

Quality Assurance System: Systemic Factor Data Planning Worksheet



Capacity Building
CENTER FOR STATES

CFSR Round 4 Planning and Implementation Tool

Introduction and Overview

As part of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), states assess the extent to which seven systemic factors function effectively to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families receiving child welfare services. These seven systemic factors include:

- ◆ Statewide information system
- ◆ Case review system
- ◆ **Quality assurance system**
- ◆ Staff and provider training
- ◆ Service array and resource development
- ◆ Agency responsiveness to the community
- ◆ Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention

The CFSR Statewide Assessment process involves a review of data and evidence to strengthen understanding of child welfare system performance on 18 items associated with the seven systemic factors.¹

This Data Planning Worksheet helps state teams consider existing information and data sources and additional data needs for assessing the statewide functioning of one systemic factor— the **quality assurance system**. A well-functioning Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)/Quality Assurance (QA) system produces knowledge that is foundational to understanding how the child welfare system is operating and generates performance data that can inform improvement efforts, which are then monitored over time.

The worksheet tables are intended to support state teams in early phases of preparing for the CFSR Statewide Assessment by taking stock of available information and data sources, considering limitations and gaps, and identifying additional data to generate or develop further before analysis begins. This tool draws from, and should be used together with, the more comprehensive information provided in [Assessing Systemic Factor Functioning Using Data and Evidence](#).² Both resources highlight potential sources of relevant information and data that child welfare agencies and their partners can use to explore and demonstrate functioning of a quality assurance system. Note, however, that the inclusion of data and information from the identified sources by itself does not mean that a state has demonstrated conformity with the factor in the Statewide Assessment.

¹ For more information on the importance of collecting and using quality data and information to assess and routinely monitor statewide functioning of systemic factors and findings from CFSR Round 3, see [Systemic Factors—Results From the CFSRs: 2015-2018](#).

² Find more detailed information on each systemic factor and related items, questions to explore the systemic factor federal requirements and beyond, and sources of data for demonstrating functionality in [Assessing Systemic Factor Functioning Using Data and Evidence](#) on the CFSR Information Portal.

Use this tool to:

- ◆ Identify existing and needed data sources to demonstrate evidence of quality assurance system functioning
- ◆ Prepare for the CFSR Round 4 Statewide Assessment

Organization

[Tips and Things to Remember](#)

[Worksheet Instructions](#)

[Planning Worksheet Tables for Existing Data Sources by Item \(A\)](#)

- ◆ [Item 25: Quality Assurance System](#)

[Planning Worksheet Table for New Data Sources or Data Quality Improvements \(B\)](#)

[Appendix: Data Analysis Checklist](#)

See also [Data Planning Worksheets for other CFSR systemic factors](#)

Tips and Things to Remember

- ◆ The Children’s Bureau (CB) considers a systemic factor to be “functioning” if it is operating consistently and on an ongoing basis across the state for all relevant populations. Description of a law, procedure, or process alone is not sufficient to demonstrate the level of functioning.
- ◆ As part of efforts to advance equity for all children and families, states should consider how their data, policies, and practices may reflect or contribute to inequities in services or outcomes for specific populations.³
- ◆ While identifying and developing data sources and plans for assessing systemic factor functioning, state teams should engage various perspectives, including young people and families with lived experience, tribes, legal and judicial communities, and other child welfare system partners.
- ◆ While CB does not require a specific format for presenting data on systemic factors, to adequately demonstrate functioning, states must:
 - ◆ Present relevant and quality evidence
 - ◆ Use sound measurement principles
 - ◆ Rely on recent data (within the last 3 years)
- ◆ States can use the “Data Analysis Checklist” in the worksheet’s appendix as a support in assessing the quality and relevance of evidence proposed for analysis.
- ◆ To show how well each systemic factor functions statewide, states should present quantifiable data as evidence where appropriate (e.g., number of children documented in an administrative report). Frequently, these data can be expressed in the form of a fraction showing what part of an identified population (the denominator) meets a specified condition (the numerator). In some cases, qualitative data (e.g., findings from interviews or focus groups) may be needed to provide context or to better understand systemic factor functioning.
- ◆ **The exhibit presented for each item on the worksheet pages below highlights a series of questions or key aspects and data sources that exemplify one way to demonstrate how well a systemic factor is functioning. While intended to support state thinking about available data, note that this is not the only way to demonstrate functioning.**
- ◆ State teams may need multiple types of data and information to demonstrate functioning. Yet while seeking to be comprehensive, state teams should also consider how relevant each potential source is to answer the specific questions posed in the Statewide Assessment. States may have additional data or information that can help explore other questions outside the scope of the federal requirements. Some of these data and information may be useful to other parts of the CFSR (e.g., root cause analysis of a problem area, Program Improvement Plan (PIP) development for improvement of a systemic factor) or ongoing CQI but may not be needed to demonstrate systemic factor functioning in the Statewide Assessment.

