

# CFSR Weekly Hint #1

August 13, 2007

## **Onsite Review Instrument:**

The 82 page Onsite Review Instrument, affectionately referred to as the OSRI, (at [www.pcy.org](http://www.pcy.org) on the CFSR page) is the document that reviewers will use to assess both placement and in-home cases during the CFSR.

- While reviewers will actually be entering the data on an IBM Tablet PC, having hard copy of the OSRI available to scribble on (and to keep you from losing your navigational sense of direction on the Tablet) is handy. The Tablet will, however, guide you through the applicable sections to be completed.
- Some of the terms are defined a little differently by the Fed, so read the instructions on each page very carefully, asking questions of your Team leaders as you go (better to clarify now than at 10:30 at night).
- As you and your federal partner complete each case, your data will be transferred to the federal Team Leaders staff for secondary and tertiary QA review. You will work out differences, clarifications and semantics with them through electronic “stickie notes” until everyone is happy with the scoring and supporting documentation.
- I would caution you not to use the “handwriting recognition feature”- you and the machine will not have sufficient time to get to know each other well enough to make it worthwhile.

## **Face Sheet (refer to pp. 1-3 of the OSRI):**

This is one of the first opportunities to make the Reviewer's lives easier (always a good idea as you don't want it to be a “test” to see if they can find needed information in the record).

- The Face Sheet sets up and populates certain data throughout the document, so having that information right up-front and accurate is very helpful- to the point of having a sheet prepared with just that information on it (and maybe placement history for those cases), but the CFSR Steering Committee will deal with how the records and information will be set up as we get closer.
- Make sure that you have the “period under review” (or PUR) clearly in your head because it is information from that period of time that is most critical as you go through the written case record and your interviews.
- Keep in mind that, unlike most QA or Licensing reviews, the fed will allow you to use information from interviews to “fill in the blanks” in the case record. In this context, if it isn't written down, maybe it did happen- just make sure you document where you got the supporting info.
- Other than CFSR and PUR, very few abbreviations will make it through the QA process, so just forget all the alphabet soup.

A special note about interviews is called for. Each pair of reviewers (one of us & one Fed) will have 2 or 3 cases to thoroughly review in a short period of time. While there may be circumstances where seeing a home environment may be helpful, during the CFSR you are a reviewer, not a caseworker. To make best use of limited time, I suggest meeting your interviewees at the evaluation site and, to the extent possible, in an order and at a time that makes sense (e.g. don't schedule interviews for case #1 after you are supposed to be working on case #2). Interviews at sites that are more than 30 mins. away from the evaluation site consume a lot of valuable time. Use the interviews to complete, clarify and confirm the information in the case record.

Probably enough for today. More next week . . .

Chuck S.

*Disclaimer: These “Weekly Hints” are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint # 2

August 17, 2007

## General Info:

- For confidentiality purposes, no names should be used on the OSRI anywhere but on the Face Sheet; all worksheets, schedules, etc. that have identifying information on them will typically be collected at the end of the week and shredded;
- brevity and clarity are good things;
- remember, even if your agency isn't selected for review, the information covered by the CFSR will impact our revisions to our Practice Standards and QSRs and will, therefore, impact all CCYAs and all of our clients/partners;
- the individual item ratings of "Strength", "Area Needing Improvement" (ANI) and "Not Applicable" will combine with additional documentation to determine the General Outcomes ratings of "Substantially Achieved", "Partially Achieved", "Not Achieved" or "Not Applicable" in Substantial Conformity";
- any item not rated as a "Strength" or Outcome not rated as "Substantially Achieved" will most likely find a place in our statewide Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

## **Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from Abuse and Neglect**

### Item 1. Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment

*While we got a "Substantial Conformity" score for Safety Outcome 1 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round, this item was rated as an "Area Needing Improvement" due to a number of the reports in the sample not meeting state timelines.*

- the first determination for this item is whether the case is applicable; that is, during the Period Under Review (PUR) was a report received on the family?
- if so, how many during the life of the case? during the PUR?
- what are the state timelines for initiating investigations?
- of reports received during the PUR, how many were not investigated according to state timelines? if any, what were the reasons?
- of reports received during the PUR, how many child subjects of the report were not seen face-to-face according to state timelines? if any, what were the reasons?
- were any of the circumstances that prevented meeting state timelines beyond the control of the agency?

