

Guide 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 indicators² 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 child welfare system.

Created by the Children's Bureau (CB) using the states' administrative data, the Data Profile and Context Data are foundational parts of the CFSR process from the statewide assessment through development and monitoring of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). States can use these data sources to:

- ♦ Monitor performance on the statewide data indicators during the CFSR
- ♦ Identify strengths, improvement needs, and areas for further exploration as part of ongoing continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts
- ♦ Assess progress on goals and objectives in a state's PIP and other strategic plans

The Context Data contains CFSR indicators and other metrics broken down by race/ethnicity, age, and locality. Variations across these subgroups can identify disproportionate outcomes, particularly among marginalized and underserved populations, which is an important initial step in taking action to advance equity.³

This tool supports state teams preparing for the CFSR in exploring and visualizing their state data. For a closer look at the process of examining data to better understand the outcomes of children and young people served by the child welfare system, see the companion document, "[Application Example for Using the State Data Profile and Context Data.](#)"

Use this tool to:

- ♦ Better understand how to use the CFSR State Data Profile and Supplemental Context Data Workbook
- ♦ Explore and discuss state performance on CFSR statewide data indicators

Organization

- ♦ [Tips and things to remember](#) when looking at statewide data indicator performance
- ♦ [General steps](#) for Using the Data Profile and Context Data to Assess Performance
- ♦ [Sample Context Data presentation](#)
- ♦ [Observation worksheet](#) to document and share notes on state data
- ♦ [Appendix: Tips for using Excel](#) to create visualizations (graphs, charts, or other images) and explore data

See also the companion document, "[Application Example 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](#).

³ See the [Children's Bureau's Advancing Equity and Inclusion Through the Child and Family Services Reviews](#).

Tips and Things to Remember

- ◆ Using the Data Profile and Context Data to better understand statewide data indicator performance and inform improvements is a critical part of the CFSR and PIP process.
- ◆ By digging deeper into data, child welfare agencies can demonstrate areas of strong performance and identify where there may be problems to address.⁴
- ◆ Disaggregating data—or looking at it by subgroups—helps identify strengths and problem areas and which groups are most affected. Examining performance data broken down by race/ethnicity, age, and locality can identify disproportionality and support efforts to explore variations and address racial, age, or locality disparities.
 - ◆ **Disproportionality** refers to the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a group with a particular experience or outcome when compared with the group's percentage in the total population. While disparities reflect differences across two or more groups, disproportionality reflects the experience or outcome of a single group—for example, the percentage of children entering foster care who are Black or African American as compared to the percentage of children in the general U.S. population who are Black or African American.
 - ◆ **Disparities** are the unequal experiences or outcomes of one group as compared to the experiences or outcomes of another group. For example, a comparison of the percentage of Black or African American children discharged to permanency within 12 months and the percentage of White children discharged to permanency in that same period could show differences that may signal both disparity and inequity. Similarly, looking at data broken down by county may show locality disparities and point to differences in experiences or outcomes of children who live in different parts of the state.
 - ◆ When comparing outcomes across subgroups, it is important to consider context. Disparity in outcomes may be observable in any comparison of subgroups, and those differences do not necessarily signal an unfair bias or inequity. For example, children under age 1 enter care at a higher rate than children over age 16. Given the potentially greater needs of children under 1, this disparity may be expected and not necessarily indicate bias or inequity. Making observations, and then using other sources to consider their context and causes, is vital to identifying where system outcomes vary in ways that merit further attention and remediation.
- ◆ Gathering diverse perspectives is essential to understanding data trends, disproportionality, and disparate outcomes that may be revealed by the data. States should bring together agency staff at different levels (including frontline workers, managers, and administrators), young people and family members with lived experience, caregivers, Tribes, individuals from legal and judicial communities, other system partners, and community members to discuss how they interpret data trends and identify areas for further exploration. Data discussions should include individuals that reflect the populations served, including persons of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequity in the child welfare system.

⁴ For more on exploring data and root cause analysis, see [Change and Implementation in Practice Problem Exploration resources](#).

