

THE CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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I. Executive Summary

A New Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System

Too often, foster children are separated from their siblings; they are moved from home to home; or they age out of foster care and are left without the support and resources they need to make it on their own. That is why, for the first time ever, the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS) is establishing the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System, consistent with this vision for the child welfare system:

“The true measurement of success will be when California’s communities see and treat foster children as if they were their own. The day that we prevail in our mission will be the day that we monitor the health, education, well-being and overall success of foster children the same way that we do for our own children.”

Over time, we expect that this system will bring about many improvements to the child welfare system. Specifically, the new child welfare outcomes and accountability system will:

- Hold the State and Counties accountable for performance through: uniform standards and improvement goals, required County plans approved by County Board of Supervisors, and regularly published progress reports.
- Replace the existing process-driven County child welfare reviews, with an outcomes-based review system.
- Improve the effectiveness of social workers interacting with and providing services for children and families.
- Help drive the program and county collaboration to a more community-based, family-focused service system.
- Move the focus to designing programs that prepare all children for life – the real message in the vision statement.
- Measure, track and monitor Counties on an ongoing basis, looking at outcomes that deal directly with well-documented issues such as keeping siblings in foster care together and ensuring appropriate placements for foster children.
- Provide the State and Counties with better program information and an opportunity to critically assess the system’s strengths, and, more importantly, areas for improvement, including any funding or staffing increases needed to implement the review.

- Share best and promising practices among Counties.
- Encourage coordination with all relevant State and local agencies.
- Build on the recently conducted federal reviews, and assist the State's efforts in meeting the goals of the federal Program Improvement Plan.

On October 1, 2002, CHHS kicked off the first of its biweekly meetings with the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability Workgroup which includes members representing: foster parents, foster youth, providers, researchers, social workers, mental health, education, advocates, the Legislature, Counties, and others.

CHHS charged the Workgroup, in consultation with the Chapin Hall Center for Children, with creating a new Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System – an unprecedented and historic effort to reform California's child welfare system. As described in this report, the heart of the new Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System is a State and local accountability system, and an outcomes-based child and family service review of all 58 County child welfare departments.

AB 636 Workplan

The outcomes-based review is consistent with the requirements of Assembly Bill 636 (Steinberg), which provided a framework for action, requiring that the CHHS convene a workgroup to establish a workplan by which new outcome-based reviews will be conducted in all Counties. One of the bill's primary goals was to encourage State leadership that is necessary to identify and replicate best practices to assure that the unique and critical needs of these children and their families are met.

This report, which includes the Workplan required by AB 636, is being submitted for April 1, 2003. The California Department of Social Service (CDSS) will begin conducting the reviews required under AB 636 in January 2004.

Tools for State and Local Accountability

The following are proposed mechanisms for holding the State and Counties accountable for achieving mandated outcomes.

- Quarterly Management Reports: CDSS will generate quarterly reports to include Statewide county performance on all outcome measures. Reports are intended to provide a management tool for the State and Counties, as well as inform the public, and will be available to both program managers, as well as the public.
- Performance Standards: Based on distributions of County performance in the quarterly reports, the State will develop performance standards to measure statewide and individual County performance.

- Improvement Goals: State and County improvement goals will be determined based on statewide and individual County performance, progress and improvement.
- State Annual Progress Report: CDSS will publicly release an online Progress Report, providing information on statewide and individual County performance, and improvement goals.
- County System Improvement Plan: All Counties will outline their strategy to improve performance in their System Improvement Plan. Plans must be approved by the County Board of Supervisors. The State will analyze and assess Plans.
- Technical Assistance/Training: High priority Counties would receive focused technical assistance.
- Formal State Compliance Action: If a County demonstrates a lack of good faith effort to actively participate in this process or any portion thereof, and/or consistently fails to follow State regulations and/or make the improvements outlined in the County SIP, CDSS, in accordance with current law, has authority under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10605 to compel County compliance through a series of measured formal actions up to State Administration of the County Program.

Outcomes-Based Reviews

In addition to the outcomes measured by the federal government in its review of California's child welfare system, the workgroup developed a comprehensive list of outcomes to measure the performance of each County child welfare department, as well as the State overall. These are described in the Outcomes and Process Matrix and Indicators below.

While this document emphasizes California's enhanced outcome measures, it is important to note that this process is much more than a means of addressing the federal outcome portion of the CFSR. In combination with the Peer Quality Case Reviews, this outcome-based review system also will force changes in service delivery and case worker practice needed to achieve steady improvement in the safety, permanency, and well-being measures found in our outcome matrix.

Elements of the Outcomes and Accountability System

Under the new outcomes and accountability system, each County will participate in a three-part system.

1. County Self-Assessment
2. Targeted Peer Quality Case Review

3. County System Improvement Plan

When implementing this system, it is important that we avoid thinking linearly about this sequence of documents or processes. Rather, we must consider planning in the context of a spiral process of continuously improving performance that unfolds over time. Specifically, we need to view this as a cycle that answers four questions:

1. Are we meeting our goals and objectives?
2. How do we better serve children, families, and communities, to move closer to our goals?
3. Have we succeeded in meeting our expectations?

Answering these questions drives the planning cycle and naturally moves the process in the upward spiral needed for long-term improvement and fulfillment of the vision.

Conclusion

Improving California's child welfare system is no small feat. California has been aggressively working to reform its child welfare system to improve outcomes for children since 2000, when Governor Gray Davis directed CDSS to undertake a system-wide review and redesign of the system. Over 100 Stakeholders representing all aspects of the child welfare program have developed a vision to redesign the system, and will soon release a plan for implementation.

Consistent with this redesign effort, this report is a plan to establish this new Outcomes and Accountability system by January 2004. While we do not expect to turn things around overnight, this effort will put us on a fast track for improvement. It is our expectation that after a few years of tracking outcomes, bringing local and State partners to the table, and focusing efforts in areas where we need it most, outcomes will improve for all children including those in the child welfare system.

II. Background

A Snapshot of California's Child Welfare System Today

In recent years, California has made great strides to improve its child welfare services system so as to meet the changing needs of children and families in today's society. In particular, it has begun to shift the balance of services away from a heavy reliance on out-of-home care to a broad range of services and supports for families and children. In 2001, there were over 100,000 children in foster care – a 10 percent decrease from 111,000 children in 1998. Part of this decline can be attributed to Kin-GAP, the Kinship Guardian Assistance Payment program. Since the program's inception in January 2000, over 11,000 children have been able to leave foster care and find permanent homes with relatives who now receive financial support. Moreover, since 1999, parents have adopted over 20,000 children from the foster care system. This success earned the State nearly \$18 million in Federal Adoptions Incentive funds, as well as an Adoption Excellence Award from the federal government.

In addition to these efforts to ensure that foster children are placed in permanent homes in a timely manner, California has made improvements in other areas. In the area of prevention, California has expanded funding for Family Resource Centers, home visiting, and parent education; established a model program for early intervention and assistance to pregnant parents and children up to 3 years old; and, assisted local communities across the State in developing violence prevention programs. California has also taken the initiative in improving the quality of care children and their families receive. For example, California has placed 270 public health nurses in County child welfare and probation offices statewide to improve access to and documentation of health care services. California also established the Ombudsman Office for Foster Care to provide children in foster care and their families with a means to resolve issues related to care, placement and services, and created a toll-free help line that foster youth

can access from anywhere in the State to get their questions answered or problems resolved. To ensure that youth aging out of care receive the support they need, California created transitional housing options for foster youth between 16 and 18 years of age and now provides transitional housing assistance and independent living services through 21.

