Application Example for Using the State Data Profile and Context Data

Capacity Building CENTER FOR STATES

CFSR Round 4 Planning and Implementation Tool

Introduction and Overview

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) State Data Profile (Data Profile) and Supplemental Context Data Workbook (Context Data) help build an understanding of child welfare system performance and the outcomes children experience.

- **The Data Profile**[1] provides states with performance information on seven statewide data indicators[2] related to child safety and permanency outcomes.
- **The Context Data** shows performance data over time; breaks down data by age, race/ethnicity, and locality; and presents additional information on children and young people served by the child welfare system.

This application example illustrates how a state can examine and drill down into data from the Data Profile and Context Data to better understand the outcomes of children and young people served by the child welfare system. The example is intended to be used together with the "Guide for Using the State Data Profile and Context Data."

Setting the Stage

Below is an imagined scenario illustrating how a state CFSR team can use their Data Profile and Context Data to explore permanency. Follow the series of questions to see how data exploration can create a more complete understanding of the experiences of children and youth in care and point to additional questions for further exploration and areas for attention.

The application example is presented to show a team:

1) Looking at excerpted data and visualizations from the Data Profile and Context Data (shown in exhibits)
2) Documenting initial observations and contextual notes related to the data (shown in highlight boxes marked with 🔍)
3) Generating considerations for further exploration (shown in highlight boxes marked with ?)
4) Continuing on to explore another related question (repeating steps 1–3)
5) Bringing the findings together and generating next steps

Use this tool to:

- Model indepth exploration of the data presented in the Data Profile and Supplemental Context Data Workbook
- Use visual representations of the data to reveal patterns and differences

Organization

Initial Observations and Context

Exploratory Questions

- What are the trends over time? Has performance been getting better or worse?
- How does performance on this indicator differ among age groups?
- How do trends for the number of children in care relate to performance on this indicator?
- How does performance on this indicator differ by the child's race and ethnicity?
- How does performance vary by local jurisdiction?

Team Takeaways and Next Steps

Summing Up

See also the companion document, "Guide for Using the State Data Profile and Context Data"

1 Visit the CFSR Data Profile Quick Reference publication and CFSR State Data Profiles FAQ webpage for more information on the Data Profile.
2 Learn more about the statewide data indicators on the Center for States' CFSR Statewide Data Indicators webpage.

Initial Observations and Context

A jurisdiction's CFSR Data Profile presents performance data and visualizations on permanency-related statewide data indicators, including national performance (NP) and the state's risk-standardized performance (RSP) values shown in exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1. National Performance and Risk-Standardized Performance for Three Permanency in 12 Months Indicators

Permanency in 12 Months (entries)		Permanency in 12 Months (12–23 mos)		Permanency in 12 Months (24+ mos)	
35.2% NP	41.2% RSP	43.8% NP	30.0% RSP	37.3% NP	36.9% RSP
Higher value is desired		*Higher value is desired*		*Higher value is desired*	

Initial Observations and Notes

By looking at the state's RSP data on the Data Profile (exhibit 1), the CFSR team notes:

- Performance on the indicator permanency in 12 months for children entering care is better than National Performance
- Performance on the indicator permanency in 12 months for children in care 12–23 months is worse than National Performance and calls for additional attention
- Performance on the indicator permanency in 12 months for children in care 24+ months is not statistically different than National Performance

Sample Considerations for Further Team Exploration

- Has performance on permanency in 12 months for children in care 12–23 months changed over time?
- Do trends relate to entry rates?
- Do the different performance patterns for the three indicators reflect differences for families with varying complexity of needs (e.g., are families with less complex needs reunified more quickly)?
- Are there variations in performance on permanency in 12 months for children in care 12–23 months by subpopulation (by age, race/ethnicity)?
- Are certain localities (e.g., larger urban counties) driving performance?

