



# Child and Family Services Reviews

## Alabama

## Final Report

## 2018



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

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# Final Report: Alabama Child and Family Services Review

## INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the state of Alabama. The CFSRs enable the Children's Bureau to: (1) ensure conformity with certain federal child welfare requirements; (2) determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and (3) assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. Federal law and regulations authorize the Children's Bureau, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, to administer the review of child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSRs are structured to help states identify strengths and areas needing improvement in their child welfare practices and programs as well as institute systemic changes that will improve child and family outcomes.

The findings for Alabama are based on:

- The statewide assessment prepared by the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) and submitted to the Children's Bureau on May 14, 2018. The statewide assessment is the state's analysis of its performance on outcomes and the functioning of systemic factors in relation to title IV-B and IV-E requirements and the Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan
- The results of case reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home) conducted via a Traditional Review process at sites in Jefferson, Lee, and Covington Counties, Alabama, during the week of July 23–27, 2018
- Interviews and focus groups with state stakeholders and partners, which included:
  - Attorneys for the agency, children and youth, and parents
  - Child welfare agency caseworkers and supervisors
  - Child welfare agency Commissioner
  - Child welfare agency county directors and district administrative specialists
  - Child welfare agency and private agency training staff
  - Child welfare agency information systems staff
  - Children's residential center licensing and monitoring staff
  - Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) staff and Quality Assurance (QA) Committee members
  - Court system and Court Improvement Program staff
  - Criminal history check staff
  - Federal and other coordinating agency staff
  - Foster and adoptive parent licensing staff

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- Foster and adoptive parents
- Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children staff
- Judges
- Kinship caregivers
- Parents and guardians
- Resource workers and resource development staff
- Service providers
- Youth served by the agency

In Round 3, the Children’s Bureau suspended the use of the state’s performance on the national standards for the 7 statewide data indicators in conformity decisions. For contextual information, Appendix A of this report shows the state’s performance on the 7 data indicators. Moving forward, the Children’s Bureau will refer to the national standards as “national performance.” This national performance represents the performance of the nation on the statewide data indicators for an earlier point in time. For the time periods used to calculate the national performance for each indicator, see 80 Fed. Reg. 27263 (May 13, 2015).<sup>1</sup>

### Background Information

The Round 3 CFSR assesses state performance with regard to substantial conformity with 7 child and family outcomes and 7 systemic factors. Each outcome incorporates 1 or more of the 18 items included in the case review, and each item is rated as a Strength or Area Needing Improvement based on an evaluation of certain child welfare practices and processes in the cases reviewed in the state. With two exceptions, an item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90% or more of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. Because Item 1 is the only item for Safety Outcome 1 and Item 16 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95% Strength rating applies to those items. For a state to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95% or more of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome.

Eighteen items are considered in assessing the state’s substantial conformity with the 7 systemic factors. Each item reflects a key federal program requirement relevant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) for that systemic factor. An item is rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement based on how well the item-specific requirement is functioning. A determination of the rating is based on information provided by the state to demonstrate the functioning of the systemic factor in the statewide assessment and, as needed, from interviews with stakeholders and partners. For a state to be in substantial conformity with the systemic factors, no more than 1 of the items associated with the systemic factor can be rated as an Area Needing Improvement. For systemic factors that have only 1 item associated with them, that item must be rated as a Strength for a determination of substantial conformity.

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<sup>1</sup> May 2017 revised syntax (pending final verification) uses 2 years of NCANDS data to calculate performance for the Maltreatment in Foster Care indicator. National performance is based on FY 2013–2014 and 2013AB files. All other indicators use the same time periods identified in the May 2015 Federal Register notice.

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The Children's Bureau made several changes to the CFSR process and items and indicators relevant for performance based on lessons learned during the second round of reviews and in response to feedback from the child welfare field. As such, a state's performance in the third round of the CFSRs is not directly comparable to its performance in the second round. Appendix A provides tables presenting Alabama's overall performance in Round 3. Appendix B provides information about Alabama's performance in Round 2.

### I. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

#### Alabama 2018 CFSR Assessment of Substantial Conformity for Outcomes and Systemic Factors

The following 1 of the 7 outcomes was found to be in substantial conformity:

- Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect

None of the 7 systemic factors was found to be in substantial conformity.