### Considerations for Item 1:

- PA's differentiation between CPS and GPS will have to be carefully explained and documented, as will our differential response, as many states don't operate this way; I happen to think that ours is the best practice, by the way;
- the OSRI has a chart to be completed for reports, if any, received during the PUR; it will expedite the Review and allow it to be more accurate if that information is compiled in one place, or at least easily found;
- don't be shy about showing what was done correctly; one of the things that we, as Reviewers, are told is to look for and highlight "Best Practices";

That's all for now- back to you after the OK experience next week.

Chuck S.

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint # 3

August 28, 2007

## General Info:

Well, Oklahoma was quite the experience. The flooding the week before was mainly north and west of OKCity, so we weren't impacted directly. The local/state folks had things well organized and the work environment at our site were fine- give or take a few episodes of power outages (good reminder to back up your computer frequently!!!). The Review work days continue to be long (shortest day was 0800 to 2130; longest day was 0800 to 2300), but there was generally food/snacks around. Case interviews were at the site again & I don't think we lost anything, other than a chance to get outside, by not doing home visits. Case records were problematic (missing & misfiled data) & frequently did not match SACWIS data. This made for a lot of extra work (and hours) for the Reviewers and for the QA process. The evening de-briefing sessions went pretty smoothly. There were still some cases being de-briefed/QA'd Thurs. a.m. as the group was trying to gather data for site exit conf. Thurs. afternoon. I'm kind of glad that I won't have another one of these until spring- one CFSR a month over the summer was quite enough. I don't know how the regular feds do it every 2 weeks or so.

## **Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from Abuse and Neglect**

### Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

*This was rated as a "strength" for us in the First Round, as only one of the applicable records reviewed showed a repeat incident.*

- a concern here will again be on how our CPS/GPS cases are interpreted; this will be resolved with the feds prior to our Review;
- this item looks at repeat substantiated reports (within a six month period) on either the subject child or on other children in the family during the PUR;
- reports on children in custody are included here;
- it also reviews whether additional reports were unsubstantiated or "screened out" & referred to an alternative response (i.e. non-CPS);
- documentation for all reports, the reasons for dispositions and the outcomes of the individual cases will be required;

### **Rating on Safety Outcome 1** (Items 1 & 2)

*We were rated as in "Substantial Conformity" on Safety Outcome 1 in the First Round- the only Outcome to receive that rating, although we did better on the Systemic Factors (6 of 7 in "Substantial Conformity").*

- Substantially Achieved if 1 & 2 are both rated as "strength" or one is "strength" and the other "not applicable";
- Partially Achieved if one item is a "strength" and the other is an "area needing improvement" (ANI);
- Not Achieved if both items are rated as an "area needing improvement" or one is ANI and the other is "not applicable";
- Not Applicable if both items are rated as "not applicable"

That's it for now- back to my real job.

Chuck S.

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #4

September 12, 2007

*Missed a week, so here is a two-fer!*

## General Info:

Safety 2 really gets to the heart of our preventive and GPS services.

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

### Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal

*This was an Area Needing Improvement (ANI) in the First Round*

The most that I can say in this area is DOCUMENT. This is one of the areas where you can really highlight your efforts. The operant words for reviewers are whether, during the PUR, concerted efforts to provide appropriate and relevant services were made to prevent removal, not just rote efforts. "Concerted efforts" means conducting safety assessments to identify needed services, working to engage families in services and facilitating family access to services. If you and our community network have a "best practice" in this area- make sure that it is documented. If, despite those efforts, the child's safety still required placement, so be it- you won't be docked for that. So even if the family refused to participate/cooperate initially and/or ongoing- show your efforts. Keep in mind too that reviewers will be looking at siblings of a placed child that remain at home.

### Item 4. Risk of harm to child

*This was also an ANI for PA in the First Round.*

Central here is whether, during the PUR, the agency made concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns related to the child(ren) in their own home and/or in foster care. Further, were these assessed initially and on an ongoing basis? was there a safety plan? did the family participate in the plan/implementation? how was it monitored? If the target child was placed, were there safety concerns in the FH or during visitation? If so, how were they addressed?

### **Rating on Safety Outcome 2** (Items 3 & 4)

*While PA was not in "substantial conformity" for Safety 2 in the first round (90% required, only hit 83%), we did make a strong showing re individualizing services, esp. In-Home, to prevent placement & reducing risk of harm.*

- Substantially Achieved if 3 & 4 are both Strengths or one is a Strength and the other is Not Applicable;
- Partially Achieved if one of the Items is a Strength and the other is ANI;
- Not Achieved if both Items are ANI or one is ANI and the other Not Applicable;
- Not Applicable if both Items are rated as Not Applicable.

Next week we'll delve into the world of CFSR Permanency-

Chuck S.