Ripe for Reform

Despite these accomplishments, there is no reason to believe that the time for real system reform has passed. On the contrary, California should reinforce these first steps with a set of comprehensive initiatives directed at the entire child welfare service continuum -- from prevention to foster care exits to ongoing wraparound support services. All the while, the goal must be measurable progress in improving the well-being of California's most vulnerable children.

Progress in the area of outcomes-based measures is consistent with larger efforts to reform the system overall. California has been aggressively working to reform its child welfare system to improve outcomes for children since 2000, when Governor Gray Davis directed CDSS to undertake a system-wide review and redesign of the system. Over 100 Child Welfare Services (CWS) Stakeholders' Group representing all aspects of the child welfare program have developed a vision to redesign the system, and will release a plan for implementation in June 2003. Representatives from the CWS Stakeholders' Group have been active participants in the Workgroup, to help shape a Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System that is consistent with the larger vision of the redesign effort.

The Federal Role

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 sets a new tone for federal child welfare policy. It sent a message of renewed urgency about keeping children safe, and, when necessary, moving them much more quickly into permanent homes. In particular, the law's requirements regarding timely

termination of parental rights when children are unlikely to go home sent a wake-up call to states that had many children in long-term foster care.

However, an element of ASFA that received much less attention early on is turning out to be perhaps the most important change in child welfare legislation in a generation. Since 1980, federal law has only required states to keep track of various processes associated with provision of child welfare services (such as, timeliness and completeness of case plans). In contrast, ASFA required the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop a set of outcome measures for State performance in operating child welfare services. These outcome measures are tied to State funding under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, which supports foster care. The regulations implementing ASFA measure state performance on seven child-level outcomes and seven “systemic factors” (such as, presence of an adequate array of services) and failure to measure up can lead to fiscal sanctions against states.

For the first time in our nation’s history, states are now required to publicly account for at least some of the outcomes experienced by the children involved with the child welfare system. The federal government has provided important leadership in changing this focus.

California’s Effort Beyond the Federal Reviews

While the federal reviews represent the first critical step in the right direction, the outcomes and process used to enforce them are not without their own shortcomings. For example, the outcome measures are limited. Although they include measures of child safety and permanency, they do not provide comprehensive coverage of these domains and they include no measures of child well-being. Moreover, due to inherent limitations of the federal child welfare data system, the federal measures provide only a static and somewhat skewed view of state performance -- a view that, in the worst case, could lead to poor decisions about how to improve the system. Lastly, the qualitative review of child welfare practice that the federal government requires does not provide enough

depth to help states understand how to improve practice so as to affect outcomes. ASFA spurred the movement to use child outcomes to drive child welfare reform, but it will be up to the states to develop the tools to guide the reform.

To this end, for the first time ever, CHHS is establishing the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System, consistent with this vision for the child welfare system:

“The true measurement of success will be when California’s communities see and treat foster children as if they were their own. The day that we prevail in our mission will be the day that we monitor the health, education, well-being and overall success of foster children the same way that we do for our own children.”

A New Outcomes and Accountability System

On October 1, 2002, CHHS kicked off the first of its biweekly meetings with the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability Workgroup which includes members representing: CDSS, California Youth Connection, Youth Law Center, Judicial Council, Department of Health Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Education, the Department of Child Support Services, the State Department of Justice, the County Welfare Directors Association, the California State Association of Counties, the Chief Probation Officers of California, labor, and representatives of California Tribes, interested child advocacy organizations, researchers, and foster parent organizations. As a result, this plan for an Outcomes and Accountability System represents broad stakeholder input to ensure implementation of a rigorous monitoring system.

Acting in an advisory capacity, the Workgroup, in consultation with the Chapin Hall Center for Children, assisted CHHS in establishing the Workplan for establishing a new Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System – an unprecedented and historic effort to reform California’s child welfare system. As described in this report, the heart of the new Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System is a State and local accountability system, and an outcomes-based child and family service review of all 58 County child welfare departments.

The outcomes-based reviews portion of the Outcomes and Accountability System is consistent with the requirements of the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001 (Assembly Bill 636, Steinberg), signed by Governor Davis. AB 636 provided a framework for action, requiring CHHS to convene a workgroup to establish a Workplan by which new outcome-based reviews will be conducted in all Counties. One of the bill's primary goals was to encourage the State leadership that is necessary to identify and replicate best practices to assure that the unique and critical needs of these children and their families are met.

In addition, AB 636 required that the new outcomes-based reviews include, at a minimum, the outcomes included in the federal Child and Family Service Review. In this way, the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System are inextricably linked. The federal review requires the State to submit a Program Improvement Plan, including strategies for areas needing improvement. Because the federal indicators are a subset of the State proposed indicators, it is our intention that the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System will not only improve State performance on the federal outcomes, but on an even broader set of vital indicators.

As required by AB 636, this Workplan is being submitted for April 1, 2003, and CDSS will begin conducting the reviews in January 2004. The C-CFSR shall include compliance thresholds, timelines for improvement, review cycles, and a uniform process for use in each County.

In the following sections, this report describes the framework for the new Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System, and provides a detailed description of each element that comprises this comprehensive system, including the County Self-Assessment, the Peer Quality Case Review, and the County System Improvement Plan.

III. The Child Welfare Outcomes and the Accountability System

A. A Framework for Accountability

The Outcomes and Accountability System expands public accountability in significant ways. The Workgroup relied on principles to guide discussion of each component of the accountability system. One was that a focus on clear, measurable outcomes will improve the public's right to know how public resources are used on behalf of children and families. Accountability based on process measures often leaves the public with a vague sense of what happens when children receive child welfare services.

The focus on outcomes will also force the planning process to examine how to make reforms in the qualitatively measured "systemic factors" that are a major part of the federal CFSR because these factors represent the service delivery and practice features of each county's CWS-FC program. This broader focus comes from the interaction between the measurable outcomes system, the Peer Quality Case Reviews, and the on-going planning cycles that characterize California's new system. In other words, the focus on children, families, and communities; prevention; and the need to make steady improvement in the safety, permanence, and well-being outcomes will force case worker practice, service delivery, and other system reforms across all child-related systems. In this sense, the Outcomes and Accountability System absorbs the current Stakeholders Process and the federal PIP process.

In addition, as noted above, broad participation in the design process was a priority. Going forward, the Workgroup seeks to establish as part of the accountability process itself, an emphasis on broad participation. Communities have a stake in how well the child welfare system performs; broad participation in the accountability system reinforces the importance of communities.

Since California's Counties are the focal point for service delivery and management, the accountability system must recognize the need for County

discretion within a statewide accountability framework. For this reason, the County's Self-Assessment and subsequent planning steps emphasize flexibility, provided the Counties retain a persistent focus on outcomes. The entire process, together with the County System Improvement Plan, relies on a collaboration that allows for the necessary exchange of information and coordination of effort.

The heart of the accountability system is the outcomes-based review. Consistent with the requirements of AB 636, discussed in the previous section, the review includes compliance thresholds, timelines for improvement, review cycles, and a uniform process for use in each County.

The purpose of the outcomes-based reviews, also known as the California Child and Family Service Review, or C-CFSR, is to strengthen significantly the accountability system used in California to monitor and assess the quality of services provided on behalf of maltreated children. In past years, CDSS relied primarily on a system of process measures to monitor County child welfare programs. Although process measures are important for understanding whether children and families receive appropriate services, there is growing agreement among CWS stakeholders that child welfare programs must be accountable for outcomes measured in terms of safety, permanency, and well-being.