General Steps for Using the Data Profile and Context Data to Assess Performance

Follow the steps below as a general guide to using your state's Data Profile and Context Data.

Explore the “Big Picture” on the Data Profile

- ① **Get oriented to the Data Profile**, how state performance on the statewide data indicators is presented, and what the data represent. For more information, consult the [CFSR Data Profile Quick Reference](#) or [related FAQs](#).
- ② **Look for areas of strength** and identify where the state's performance is better than the national performance (shown in blue). Comparisons are made on the Data Profile using the state's RSP and the national performance for each indicator.
- ③ **Look for areas that will need further attention** where the state's RSP is worse than the national performance (shown in orange).
- ④ **Observe trends over time** shown in the RSP and observed performance.⁵

The Data Profile presents information on:

- ◆ **Risk-standardized performance (RSP)**, which adjusts for some factors that the state has little control over, and can be compared with national performance values
- ◆ **Observed performance**, which shows how the state performed on each indicator without risk adjustment
- ◆ **Results of data quality checks** and problem areas that might affect data performance calculations

Dig Into the Details and Nuances for Individual Indicators in the Context Data

- ⑤ **Get oriented to the Context Data**. Drawing from state submissions to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), these data files help broaden state understanding of statewide data indicator performance and related child welfare dynamics.
- ⑥ **Review “guiding questions”** near the top of each tab and explore how the data can provide answers and spark initial insights.
- ⑦ **Observe trends** over time. Look at changes in the numerator, denominator, and overall performance.
- ⑧ **Examine how performance on an indicator varies** among different groups—by child age, race and ethnicity, and locality. (Be cautious, however, about interpreting data for groups with small numbers as observations may be limited.)
- ⑨ **Use charts and other visualizations** to better see trends and patterns.
- ⑩ **Look at state and national data** in the Context Data that reflect characteristics of the population served by the child welfare system and consider whether they provide additional insights into trends and patterns.
- ⑪ **Explore theories** and areas for further exploration on why trends and group differences have occurred using the Context Data as well as other data sources (e.g., management information system data and reports,⁶ trends observed from performance on the CFSR case review items and [CFSR Online Monitoring System \(OMS\) reports](#), and interviews or focus groups with frontline and program staff, young people in care, and families receiving services).
- ⑫ **Engage individuals with lived experience, legal and judicial communities, and other stakeholders** in discussions of the findings, key themes emerging from the data, the underlying causes, and areas for further exploration and attention.

⁵ States can access additional visualizations of statewide data indicator performance over time through the [CFSR Online Monitoring System \(OMS\)](#) (login required).

⁶ In addition to state-produced management reports, states may be able to access relevant data from publicly available sources on child welfare system trends (e.g., investigations, substantiations, entries into and exits from foster care) from the [Children's Bureau's Child Welfare Outcomes Report data](#), the [National Center for Juvenile Justice's Disproportionality Rates for Children of Color in Foster Care Dashboard](#), [Child Trends' State-Level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States](#), and [Kids Count Data Center](#). Customized data can be obtained through use of contracted reporting tools and services available from [Chapin Hall's Center for State Child Welfare Data](#), Results Oriented Management, and others.

Sample Context Data Presentation

The Context Data files contain:

- ♦ **Blue tabs** with foundational information on the characteristics of the state's child and youth population served by the child welfare system, entry rates, national and state permanency over time, and national and state outcomes by entry year and by age of children and young people at time of entry into foster care
- ♦ **Green tabs** with aggregate and disaggregated observed performance data for each of the state's statewide data indicators from the three most recent 12-month reporting periods

The following illustration presents a sample excerpt from the Context Data files. Most green tabs in the Context Data are presented in a similar format with data broken down by age, race/ethnicity, and locality. The final two columns (percent of total) can be particularly useful in examining the proportion of a subgroup in the population and the proportion of that group experiencing a specific outcome to identify potential disproportionality.