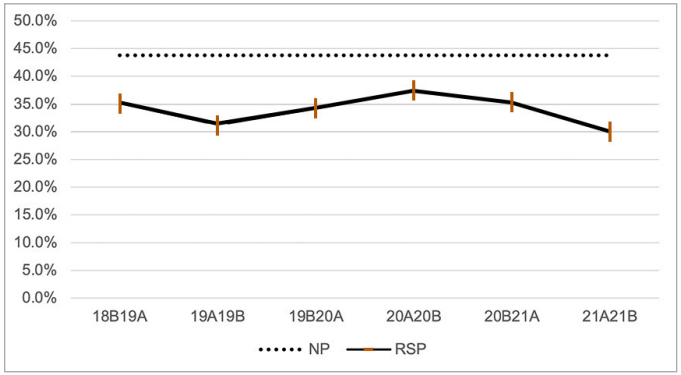
Exploratory Questions

The initial observations help provide a broad perspective on how the agency is performing in achieving permanency for children who have been in care for different lengths of time. As part of deeper exploration on these data indicators, the CFSR team in this scenario decides to take a closer look at performance on permanency in 12 months for children in care 12–23 months by investigating the following series of questions.

What are the trends over time? Has performance been getting better or worse?

Exploration begins here with looking at trends across fiscal years (FYs) 2019, 2020, and 2021 in the RSP visualization on the Data Profile.

Exhibit 2. Risk-Standardized Performance Visualizations for Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 12–23 Months



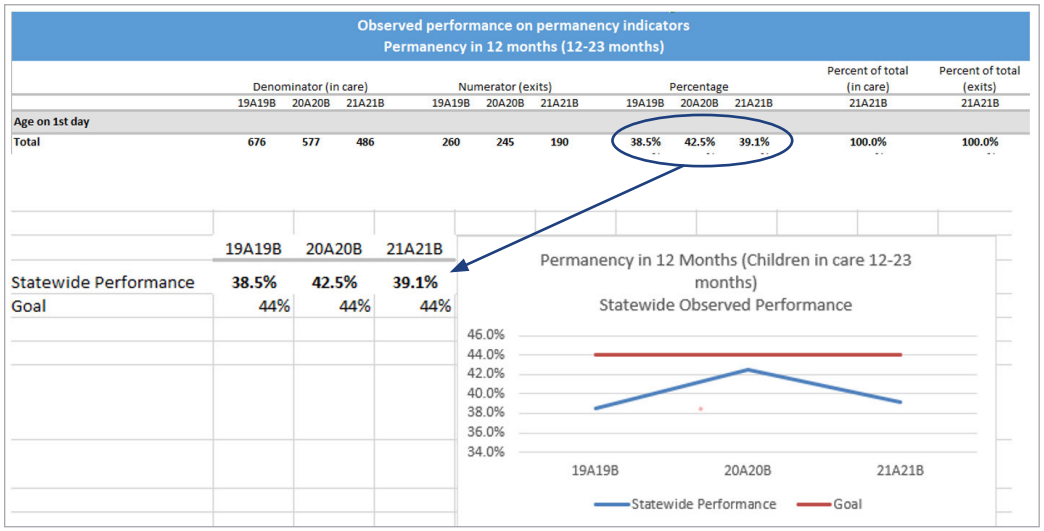
Initial Observations and Notes

By looking at the state's RSP over time, the CFSR team observes that:

- RSP for this indicator has remained below National Performance for all six reporting periods
- RSP was increasing over three periods but began to decline in recent periods

In addition, states may track their overall performance in comparison to an established improvement goal based on state continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes or other factors. Visualizing observed performance data from the Context Data alongside an identified improvement goal can aid states in assessing whether they are making progress toward their goals.