Once established, the C-CFSR will accomplish several important objectives. Foremost, it will establish the core outcomes that are central to maintaining an effective system of child welfare services. By design, the C-CFSR follows closely the federal emphasis on safety, permanency, and well-being. Second, the C-CFSR will serve as the source of information needed to understand actual practices in the field. As such, the review cycle will provide the basis for a continuous quality review process.

At the same time, the C-CFSR goes beyond the federal measures in two important ways. First, to take advantage of significant investments over the last five years in information technology through California's Child Welfare

Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), the Workgroup recommended an enhanced set of outcomes as the basis for California's accountability system. The data in CWS/CMS provide an unprecedented capacity for understanding what happens to children and families who receive child welfare services, and it is CDSS' intent to use that information to the fullest extent possible.

Second, recognizing that the CDSS Child Welfare Stakeholders' Group's Redesign offers the promise of a child welfare system based on a holistic view of children, families, and communities, the C-CFSR anticipates future advances in service delivery. The monitoring and accountability process will evolve as system responsibilities grow beyond their current boundaries.

Because measurable outcomes are the keystone to the Outcomes and Accountability System, the Workgroup gave initial attention to outcomes for which data would be available within the timeframe specified in the authorizing legislation. Nonetheless, the group expects to add new outcomes as the outcome system matures. In particular, the Workgroup expects that the Child Welfare Stakeholders Redesign will draw attention to outcomes that fit a broader vision for the child welfare system.

Finally, AB 636 emphasizes coordination with the federal Child and Family Service Reviews. Thus, the Workgroup considered the content and structure of the federal review and elected to propose an accountability system that parallels, but is not limited by, the federal approach.

In the final analysis, the Outcomes and Accountability System includes several mechanisms for increasing State and local accountability, including the following.

- Quarterly Management Reports: CDSS will generate quarterly reports to include statewide County performance on all outcome measures. Reports are intended to provide a management tool for the State and Counties. The reports will be most useful to Counties but will also be available to the public via a State-sponsored web portal.

- Performance Standards: Based on distributions of County performance in the quarterly reports, the State will develop performance standards to measure statewide and individual County performance.
- Improvement Goals: State and County improvement goals will be determined based on statewide and individual County performance, progress and improvement.
- State Annual Progress Report: CDSS will publicly release an on-line Progress Report, providing information on statewide and individual County performance, and improvement goals. This will be same data as in the Quarterly Management Reports but will be in a more readable summary format for the public.
- County System Improvement Plan: All Counties will outline their strategy to improve performance in their System Improvement Plan. Plans must be approved by the County Board of Supervisors. The State will analyze and assess Plans.
- Technical Assistance/Training: High priority Counties would receive focused technical assistance. To ensure a consistent approach to technical assistance and training statewide, CDSS will develop training materials and curricula that reinforce the broader objectives of the State's accountability framework, the County System Improvement Plan, and the federal CFSR.
- Formal State Compliance Action: If a County demonstrates a lack of good faith effort to actively participate in this process or any portion thereof, and/or consistently fails to follow State regulations and/or make the improvements outlined in the County SIP, CDSS, in accordance with current law, has authority under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10605 to compel County compliance through a series of measured formal actions up to State Administration of the County Program.

B. Outcomes

California's accountability system uses a core set of outcomes tied to the fundamental responsibilities of the CWS to drive its system. The outcomes are defined in terms of safety, permanency, and well-being, as are the outcomes used in the federal Child and Family Service Review. Furthermore, the Workgroup identified enhanced outcomes that take advantage of California's data resources. In particular, the enhanced outcomes focus on well-being, areas for which there are few, if any, federal outcomes.

The outcomes at the heart of the C-CFSR are:

1. Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
2. Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
3. Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.
4. The family relationships and connections of the children served by the CWS will be preserved, as appropriate.
5. Children receive services adequate to their physical, emotional and mental health needs.
6. Children receive services appropriate to their educational needs.
7. Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
8. Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.

The measures are illustrated in the matrix of Outcome and Process Indicators included in Appendix D.

Outcome Indicators

The specific measures chosen, included in the Outcome and Process Indicators Matrix, relied on Workgroup input and feedback. In selecting the indicators, the Workgroup considered several factors. First, outcome measures for which data are available received highest priority given the January 1, 2004 implementation. Second, the full list of indicators, including indicators for which data may not be available, had to support the work of the Child Welfare Stakeholders Redesign over the longer term. Third, the outcomes and the measures had to be reliable and valid. Research that compares different approaches to accountability suggests that measures that track children from the time services start until the time when services are no longer needed offer a more effective way to monitor system performance over time. In the context of the federal Child and Family

Services Review, California's enhanced outcome measures improve significantly on those used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Process Indicators

In addition to outcome indicators, the C-CFSR will make use of indicators of the process of child welfare service provision. The process measures will be used to explore how the process of care is related to outcomes. For example, if a County performs relatively poorly in reunifying children with their families in a timely way, it might be useful to understand how often case managers visit children and birth families. Similarly, poor safety outcomes in a given County may be a function of a failure to conduct health and safety assessments of foster care homes. If the State finds the County is deficient in meeting its statutory and regulatory obligations regarding the process measures, the State will take actions to ensure County improvement. If necessary, the State will take a formal compliance action as authorized under the Welfare Institution Code Section 10605. The State, in partnership with the Workgroup, will determine the process by which the State determines the County needs to make improvements in the area of process indicators.

The process measures were selected with two criteria in mind. First, the process measure had to have demonstrable relationship to outcomes. That is, available research points to a clear relationship between the measure and outcomes that are included as part of the review. Second, the data should be available from automated data sources in order to limit reliance on sample-based data collection. These specific measures are a base upon which to build, as experience relating processes to outcomes improves over time and as data on a wider range of process indicators becomes available from CWS/CMS and other automated sources, such as court systems. In addition, Counties are encouraged and expected to use other sources of information (such as interviews with key stakeholders, case record reviews, administrative data on other processes) to help understand outcomes and to develop performance improvement plans.

Building on the Federal Measures

In developing its outcomes and indicators, the Workgroup made every effort to build a unified approach that follows children from the time they start child welfare services through until the time when services are no longer needed. Moreover, the proposed indicators will be applied in a way that considers local population differences. County performance will be judged comparatively, and the State will develop performance targets will be established relative to a County's baseline. Appendix A includes more detail on how the counties will be ranked.

In addition, the outcomes and indicators differ from the federal outcomes in several important respects. First, the proposed indicators stress the importance of prevention in relation to child maltreatment. For example, the federal measures do not track maltreatment rates in relation to the child population. Because reducing the rate of maltreatment is the broad objective of system reform in California, a basic understanding of maltreatment rates is essential.

Second, the California outcomes and indicators incorporate measures of well-being. Healthy, educated children who are prepared for adulthood are a vital resource for California and the fact a child has been maltreated in some way cannot alter the State's commitment to their general well-being.

Third, the California outcomes and indicators follow children throughout their entire service history, from start to finish. Federal outcomes, particularly those that pertain to permanency (for example, reunification and adoption) consider only the fraction of children discharged within certain timeframes (12 months for reunification and 24 months for adoption). No measure of non-permanent discharges (such as running away) is part of the federal system, yet non-permanent exits can have a dramatic impact on children, especially older youth. The federal outcomes also do not consider the likelihood a child will be reunified or adopted. That is, the federal measures do not evaluate the number of children reunified or adopted as a fraction of all children who enter care. As a result, it is

possible for states (or Counties within states) to improve the fraction of children reunified within 12 months relative to all children reunified (the federal measure) even as the fraction of children reunified goes down. The same is also true for the federal adoption standard.