#### Children's Bureau Comments on Alabama Performance

The following are the Children's Bureau's observations about cross-cutting issues and Alabama's overall performance:

The CFSR identified many positive trends and practices including initiatives that, with continued implementation, are anticipated to help strengthen the Alabama child welfare system. While experiencing struggles in some areas of safety practice, Alabama's case review findings indicate strong performance in initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports on a timely basis with the state exceeding the response time for the majority of cases reviewed. The state's recent revision of the initial training curriculum for child welfare caseworkers was noted by both internal and external stakeholders to have had a positive effect on practice. In addition, Alabama's commitment to developing a case review process is evident by the number of cases that are reviewed yearly and DHR use of the state QA Committee, as well as county QA committees, to engage external stakeholders in that process. The Children's Bureau encourages Alabama to continue to strengthen its case review process and to build a functional CQI system that enhances the feedback loop to ensure a concise flow of communication among state office leadership, frontline staff, external stakeholders, and the children and families Alabama serves.

Alabama DHR struggled in safety practices including initial and ongoing safety assessments, the provision of safety-related services, and the development and monitoring of appropriate safety plans to address identified safety concerns in both foster care and in-home service cases. In 2017, DHR began Safety Assessment/Safety Plan Training for individual counties. The Children's Bureau recommends that DHR evaluate its implementation of this training statewide to ensure that safety practices are being strengthened to better support the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and families served.

The foster care cases reviewed confirmed information in the statewide assessment indicating significant challenges in achieving timely permanency and well-being outcomes. The case review found cross-cutting issues that affect timely permanency, particularly

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challenges in engaging parents in assessment and case planning, caseworker visits with parents that were not of sufficient frequency or quality, and inadequate service provision to children and families.

While timely permanency was lacking for all approved case plan goals, it was a most significant challenge for the state to achieve timely permanency through adoption. Case reviews revealed a number of concerns affecting timely adoption, including a lack of timely filing for termination of parental rights (TPR); court delays in docketing TPR hearings; lengthy TPR appeals; a lack of concurrent planning; delays in changing permanency goals; and in some cases refusal of the court to hold TPR hearings. These issues contributed to a lack of timely adoption in over half of the applicable cases with this goal.

In foster care cases, improvement is needed to ensure that siblings are placed together when appropriate; that sibling visitation occurs; that children's connections are preserved; that relatives are assessed for placement; and that relationships between parents and children and between siblings are nurtured and supported. Siblings were placed together in fewer than half of the applicable cases, with the reason for separation being a lack of foster homes available to accommodate sibling groups. This is an area for improvement, as the agency addresses a lack of substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention.

Alabama's lowest performing outcome was families' enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. Case reviews noted concerns about the quality of initial and ongoing needs assessments for both children and parents, and especially about assessment and service provision to parents. The statewide assessment also indicated that improvement was needed to individualize services to meet the unique needs of families and children. Case reviews showed that substance abuse was the reason for the agency's involvement in a large percentage of cases in the review sample. Additionally, insufficient mental health services for children in care and transportation access were issues that affected the state's performance in effectively assessing and addressing the service needs of children and families. The Children's Bureau encourages the state to further analyze the lack of a sufficient service array and its effect on the state's performance in outcomes for family and child well-being.

Although Alabama was found not in substantial conformity with most outcomes, case reviews identified good practice related to supervisory oversight in some areas. When supervisory oversight was evident in cases, quality worker visits with children occurred; comprehensive initial and ongoing safety and needs assessments were completed; foster parents ensured that sibling visitation occurred; connections were preserved in many cases; and most of the children had stable placements during the period under review. In contrast, when supervisory oversight was not evident, or when multiple caseworkers were assigned to a case, safety practices for children and families were negatively affected; family engagement was inconsistent; and service provision was delayed.

Alabama has implemented the Comprehensive Child and Family Assessment as well as a new individual service plan process and a new initial caseworker training curriculum. DHR has also fostered collaborative partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders. The Children's Bureau encourages Alabama to explore ways in which these foundational practice components and partnerships can be used to improve the safety, permanency and well-being outcomes of children and families.

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### II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

For each outcome, we provide performance summaries from the case review findings. The CFSR relies upon a case review of an approved sample of foster care cases and in-home services cases. Where relevant, we provide performance summaries that are differentiated between foster care and in-home services cases.

This report provides an overview. Results have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Details on each case rating are available to DHR. The state is encouraged to conduct additional item-specific analysis of the case review findings to better understand areas of practice that are associated with positive outcomes and those that need improvement.

#### **Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.**

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Safety Outcome 1 using the state's performance on Item 1.

##### **State Outcome Performance**

Alabama is in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 96% of the 26 applicable cases reviewed.

##### **Safety Outcome 1 Item Performance**

##### **Item 1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment**

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports received during the period under review were initiated, and face-to-face contact with the child(ren) made, within the time frames established by agency policies or state statutes.