	Denominator (in care)			Numerator (exits)			Percentage*			Percent of total (entries)	Percent of total (exits)
	17A17B	18A18B	19A19B	17A17B	18A18B	19A19B	17A17B	18A18B	19A19B	19A19B	19A19B
Age at entry											
Total	1,105	970	867	298	289	267	27.0%	29.8%	30.8%	100.0%	100.0%
0-3 mon	143	135	113	28	23	18	19.6%	17.0%	15.9%	13.0%	6.7%
4-11 mon	60	48	63	20	10	22	33.3%	20.8%	34.9%	7.3%	8.2%

The **column headings** provide the AFCARS data periods corresponding to the 12-month federal reporting period. For example, "17A17B" represents October 2016–March 2017 and April 2017–September 2017.

The **denominator** in the first set of columns presents the population of interest (e.g., children who entered foster care).

The **numerator** presents the population experiencing the selected outcome (e.g., children who exited foster care).

The **percentage** shows the performance value of the numerator divided by the denominator (e.g., exits/entries for selected period).

The **percent of total** columns describe the relative distribution of the subcategories for the latest 12-month period (e.g., children ages 0–3 months represented 13.0% of all children who entered foster care in FY 2019 but only 6.7% of all exits from care). This is important in examining breakdowns by age, race/ethnicity, and locality and determining whether any groups are disproportionality represented in either the denominator or the numerator.

* For some indicators, the percentage column presents rates rather than percentages (e.g., placement stability data present moves per 1,000 days in care).

Observation Worksheet

Use this worksheet to document observations from your state's Data Profile and Context Data and identify questions to explore further. Bring together CQI and data staff, program managers, frontline staff, young people and family members with lived experience, representatives of legal and judicial communities, and other system partners and stakeholders to discuss your state's child welfare data. Note how thinking changes and understanding deepens as your team digs into the data and explores the information from multiple perspectives.⁷

Looking at the Data Profile

1. What **trends** do you see in the RSP visualizations?

2. What **areas of strength** do you see?

3. What **areas for improvement** or further attention do you see?

4. What questions does the Data Profile raise? How could your team answer those questions with the Context Data?

Looking at the Context Data

5. Which **performance data** (statewide data indicator(s) and other child welfare dynamics) are of particular interest to explore further?

⁷ This data exploration process may evolve from or feed into your state's CQI process, problem exploration, and "5 whys" activities conducted for change efforts. See the ["Change and Implementation in Practice: Problem Exploration" brief](#) for more information.

6. Does the performance data show **trends** of getting better or worse over time?

7. How do the selected performance data **vary among different age groups**?

8. How do the selected performance data **vary by race and ethnicity**?

9. How do the selected performance data **vary by locality** (e.g., county, region)?

10. How do the selected performance data compare to performance on other statewide data indicators?

11. What questions should your team explore further to better understand the observed trends and variations and their underlying causes?

12. How can state Context Data help answer the identified questions?

13. How can young people and families with lived experience, frontline staff, and system partners provide insight to answer the identified questions?

14. What additional data sources could help your team answer the identified questions? (Consider case reviews, agency or court administrative data, management reports, surveys, focus groups, other.)

Appendix: Using Excel to Create Charts and Explore Data

This appendix provides guidance and tips for using Excel to create charts and explore the data from the Supplemental Context Data Workbook (Context Data).

Getting Started

Keep the following in mind when getting started:

- ◆ The Context Data includes a lot of detailed information on the state's performance on the statewide data indicators, as well as contextual information about the state and national child welfare population. The "Overview" tab provides a summary of what is included in each of the subsequent tabs at the bottom of the workbook.
- ◆ When using the Context Data, it may be helpful to select the data that your team would like to include in a chart and copy it to a blank workbook. This allows you to focus only on the data you're planning to visualize, adjust the headers and other labels, and have space for your charts. When copying data into a new worksheet, ensure that you're bringing over the labels for the periods under review.
- ◆ You might also want to combine performance on more than one statewide data indicator or other types of context data, such as entry rates. For example, considering the overall entry rate as well as entry rates by age may provide important context for performance on the data indicators. Considering performance on all three of the permanency in 12 months indicators may help begin to isolate contributing factors and lead to the subsequent questions that might be answered with additional data sources.

