

# **Child and Family Services Reviews Stakeholder Interview Guide**

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**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau**

**General Instructions**

Stakeholder interviews will be conducted in the local review sites and at the State level. Those individuals to be interviewed are selected from the stakeholders who participated in the development of the State’s Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) required at 45 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1357.15(1), including courts, administrative review bodies, children’s guardians ad litem, and other individuals or bodies assigned responsibility for representing the best interests of the child. The following core stakeholders must be interviewed:

**State Stakeholders**

- State child welfare director
- State child welfare program specialists
- State court system representative
- Major tribal representatives
- State administrative review bodies

**Local Stakeholders**

- Local child welfare agency administrator
- Foster parent(s)
- Juvenile court judge
- Law enforcement representative
- Social worker(s) from the local agency
- Guardian(s) ad litem
- Local administrative review bodies

- Additional stakeholders at both State and local levels may be interviewed, as needed. The various types of additional stakeholder representatives who may be interviewed are listed in the review procedures manual.
- This interview guide identifies core questions that should be covered in stakeholder interviews in each review site. While each individual stakeholder may not be able to address each core question, the combination of interviews in each site should cover the core questions. Following each core question is a list of possible stakeholders who may be able to address the particular issue. However, reviewers will need to make judgments about which of the questions to be covered should be pursued with each individual stakeholder.
- Each core question is followed by a list of exploratory issues that reviewers should pursue, as appropriate, in the interview. As with the core questions, some of the exploratory issues will be more or less applicable to individual stakeholders.
- In addition to the core questions, the Regional Office team leader, in collaboration with the State and the Central Office, will be responsible for identifying any State-specific issues from the statewide assessment that need further examination through stakeholder interviews in the onsite review and including those issues in section II of the Stakeholder Interview Guide.
- Notes from the interviews are recorded on the Stakeholder Interview Guide forms. Notes from all stakeholder interviews are summarized by the reviewer on a single form. The forms are used by the review team to complete the Summary of Findings Form at the end of the onsite review. The forms must be submitted to the designated team member at the end of the onsite review.
- Interviews should be kept to around an hour in length.

THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104–13):

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, conducting interviews, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.



**Item 1. Safety Outcomes for Children (All stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the extent to which services provided by the agency to children for whom the agency has care or custody help ensure that they are safe and protected from abuse and neglect and that their safety and health are the primary concerns in the agency's interventions.

**Exploratory Issues**

- How does the agency address health and safety as the primary concerns in placement and reunification decisions?
- How is the safety of children in foster care placement addressed?
- How effective is the agency in identifying and responding to factors that place children at risk of maltreatment?
- What is the agency's capacity to respond timely and effectively to incoming reports of child maltreatment?
- How effective are the agency's interventions in protecting children from maltreatment?

**Item 2. Permanency Outcomes for Children (All stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the extent to which children in foster care achieve permanency and stability in their living situations and reach their designated permanency goals in a timely manner.

**Exploratory Issues**

- What process does the agency use to determine whether children in care for 15 of the past 22 months should have parental rights terminated or have an exception made?
- Under what circumstances are exceptions made to the termination of parental rights (TPR) requirements?
- How does the agency engage in concurrent planning and what are the results?
- What services are in place to help children in care achieve permanency in a timely manner?
- What measures are in place to remove barriers to interjurisdictional adoptions?
- For children experiencing delays in foster care or adoptive placements, to what are the delays attributable?

**Item 3. Well-Being Outcomes for Children and Families (All stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the extent to which families are supported to meet the needs of their children and the educational, emotional, mental, and physical health needs of children are adequately addressed through the agency's interventions.

**Exploratory Issues**

- In what ways do children and their parents or guardians participate in case planning activities with the agency?
- How are the educational needs of children in the agency's care or responsibility routinely addressed through case planning or collaboration with the education system?
- What measures are in place to ensure that the physical health and medical needs of children in the agency's care or responsibility are identified and addressed?
- What measures are in place to ensure that the emotional and mental health needs of children in the agency's care or responsibility are identified and addressed?

**Item 4. Agency Responsiveness to Community (State and county agency staff, external stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the agency’s responsiveness to expectations and needs of this community (or State if interviewing State-level stakeholder) as they relate to the agency’s mission.

**Exploratory Issues**

- What are the strengths and needs of the agency’s ability to respond to the community’s (State’s) expectations about protecting children from maltreatment?
- How effective is the agency in serving all relevant populations in the community (State), e.g., racial and ethnic groups, age groups, rural vs. urban populations?
- In what ways does the agency collaborate with other child- and family-serving agencies in the community (State), particularly those serving the same populations of children and families as the agency?
- How does the agency incorporate input from community (State) stakeholders into its planning, policies, and practices?
- How does the community view the agency’s mission?

**Item 5. Information System Capacity (State and county agency staff)**

**Core Question:** Describe the capacity of the State (or county) agency’s information system to support the work of staff at the local level (State and local levels, if interviewing State-level staff).

