

**Children's Bureau
Child and Family Services Review
Key Findings Report
North Dakota Department of Human Services
Children and Family Services**

The Children's Bureau and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) administer the child and family services reviews. The reviews comprise two phases: (1) the Statewide Assessment, during which the State analyzes its child welfare data and practice, and (2) the onsite review, during which Federal and State teams examine outcomes for children and families by conducting case record reviews and case-related interviews, and assess State systemic issues through stakeholder interviews.

Following the onsite review, Federal staff prepare a Final Report, which is provided to the State not more than 30 days after the onsite review or resolution of a discrepancy. States are provided a courtesy copy of the Final Report before the official Final Report is issued. In order for the State to be found in substantial conformity in any one of the seven outcomes reviewed, the outcome must be determined to be substantially achieved in 95 percent (90 percent during the first review) of the cases reviewed. States that are found not to be in conformity on any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors must prepare a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that includes action steps and benchmarks for bringing the State into conformity. The PIP is due not more than 90 days after the State receives the courtesy copy of the Final Report. This report presents key findings from the North Dakota Final Report of the review.

I. Identifying Information and Review Dates

ACF Region: VIII

Date of Onsite Review: September 24–28, 2001

Period Under Review: April 1, 2000–September 24, 2001

Date Final Report Issued: April 15, 2002

Date Program Improvement Plan Due: July 14, 2002

Date Program Improvement Plan Approved: November 13, 2003

Estimated Penalty: \$91,492

II. Highlights of Findings

A. The State met the national standards for two of the six standards.

B. The State achieved substantial conformity for two of the seven outcomes.

C. The State achieved substantial conformity for all of the seven systemic factors.

| III. State's Conformance With the National Standards | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| Data Indicator | National Standard (Percentage) | State's Percentage | Meets Standard | Does Not Meet Standard |
| Repeat Maltreatment | 6.1 or less | 11.71 | | X |
| Maltreatment of Children in Foster Care | .57 or less | .44 | X | |
| Foster Care Re-Entries | 8.6 or less | 16.3 | | X |
| Length of Time To Achieve Reunification | 76.2 or more | 72.8 | | X |
| Length of Time To Achieve Adoption | 32 or more | 44 | X | |
| Stability of Foster Care Placements | 86.7 or more | 86.2 | | X |
| IV. State's Conformance With the Outcomes | | | | |
| Outcome | | | Achieved Substantial Conformity | Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity |
| Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. | | | | X |
| Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. | | | | X |
| Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. | | | | X |
| Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children. | | | X | |
| Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. | | | | X |
| Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs. | | | X | |
| Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. | | | | X |

| V. State's Conformance With the Systemic Factors | | |
|--|--|---|
| Systemic Factor | Achieved Substantial Conformity | Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity |
| Statewide Information System | X | |
| Case Review System | X | |
| Quality Assurance System | X | |
| Training | X | |
| Service Array | X | |
| Agency Responsiveness to the Community | X | |
| Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention | X | |
| VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor¹ | | |
| <p>A. The review noted the following strengths regarding the outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating reports of child maltreatment in a timely manner • Making diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes • Achieving permanency goals for children in a timely manner • Making efforts to provide independent living services for children age 16 and older • Making diligent efforts to achieve adoption for children in a timely manner • Making efforts to assist children in attaining permanency though a goal of other planned living arrangement • Placing children in close proximity to their biological families and with their siblings, when appropriate • Facilitating visitation of children in foster care with their parents and siblings • Preserving children's connections to their family, faith, community, culture, and friends • Making diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources for children | | |

¹ Visit the Children's Bureau Web site at <www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/sumfinding.doc> for more detailed information about the child and family services reviews outcomes and systemic factors.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- Making efforts to support the parent-child relationship of children in foster care
- Involving parents and children in case planning
- Visiting with parents frequently enough to promote the safety and well-being of children
- Meeting the educational needs of children
- Meeting the physical and dental health needs of children

B. The review noted the following concerns regarding the outcomes:

- Not preventing repeat maltreatment of children
- Not making sufficient efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children
- Not preventing children from re-entering foster care within 12 months of a previous discharge
- Not providing stable placements for children in foster care
- Not assessing the needs of, nor providing services to, parents, foster parents, and children
- Not visiting with children frequently enough to monitor their safety and well-being
- Not meeting the mental health needs of children

C. The review noted the following strengths regarding the systemic factors:

- Statewide Information System
 - The statewide automated information system can determine the status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care.
- Case Review System
 - Children in foster care have written case plans and children and parents are consistently involved in case planning.
 - The status of each child is reviewed in court at least every six months.
 - Permanency hearings are held for children in foster care within 12 months of entry into care.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- Foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caretakers of children in foster care are routinely notified of and given an opportunity to participate in hearings for children.
- Quality Assurance System
 - Standards have been implemented to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services to address their needs.
- Training
 - The State operates a staff development and training program.
 - The State provides ongoing training addressing the skills and knowledge needed for staff to perform their duties.
 - The State provides training addressing the skills and knowledge needed for current and prospective foster and adoptive parents and staff of State-licensed facilities that care for children in foster care to carry out their responsibilities.
- Service Array
 - The State offers an array of services to meet the needs of children and families.
 - Services offered are individualized to the unique needs of children and families.
- Agency Responsiveness to the Community
 - The State engages in ongoing consultation with consumers, service providers, courts, and other stakeholders.
 - The State jointly develops with its stakeholders annual reports of progress.
 - The State's services are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal programs serving the same population.
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention
 - The State has implemented standards for foster and adoptive family homes and child care institutions.
 - State standards for foster and adoptive family homes are applied uniformly.
 - The State conducts criminal clearances for foster care and adoptive families and operates a case planning process that includes provisions for ensuring children's safety.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- The State uses cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for children.

D. The review noted the following concerns regarding the systemic factors:

- Case Review System
 - Delays exist in achieving termination of parental rights.
- Quality Assurance System
 - The State does not operate an identifiable quality assurance system.
- Service Array
 - Services are not accessible to families and children in all locations of the State.
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention
 - The State does not diligently recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom homes are needed.