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #5

Sept. 21, 2007

## **Permanency 1. Children have permanency and stability in their living situations**

*We were not in Substantial Conformity with this outcome in Round 1- in fact, every Item under Perm. 1 was an "area needing improvement" or ANI. Our Program Improvement Plan (PIP) focused considerable attention on this area, so we expect improvement. If the subject child did not enter placement during the PUR, Perm. 1 will not apply. As stated previously, the needed information to assess these items should be easily located, complete and accurate as reviewers have little time to deal with conflicting data or to spend hunting for a specific piece of information. If the information is not available, admit it & move on- they can try to pick it up through interviews.*

### **Item 5. Foster Care re-entries**

#### *Round 1 ANI*

The major factor in this item is whether the entry in to placement during the PUR occurred within 12 mos. of discharge from a previous placement episode. If "yes" then documentation of "concerted efforts" to prevent the placement must be available. If "no", then this item is not applicable. The quantity and quality of those efforts count more than the fact that placement still occurred. That outcome, of course, is more important to the child and family however, which is really why we do this stuff.

### **Item 6. Stability of foster care placement**

#### *Round 1 ANI*

This item deals with the question "is the child in a stable placement at the time of the CSFR and whether any changes during the PUR were in the best interest of the child and consistent with the child's goal?" (trial home visits, runaways, respite don't count). The reviewers will want to see the child's goals, list of placements during the PUR and the reasons for any changes that occurred (e.g. planned/unplanned; step-down; improvement/deterioration of child's behavior; adoption).

### **Item 7. Permanency Goal for the child**

#### *Round 1 ANI*

The purpose here is to determine whether appropriate goals have been set in a timely manner. All plmt. cases will be applicable unless opened for less than 60 days and a goal has not been established. Documentation of current and previous goals is critical here and they should be easily located as they will impact not only this Item but Items 8, 9 and 10 as well. Evidence of concurrent planning should be noted. All stakeholders in the case should have knowledge of the current goal(s). Timeliness of goal setting is also important. Were initial goals set within 60 days? Are ASFA timelines being followed? If not, why not? A helpful chart would be one showing: goal, date established, time in care before the goal was established, date goal was changed, and reason for goal change. Case and court records should coincide. If TPR is the goal, are there barriers to completion in a timely manner?

Enough for today. See many of you at next week's CSFR mtg. @ CWT. Keep your eyes on the prize- better outcomes for children & families!

Chuck

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CSFR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #6

Sept. 27, 2007

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

(cont'd. from last week)

### Item 8. Reunification, guardianship or permanent placement with relatives

#### *Round 1 ANI*

The question is, did the CCYA make “concerted efforts” (those words again), during the PUR, to achieve reunification, etc. in a timely manner (read “within 12 mos). In this context, “concerted efforts” would include actively involving the child and appropriate adults and resources in planning and reaching the permanency goal. Any placement case that has at least one of these as a concurrent goal will be applicable. This item does not address the appropriateness of the goal, as that is answered back in Item 7.

### Item 9. Adoption

#### *Round 1 ANI*

This item looks at the same questions but around timely finalization. Months will be calculated (ensure that the dates are correct in file/data base). Agency & court efforts (timely, concurrent, documented, diligent search for missing parent, etc.) to move toward the goal will be reviewed. Timeliness is based upon the date the child entered care, not the date of goal change.

### Item 10. Other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA)

#### *Round 1 ANI*

Were concerted efforts made to adequately prepare teens to transition from foster care to independence? If the child is remaining in foster care until reaching majority, are all parties committed to that placement? Are there special needs to be addressed for this goal? If Life Skills instruction was given, how were needs assessed and met? Cases will be reviewed on this item if OPPLA is the primary or concurrent goal. You will need to document, or otherwise verify, those efforts by all parties involved with the child (e.g. is there a formal agreement signed by the foster parents to keep the child?).

### **Rating Permanency Outcome 1** (Items 5-10)

*As stated before, PA was Not in Substantial Conformity on this Outcome in Round 1. However, OPPLA services, esp. in the area of IL, have received considerable attention since then, so we may do much better this time around.*

- Substantially Achieved if Item 7 and related Item (8, 9 or 10) are strengths, and either Item 5 or 6 is also rated as a strength or both are “not applicable”;
- Partially Achieved if the above criteria are not met but at least one of the Items is rated as a strength;
- Not Achieved if all of the Items are rated as either ANI or Not Applicable (providing at least one is ANI);
- Not Applicable if all Items are rated as Not Applicable (i.e. an in-home case)

*Next, we will look at Permanency 2- “The continuity of family relationships and connections are preserved for children”, where we also had some difficulty in Round 1.*