CDSS will provide counties with data profiles that describe the local child population, the child welfare services population and baseline outcome and process data. Counties will receive these data at the initial review stage and periodically thereafter. This approach will ensure timely feedback in response to program improvement initiatives.

Two projected uses of the outcome data will be particularly germane to the C-CFSR. First, outcome data help stakeholders understand County performance from a comparative perspective. That is, these data place County performance in a context that allows State and local stakeholders to understand where Counties stand relative to other Counties. Assessing County performance relies on consideration of the following factors:

1. Local differences in the characteristics of the potential service population that might affect outcomes, such as age distribution, percentage of children living in poverty.
2. The fact that outcomes (such as length of stay and reentry) are sometimes related to one another.
3. The results must support the self-assessment and peer reviews by identifying areas of practice or service populations that should be a focus of the County assessment process.

These data will help to identify those Counties where best practices will most likely be found and those Counties where relative performance is weakest.

Second, the outcome data will help to establish performance improvement targets. County performance improvement during a review cycle will use that County's historical baseline to determine whether the County achieves projected improvements. Thus, it will be possible to examine change in County performance over time.

C. Elements of the Outcomes and Accountability System

The purpose of the C-CFSR is to provide for improved accountability for child and family outcomes that result from the interventions and services provided by California's child welfare system (CWS) and to assure that the unique needs of children and families are met through the promotion of best practices in CWS.

The C-CFSR will use a balance of outcome and process data, Stakeholder survey input/feedback and State/Peer reviewers as primary sources of information for the accountability system. The data/information will be used to keep the public and stakeholders informed of the CWS system's performance, assist Counties in monitoring their performance, inform policymakers, identify needed improvements track California's compliance with its federal Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and identify the resources needed to implement the steps needed to improve services in accordance with the findings.

Taken together, these multiple layers of information will provide the insight needed to understand how the child welfare system works and how to improve practice in the field.

The C-CFSR accountability system is a State-County partnership, with the following elements:

1. County Self-Assessment
2. Targeted Peer Quality Case Reviews
3. County System Improvement Plan

Each element is described in additional detail below and in the corresponding appendices. From the perspective of implementation, a complete county review includes each element. All Counties will undertake a complete review, including a Peer Quality Case Review, every three years. In general, information gathered from the County Self-Assessment and the Peer Quality Case Reviews shall be used to inform every County's System Improvement Plan. However, due to constraints during implementation, it is likely that approximately two-thirds of

Counties will have to submit the System Improvement Plan without having undergone a Peer Quality Case Review first during the initial review cycle. In these counties, the PQCR will follow later in the first cycle. Counties will be selected to undertake a full review during the initial cycle based on the assessment of measured outcomes provided by the state CDSS.

County child welfare departments will be responsible for maintaining the core CWS infrastructure including: assessments, case planning, visitation, and timeframes consistent with federal statute and regulations.

The State will play a leadership role, with State and local partners, in ensuring accountability for child welfare outcomes and in the coordination of responsibility and resources. Because the C-CFSR design is to stimulate continuous quality reviews and system improvement, the C-CFSR system includes on-going evaluation to insure the system keeps pace with developments in the delivery of child welfare services.

1. County Self-Assessment

The County Self-Assessment is a County's opportunity to explore how local program operations and other systemic factors affect measured outcomes. The design of the self-assessment affords the Counties maximum discretion with respect to local stakeholder input, provided the assessment retains a focus on the core outcomes. This review requires each County to prepare a document that addresses the CWS outcomes and indicators, local system characteristics, and any additional indicators and measures the County chooses to identify. CDSS will help Counties by developing model strategies for conducting County Self-Assessments and data collection tools.

The Self-Assessment must include an analysis of the County's performance relative to the federal CFSR outcomes and indicators, California's outcomes and indicators, and must include population-based consideration of how County resources contribute to prevention of child maltreatment. One component of the County self-assessment is the review of process measures. The measures will

be used to explore how the process of providing care is related to outcomes. The primary source of data for the Self-Assessment must be CWS/CMS. Additional indicators should come from existing data sources/analysis whenever possible. County proposals to add indicators must include justification of the need for, and the funding needed to support, such additions before adding new indicators or outcomes.

Counties may look to the State for technical support in developing the Self-Assessment. The State will review the County Self-Assessment for completeness and provide feedback to the County.

Elements of the County Self-Assessment

As a document that relates service delivery to outcomes, the Self-Assessment should consist of the following components.

1. **Demographic Profile and Outcomes Data.** This section describes the County's children, youth, and families, both at the population and CWS-FC levels. In addition, the profile includes the outcome data and process measures included in both the federal and State reviews.
2. **Public Agency Characteristics.** This section includes a description of the local system of care, with an emphasis on system capacity, resource base, organizational structure, and political context.
3. **Systemic Factors.** This section includes a discussion of the federal review "systemic factors" and any additional factors the County chooses to discuss. For appropriate factors, especially service array and case review system, the County should obtain input from its customers, using surveys.
4. **Summary Assessment.** Discussion of the system strengths, areas needing improvement, and identification of service gaps and needs.

Appendix B provides a detailed listing of the elements of the County Self-Assessment.

Process

The Self-Assessment is a regular review every 3 years. At the beginning of the first year of each review cycle, CDSS will provide the Counties with the data profiles described above. The Counties will then begin the process of pulling together the necessary planning participants, analyzing the data and preparing the report. It is expected that completion of this process will vary from county to county depending on its size and the number of stakeholders involved in the process. Counties shall provide for a public comment process to ensure an opportunity for maximum input and feedback. CDSS will provide Counties with feedback so that Counties can include such feedback in the County System Improvement Plan.

Team Composition

Membership on these teams may differ according to a specific County's Profile, or specific strengths, weaknesses, and special programs or other circumstances in the County. The County Child Welfare Department will be the entity responsible for establishing the team. The list below describes a set of core or required representatives for each team and a list of stakeholders that must be consulted with, if not represented on, the Self-Assessment Team. In addition, teams may consult with anyone else deemed to have important input to provide to the Self-Assessment process. Should an individual wish to participate in the process, the County Child Welfare Department should make every effort possible to accommodate such a request.

County Self-Assessment Team Membership

Core Representatives:

- California Youth Connection, if available
- County Health Department
- County Mental Health Department
- CWS Administrators, Managers, and Social Workers
- Foster Parents and Parents
- Local Education Agency

- Local Tribe(s) for applicable Counties
- Probation Administrators, Supervisors, and Officers

Groups that must be consulted or represented:

- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- County Alcohol and Drug Department
- Labor
- Law Enforcement
- Local representatives of children and parents
- Local Juvenile Court Bench Officer
- Regional Training Academy

Other examples of groups that may be consulted or represented:

- County Children and Families Commission (Prop. 10 Commission)
- County Welfare Department
- Department of Developmental Services Regional Center (depending on client population)
- Domestic Violence Prevention Provider
- Economic Development Agency
- Local Child Abuse Prevention Council
- Local Workforce Investment Board
- Local Public Housing Authority
- Other Service Providers
- Special Education Local Planning Area(s)

State Team for Review of County Assessment

- CDSS: Children’s Services Operations Bureau; Office of Child Abuse Prevention; Child and Youth Permanency Branch; Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) unit; Resources Development and Training Bureau
- Dept. of Health Services (DHS)
- Dept. of Mental Health (DMH)
- Dept. of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP)
- Dept. of Education (DOE)

2. Peer Quality Case Review

The purpose of the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) is to learn, through intensive examination of County child welfare practice, how to improve child welfare services and practices in California, both in the participating County and in other jurisdictions as well. Without relying on the PQCR as a vehicle for

validating the quantitative data, the PQCR should provide another layer of information. Specifically, the PQCR will be another mechanism for understanding the key to the child welfare system: social worker practice. While the quantitative data provides integral, population-based information, the PQCR will provide a rich and deep understanding of actual practices in the field. In addition, the PQCR goes beyond the County Self-Assessment by bringing in outside expertise, including County peers, to help shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of County child welfare services delivery system and social work practices. The PQCR, along with the Self-Assessment, should inform the development and revision of County System Improvement Plans.