Sources and Types of Data

To assess performance on systemic factors, states use both quantitative and qualitative evidence, including:

- ◆ State administrative data from statewide information systems
- ◆ Management information reports
- ◆ Administrative data from courts, service providers, and other partners
- ◆ Information included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR), Court Improvement Program Strategic Plan, and other reports
- ◆ Case record reviews
- ◆ Surveys, interviews, or focus groups with case participants, agency staff, and system partners
- ◆ QA and CQI data
- ◆ Federal and state reviews and audits
- ◆ Program evaluations

³ See also [Advancing Equity and Inclusion Through the CFSRs](#) and consider the “Getting Curious” questions and considerations presented in [Assessing Systemic Factor Functioning Using Data and Evidence](#).

Worksheet Instructions

A. Complete the Planning Worksheet Tables for [Existing Data Sources](#)

For each item:

1. Review the **question to answer** in the CFSR Statewide Assessment.
2. Look at the **overview exhibit** for a summary of the Assessment question's subcomponents and their interrelationships. For each component, consider "How do you know?"
3. Review the **subquestions** for exploring systemic factor federal requirements. (While the subquestions align with the exhibit, they may include additional questions for consideration or context.) In the **source table(s)**, place a check by available information and data sources that your state can use to address each question. Multiple sources may be needed to fully respond to each question and confirm reliability of the data or information.
4. For each existing source:
 - ♦ Enter a **title or brief description** (e.g., policy title or report name)
 - ♦ Identify the applicable **time period** of the information or data in the source that will address the subquestion (e.g., children exiting care in fiscal year 2021) (note the time period may differ from the date the data or information were collected or recorded)
 - ♦ Describe the **scope** of the data, noting the specific population and/or geographic area as applicable (e.g., children in care for at least 60 days in region 1)
 - ♦ Identify any known data **limitations**. Consider—Are the data recent? complete? accurate? reliable?
5. In the item review:
 - ♦ Indicate whether the state has **sufficient data** to fully respond to the Statewide Assessment question
 - ♦ Identify **additional information or data** that may be needed to demonstrate systemic factor functioning
 - ♦ Document **data quality issues** that need to be addressed
 - ♦ Consider whether some available **data and information fall outside the scope** of the Statewide Assessment question and therefore should not be presented to demonstrate systemic factor functioning

When the following conditions exist, move to the [Planning Worksheet Table for New Data Sources or Data Quality Improvements \(Section B\)](#):

- ♦ Available data sources are not sufficient to answer all components of the Statewide Assessment questions
- ♦ Additional information or data needs to be collected/generated
- ♦ Data limitations or data quality issues need to be addressed

(Consider * prompts in Section A tables as a reminder to visit Section B)

B. Complete the Planning Worksheet Table for [New Data Sources or Data Quality Improvements](#)

1. List the relevant systemic factor, item, and subquestion where information or data is needed.
2. Describe the proposed information or data source, time period, scope, method of collection or development, expected completion date, lead person responsible, and other related notes.