*Chuck S.*

*Disclaimer: These “Weekly Hints” are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #7

October 9, 2007

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

*We only managed a 60% rating (90% was the target) in this outcome in Round 1. Our strongest area was placing siblings together. Visitation with families and with absent fathers, were the weakest areas. Keep in mind throughout- what is most appropriate and necessary for the target child's needs?*

### **Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement**

#### *Round 1 ANI*

The choices re proximity to parent(s) are, in priority order: same community; different community but same county; different county but same state; different state. Clearly, distance and accessibility can mitigate placement over a political boundary, but it has to be documented. The general rule for Reviewers is one hour or less facilitates face-to-face contact. Special placement needs of the child and local resources also play a role here, as is the child's Goal. If it is not reunification, then this Item may be "NA".

### **Item 12. Placement with siblings**

#### *Round 1 Strength*

This Item only applies if the target child has one or more siblings in foster care. The question is, during the PUR, were concerted efforts made to place the siblings together, unless separation is necessary to meet their needs. If initially there were valid reasons for separation, did those reasons exist throughout the PUR? As usual, exceptions should be thoroughly documented and "concerted efforts" is the standard. If it is an applicable case, a chart showing each child's placement(s) and reasons for separation (if applicable) is helpful.

### **Item 13. Visiting with parent(s) and sibling(s) in foster care**

#### *Round 1 ANI*

The question here is whether, during the PUR, concerted efforts were made to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity of the target child's relationship with the immediate family. If visitation is not in the interest of the target child, there are no siblings in care and/or one or both parent's whereabouts are unknown, this must be documented (see a theme here?). If one or both parent's whereabouts are unknown, what concerted efforts were made to locate them? Visitation with each parent and each sibling in care will be reviewed for both frequency and quality. If a parent is incarcerated, what alternative means of contact were pursued? If not advisable, why? "Frequency" choices are: more than once a week; once a week; less than weekly but at least twice monthly; at least once a month; less than monthly; never. If the schedule of visitation was appropriate but was not kept, why not? What did the agency do to reschedule? "Quality" criteria include: comfortable, home or family-like atmosphere; sufficient time for interaction; if applicable, how the visits are supervised; sibling-only visits as well as family visits (if appropriate).

*There are 3 more Items under this outcome & they will be addressed next time.*

*Chuck S.*

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CSFR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #8

October 12, 2007

## **Permanency 2. The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children (cont'd from last week):**

### Item 14. Preserving Connections:

#### *ANI in Round 1*

The need for “connectedness” for children & youth is pretty universal. However, in Round 1 we documented diligent efforts in 80% of the 25 foster care cases- not enough then, definitely not enough this time around. Remember too that this Item does not assess visits with parents, but rather with extended family, faith, heritage & the community (this is where ICWA plays a role- ensure that your staff and resource folks know what it is all about & take appropriate actions). Age and developmental stage will also play a role in relevancy. The only likely cases not to apply here would be an unidentified/abandoned infant or child. If time and/or distance are issues, make sure you show how the agency/caregivers made accommodations.

### Item 15. Relative Placement:

#### *ANI in Round 1*

We documented efforts to locate and assess relatives’ suitability as placement resources in only 53% of the applicable cases last time. Ensure that your concerted search efforts include both maternal and paternal sides of the family (and if not, why not). Is the relative placement stable and appropriate to the child’s needs? Relative placement has become an increasingly contentious and litigious area, as witnessed by court cases and the number of bills introduced in the legislature. The cases that would not apply would most likely be unidentified/abandoned children or those with highly specialized needs, which would need to be addressed. Again, document, document . . .

### Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parent(s):

#### *ANI in Round 1*

We showed concerted efforts in 66% of the cases reviewed in Round 1. There are a number of circumstances that would make continuation of this relationship inappropriate (TPR, abandoned, etc.), but for the vast majority what has the agency tried to do, in addition to just visitation, to promote, strengthen and/or maintain a positive relationship? If the child or parent(s) have not followed through on their part, why? Is there a bond there with mom? with pop? Examples of agency efforts beyond visits include: encouraging/facilitating parental involvement in the child’s school & community activities and medical care; providing transportation to allow such participation; encouraging foster parent mentoring; if a parent is incarcerated, finding ways to maintain contact.