State policy requires that response to reports of child abuse and neglect be initiated within one of two designated response times: (1) "immediate," when intake information indicates serious harm will likely occur within 24 hours to the children identified in the report as allegedly abused, which requires response as soon as possible after a report is received but no later than 12 hours from receipt; and (2) "within 5 calendar days," when an immediate response is not required, which means 5 days from the exact date, hour, and minute the intake information was received. In-person indication contact must be made with the children who are allegedly at risk of serious harm and all other children in the home. Child welfare staff must make in-person contact with all other children in the home not abused or neglected as soon as the intake and initial contact warrants are issued but no later than 15 days from the exact date/time the report was received.

When a report involves the allegation of a positive test for alcohol and drugs at birth, and the report is received before the infant is discharged from the hospital, child welfare staff must respond immediately to the hospital. If the report is received after the infant's discharge from the hospital, child welfare staff must make a home visit no later than 12 hours after the report is received.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Strength for Item 1 because 96% of the 26 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

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For performance on the Safety statewide data indicators, see Appendix A.

### **Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.**

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Safety Outcome 2 using the state's performance on Items 2 and 3.

#### **State Outcome Performance**

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 58% of the 65 cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 60% of the 40 foster care cases and 56% of the 25 in-home services cases.

#### ***Safety Outcome 2 Item Performance***

##### **Item 2. Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care**

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children's entry into foster care or re-entry after a reunification.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 2 because 71% of the 17 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 73% of the 11 applicable foster care cases and 67% of the 6 applicable in-home services cases.

##### **Item 3. Risk and Safety Assessment and Management**

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 3 because 60% of the 65 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 63% of the 40 foster care cases and 56% of the 25 in-home services cases.

### **Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Permanency Outcome 1 using the state's performance on Items 4, 5, and 6.

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### State Outcome Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 25% of the 40 applicable cases reviewed.

### *Permanency Outcome 1 Item Performance*

#### Item 4. Stability of Foster Care Placement

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether the child in foster care is in a stable placement at the time of the onsite review and that any changes in placement that occurred during the period under review were in the best interests of the child and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal(s).

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 4 because 60% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

#### Item 5. Permanency Goal for Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 5 because 50% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

#### Item 6. Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 6 because 40% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

For performance on the Permanency statewide data indicators, see Appendix A.

### **Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Permanency Outcome 2 using the state's performance on Items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

### State Outcome Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 48% of the 40 applicable cases reviewed.

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### *Permanency Outcome 2 Item Performance*

#### **Item 7. Placement With Siblings**

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 7 because 65% of the 20 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

#### **Item 8. Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care**

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father,<sup>2</sup> and siblings is of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationship with these close family members.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 8 because 50% of the 30 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- In 57% of the 14 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation with a sibling(s) in foster care who is/was in a different placement setting was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.
- In 58% of the 26 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation between the child in foster care and his or her mother was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.
- In 36% of the 11 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation between the child in foster care and his or her father was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.

#### **Item 9. Preserving Connections**

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to maintain the child's connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends.

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<sup>2</sup> For Item 8, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification. The persons identified in these roles for the purposes of the review may include individuals who do not meet the legal definitions or conventional meanings of a mother and father.

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- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 9 because 53% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

### Item 10. Relative Placement

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to place the child with relatives when appropriate.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 10 because 54% of the 35 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

### Item 11. Relationship of Child in Care With Parents

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father<sup>3</sup> or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 11 because 39% of the 28 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- In 48% of the 27 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her mother.
- In 36% of the 11 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her father.

## Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Well-Being Outcome 1 using the state's performance on Items 12, 13, 14, and 15.

### State Outcome Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 22% of the 65 cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 20% of the 40 foster care cases and 24% of the 25 in-home services cases.

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<sup>3</sup> For Item 11, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification.

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### **Well-Being Outcome 1 Item Performance**

#### **Item 12. Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents**

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency (1) made concerted efforts to assess the needs of children, parents,<sup>4</sup> and foster parents (both initially, if the child entered foster care or the case was opened during the period under review, and on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family, and (2) provided the appropriate services.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12 because 23% of the 65 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12 was rated as Strength in 23% of the 40 foster care cases and 24% of the 25 in-home services cases.

Item 12 is divided into three sub-items:

#### **Sub-Item 12A. Needs Assessment and Services to Children**

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12A because 69% of the 65 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12A was rated as a Strength in 70% of the 40 foster care cases and 68% of the 25 in-home services cases.