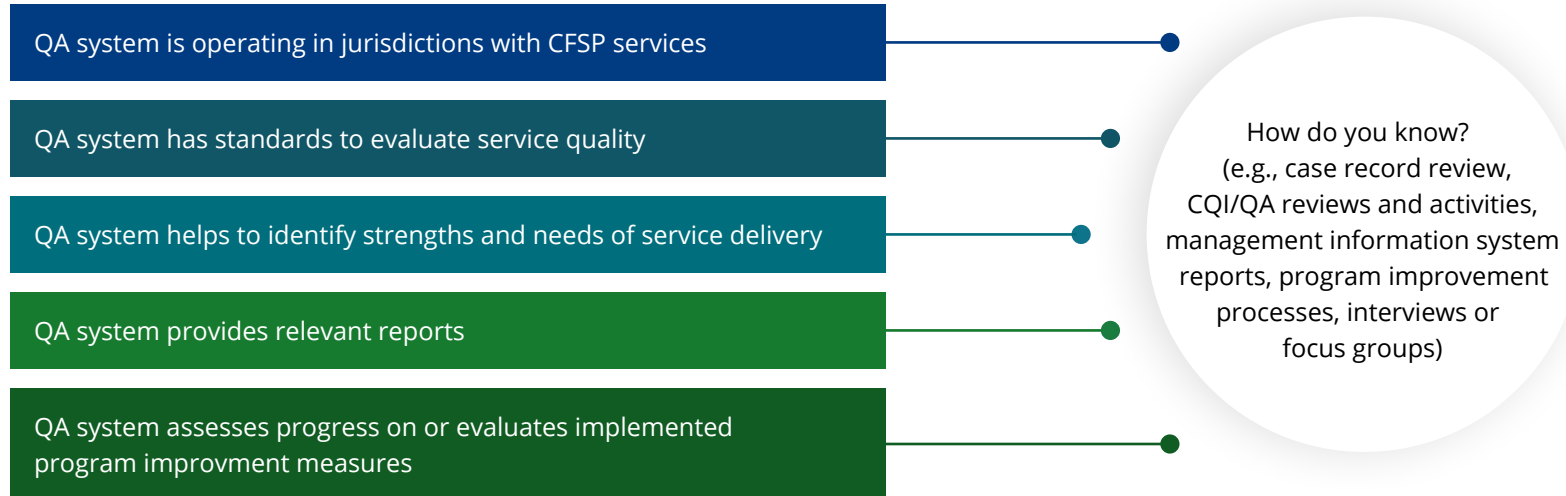
A. Planning Worksheet Tables for Existing Data Sources

In the Statewide Assessment, states provide evidence on one item related to the functioning of their quality assurance system (item 25). The following section can help state teams consider available data sources and evidence for exploring systemic factor federal requirements. The overview exhibit presents key aspects of the Statewide Assessment question, and the source tables can help teams identify and organize their data to respond to the overarching question and related subquestions. While intended to prompt critical thinking about how to demonstrate functioning, the approach represented is not the only possible approach.

Item 25. Quality Assurance System

Statewide Assessment question: How well is the quality assurance system functioning statewide to ensure that it (1) is operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

Item 25 Overview Exhibit



Item 25 Source Tables

Subquestion 25A. What evidence do you have that the QA system is functioning statewide to ensure that it is operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided and that it has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety)?