**Exploratory Issues**

- How adequate is the information provided through the information system in assisting workers, supervisors, and managers in their daily work?
- What is the capacity of the information system to determine status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care in the county (or State)?
- What is the capacity to identify and track children and families served in programs other than foster care, e.g., Child Protective Services (CPS), inhome services?
- How uniform is the State’s information system capacity on a statewide basis?
- What are the gaps/needs in the information system from both local and State perspectives?

**Item 6. Quality Assurance (State and county agency staff)**

**Core Question:** Describe the effectiveness of the agency's provisions for quality assurance in promoting satisfactory outcomes for children and families.

**Exploratory Issues**

- Describe the agency's standards that ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services that protect their health and safety?
- How does the agency monitor implementation and compliance with the standards?
- Describe the agency's quality assurance system for child welfare services.
- How effective are the county agency's (or State's) quality assurance measures in:
  - Helping ensure that children in the county (or State) are protected from maltreatment?
  - Helping ensure that children in foster care achieve permanency on a timely basis?
  - Involving individuals outside the county (or State) agency in evaluating outcomes for children and families, e.g., service recipients, service providers, advocates, etc.?
- What is the reporting and evaluation capacity of the quality assurance system?

**Item 7. Staff and Provider Training (State and county agency staff, local external stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the extent to which staff of the agency and service providers, particularly foster families, are trained and prepared to carry out the agency's mission and help families and children achieve satisfactory outcomes.

**Exploratory Issues**

- What are the strengths and needs of the training provided to:
  - Agency staff (at all levels) in preparing them to work with families and children or otherwise carry out the agency's mission?
  - Foster and adoptive parents in preparing them to work with children and their families and with staff of the agency and to prepare them to care for children placed in their homes?
  - Other service providers used by the agency in preparing them to work with children and families in a manner that is consistent with the agency's mission and goals?
- What is the level of consistency of the training curricula used by the agency with the agency's goals in the community or State?
- Are there differences between preservice and inservice training for staff and providers?

**Item 8. Foster and Adoptive Home Licensing/Approval/Recruitment (State and county agency staff, selected external stakeholders, e.g., foster parents, court, service providers)**

**Core Question:** Describe the effectiveness of the agency’s provisions for licensing or approving and recruiting foster and adoptive homes to help provide protection and permanency for children in out-of-home care.

**Exploratory Issues**

- How sufficient is the county’s (or State’s) current pool of foster and adoptive families to meet the placement needs of children in the county (or State), including numbers, locations, and capacity to parent the children in need of placement?
- How adequate are the numbers and training of staff who perform licensing and recruitment functions?
- What are the effects of the agency’s (county or State) standards/licensing requirements on protection and permanency for children in out-of-home care?
- How does the agency recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State in need of placement?
- To what extent do the agency’s licensing standards reflect national standards?
- Are the same standards applied equally to all licensed/approved foster homes?
- How does the agency recruit adoptive families across State lines or other jurisdictions?
- How effectively has the State implemented the provisions for criminal background clearances on all foster and adoptive families licensed or approved by the agency or used as resources for children in the State’s care and custody?

**Item 9. Case Review System (State and county agency staff, selected local external stakeholders, e.g., foster parents, court, attorneys, advocates, foster care review board members)**

**Core Question:** Describe the effectiveness of the current provisions in place in the county (or State) for reviewing cases of children in foster care, including relative placements, who are in the agency's custody or supervision.

**Exploratory Issues**

- Do all children have case plans reflecting most appropriate placements in their best interests and in close proximity to parents?
- Are children placed out of State visited by their caseworkers at least once each 12 months?
- How effective are the periodic reviews and permanency hearings in the county (or State) in promoting permanency for children in foster care, including children in relative placements?
- What factors affect the agency's substantial conformity with requirements for the frequency and content of hearings and reviews?
- What is the level of participation by children, families, foster families, and preadoptive families in hearings, including provisions for notifying them of reviews and hearings, changes in placements and visiting arrangements?

**Item 10. Service Array (State and county agency staff, external stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the capacity of the current array of services in the county (or State) to meet the individual needs of children and families served by the agency.

**Exploratory Issues**

- What are the strengths and gaps in the current array of services in the county (or State) to meet the needs of children and families served by the agency?
- How effectively does the current service array respond to the individual needs of children and families, as opposed to providing the same level and type of service to all?
- To what extent are services available and accessible to families and children in their own homes and in the communities where they live (for County stakeholder interviews)?
- Describe the services designed specifically to ensure the health and safety of children.
- Describe the services designed specifically to promote permanency for children, including adoption support and promotion.
- Describe the services designed to promote reunification of children with their families.



**Item 13.**

**Core Question:**

**Exploratory Issues**

**Item 14.**

**Core Question:**

**Exploratory Issues**