomly drawn oversample of no more than 150 foster care and 150 in-home services cases. The oversample must be statistically significant at a 90 percent compliance rate (95 percent in subsequent reviews), with a tolerable sampling error of 5 percent and a confidence coefficient of 95 percent. The additional cases in the oversample not selected for the on-site review will form the sample of cases to be reviewed, if needed, in order to resolve discrepancies between the statewide assessment and the on-site reviews in accordance with paragraph (d)(2) of this section.

(d) *Resolution of discrepancies between the statewide assessment and the findings of the on-site portion of the review.* Discrepancies between the statewide assessment and the findings of the on-site portion of the review will be resolved by either of the following means, at the State's option:

(1) The submission of additional information by the State; or

(2) ACF and the State will review additional cases using only those indicators in which the discrepancy occurred. ACF and the State will determine jointly the number of additional cases to be reviewed, not to exceed 150 foster care cases or 150 in-home services cases to be selected as specified in paragraph (c)(6) of this section.

(e) *Partial review.* A partial child and family services review, when required, will be planned and conducted jointly by ACF and the State agency based on the nature of the concern. A partial review does not substitute for the full reviews as required under § 1355.32(b).

(f) *Notification.* Within 30 calendar days following either a partial child and family services review, full child and family services review, or the resolution of a discrepancy between the statewide assessment and the findings of the on-site portion of the review, ACF will notify the State agency in writing of whether the State is, or is

not, operating in substantial conformity.

[65 FR 4077, Jan. 25, 2000, as amended at 66 FR 58675, Nov. 23, 2001]

§ 1355.34 Criteria for determining substantial conformity.

(a) *Criteria to be satisfied.* ACF will determine a State's substantial conformity with title IV-B and title IV-E State plan requirements based on the following:

(1) Its ability to meet national standards, set by the Secretary, for statewide data indicators associated with specific outcomes for children and families;

(2) Its ability to meet criteria related to outcomes for children and families; and

(3) Its ability to meet criteria related to the State agency's capacity to deliver services leading to improved outcomes.

(b) *Criteria related to outcomes.*

(1) A State's substantial conformity will be determined by its ability to substantially achieve the following child and family service outcomes:

(i) *In the area of child safety:*

(A) Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect; and,

(B) Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate;

(ii) *In the area of permanency for children:*

(A) Children have permanency and stability in their living situations; and

(B) The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children; and

(iii) *In the area of child and family well-being:*

(A) Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs;

(B) Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs; and

(C) Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

(2) A State's level of achievement with regard to each outcome reflects the extent to which a State has:

(i) Met the national standard(s) for the statewide data indicator(s) associated with that outcome, if applicable; and,

(ii) Implemented the following CFSP requirements or assurances:

(A) The requirements in 45 CFR 1357.15(p) regarding services designed to assure the safety and protection of children and the preservation and support of families;

(B) The requirements in 45 CFR 1357.15(q) regarding the permanency provisions for children and families in sections 422 and 471 of the Act;

(C) The requirements in section 422(b)(9) of the Act regarding recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families;

(D) The assurances by the State as required by section 422(b)(10)(C)(i) and (ii) of the Act regarding policies and procedures for abandoned children;

(E) The requirements in section 422(b)(11) of the Act regarding the State's compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act;

(F) The requirements in section 422(b)(12) of the Act regarding a State's plan for effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements; and,

(G) The requirements in section 471(a)(15) of the Act regarding reasonable efforts to prevent removals of children from their homes, to make it possible for children in foster care to safely return to their homes, or, when the child is not able to return home, to place the child in accordance with the permanency plan and complete the steps necessary to finalize the permanent placement.

(3) A State will be determined to be in substantial conformity if its performance on:

(i) Each statewide data indicator developed pursuant to paragraph (b)(4) of this section meets the national standard described in paragraph (b)(5) of this section; and,

(ii) Each outcome listed in paragraph (b)(1) of this section is rated as "substantially achieved" in 95 percent of the cases examined during the on-site review (90 percent of the cases for a State's initial review). Information from various sources (case records, interviews) will be examined for each outcome and a determination made as to the degree to which each outcome