✓	Possible Data Sources	Title/Description	Time Period	Scope of Data	Data Limitations
	Case record review and other CQI/QA activities (conducted in every jurisdiction where the services included in the CFSP are provided)				
	Management information reports				
	Program improvement processes				
	Interviews or focus groups with individuals applying the standards and conducting case record reviews				
	Other				
	None*				

Subquestion 25B. What is the state's process to ensure that the CQI/QA system identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

✓	Possible Data Sources	Title/Description	Time Period	Scope of Data	Data Limitations
	Management information system reports (including information on performance and outcomes for children and families in every jurisdiction where services included in the CFSP are provided)				
	Interview or focus groups with CQI/QA staff				
	Reports from performance-based contractors				
	Other				
	None*				

Subquestion 25C. What evidence do you have that the QA system is functioning statewide to ensure it identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

✓	Possible Data Sources	Title/Description	Time Period	Scope of Data	Data Limitations
	CQI/QA reviews and activities				
	Management information reports				
	Case reviews or targeted reviews process				
	Program improvement processes or plans				
	Interview or focus groups with stakeholders to inform the entire process				
	Website where reports are published				
	Surveys				
	Interviews or focus groups with individuals implementing improvement efforts				
	Interviews or focus groups with individuals affected by improvement efforts				
	Other				
	None*				

Subquestion 25D. To what extent is information from CQI/QA processes (or other data, evidence, and reports) sound and relevant? How can it be used by staff to support good decisions? And, in what ways are relevant reports used by the intended audience?

✓	Possible Data Sources	Title/Description	Time Period	Scope of Data	Data Limitations
	Surveys, interviews, or focus groups with individuals involved in data and evidence collection processes				
	Surveys, interviews, or focus groups with intended users of CQI/QA data and information (e.g., program managers, supervisors, caseworkers)				
	Other				
	None*				

Subquestion 25E. What is the state's process for using evidence collected through its QA activities to select or design program improvement measures?

✓	Possible Data Sources	Title/Description	Time Period	Scope of Data	Data Limitations
	Surveys, interviews, or focus groups with agency staff and partners involved in program improvement efforts				
	Surveys, interviews, or focus groups with individuals involved in data and evidence collection and analysis processes				
	Other				
	None*				

Item 25 Review

Are the available data sources sufficient to answer all components of the assessment question using an appropriate measurement approach?	YES		NO*	
If not, what additional data or information needs to be collected or generated?*				
Are there data limitations or data quality concerns that need to be addressed to support quality evidence?	YES*		NO	
Do any of the data sources listed fall outside the scope of the Statewide Assessment question (e.g., address other questions or root causes)?	YES		NO	

B. Planning Worksheet Table for New Data Sources or Data Quality Improvements

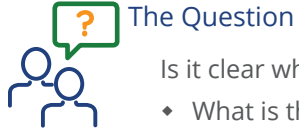
Complete this table to identify where the state team will fill gaps and address limitations to provide relevant and timely data and information that fully address the assessment questions for the systemic factor. Rows in this table should be completed when the following conditions exist: 1) Available data sources are not sufficient to answer all components of the Statewide Assessment question for the systemic factor item; 2) Additional information or data needs to be collected or generated; or 3) Data limitations or data quality issues need to be addressed to support quality evidence.

Systemic Factor and Item	Question to Answer	Information or Data Source	Time Period/ Scope	Method of Collection/ Development	Expected Completion Date	Lead	Notes

APPENDIX: Data Analysis Checklist

Excerpted from the Children's Bureau's [CFSRs: Guiding Principles, Framework, and Tools for the Statewide Assessment Process](#)

The Data Analysis Checklist provides a short, easy way to help assess the quality and relevance of evidence used for analysis. The questions focus on the scope and methods used to generate evidence and are designed to confirm that the information is relevant and reliable to use for analysis, and to support observations and conclusions. This checklist is an optional resource that may be helpful for individuals planning, conducting, and/or reviewing data analysis done for a variety of purposes, including, but not limited to, Child and Family Services Plans (CFSPs), Annual Progress and Services Reports (APSRs), CFSR Statewide Assessments, Program Improvement Plans (PIPs), Court Improvement Program (CIP) Self-Assessments, and state program evaluations.



The Question

Is it clear what question this analysis is answering?