Exhibit 3. Three Years of Observed Performance and State Goal for Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 12–23 Months



Observed performance on permanency indicators
Permanency in 12 months (12-23 months)

	Denominator (in care)			Numerator (exits)			Percentage			Percent of total (in care)	Percent of total (exits)
	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B	21A21B	21A21B
Age on 1st day											
Total	676	577	486	260	245	190	38.5%	42.5%	39.1%	100.0%	100.0%

	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B
Statewide Performance	38.5%	42.5%	39.1%
Goal	44%	44%	44%

Initial Observations and Notes

By looking at the state's observed performance over time along with an improvement goal (exhibit 3), the CFSR team notes that:

- In FY 2020, the state's performance improved and was closer to the goal
- In FY 2021, performance declined and moved away from the goal

Sample Considerations for Further Team Exploration

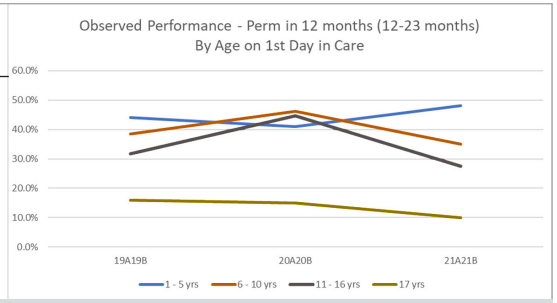
- What child demographic factors may be driving performance (e.g., age when entering care)?
- What system-related factors (e.g., new policies, program implementation, legal or court practices) may be driving performance?
- How do the trends observed here relate to trends in other data reported in the Context Data (e.g., entry rates, performance on other permanency data indicators)?
- How do the trends relate to other outcomes tracked by the state (workforce trends, court-related outcomes, etc.)?

How does performance on this indicator differ among age groups?

Using the Context Data to make a simple line graph of trends for children and young persons of varying age groups (based on their age when they first entered care) gives the CFSR team a visual for how outcomes vary among these groups.

Exhibit 4. Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 12–23 Months by Age

Age on 1st day	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B
1–5 yrs	44.1%	41.0%	48.1%
6–10 yrs	38.5%	46.2%	35.1%
11–16 yrs	31.7%	44.7%	27.5%
17 yrs	16.0%	15.0%	10.0%



Initial Observations and Notes

Based on the data in exhibit 4 presented for different age groups, the CFSR team observes:

- Performance for younger children ages 1–5 had a slight decline and then increased in the most recent period
- Performance for children 6–10 years old and 11–16 years old improved between 2019 and 2020 and then declined during 2021, following the trends for statewide performance
- Performance has been worse for 17-year-olds and has declined during the most recent period under review (note: these data reflect a small number of young people who may not have been in care for a full 12 months and have unique considerations)

Sample Considerations for Further Team Exploration

- Do the population group sizes or other factors affect the interpretation of these data?
- What might have contributed to the increase and subsequent decrease in performance for children 6–10 years old and 11–16 years old?
- How do trends differ for different permanency types (reunification, adoption, legal guardianship, and living with a relative)?
- What strategies have been successful in achieving permanency for young children (ages 1–5 years)? What efforts have led to the recent increase in performance?
- How many children and young people were counted in the denominator for this indicator? How might that affect how performance looks?

How do trends for the number of children in care relate to performance on this indicator?

Exhibit 5 presents the number of children who have been in care 12–23 months on the first day of the 12-month period (denominator) and, of those children, the number discharged to permanency (numerator).

Exhibit 5. Number of Children in Care on the First Day of 12-Month Period and Number of Children Discharged to Permanency

	Denominator (in care)			Numerator (exits)		
	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B
Age on 1st day						
Total	**676**	**577**	**486**	**260**	**245**	**190**
1–5 yrs	297	249	233	131	102	112
6–10 yrs	187	158	134	72	73	47
11–16 yrs	167	150	109	53	67	30
17 yrs	25	20	10	4	3	1

Initial Observations and Notes

Based on data in exhibit 5, the team observes:

- There has been a decline overall in the number of children included in the denominator for this indicator (children in care), which holds true for all age groups
- There also has been a decrease in the numerator (exits from care) for children of all age groups
- There are only a small number of 17-year-olds in care, which may affect variations and limit the ability to interpret data for this population.

Sample Considerations for Further Team Exploration

- Why might the number of children who have been in care for 12–23 months be declining? What factors (e.g., process changes) may contribute?
- How does this compare with trends in the overall number of children in care?
- How does this compare with trends for children entering care? For children achieving permanency within 12 months of entry?