#### **Sub-Item 12B. Needs Assessment and Services to Parents**

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12B because 25% of the 57 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 12B was rated as a Strength in 22% of the 32 applicable foster care cases and 28% of the 25 in-home services cases.
- In 45% of the 56 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts both to assess and address the needs of mothers.
- In 21% of the 39 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts both to assess and address the needs of fathers.

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<sup>4</sup> For Sub-Item 12B, in the in-home cases, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers with whom the children were living when the agency became involved with the family and with whom the children will remain (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adoptive parents). In the foster care cases, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification; however, biological parents who were not the parents from whom the child was removed may also be included, as may adoptive parents if the adoption was finalized during the period under review. A rating could consider the agency's work with multiple applicable "mothers" and "fathers" for the period under review in the case.

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### Sub-Item 12C. Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12C because 57% of the 37 applicable foster care cases were rated as a Strength.

### Item 13. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made (or are being made) to involve parents<sup>5</sup> and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 13 because 33% of the 61 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 31% of the 36 applicable foster care cases and 36% of the 25 in-home services cases.
- In 71% of the 45 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve child(ren) in case planning.
- In 57% of the 56 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve mothers in case planning.
- In 25% of the 32 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve fathers in case planning.

### Item 14. Caseworker Visits With Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the child(ren) in the case are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 14 because 75% of the 65 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 80% of the 40 foster care cases and 68% of the 25 in-home services cases.

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<sup>5</sup> For Item 13, in the in-home cases, “Mother” and “Father” are typically defined as the parents/caregivers with whom the children were living when the agency became involved with the family and with whom the children will remain (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adoptive parents). In the foster care cases, “mother” and “father” are typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification; however, biological parents who were not the parents from whom the child was removed may also be included, as may adoptive parents if the adoption was finalized during the period under review. A rating could consider the agency’s work with multiple applicable “mothers” and “fathers” for the period under review in the case.

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### Item 15. Caseworker Visits With Parents

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers<sup>6</sup> of the child(ren) are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 15 because 23% of the 57 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 19% of the 32 applicable foster care cases and 28% of the 25 in-home services cases.
- In 39% of the 56 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of caseworker visitation with mothers were sufficient.
- In 22% of the 32 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of caseworker visitation with fathers were sufficient.

### Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Well-Being Outcome 2 using the state's performance on Item 16.

#### State Outcome Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 77% of the 35 applicable cases reviewed.

#### *Well-Being Outcome 2 Item Performance*

### Item 16. Educational Needs of the Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To assess whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children's educational needs at the initial contact with the child (if the case was opened during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis (if the case was opened before the period under review), and whether identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

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<sup>6</sup> For Item 15, in the in-home cases, "Mother" and "Father" are typically defined as the parents/caregivers with whom the children were living when the agency became involved with the family and with whom the children will remain (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adoptive parents). In the foster care cases, "Mother" and "Father" is typically defined as the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification; however, biological parents who were not the parents from whom the child was removed may also be included, as may adoptive parents if the adoption was finalized during the period under review. A rating could consider the agency's work with multiple applicable mother and fathers for the period under review in the case.

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- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 16 because 77% of the 35 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 81% of the 32 applicable foster care cases and 33% of the 3 applicable in-home services cases.

### Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

The Children's Bureau calculates the state's performance on Well-Being Outcome 3 using the state's performance on Items 17 and 18.

#### State Outcome Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 52% of the 58 applicable cases reviewed.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 50% of the 40 applicable foster care cases and 56% of the 18 applicable in-home services cases.

#### Well-Being Outcome 3 Item Performance

##### Item 17. Physical Health of the Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the physical health needs of the children, including dental health needs.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 17 because 60% of the 42 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 58% of the 40 foster care cases and 100% of the 2 applicable in-home services cases.

##### Item 18. Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the children.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 18 because 53% of the 43 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.
- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 54% of the 26 applicable foster care cases and 53% of the 17 applicable in-home services cases.

### III. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

For each systemic factor below, we provide performance summaries and a determination of whether the state is in substantial conformity with that systemic factor. In addition, we provide ratings for each item and a description of how the rating was determined. The CFSR relies upon a review of information contained in the statewide assessment to assess each item. If an item rating cannot be determined from the information contained in the statewide assessment, the Children's Bureau conducts stakeholder interviews and considers information gathered through the interviews in determining ratings for each item.

#### Statewide Information System

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Item 19.