- ♦ What is the analytic question?¹



The Evidence/Data/Methodology

Can you identify the source and characteristics of the data? Are the data provided, and are they complete?

- ♦ What is the data source?
- ♦ How current are the data (through what month/quarter/year)?

Is the information presented clearly labeled?

Does the population selected for the analysis match the question?

- ♦ What population is selected for analysis?

Does the method of analysis match the question being asked or the observation being made?

- ♦ If the analysis is about a system outcome, does the method use aggregate data?
- ♦ If the analysis is about a root cause, does the analysis rely on targeted data collection, either qualitative or quantitative?
- ♦ If the analysis is about the quality of a system of care, does it rely on qualitative data collection, such as through focus groups?

Should there be a comparison group, and if so, is it included in the analysis?

- ♦ What population is used for comparison?

Does the analysis consider variation (e.g., by place, by population, over time)?

Does the analysis consider whether observed variations may be a consequence of disparities in systems, structures, policies, and/or practices?

Are the limitations of the data identified?

Is the data source accurate and reliable?

Does the analysis answer the question?

¹ A research or analytic question is designed to guide the acquisition and generation of evidence that when processed (or analyzed) increases one's knowledge and is related to a theory or a hypothesis. A good data analytic question specifies the target population and the measurable change that population should experience. Sometimes the question is descriptive (e.g., How often do children placed in care move during their first year in care?), sometimes it is comparative (e.g., Are children who enter care in 2021 moving more now in their first year of care as compared with children placed in care in 2019?), and sometimes it is causal (e.g., To what extent are children who were placed in care in 2021 moving more in their first year of care because of pandemic-related issues?).



The Conclusion

Are the arguments summarized and clear?

Are all the graphic representations of the data clearly explained in the narrative?

Were associated factors or data used to better inform the analysis?

- ◆ For example, if the analysis considered timely permanence, did it also refer to performance on reentry to care?

Is the conclusion verified or contradicted by other sources of data?

- ◆ For example, did feedback from individuals with vested interests, focus groups, surveys, or other administrative data support the analytic findings or suggest possible alternatives?

Are there perspectives not accounted for in the analysis?

Do the results suggest that further analysis may be indicated?

After a decade of CQI system and performance measurement work, advancements in our knowledge of implementation science,² the introduction and application of the CQI [change and implementation process](#), and the call to action to transform and create equitable child welfare systems, the Children's Bureau believes that states are well-positioned to complete high-quality Statewide Assessments.

² Annie E. Casey Foundation. (August 12, 2017). [What is implementation science?](#) [blog post].

Find More CFSR Planning and Implementation Tools and Supports

Access [CFSR Systemic Factor Data Planning Worksheets](#) for the other six systemic factors.

Find additional [CFSR Round 4 Planning and Implementation Tools](#) that support:

- ♦ Strengthening use of data and evidence
- ♦ Communicating with partners about the CFSR
- ♦ Engaging youth 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 support in data planning and preparing for CFSR Round 4. To request services tailored to your needs, email capacityinfo@icfi.com or contact your [Center for States Liaison](#).

Additional Resources on Assessing Systemic Factor Functioning and the CFSR Statewide Assessment

Children's Bureau. (2022). [Assessing Systemic Factor Functioning Using Data and Evidence](#).

Children's Bureau. (2022). [CFSRs: Guiding Principles, Framework, and Tools for the Statewide Assessment Process](#).

Children's Bureau. (April 6, 2022). [CFSR Round 4 National Call #6: Systemic Factors and Stakeholder Interview Guide](#). (Webinar video)

Children's Bureau. (2022). [CFSR Procedures Manual](#). (Chapter 2)

Children's Bureau. (2022). [Statewide Assessment Instrument](#). (Section IV, includes guiding questions)

Children's Bureau. (2020). [Systemic Factors—Results From the CFSRs: 2015-2019](#).

JBS International. [CFSR Information Portal](#). [CFSR Round 4 Resources](#). (Webpage)

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