## **Rating Permanency Outcome 2**

- **Substantially Achieved:** no more than 6 Items “ANI”, with the remaining Items all “Strength” or “Not Applicable”;
- **Partially Achieved:** at least 2 Items, but less than 6, are “ANI” and at least 1 Item rated as a “Strength”;
- **Not Achieved:** no Item rated as a “Strength” and at least 1 Item rated “ANI”
- **Not Applicable:** all 6 Items are rated as “Not Applicable”

*Chuck S.*

*Disclaimer: These “Weekly Hints” are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint # 9

November 2, 2007

## **Well-Being 1. Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's**

**needs:** *In Round 1, we were "Not in Substantial Conformity" on this outcome- not a good thing. We only hit the "substantially achieved" mark in 64% of the cases reviewed- the target was 90%. We can do better than that.*

### Item 17. Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

*ANI in Round 1*

Did the agency, during the PUR, make concerted efforts to assess the needs (not education, physical or behavioral health- they are addressed later) of the above, identify & provide appropriate resources/services to achieve case goals? Was there a formal initial assessment? If not, how were needs determined? Were ongoing assessments made? How? Do services provided match assessed needs? If not, why not? Were Independent Living skills relevant in the case? There will be separate sections in this item for the target child(ren), each parent & FPs, and their individual needs will need to be identified as well as the services provided to meet those needs.

### Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

*ANI in Round 1*

All cases will be rated in this area. Were active & concerted efforts made by the agency, during the PUR, to involve each parent and the target child (ren) in the case planning process? How/when/where? Here again, efforts with each individual will need to be documented- it won't be sufficient to say "met with family".

### Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

*ANI in Round 1*

This one looks at both the quantity and quality of visits (face-to-face), during the PUR, with the child and whether it was the agency or a contractor. Were the frequency and content sufficient to meet the identified safety, permanency and well-being goals? Was the target child seen alone? Were the case plan/goals discussed? If not, why not?

### Item 20. Caseworker visits with parent(s)

*ANI in Round 1*

This item applies only to cases where contact by the caseworker and each parent is determined to be appropriate and not contrary to the child's safety or best interests. The quantity and quality questions above apply here as well. Remember, if the visits aren't documented, or can't be verified by interviews, etc. - they didn't happen. Diligent efforts by the agency to locate absent parents should be noted. Interaction with each parent is to be reviewed.

## **Rating Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 1**

- **Substantially Achieved:** Item 17 is a Strength and only one of the remaining is ANI;
- **Partially Achieved:** Item 17 is ANI but at least one of the others is rated as a Strength; or Item 17 is a Strength but at least two of the others are ANI.
- **Not Achieved:** All applicable items are ANI;
- **Not Applicable:** All items are NA

Chuck S.

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CSFR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #10

November 6, 2007

**Well-Being 2. Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs:** *We missed the boat in Round 1 on this WB outcome as well, but not by much (86.4% of the cases reviewed instead of the 90% level needed). Our problem area was not in assessing educational needs but in meeting them.*

## Item 21. Educational needs of the child

### *ANI in Round 1*

This is a really straightforward item- during the PUR, were there concerted efforts to assess the child's needs and were those needs addressed. Almost all cases will be reviewed on this item. Was there a formal educational assessment done by the agency? by the school? Is it in the file? If the assessment was done "informally", explain how and when. If educational and/or developmental needs are identified, what concerted efforts were made by the agency to address them? Were there obstacles? How were they addressed? (this is where the "concerted" piece really fits in- what was done, even if ultimately unsuccessful, to overcome the obstacles?). A chart showing the following would help to clarify this area:

<b>Educational Needs</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>	<b>Services Needed But Not Provided</b>
A, B, C . . .	A1, B1, C1 . . .	A2, B2, C2 . . .

While not part of the basis for the rating on this Item, the following will also be looked at (to check compliance with Social Security Act sec. 475(1)(C) :

- are the child's education records current and in the file?
- does the FSP address educational needs?
- were FPs or caregivers provided with the child's education records?
- education records include: names/addresses of providers; child's grade level performance; other relevant information

## **Rating Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 2**

- Substantially Achieved: Item 21 is a Strength;
- Partially Achieved: Item 21 is ANI but at least one of the key questions is "Yes";
- Not Achieved: Item 21 is rated ANI and none of the questions are answered "Yes";
- Not Applicable: Item 21 is rated as NA

*Next, we'll take a look at WB 3, Physical/Dental and Mental Health needs. That will wrap-up the "case review" portion of the CFSR and then we will move on to the seven Systemic Factors.*

*Keep your eyes on the prize- this isn't about pass/fail, it is about providing the best services for the children and families that we serve.*

*Chuck S.*

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #11

November 12, 2007

**Well-Being 3. Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs:** *We missed the boat in Round 1 on this WB outcome as well-78.3% of the cases reviewed were OK instead of the 90% level needed. Records on physical health were more consistent than those for MH (services not intense enough or of sufficient duration).*