##### State Systemic Factor Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The one item in this systemic factor was rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

##### Statewide Information System Item Performance

#### Item 19. Statewide Information System

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The statewide information system is functioning statewide to ensure that, at a minimum, the state can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or, within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 19 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Data and information in the statewide assessment indicated that Alabama has a written policy for the timeliness of data entry of the status, demographics, location, and placement goals for children in foster care into the state's Family, Adult, and Child Tracking System (FACTS). However, there is not a statewide practice for verifying the accuracy of the data and Alabama was unable to provide data or information that supports the accuracy of information in FACTS. Stakeholders said that the quality of the information depended on caseworker data entry. Stakeholders also said that monthly reports generated from Alabama's Electronic Report Distribution (ERD) system, sourced from FACTS, do not contain real-time information to assure that the status, demographics, location, and placement goals for children in foster care are readily available.

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### Case Review System

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

#### State Systemic Factor Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. One of the 5 items in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

#### Case Review System Item Performance

##### Item 20. Written Case Plan

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The case review system is functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a written case plan that is developed jointly with the child's parent(s) and includes the required provisions.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 20 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Case review data provided in the statewide assessment showed that the state is not effectively ensuring that parents are engaged in the development of case plans; in 2015 through 2017, slightly more than half of parents were engaged in developing their written case plans. Stakeholders confirmed that parental involvement in case plan development varies across the state. Although the state has implemented a new Individualized Service Plan process, the process is not yet occurring statewide.

##### Item 21. Periodic Reviews

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The case review system is functioning statewide to ensure that a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 21 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment described inconsistent practices in the process for holding periodic reviews across the state. In some jurisdictions, there are formal court hearings. In other jurisdictions, a paper review occurs as the judge reviews and signs off on submitted documentation. Stakeholders confirmed that timely periodic reviews do not occur across all jurisdictions. Barriers to timely periodic reviews include an increase in the number of children entering foster care and high staff turnover.

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### Item 22. Permanency Hearings

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The case review system is functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body that occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Strength for Item 22 based on information from the stakeholder interviews.
- Information collected during interviews with stakeholders indicated that permanency hearings are occurring no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter for all children in foster care throughout the state. Permanency hearings are routinely scheduled at the disposition hearing and Guardian Ad Litem attorneys track when hearings are due. Stakeholders also said that in some cases the hearings are held earlier than the 12-month time frame.

### Item 23. Termination of Parental Rights

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The case review system is functioning statewide to ensure that the filing of termination of parental rights proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 23 based on information from the statewide assessment. Alabama agreed with this rating and felt that additional information collected during stakeholder interviews would not affect the rating.
- Information in the statewide assessment indicated that the filing of TPR proceedings does not occur in a consistent manner across the state. Data provided from the Administrative Office of Courts does not support that TPR occurs timely in accordance with required provisions.

### Item 24. Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The case review system is functioning to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 24 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment showed that caregivers are neither routinely notified of reviews and court hearings regarding children in their care nor afforded their right to be heard in the proceedings. The state does not have a standard process statewide to ensure caregivers are notified of hearings and their right to be heard. Stakeholders confirmed that jurisdictions vary on whether caregivers are allowed to remain in the courtroom or able to offer information during hearings.

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### Quality Assurance System

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Item 25.

#### State Systemic Factor Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The one item in this systemic factor was rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

#### Quality Assurance System Item Performance

##### Item 25. Quality Assurance System

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The quality assurance system is 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.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 25 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders showed that Alabama does not have a QA system that is functioning effectively statewide. The state uses the Quality Services Review (QSR) instrument to assess whether best practice standards are met and uses state and local QA Committees to evaluate and provide feedback to DHR on the performance on the overall system of care. However, feedback loops with the local level and expectations for what local levels do with case review results have not been fully developed. Aspects of the CQI process are implemented statewide. Counties submit a self-assessment and county improvement plans are required. However, stakeholders said that the CQI component does not consistently include caseworkers and, in some circumstances, supervisors in meaningful ways.

### Staff and Provider Training

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 26, 27, and 28.

#### State Systemic Factor Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. None of the items in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

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### *Staff and Provider Training Item Performance*

#### **Item 26. Initial Staff Training**

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The staff and provider training system is functioning statewide to ensure that initial training is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 26 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders indicated that although the state has a training system in place that ensures that staff receive initial training, information regarding the timeliness of the initial staff training was inconsistent. Stakeholders said new workers may attend initial training up to 3 months after their hire dates. Prior to receiving initial training, caseworkers may receive caseloads and participate in on-the-job training. Supervisors and experienced caseworkers support them in their completion of casework duties. This practice is more common in larger jurisdictions of the state. The state does not have a mechanism for formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the initial training outside of surveys completed by the participants. Results of those surveys indicated that staff felt the training prepared them to do their jobs.