We propose that all Counties – not simply those with the most need for improvement -- participate in the PQCR. The PQCR is not intended to be a punitive measure, but an opportunity for every County to benefit from this additional source of information. Moreover, the State has much to learn from PQCRs in Counties with positive outcomes.

Elements of the Peer Quality Case Review

The PQCR team will analyze a variety of data sources, starting with the information gathered during the County's Self-Assessment, to better understand services delivered to children and their families. In addition to information from the Self-Assessment, reviews will involve collection of other data deemed necessary by the review team, such as stakeholder focus groups, interviews and surveys. All reviews will also involve structured case reviews with case carrying social workers. As necessary, the review team may examine systemic factors, including those identified as part of the Self-Assessment. Appendix C describes the elements of the PQCR in more detail. Peer review teams will include State staff, County peer staff, staff from the County being reviewed, and local stakeholders.

Process

Peer Quality Case Reviews are part of a complete review and are to be used to inform the System Improvement Plan. The PQCR focuses specifically on service delivery issues that are relevant to the outcomes that the review seeks to help the County improve. CDSS will inform Counties when it is to undergo a PQCR, and will lead the review process. Steps in the review process include the following:

1. **General Preparation/Focus of Review.** The CDSS provides a copy of the self-assessment so the team members can identify the study areas and establish the criteria for targeted data collection.
2. **PQCR Team Training and preparation.** The team members are prepared for the review in order to differentiate roles, review the purpose, and familiarize members with the review instruments. Team members review relevant data including the outcome data, process measures, surveys findings and any other data relevant to the task. Based on this review, the team identifies any additional data that they need to complete their review, keeping in mind time and resource constraints.
3. **Case Selection.** After consultation with the County, CDSS will select a sample of targeted cases for the review. CDSS will select cases to reflect the population based data and measured outcomes, rather than a random sample.
4. **Collection and Review of Additional Data.** The team collects any additional needed data (e.g., targeted worker or client surveys, key stakeholder interviews, focus group data). All reviews will include conducting peer quality case reviews with case-carrying child welfare workers. These cases will be chosen to best collect information about practice issues that are relevant to the outcomes of concern in the County including perceived gaps in services.
5. **Written Report.** Prepared by the CDSS and County Co-Chair, the PQCR report summarizes findings (outcomes in the context of program strengths and areas needing improvement) and proposes a clear set of recommendations.
6. **Exit Interview.** The PQCR concludes with an exit interview that offers an objective summary of the team's findings. The exit interview (and report) should reference outcome indicators, established quality

indicators, and differentiate between program strengths and areas needing improvement.

Team Composition

The CWDA and Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC) will propose team membership from a pool of potential team members based on an assessment of specific expertise needed to review in more depth the outcome and practice issues identified during the self-assessment. CDSS will make the final determination of team membership. As noted in Section IV, the Workgroup plans to continue discussion about the team membership during the implementation phase.

County Peer Review Team

- CDSS Manager Co-Chair
- County Manager Co-Chair
- Neighboring County Manager
- Neighboring County Supervisors, Analysts, Program Specialists, or Line Workers experienced in casework
- Neighboring County Probation, in collaboration with CPOC
- Regional Training Academy representative
- Other representatives, depending on targeted program area

3. County System Improvement Plan

The County System Improvement Plan (County SIP) is the third component of the C-CSFR. Updated on an annual basis, the County SIP is the operational agreement between the County and the State outlining how the County will improve its system of care for children and youth and forms an important part of the system for reporting on progress toward meeting agreed upon improvement goals using the C-CSFR outcomes and indicators. As a general matter, the SIP focuses on outcomes. For those outcome indicators for which the County performance is determined to be below the statewide standard, the County SIP must include milestones, timeframes, and proposed improvement goals the County must achieve. Counties demonstrating consistently poor overall performance and/or reduced compliance with the outcome measures specified in the C-CFSR will receive focused technical assistance and training. If a high

priority County demonstrates a lack of good faith effort to actively participate in this process or any portion thereof, and/or consistently fails to follow State regulations and/or make the improvements outlined in the County SIP, CDSS, in accordance with current law, has authority under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10605 to compel County compliance through a series of measured formal actions up to State Administration of the County Program.

To develop and revise the SIP, County child welfare agencies must collaborate with their local partners. These partners generally include the groups identified as the likely partners for the County self-assessment process. The SIP must cross reference other service plans and reporting requirements (Child Abuse Prevention Intervention and Treatment, Promoting Safe and Stable Families, and other applicable plans) in order to reinforce the need to collaborate and develop more integrated local service structures.

Elements of the County SIP

1. Identifies Local Planning Body
 - a. The local planning body should consist of local stakeholders and agencies that serve the families and children who are in the CWS system or who are at risk of entry to the system. This body should include consumers of CWS services and advocates. The County may use the County Self-Assessment team or consultants. Counties also may use this planning body and process to meet the planning requirements for other related planning requirements.
2. Emphasizes Prevention Strategies
 - a. Describe the County's strategies including specific services, target groups, funding sources and how they link to the CWS redesign, including prevention of child maltreatment. Identifies specific goals for prevention.
 - b. Identify resources devoted to accomplishing prevention goals.
 - c. Identify specific commitments by community partners to prevention projects.

3. Describes Performance, Standards, Goals, and Strategies, along with corresponding milestones and timeframes.
 - a. Identify how the plan builds on progress and improves areas of weakness.
 - b. Describe the systemic changes needed, and how these activities will help achieve the goals.
 - c. Describe education/training needs and any identified needs for technical assistance, and how these activities will help achieve these goals.
 - d. Identify roles of other partners in achieving improvement goals (for example, attach Memoranda of Understanding with Probation and CWS agencies).
4. Describes the Interface with State PIP
 - a. Describe how the County SIP will contribute to the State's achievement of the State's PIP submitted to the federal government.
5. Analyzes and reports on the findings of data collection conducted as part of the Self-Assessment, and, if available, a PQCR.
6. Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of identified goals.

Process

Counties submit their SIP to the CDSS after completion of the County Self-Assessment. The County will provide CDSS with an annual update to the County SIP. County child welfare directors select the membership of the group, relying primarily on members of the Self-Assessment team, and convene the workgroups. County Boards of Supervisors will approve the County SIP and verify local coordination and integration before submitting the Plan to the State. The County SIP plans will be posted online, and available for public comment. A CDSS review team will analyze and assess the County SIP and updates, and evaluate how the local CWS system operates. Following this review, the CDSS may make recommendations for improvements to the County SIP.

In the event that negotiations between CDSS and the County fail to produce a consensus regarding the SIP or the degree of program or data improvements to be made, there will be negotiation process between CDSS and the County. The CDSS has final authority to assign the contents of the plan and/or the degree of improvement required for successful completion of the plan.