Examining these data points may offer a clearer picture. If the data reflect that either fewer children are entering care or a greater proportion of children are returning home sooner, this may suggest further consideration of population changes, intake processes, prevention services, etc. If those data points are unchanged, then it may point to something else—for example, a court system change or workforce turnover. In the team's discussions, workers note that fewer families are entering the child welfare system and those that stay 12–23 months have more complex needs, which may contribute to permanency trends. To verify the first part of this perception, the team could look at the state's overall entry rate trends (from the "Entry Rates" tab of the Context Data).

Exhibit 6. State Entry Rates

Entries					Entry rates per 1,000				
17A17B	18A18B	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B	17A17B	18A18B	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B
1,105	970	867	858	716	2.26	2.01	1.82	1.82	1.52

Initial Observations and Notes

Based on the data in exhibit 6, the team observes:

- There has been a steady decline in the rate of children entering care

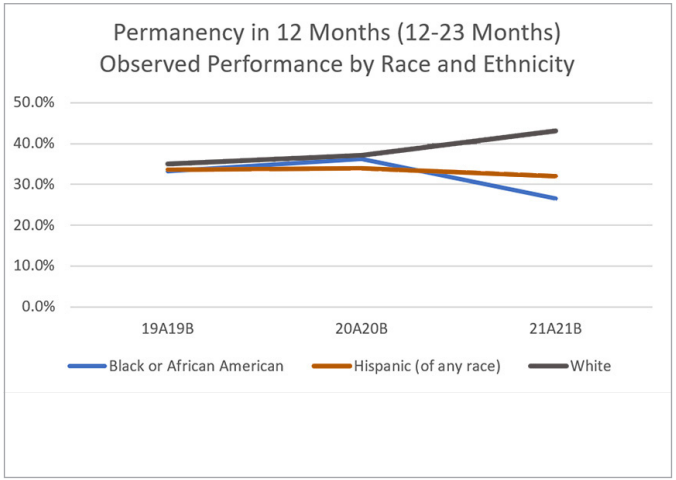
Sample Considerations for Further Team Exploration

- What evidence exists about changes in the complexity of needs among families coming to the attention of the child welfare system (e.g., data on family needs gathered from family, safety, or risk assessments)? How do those changes affect permanency trends, including reunification rates?
- How does performance on this indicator differ by the child's race and ethnicity?

How does performance on this indicator differ by the child's race and ethnicity?

Examining data broken down by race and ethnicity can provide additional insights. A simple line graph can help identify patterns and outliers in performance on this indicator across race and ethnicity. Note that the numbers of children in some racial/ethnic categories are smaller numbers. This is important to keep in mind as teams look at trends and percentages. Here, the team focuses on the three race/ethnicity categories with the largest number of children in the denominator.

Exhibit 7. Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 12–23 Months by Race and Ethnicity



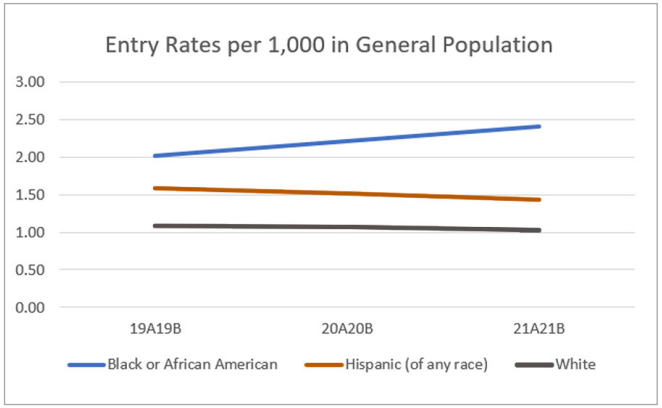
Initial Observations and Notes

Based on the data in exhibits 7 and 8 presented for different racial/ethnic groups, the team observes:

- The number of children entering care has decreased over the past few years for White and Hispanic children, while the number of Black or African American children has increased
- The entry rate of Black or African American children per 1,000 in the general population has also increased
- The rate of White and Hispanic children entering care per 1,000 in the general population has decreased slightly
- The percentage of Black or African American children in care for 12–23 months who were discharged to permanency increased and then declined again in FY 2021—this is also true of Hispanic children, but to a lesser degree
- The percentage of White children in care for 12–23 months who were discharged to permanency has increased over the past few years

Exhibit 8. Entry Rates by Race/Ethnicity

	Total Population			Entries			Entry Rates per 1,000		
Race/ethnicity	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B	19A19B	20A20B	21A21B
Black or African American	109,236	108,120	108,120	220	240	261	2.01	2.22	2.41
Hispanic (of any race)	99,321	100,021	100,021	157	152	144	1.58	1.52	1.44
White	294,236	290,824	290,824	320	311	301	1.09	1.07	1.03



Sample Considerations for Further Team Exploration

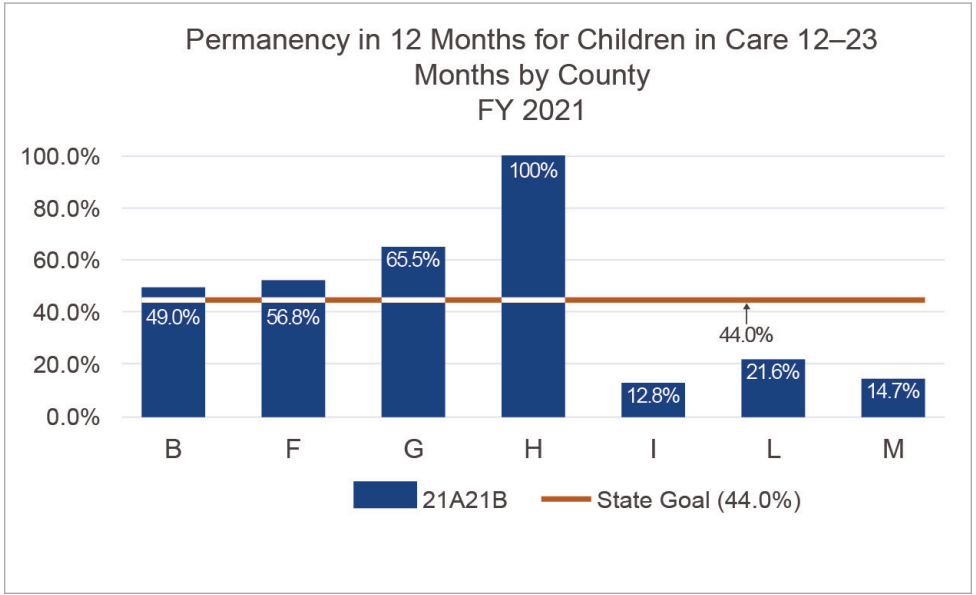
- What factors (e.g., availability of culturally appropriate services and placement resources) may be contributing to differences in performance patterns for this indicator across racial/ethnic groups?
- Is there evidence of disparities in decision-making, programs, and policies that contribute to inequities in services and outcomes across racial/ethnic groups?
- How do timeframes to reunification vary across racial/ethnic groups? How do timeframes vary by permanency type (reunification, adoption, etc.)?
- Are there geographic differences in timeframe to permanency by racial/ethnic groups?

How does performance vary by local jurisdiction?

The Context Data provides performance by county or other local jurisdiction for all statewide data indicators. Looking at performance by county can support problem exploration, begin to point to areas where improvements can be targeted, and help identify strong performing counties where promising strategies and interventions can be further explored. It may also be helpful to group counties by regions or other local designations to examine performance.

The CFSR team in this scenario also uses a performance goal to offer a comparison point for assessing performance across locations. By sorting locality performance data by the denominator, the team can more easily explore variations in performance across counties. In addition, looking at data by jurisdiction offers the team an opportunity to assess its hypothesis that urban counties with larger numbers of children in care are driving performance on this indicator.