Creating a Chart

Once you have the data that you'd like to put into a chart, follow these steps:

1. Select the range of cells

	19AB	20AB	21AB
Total	6,702	5,945	4,162
< 1 year	1,076	941	780
1-5 yrs	1,756	1,488	1,083
6-10 yrs	1,365	1,222	792
11-16 yrs	2,151	1,970	1,303
17 yrs	354	324	204

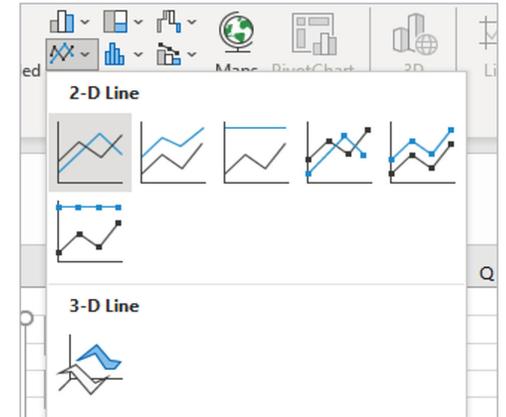
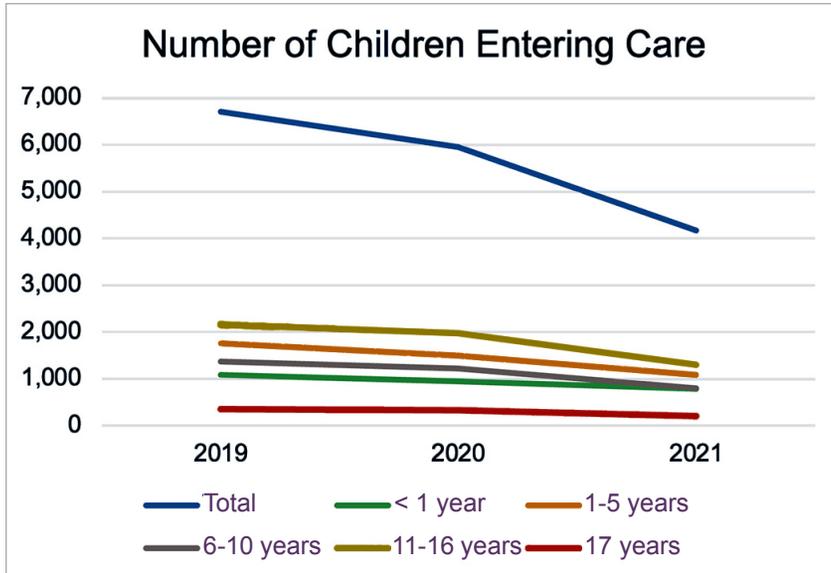
2. Create a chart

On the "Insert" tab, in the Charts group, click on the type of graph you'd like to create (bar, clustered bar, line, etc.), as shown in the example to the right.

3. Make adjustments

Adjust the chart title, axis ranges, and labels as needed.

Example



Data Visualization Tips

Remember these tips when creating charts and other data visuals:

- ◆ Consider what questions the data might answer and related questions that might be raised.
- ◆ Use clear labels. If there's a possibility that the audience is not familiar with concepts such as the federal fiscal year, use calendar year dates. Where possible, use labels that reflect the jurisdiction's practice and terminology and provide a key for acronyms or explanations.
- ◆ Carefully select colors. Ensure that the use of color is consistent so that the meaning is clear to the user. Consider using colors that allow all users to see and understand the visualization.

Find More CFSR Planning and Implementation Tools and Supports

Visit the Center for State's [CFSR Planning and Implementation Tools webpage](#) to find the companion document, "[Application Example 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](#).

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](#).

Capacity Building Center for States. (2018). [Change and Implementation in Practice: Problem Exploration](#). [webpage]

Children's Bureau. (2022). [Advancing Equity and Inclusion Through the CFSRs](#).

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

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

Public Profit. (2017). [Dabbling in the Data: A Hands-on-Guide to Participatory Data Analysis](#).

Schwabish, J. & Feng, A. (2021). [Do No Harm Guide. Applying Equity Awareness in Data Visualization](#). Urban Institute.

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