State Training and Technical Assistance

The key to improving child welfare outcomes is supporting the professionals who have chosen to practice social work. The State must provide them with the support they need to continually refresh and improve their child welfare practices, and enable them to do the best job they can.

To that end, the CDSS will monitor the annually updated County SIP on a regular basis using the Quarterly Program Management reports. The primary focus of the monitoring will be on progress towards reaching the goals in areas identified as needing improvement in the County SIP. Through regular analysis of this information, CDSS, in partnership with the County, will provide ongoing targeted technical assistance to assist counties in their efforts to improve performance on outcome measures.

However, training and technical assistance is not limited to areas needing improvement. In an effort to continually improve outcomes for children and families, Counties may request training or technical assistance to assist with continual program improvement in areas of strength not requiring CDSS monitoring. Finally, CDSS will develop a statewide plan for training and will regularly consult with the Regional Training Academies to ensure both consistent training across Counties and that curricula reflect training known to reinforce research-based effective practice.

Team Composition

As with other aspects of the C-CFSR, the goal is to open the process to relevant stakeholders. To reinforce the connection between the Self-Assessment and the

SIP, members of the team drafting the SIP should come from the team that assisted with the Self-Assessment. As noted in Section IV, the Workgroup plans to continue discussion about the team membership during the implementation phase.

County SIP Team Membership

Core Representatives:

- CWS Administrators, Managers, and Social Workers
- Probation Administrators, Supervisors, and Officers
- California Youth Connection, if available
- Foster Parents

Groups that must be consulted or represented:

- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- County Health Department
- County Mental Health Department
- County Alcohol and Drug Department
- Labor
- Law Enforcement
- Local representatives of children and parents
- Local Juvenile Court Bench Officer
- Local Education Agency
- Local Tribe(s) for applicable Counties
- Regional Training Academy

Other examples of groups that may be consulted or represented:

- County Children and Families Commission (Prop. 10 Commission)
- County Welfare Department
- DDS Regional Center (depending on client population)
- Domestic Violence Prevention Provider
- Economic Development Agency
- Local Child Abuse Prevention Council
- Local Workforce Investment Board
- Local Public Housing Authority
- Other Service Providers
- Special Education Local Planning Area(s)

State Team for Review of County SIP

- CDSS Children's Services Operations Bureau

- CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention
- CDSS Child and Youth Permanency Branch
- CDSS Estimates
- CDSS Community Care Licensing

IV. Implementation Workplan

This Workplan represents a monumental change in California's child welfare system. And while much work has been accomplished over the past several months, thanks to the Workgroup and the Chapin Hall Center for Children, there is much left to do in order to implement this Workplan by January 1, 2004. This is an ongoing and fluid process, and we note that the C-CFSR is subject to evaluation and changes as we learn more about the review process. The CHHS and CDSS also retain the right to make additional changes to the AB 636 workplan to reflect any changes in federal law, state law, appropriations, or provisions of the State's Program Improvement Plan required by the federal Children and Family Services Review.

The Workplan below sets forth the basic elements and principles of California's proposed outcome accountability system and AB 636 requirements. Following April 1, 2003, the date set by the Legislature for establishing the Workplan, CHHS is committed to addressing the significant details that remain to be resolved before a viable C-CSFR can be implemented in the field. Specifically, the Workgroup will need to have further discussion on a several issues, including, but not limited to:

Issues for Further Workgroup Discussion:

- Performance thresholds
- Risk adjustment process
- Enforcement/noncompliance issues, including triggers for compliance action
- Increased public involvement (in the context of confidentiality requirements)
- Interaction with local Citizen's Review Process
- Team membership for the PQCR and SIP

Specific tasks and projected completion dates follow:

<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Task</u>
5/1/03	Identify legislative and regulatory changes
5/1/03	Develop proposed County review schedule (CWS and Probation)
5/30/03	Develop a proposal for a review system for Probation cases
5/15/03- 6/30/03	Identify DSS training needs, identify trainers, develop and conduct - training on how to conduct the review
5/15/03- 8/1/03	Convene workgroup to develop tools and instruments for C-CFSR, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Manual for C-CFSR B. County Self-Assessment C. Performance Baselines and Performance Standards D. Peer Quality Case Reviews E. Interviews and Surveys F. County SIP, including approval and dispute resolution process between the County and State G. Quarterly Management Reports, including risk adjustment methods H. Post-SIP Approval and Monitoring Process
5/15/03- 8/15/03	Conduct training on data management and analysis
8/1/03	Provide information to Counties through All County Letters/All County Informing Notices
8/15/03	Identify CWS/CMS enhancements
9/1/03	Plan County training: sites, standardized materials, staffing, invitation letters, schedule
9/1/03	Test and complete tools and instruments
9/15/03	Begin County training
1/1/04	Commence first C-CFSR

APPENDIX A: Measuring Performance for the Outcomes-Based Review

A. Approach

The key to performance improvement rests on using outcome data to understand current performance. An understanding of current performance helps to identify county-level outcomes and provides insight into system strengths and weaknesses. The analysis of performance allows Stakeholders to sharpen the more specific reviews (the Self-Assessment and PQCR) and to frame expectations for improvement over time.

The discussion below describes a methodology for measuring outcomes at the county level. In addition, the methodology describes how the indicators are combined to provide a global understanding of county performance while preserving the ability to form an outcome-specific interpretation of county performance.

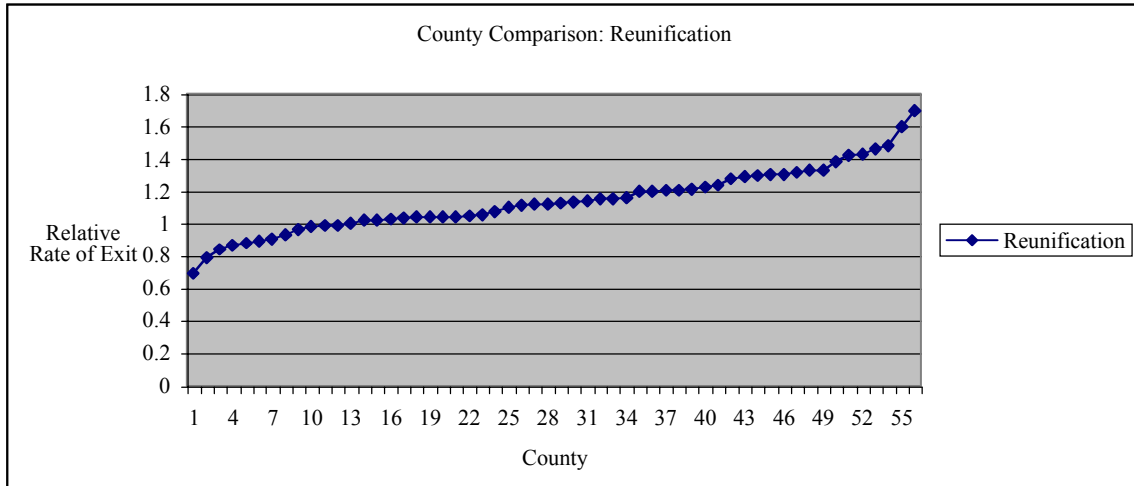
The approach is illustrated using reunification and adoption outcomes. The approach would be replicated using a larger set of the indicators.

Step One: Using an appropriate statistical approach (event history, logistic regression, event count, etc.), County performance on a given indicator will be determined. In Example 1 below, County performance on time to reunification is displayed in sort order (based on a event history/hazard model) from low to high (left to right; these are hypothetical data.)