## Item 22. Physical health of the child

### *Strength in Round 1*

All FC cases are applicable here, as are InHome cases where physical health was relevant to agency involvement. During PUR, were physical (and dental) health assessed formally/informally? How? Were services provided for identified needs? What role did EPSTD play? How was routine/preventative care addressed? For FC cases:

- to the extent available and accessible, were the child's health records up to date and included in the file? SSA 475(1)(C);
- does the case plan address medical and dental health needs? SSA 475(1)(C)
- to the extent available and accessible, were FPs or caretakers provided with copies of the child's health records? SSA 475(5)(D)

Health records are defined as: name/address of provider; immunizations; known medical problems; medications; other relevant information. A chart showing identified physical/dental health needs, services provided & services needed but not provided would be helpful to the reviewers. Obviously, if services were identified and not addressed, there should be documentation as to why.

## Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of the child

### *ANI in Round 1*

Ditto the information above but for MH and behavioral/substance abuse issues. Our previous problems in this Item were both insufficient assessments and inadequate service availability/accessibility (from record reviews as well as from Stakeholder interviews).

## **Rating Child and Family Well-being Outcome 3**

- Substantially Achieved: both Items 22 & 23 are rated as Strengths, or one is a Strength and the other NA;
- Partially Achieved: one of the Items is rated as a Strength and the other as ANI;
- Not Achieved: both Items are rated as ANI, or one is ANI and the other NA;
- Not Applicable: both Items were rated as NA.

*OK- so much for the record review aspect of the CFSR. Keys are: thoroughness of case investigation, planning process & implementation; assessment of strengths and needs; meeting those needs and documenting why & why not; organization of case file; and documentation, documentation and, oh yes, documentation.*

*Next is the area in which most of you will only be involve tangentially during the Review, but hopefully were engaged in the handling of your cases- the Systemic Factors. These will also be rated as in "Substantial Conformity" or not.*

Chuck S.

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #12

December 7, 2007

*With today's piece, I will transition to the second major activity of CFSR Week- the 7 Systemic Factors. For those who may have forgotten, they are: Statewide Information System; Case Review System; Quality Assurance System; Staff & Provider Training; Service Array & Resource Development; Agency Responsiveness to the Community; and, Foster & Adoptive Parent, Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. We'll take them one-at-a-time. Ratings are based upon information provided by the state and through stakeholder interviews.*

## **Statewide Information System**

Item 24. The State is operating a Statewide Information System that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location & goals for placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 mos. has been) in foster care. PA was rated as in Substantial Conformity in Round 1 because we were able, even without a "statewide system", to generate the needed data.

As is indicated by the fact that we passed on this one last time, the question is not how pretty our process is but can we produce. The system's effectiveness will be measured according to its ability to:

- track those Core Areas across different geographic areas;
- track those Core Areas for different groups in out-of-home care;
- produce current and useful reports for agency staff & managers in a timely manner.

Other key questions may include:

- What kind of reports and data does the system produce?
- How do the agency and the state use those reports and data?
- What Quality Assurance mechanisms are in place?
- If there are children under the care of the agency whose whereabouts are not in the system, what efforts (concerted efforts?) has the agency made to obtain and enter that information?
- How accessible is the system to agency staff? provider staff?
- What strengths has the state demonstrated in addressing or implementing this item? what barriers were overcome/still exist?
- Are the "promising approaches" in this area?

The Ratings used to determine whether Systemic Factors are "Strengths", "ANI" are:

- Very Effective- *always provides information that is current and accurate;*
- Usually Effective- *usually, but not always, provides information that is both current and accurate;*
- Sometimes Effective- *Sometime provides information that is both current and accurate;*
- Rarely Effective- *Most often does not provide information that is both current and accurate;*
- Not Effective- *Never provides information that is both current and accurate.*

Next time, a look at the 5 Items under the "Case Review System"-

Chuck S.

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #13

December 13, 2007

**Case Review System** PA was not in Substantial Conformity in Round 1.

**Item 25. Written Case Plan:** The state provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child, when appropriate, and the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions. ANI in round 1.

- to what extent do all children have current case plans? are there strengths/barriers in timeliness?
- who routinely participates in planning & how?
- are individual child and parent needs identified & addressed?
- are case plans updated regularly? strengths & barriers in this effort?