#### **Item 27. Ongoing Staff Training**

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The staff and provider training system is functioning statewide to ensure that ongoing training is provided for staff<sup>7</sup> that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 27 based on information from the statewide assessment. Alabama agreed with this rating and felt that additional information collected during stakeholder interviews would not affect the rating.
- Information in the statewide assessment showed that Alabama does not have a systematic method in place to ensure that staff receive ongoing training that addresses the skills and knowledge needed for staff to carry out their job duties.

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<sup>7</sup> "Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, includes all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP. "Staff" also includes direct supervisors of all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

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### Item 28. Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The staff and provider training system is functioning statewide to ensure that training is occurring statewide for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of state licensed or approved facilities (that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E) that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 28 based on information from the statewide assessment. Alabama agreed with this rating and felt that additional information collected during stakeholder interviews would not affect the rating.
- In the statewide assessment, the state provided information on initial and ongoing training requirements for foster and adoptive parents and facilities staff. The state does not have a way to ensure that training requirements are met. In addition, information provided in the statewide assessment indicates that not all training materials meet continuing education training requirements. No data was provided regarding how effectively the state is able to ensure that training requirements are met for state licensed or approved facilities.

### Service Array and Resource Development

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 29 and 30.

#### State Systemic Factor Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. None of the items in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

#### *Service Array and Resource Development Item Performance*

### Item 29. Array of Services

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The service array and resource development system is functioning to ensure that the following array of services is accessible in all political jurisdictions covered by the CFSP: (1) services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, (2) services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, (3) services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and (4) services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 29 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders indicated that the state does not have an adequate array of services accessible to children and families statewide. Significant differences were noted between metropolitan and rural areas of the state, with greater availability of services in metropolitan areas. Gaps and waitlists were

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identified for substance abuse treatment for both youth and adults, transportation, timely access to mental health services, in-patient crisis stabilization services, independent living services, trauma-responsive services, and services to families providing kinship care.

### Item 30. Individualizing Services

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The service array and resource development system is functioning statewide to ensure that the services in Item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 30 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders indicates that services are not being individualized across the state. Most families are referred to the same set of services without the individualization needed to reflect the families' cultural identities or preferences. Barriers to individualization include a lack of comprehensive and accurate assessments, and a lack of use of available resources.

### Agency Responsiveness to the Community

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 31 and 32.

#### State Systemic Factor Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. None of the items in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

#### *Agency Responsiveness to the Community Item Performance*

### Item 31. State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The agency responsiveness to the community system is functioning statewide to ensure that, in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, the state engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 31 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders showed that there is insufficient active engagement and ongoing consultation with key stakeholders in developing goals, objectives, and annual updates to the CFSP. Stakeholders said that although some informal engagement and collaboration occurs at the local and state levels, not all stakeholders are aware of the state's strategic planning efforts.

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### Item 32. Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The agency responsiveness to the community system is functioning statewide to ensure that the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 32 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders showed that the state has good collaborative partnerships with entities such as the Children's Justice Task Force, Alabama Fatherhood Initiative, and Alabama National Guard. However, Alabama has challenges in coordinating with other federal programs. The state was unable to provide data to support coordination with programs such as the Departments of Education and Labor, and Head Start. Coordination with the state agency responsible for administering the Medicaid program is limited to informing youth transitioning out of care that Medicaid can be extended until age 26.

### Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

The Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on this systemic factor using the state's performance on Items 33, 34, 35, and 36.

#### State Systemic Factor Performance

Alabama is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. None of the four items in this systemic factor was rated as a Strength.

#### *Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention Item Performance*

### Item 33. Standards Applied Equally

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 33 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment shows, and stakeholders confirm, that the state is not ensuring that state standards are applied equally to all licensed or approved foster homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds. The state is not consistently ensuring that provisional foster family home approvals are completed in compliance with state policies, and that requirements for continuing education for foster parents are applied equally across all jurisdictions.

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### Item 34. Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning statewide to ensure that the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 34 based on information from the statewide assessment and stakeholder interviews.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders indicated that the state is ensuring compliance with federal requirements to conduct criminal background clearances. However, the state was unable to demonstrate that it has a case planning process that, in response to concerns, adequately addresses the safety of children in foster care and adoptive placements.

### Item 35. Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed is occurring statewide.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 35 based on information from the statewide assessment. Alabama agreed with this rating and felt that additional information collected during stakeholder interviews would not affect the rating.
- Information in the statewide assessment indicated that Alabama is not ensuring that diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care across the state is occurring. The state relies on counties to self-report recruitment activity, and to use market segmentation data in recruitment efforts. Not all of the counties, however, have completed the training in the use of market segmentation data.