Counties above 1 (on the right) tend to reunify children at a rate that is faster. Counties below 1 (to the left) tend to reunify children more slowly. Counties found at either tail have performance that is substantially different than other counties. The large group of counties in the middle has average performance, although the data suggest that those counties are on one side of the average or the other (tending to be slower or faster). However, because they are not markedly different than the average, the

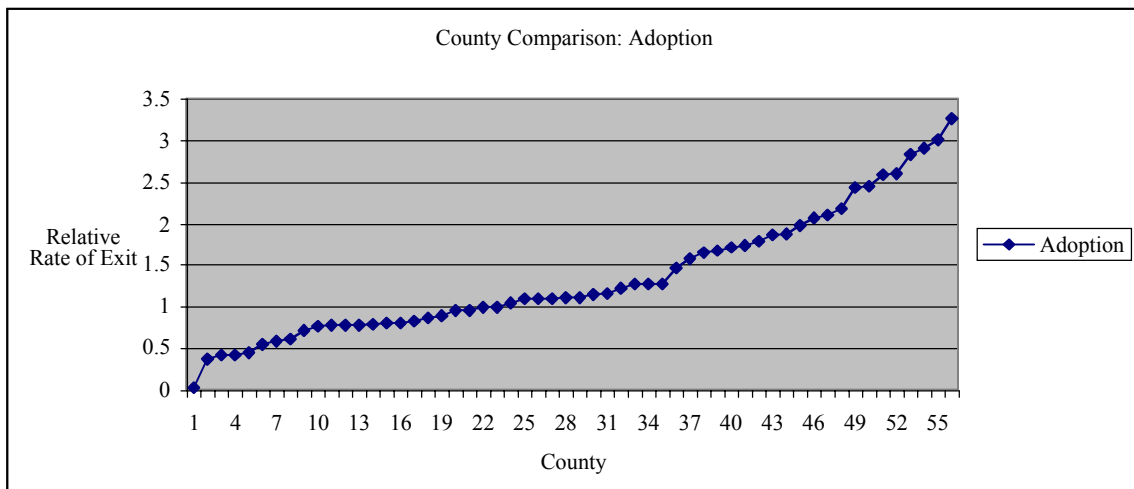
possibility exists that other, unmeasured differences affect performance.

Example 1



Example 2 below shows how counties might be distributed for the adoption indicator. (Of course, County size is an important issue that has to be analyzed in this context. For example, some counties are so small they may not have any adoptions or too few to draw reliable conclusions.)

Example 2



Step Two: Once the distribution is identified, each County that is below the threshold is assigned “-1” and each County that is above threshold is assigned “+1”.

The remaining counties are assigned “0”. The specific threshold values have not been decided.

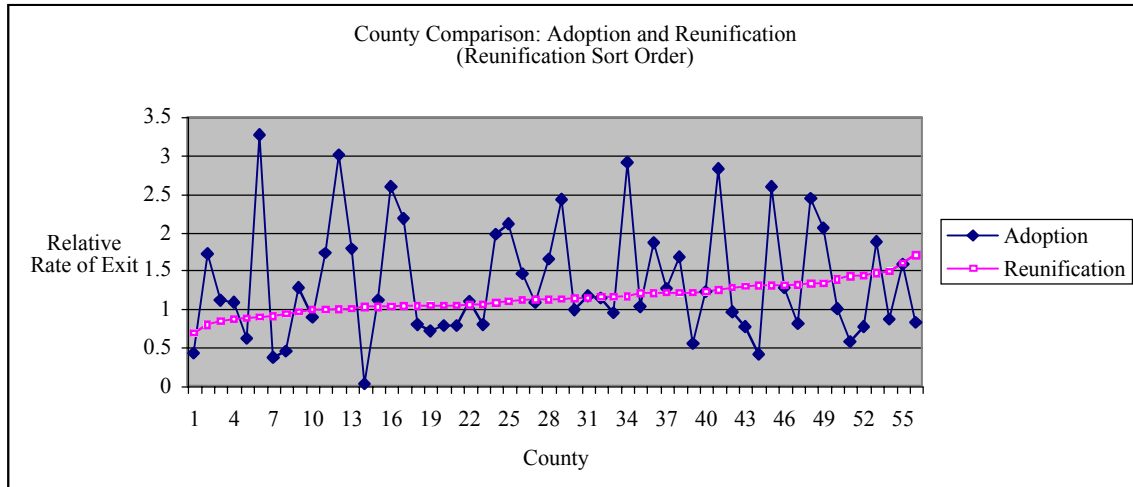
Step Three: Once the process is repeated across all the indicators, the total score is aggregated across indicators for each County. The results will yield a composite score. If a total of 7 indicators are part of the composite, counties that have consistently poor performance will have a composite index equal to “-7”. That score means that for each indicator, the County’s performance was consistently below the threshold. Conversely, counties that total “+7” have measured performance that is consistently above the threshold. Counties in between have mixed performance, with strengths some times offsetting weaknesses. Counties with a composite of “0” are balanced with respect to strengths and weaknesses. Specific strengths and weaknesses would be identifiable by reference to the individual scores. The table below illustrates the results for two indicators:

Table 1

Reunification	Adoption	Composite
-1	-1	-2
-1	0	-1
-1	1	0
0	0	0
1	-1	0
1	0	1
1	1	2

Example 3 shows the reunification and the adoption indicator juxtaposed, with the counties sorted by their reunification performance. The graphic shows that some counties are: above average for both indicators, below average for both indicators, or mixed relative to performance.

Example 3



Step Four: Counties that fall in the range of -6 to -7 (the cutoff is a choice to be made) have overall performance that is consistently poor. Counties that have $+6$ to $+7$ have consistently good performance.

For the County Self-Assessment, counties in the lowest range are high priority counties and subject to a comprehensive review. Other counties have more selective case reviews based on specific indicators.

Step Five: The County plan has to set forth a plan for improvement against the County baseline with a state specified target improvement (5%, 10%, etc.) over the County baseline. The State can set a statewide target (i.e., minimum). Alternatively, the State can set a standard for counties that is tuned to the composite score (or the individual score). Counties that are above average might have a lower target, under the theory that their performance is already more “efficient.” There is less room to improve in the short term. Counties below the average might have higher targets for improvement relative to their own baseline. These details can be worked out, subject to agreement in principle with the framework.

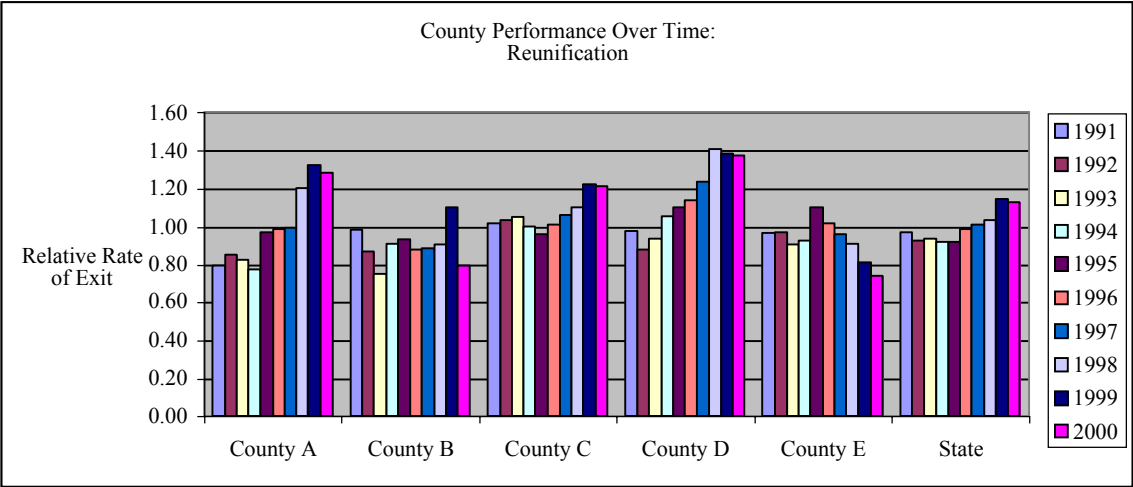
B. Other issues

1. County performance over time: Prior to the analysis of baselines, the county’s performance over time has to be assessed. In Example 4, County specific performance trends for reunification are displayed.