Exhibit 9. Performance by County in FY 2021



Initial Observations and Notes

Based on the data in exhibit 9 presented for different counties, the team observes:

- Several counties met or exceeded the state's goal on this indicator (Counties B, F, G, and H) and may be able to share promising strategies
- Some counties (I, L, M) fall below the state's goal, and the contributing factors need additional exploration
- While the team thought that urban counties B and G might be among the lower performers driving overall performance that turned out not to be the case

Note: While the charts reflect the percentage of cases where the goal was achieved, the Context Data also provides the numerator and denominator for each local jurisdiction for this indicator. A smaller number of children in the denominator may lead to what appears to be more extreme changes over time.

Sample Considerations for Further Team Exploration

- Which localities are performing well, and what can others learn from them?
- How has performance on this indicator in counties, regions, or other local jurisdictions changed over time?
- How do processes, practices, and services differ across localities, and how might they affect differences in performance?
- Which localities would benefit most from additional supports? What factors might be contributing to this, and how have they changed over time?
- What factors may be contributing to differences in performance (e.g., service array, local variations in court processes, workforce challenges, other factors)?

Team Takeaways and Next Steps

Reviewing the data and responses to the questions so far, the CFSR team can begin to piece together the story of what's happening in their state's child welfare system.

Summary Observations and Notes

Review of the Data Profile and Context Data related to permanency in 12 months for children in care 12–23 months suggests:

- Performance on this statewide data indicator has consistently been below National Performance for the past 6 periods and declined over the past year
- There has been a decline in recent years of the number of children entering care overall, which may be contributing to the recent decline in performance for this indicator
- Particular attention may be needed to address the needs of children and youth entering care with the following characteristics:
  - Over the age of 6 (especially older youth)
  - Black or African American
  - Living in counties I, L, and M
- The state may want to consider timeliness of court and agency processes, as well as complexity of cases, case plan goals, placement setting, and permanency type ultimately achieved
- There are groups for which performance has improved during the most recent period, and it would be worthwhile to better understand what is working well among counties and age groups that have shown recent improvement

After examining these data, the state CFSR team should continue to explore and address by:

- Engaging young people and families with lived experience, additional program staff, system partners, and others in discussions of the data, trends, and contributing factors and seeking their input throughout the improvement process
- Exploring additional data sources such as case reviews, administrative data (further breakdowns by permanency type, identified child and family needs, case plan goals, and other), management reports, court data, surveys, or focus groups to explore trends, contributing factors, and potential responses in more depth
- Conducting further problem exploration and root cause analysis
- Identifying areas and subgroups needing additional supports (by geographic area, race, permanency type, and specific supports needed)

Summing Up

The above scenario illustrates how a CFSR team can begin to look at and think about their state data from readily available data sources. Following a similar approach can help other teams better understand their state performance on statewide data indicators and begin to consider contributing factors. Through indepth exploration of system performance—including engagement of individuals most affected by the issues—teams may uncover findings and insights that prompt them to dig deeper in new directions. A collaborative and iterative problem exploration process leads to the generation of more questions and, in turn, to additional evidence. Explore your state's data and document observations and questions with the "Guide for Using the State Data Profile and Context Data."

Find More CFSR Planning and Implementation Tools and Supports
Visit the Center for State's CFSR Planning and Implementation Tools webpage to find the "Guide for Using the State Data Profile and Context Data" and additional CFSR Round 4 Tools. These tools support:

- Strengthening use of data and evidence
- Communicating with partners about the CFSR
- Engaging young people and families with lived experience in the CFSR process
- Getting ready for Round 4

The Center for States is available to provide state child welfare agencies with indepth assistance with understanding, using, and visualizing their CFSR State Data Profile and Context Data. To request services tailored to your needs, email capacityinfo@icfi.com or contact your Center for States Liaison.

For More Information on Exploring State CFSR Data

Capacity Building Center for States. Statewide Data Indicators. [webpage]

Capacity Building Center for States. (2021). CFSR Data Profile Quick Reference Publication.

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