### Item 36. State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements

**Description of Systemic Factor Item:** The foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide.

- Alabama received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 36 based on information from the statewide assessment. Alabama agreed with this rating and felt that additional information collected during stakeholder interviews would not affect the rating.
- Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders indicates that the state is effectively utilizing cross-jurisdictional resources to support the permanent placement of waiting children through AdoptUSKids, Heart Gallery Alabama, and Adoption.com. However, there are concerns about the state's response to

## **Alabama 2018 CFSR Final Report**

requests from other states to complete home studies in order to facilitate permanent placements in Alabama of children from those states. The state was unable to provide data demonstrating the timely completion of home study requests received from other states.

## Appendix A

### Summary of Alabama 2018 Child and Family Services Review Performance

#### I. Ratings for Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being Outcomes and Items

**Outcome Achievement:** Outcomes may be rated as in substantial conformity or not in substantial conformity. 95% of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the state to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

**Item Achievement:** Items may be rated as a Strength or as an Area Needing Improvement. For an overall rating of Strength, 90% of the cases reviewed for the item (with the exception of Item 1 and Item 16) must be rated as a Strength. Because Item 1 is the only item for Safety Outcome 1 and Item 16 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95% Strength rating applies.

#### **SAFETY OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN ARE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, PROTECTED FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT.**

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
<b>Safety Outcome 1</b> Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	In Substantial Conformity	96% Substantially Achieved
<b>Item 1</b> Timeliness of investigations	Strength	96% Strength

#### **SAFETY OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE SAFELY MAINTAINED IN THEIR HOMES WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE.**

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
<b>Safety Outcome 2</b> Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	Not in Substantial Conformity	58% Substantially Achieved
<b>Item 2</b> Services to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care	Area Needing Improvement†	71% Strength
<b>Item 3</b> Risk and safety assessment and management	Area Needing Improvement	60% Strength

## Appendix A: Summary of Alabama 2018 CFSR Performance

### PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN HAVE PERMANENCY AND STABILITY IN THEIR LIVING SITUATIONS.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
<b>Permanency Outcome 1</b> Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	Not in Substantial Conformity	25% Substantially Achieved
<b>Item 4</b> Stability of foster care placement	Area Needing Improvement	60% Strength
<b>Item 5</b> Permanency goal for child	Area Needing Improvement	50% Strength
<b>Item 6</b> Achieving reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement	Area Needing Improvement	40% Strength

### PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2: THE CONTINUITY OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS IS PRESERVED FOR CHILDREN.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
<b>Permanency Outcome 2</b> The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children	Not in Substantial Conformity	48% Substantially Achieved
<b>Item 7</b> Placement with siblings	Area Needing Improvement	65% Strength
<b>Item 8</b> Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	Area Needing Improvement	50% Strength
<b>Item 9</b> Preserving connections	Area Needing Improvement	53% Strength
<b>Item 10</b> Relative placement	Area Needing Improvement	54% Strength
<b>Item 11</b> Relationship of child in care with parents	Area Needing Improvement	39% Strength

## Appendix A: Summary of Alabama 2018 CFSR Performance

### WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1: FAMILIES HAVE ENHANCED CAPACITY TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S NEEDS.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
<b>Well-Being Outcome 1</b> Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs	Not in Substantial Conformity	22% Substantially Achieved
<b>Item 12</b> Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents	Area Needing Improvement	23% Strength
<b>Sub-Item 12A</b> Needs assessment and services to children	Area Needing Improvement	69% Strength
<b>Sub-Item 12B</b> Needs assessment and services to parents	Area Needing Improvement	25% Strength
<b>Sub-Item 12C</b> Needs assessment and services to foster parents	Area Needing Improvement	57% Strength
<b>Item 13</b> Child and family involvement in case planning	Area Needing Improvement	33% Strength
<b>Item 14</b> Caseworker visits with child	Area Needing Improvement	75% Strength
<b>Item 15</b> Caseworker visits with parents	Area Needing Improvement	23% Strength

### WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN RECEIVE APPROPRIATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
<b>Well-Being Outcome 2</b> Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	Not in Substantial Conformity	77% Substantially Achieved
<b>Item 16</b> Educational needs of the child	Area Needing Improvement	77% Strength

## Appendix A: Summary of Alabama 2018 CFSR Performance

### WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN RECEIVE ADEQUATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS.