The data indicate that counties come to an assessment with different performance histories (e.g., below average counties (today) may have a history of improvement in the recent past). This has to be taken into account.

In this example, counties A, C, and D have been improving over time. The same is true for the State as a whole. Counties B and E have declining performance. It is possible that Counties B and E have better than average performance at present, but their historical performance (against their “baseline”) is declining.

Example 4



- 2. Special populations: Even though performance overall is positive, it may be that specific groups of children, defined by age, race/ethnicity, type of placement (or a combination of factors) have markedly different experiences.

Data analysis should be undertaken to identify target populations for specific analysis. These targeted groups should be reflected in decisions that guide the selection of cases for the peer quality case reviews.

APPENDIX B: County Self-Assessment Detail

1. Demographic Profile and Outcomes Data (both CWS-FC and general population)
 - a. County Data Profile.
 - b. Caseload demographics.
 - c. Demographics of general population.
 - d. CWS outcomes and indicators.
 - e. Education system profile including performance of schools and educational outcomes for students.
2. Agency Characteristics
 - a. Size and structure of agency.
 - i. County operated shelter(s).
 - ii. County licensing.
 - iii. County adoptions.
 - b. County governance structure.
 - c. Number/composition of employees.
 - i. Staffing characteristics/issues.
 - ii. Turnover ratio.
 - iii. Private contractors.
 - iv. Caseload.
 - v. Bargaining Unit Issues.
 - d. Financial/Material Resources.
 - i. Source and Expenditure of Funds.
 - e. Political Jurisdictions.

- i. School districts/Local Education Agencies.
 - ii. Law enforcement agencies.
 - iii. Tribes.
 - iv. Cities.
 - v. Other examples.
 - f. Technology Level.
 - i. Laptops used by field staff.
 - ii. Capacity to use SAS, SPSS, Business Objects or other software.
- 3. Systemic Factors (describe each factor and assess whether it is working as intended)
 - a. Relevant Management Information Systems.
 - b. Case Review System.
 - i. Court structure/relationship.
 - ii. Process for timely notification of hearings.
 - iii. Process for parent-child participation in case planning.
 - iv. Process for older youth participation in case planning.
 - c. Foster/Adoptive Parent recruitment and retention.
 - i. Placement resources.
 - d. Quality Assurance (QA).
 - i. Description of existing County QA system.
 - e. Service Array (composition/issues of service delivery system).
 - i. Substance abuse and mental health services.
 - ii. Child care and transportation services.
 - iii. Domestic Violence Prevention Services.
 - iv. Prevention and Family Support Services.

- v. Education Services including Special Education and Developmental Services.
 - vi. Employment development/School-to-work.
 - vii. Pilot or demonstration projects.
 - viii. Interaction with local Tribes.
 - ix. Assessment of needs and provision of services to children, parents, and foster parents.
- f. Staff/Provider Training.
- i. Training requirements for social work staff.
 - ii. Training for Foster Parents and Relative Caregivers.
 - iii. Regional Training Centers provision of curricula appropriate to needs of County.
- g. Agency Collaborations.
- i. Collaboration with Public and Private Agencies.
 - ii. Existing MOUs.
 - iii. Cal-Works Interface.
 - iv. Tribes.
 - v. Relationship with community agencies.
 - vi. Local WIBs and Youth Councils.
 - vii. Local Proposition 10 Commissions.
 - viii. County Offices of Education.
 - ix. SELPAs.
- h. Local systemic factors.

4. Summary Assessment

- a. Discussion of system strengths and weaknesses.
- b. Identification of service gaps and needs.

5. County Approval and Dispute Resolution Process
 - a. Resolve disputes according to process established at the local level.
 - b. Identify County Program Improvement Plan approval process at the local level.

APPENDIX C: Peer Quality Case Review Detail

A. Process

1. Selection of PQCR Team Members
 - a. CWDA and CPOC selects representatives from each region to create a pool of potential PQCR team members.
 - b. Members with expertise in focus areas being targeted for the County PQCR will be included in each team.
2. General Preparation/Focus of Review
 - a. The CDSS will provide a copy of the County Self-Assessment to each PQCR team member for review.
 - b. The County under review will identify and propose areas of focus for the review with CDSS making the final determination of the areas of focus for the review.
 - c. The focus areas reviewed will dictate the case selection and design of the review tool and specific team training.
3. PQCR Team Training -- CDSS and other members of CWDA will provide training, which may include:
 - a. Rationale for and review of PQCR Process
 - b. The roles of the PQCR team members
 - c. How to use the review tools, one for the case read and one for the social worker case presentation
 - d. The elements of the written report
 - e. How to conduct the exit interview
 - f. Information pertinent to the focus area under review
4. Case Selection
 - a. CDSS and the County under review identify the types of cases for a focused review.

- b. CDSS identifies a representative sample within strata in the case type.
- c. CDSS and the County under review determine the specific dates for the PQCR.

5. PQCR Team Preparation

- a. PQCR Team members review the County Self-Assessment and any other relevant data or information provided by the County or CDSS including any County initiated survey results for foster parents, birth parents, children, and service providers.
- b. PQCR Team members identify both the County's strengths and weaknesses in the focus areas.

6. Peer Quality Case Review Process

- a. If the County Self-Assessment and County PIP support the need for case specific interviews, the PQCR Team will interview case plan participants on the sampled cases. DSS will determine which individuals to interview, based on the identified areas of improvement. At a minimum, interviews should be conducted with social workers and children/youth. Other individuals may include: supervisors, parents, a service provider, parent and child advocates or attorneys, current or most recent care provider and social worker.
- b. The PQCR Team Chair and one or more team members may conduct focus groups, as determined necessary by CDSS and the County under review.
- c. Each PQCR Team member will review case files and complete the review tool in preparation for the structured and interactive interview with the case carrying social worker, using a case presentation review tool.

7. Written Report

- a. The CDSS Chair will generate the summary of findings. Recognition of Program Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement will be discussed by the PQCR team and reflect the consensus of the members, whenever possible.
- b. Clearly and concisely addresses how local CWS program performs on the C-CFSR outcomes and indicators.

- c. Contains clear recommendations on actions the County may consider that will address the identified problems or service gaps, including reference to potential resources, expected outcomes, and program strengths.

8. Exit Interview

- a. Provide an objective, external prospective for the agency's CWS program.
- b. Recognize program strengths and areas for improvement.
- c. Educate the public regarding the quality of the agency's CWS program.
- d. Compare the program with established quality indicators.
- e. Share best and promising practices.

9. Review Instruments (will be developed prior to January 1, 2004, see Workplan Implementation)

APPENDIX D:
Outcomes and Indicators Matrix