**Item 26. Periodic Reviews:** Does the state provide a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 mos., either by a court or by administrative review? *Strength in Round 1*

- describe the process for periodic reviews & identify strengths/barriers;
- describe the participation and roles of child, parent & others in the reviews, again identifying strengths/barriers to increased effectiveness;
- are the periodic reviews effective in promoting timely achievement of outcomes, identifying specific strengths/barriers;
- is there a process to review the recommendations/results of the review? how are they are used to make adjustments to the case plan?

**Item 27. Permanency Hearings:** Does the state provide a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the state has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 mos. from the date that the child entered foster care and no less than every 12 mos. thereafter? *Strength in Round 1*

- describe the hearings, identifying strengths & barriers;
- describe the timeframes used for the hearings, identifying timeliness strengths & barriers;
- describe the participation and roles of child, parent & others in the hearings, again identifying strengths/barriers to increased effectiveness;
- evaluate how the hearings promote timely achievement of permanency, identifying strengths & barriers;
- is there a process to review the recommendations/results of the hearing? how are they are used to make adjustments to the case plan?

**Item 28. Termination of Parental Rights:** Does the state provide a process for TPR proceedings in accordance with the provisions of ASFA? ANI in Round 1

- how effective is the state in filing for TPR within the 15 out of 22 mos. standard, unless there are compelling reasons not to file?
- are compelling reasons well documented? strengths/barriers?
- how are decisions not to file TPR made? what is the TPR policy when no adoptive placement has been identified?

**Item 29. Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers:** Does the state have a process for the parents & caregivers to be notified of, and to have an opportunity to be heard, reviews & hearings? *Strength in Round 1*

- describe the notification process & how the opportunity to be heard is implemented;
- is the notice & opportunity to be heard process effective? strengths/barriers?

*Next is Quality Assurance-*

*Chuck S.*

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint # 14

December 17, 2007

## **Quality Assurance System** *PA was in Substantial Compliance in Round 1*

**Item 30. Standards Ensuring Quality Services:** The state has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children. *Strength in Round 1.*

- describe the state's policy requirements and monitoring system (e.g. the "PA Standards for Child Welfare Practice");
- how are the above reflected in practice? (e.g. integration into training)
- have there been any changes since the Round 1 PIP? Round 2 Statewide Assessment?
- are there any statewide promising practices?
- are there statewide barriers? how have they been addressed?
- are there any regional or county specific concerns or strengths?

**Item 31. Quality Assurance System:** The state is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that: is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP) are provided; evaluates the quality of services; identifies the strengths and needs of the service delivery system; provides reports; and evaluates program improvement measures. *Strength in Round 1.*

- describe the state's policy requirements re QA (examples: annual licensing; NBP&B process; QSRs; County QA systems, etc.)
- how are these requirements reflected in practice?
- have there been any changes since the Round 1 PIP? Round 2 Statewide Assessment?
- what is the state's approach to QA- e.g. the structure, location, number & type of cases reviewed, frequency, etc.
- does the QA system have the capacity to comprehensively assess the outcomes and systemic factors across the continuum of services?
- are all stakeholders involved in the process? how?
- how are the outcomes of the QA process used to influence policy and practice?
- are there statewide or local strengths or promising practices?
- are there statewide or local barriers? how have they been addressed?

Please keep in mind that reviews of all of the Systemic Factors include, in addition to looking at state and local documentation, interviews with many local stakeholders. If your community (including families) is not aware of our Practice Standards or involved in QA activities, see what you can to engage them.

*Next will be Staff and Provider Training.*

*Chuck S.*

***Disclaimer:** These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered to be the final word on the OSRI, CSFR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint # 15

December 26, 2007

## **Staff & Provider Training** *Pa was in Substantial Conformity in Round 1*

Item 32. Initial Staff Training: The state is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFS Plan, addresses services provided under Titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.

- How effective is the state in providing and ensuring completion of adequate initial training for state child welfare staff? strengths/barriers?
- How is participation and completion of initial training monitored?
- Does initial training address both skill and knowledge base necessary for staff to perform their jobs, including specialty areas?
- Does staff have adequate access to initial training? strengths/barriers?
- If case-management is contracted, does the state require and/or provide initial training for those staff? strengths/barriers?

Item 33. The state provides for on-going training for staff that addresses the skill and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFS Plan. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.

- How effective is the state in providing and ensuring completion of adequate on-going training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties? strengths/barriers?
- Evaluate the adequacy of the ongoing training requirements; strengths/barriers?
- How is participation and completion of ongoing training monitored?
- Does staff have adequate access to ongoing training? strengths/barriers?
- If case management is contracted, does the state require and/or provide ongoing training for those staff? strengths/barriers?

Item 34. The state provides training for current/prospective foster/adoptive parents and appropriate staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.

- How effective is the state in providing & ensuring completion of adequate training for current/prospective foster/adoptive parents, including relative caregivers, and appropriate staff that addresses the skill and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties? strengths/barriers?
- Are the initial training requirements adequate? strengths/barriers?
- Explain under what circumstances foster/adoptive parents, including relative caregivers, do/do not receive initial training prior to any placements;
- Are the ongoing/advanced training requirements adequate? strengths/barriers?
- How well does the state ensure that training is provided to appropriate staff? strengths/barriers?
- Do caregivers have adequate access to training? strengths/barriers?
- How does the state identify who needs training and what the training needs are?

Keeping in mind that state, county and provider staff, caregivers, advocates, attorneys, judges, training program staff, Tribal representatives and other stakeholders will be interviewed re this Outcome, identifying & discussing strengths and barriers in advance is appropriate. We did well on this Outcome last time & certainly don't want to lose any ground!

*Next will be Service Array & Resource Development-*

*Chuck S.*

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #16

January 11, 2008

## **Service Array & Staff Development** *PA was in Substantial Conformity in Round 1*

Item 35. Array of Services: The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.

That is quite a sentence, but guess who is going to be asked for an opinion on this?

- Admin. Review Bodies, Judges, CASAs, Agency/child Attys, Advocates.
- families, youth, foster/adoptive families, Tribal representatives.
- agency/provider staff
- community resource staff
- other stakeholders

Are these services provided or contracted? What is done to: prevent removal? to reunify? to adopt in a timely manner? to prevent disruption? to prepare youth for independent living? What strengths and barriers exist?

Item 36. The services in Item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's Child and Family Services Plan. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.

Likely the same folks will be asked to comment here. Are all needed services available everywhere they are needed? If not, why not? Strengths/barriers?

Item 37. The services in Item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.

Does the state provide an adequate array of services to address the unique needs and challenges of the populations served? If not, why not? Identify strengths/barriers.

Based upon the interviews and record reviews, the Ratings will follow the following scale:

- Very Effective
- Usually Effective
- Sometimes Effective
- Rarely Effective
- Not Effective

This Systemic factor has provided some spirited discussion in the states that I reviewed as the case record reviews didn't always match up with the outside interviews. In my experience, also, the outside interviews often trumped the case records- but there are a lot of variables, so who knows. In the best of all worlds these will compliment each other.

*The next area (also the next to the last one) is, in my humble opinion, one of the most critical- Agency Responsiveness to the Community.*

*Chuck S.*

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*

# CFSR Weekly Hint #17

January 24, 2008

## **Agency Responsiveness to the Community Systemic Factor** *PA was in Substantial Conformity in Round 1*

**Item 38. In implementing the CFS Plan, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public/private and family serving agencies and includes their concerns in the Goals & Objectives of the CFS Plan. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.**

- How effectively does the State engage in ongoing consultation with the groups mentioned above?
- How does the State use the input from external stakeholders in assessing progress in meeting its child welfare goals & objectives?
- Identify strengths and barriers.

**Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, Annual Progress and Services Reports to the CFS Plan. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.**

- How effectively does the agency develop, in consultation with these individuals or organizations, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFS Plan?
- How does the agency seek the input of external stakeholders in assessing progress on the goals & objectives of the CFS Plan?
- How does the agency use that input?
- Identify strengths and barriers.

**Item 40. The State's services under the CFS Plan are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population. Rated as a Strength in Round 1.**

- How effectively does the State coordinate its services or benefits with those of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population?
- Describe, and provide examples of, how the State coordinates its services to children & families with those of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.
- Identify strengths and barriers.

As with all of the Systemic Factors, the potential interviewee list for "Agency Responsiveness" is significant in both size and scope. It is critical to make them familiar, well in advance, with the CFSR process and what is at stake. In my experience, the state & fed leads would work on these while the case reviewers were busy tracking down information/folks on their assigned cases. Then at the evening "debriefing" both would report on the day's activities and begin to look for trends and how the reality of the case files squared with the experience & perceptions of the community. A pretty good process, all in all. By the time of the local Exit Conference on Thursday, everyone has a pretty good sense of the way that the local system works (or doesn't). By Friday, the State picture emerges.

*Next is the final Systemic Factor- Foster & Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention.*

*Chuck S.*

*Disclaimer: These "Weekly Hints" are the occasional ramblings of Chuck Songer and should not be considered the final word on the OSRI, CFSR or the process. They will summarize what I have learned as a Consultant Reviewer in other states- no more, no less. Feel free to share with appropriate staff but pls. do not take sections out of context.*