Data Element	Overall Determination	State Performance
<b>Well-Being Outcome 3</b> Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	Not in Substantial Conformity	52% Substantially Achieved
<b>Item 17</b> Physical health of the child	Area Needing Improvement	60% Strength
<b>Item 18</b> Mental/behavioral health of the child	Area Needing Improvement	53% Strength

## II. Ratings for Systemic Factors

The Children’s Bureau determines whether a state is in substantial conformity with federal requirements for the 7 systemic factors based on the level of functioning of each systemic factor across the state. The Children’s Bureau determines substantial conformity with the systemic factors based on ratings for the item or items within each factor. Performance on 5 of the 7 systemic factors is determined on the basis of ratings for multiple items or plan requirements. For a state to be found in substantial conformity with these systemic factors, the Children’s Bureau must find that no more than 1 of the required items for that systemic factor fails to function as required. For a state to be found in substantial conformity with the 2 systemic factors that are determined based on the rating of a single item, the Children’s Bureau must find that the item is functioning as required.

### STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
<b>Statewide Information System</b>	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
<b>Item 19</b> Statewide Information System	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

## Appendix A: Summary of Alabama 2018 CFSR Performance

### CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
<b>Case Review System</b>	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
<b>Item 20</b> Written Case Plan	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 21</b> Periodic Reviews	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 22</b> Permanency Hearings	Stakeholder Interviews	Strength
<b>Item 23</b> Termination of Parental Rights	Statewide Assessment	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 24</b> Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

### QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
<b>Quality Assurance System</b>	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
<b>Item 25</b> Quality Assurance System	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

### STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
<b>Staff and Provider Training</b>	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
<b>Item 26</b> Initial Staff Training	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

## Appendix A: Summary of Alabama 2018 CFSR Performance

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
<b>Item 27</b> Ongoing Staff Training	Statewide Assessment	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 28</b> Foster and Adoptive Parent Training	Statewide Assessment	Area Needing Improvement

### SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
<b>Service Array and Resource Development</b>	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
<b>Item 29</b> Array of Services	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 30</b> Individualizing Services	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

### AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
<b>Agency Responsiveness to the Community</b>	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
<b>Item 31</b> State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 32</b> Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement

## Appendix A: Summary of Alabama 2018 CFSR Performance

### FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Data Element	Source of Data and Information	State Performance
<b>Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention</b>	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Not in Substantial Conformity
<b>Item 33</b> Standards Applied Equally	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 34</b> Requirements for Criminal Background Checks	Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 35</b> Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes	Statewide Assessment	Area Needing Improvement
<b>Item 36</b> State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements	Statewide Assessment	Area Needing Improvement

### III. Performance on Statewide Data Indicators<sup>8</sup>

The state's performance is considered against the national performance for each statewide data indicator and provides contextual information for considering the findings. This information is not used in conformity decisions. State performance may be statistically above, below, or no different than the national performance. If a state did not provide the required data or did not meet the applicable item data quality limits, the Children's Bureau did not calculate the state's performance for the statewide data indicator.

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<sup>8</sup> In October 2016, the Children's Bureau issued Technical Bulletin #9 (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/cfsr-technical-bulletin-9>), which alerted states to the fact that there were technical errors in the syntax used to calculate the national and state performance for the statewide data indicators. Performance shown in this table reflects performance based on May 2017 revised syntax that is pending final verification.

## Appendix A: Summary of Alabama 2018 CFSR Performance

Statewide Data Indicator	National Performance	Direction of Desired Performance	RSP*	95% Confidence Interval**	Data Period(s) Used for State Performance***
Recurrence of maltreatment	9.5%	Lower	5.5%	4.9%–6.0%	FY15–16
Maltreatment in foster care (victimizations per 100,000 days in care)	9.67	Lower	6.72	5.42–8.34	15A–15B, FY15
Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care	42.7%	Higher	49.0%	47.2%–50.8%	14B–17A
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12-23 months	45.9%	Higher	40.3%	37.6%–43.2%	16B–17A
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 24 months or more	31.8%	Higher	28.3%	25.9%–30.7%	16B–17A
Re-entry to foster care in 12 months	8.1%	Lower	8.6%	7.1%–10.3%	14B–17A
Placement stability (moves per 1,000 days in care)	4.44	Lower	6.41	6.19–6.63	16B–17A

\* Risk-Standardized Performance (RSP) is derived from a multi-level statistical model and reflects the state's performance relative to states with similar children and takes into account the number of children the state served, the age distribution of these children and, for some indicators, the state's entry rate. It uses risk-adjustment to minimize differences in outcomes due to factors over which the state has little control and provides a more fair comparison of state performance against national performance.

\*\* 95% Confidence Interval is the 95% confidence interval estimate for the state's RSP. The values shown are the lower RSP and upper RSP of the interval estimate. The interval accounts for the amount of uncertainty associated with the RSP. For example, the CB is 95% confident that the true value of the RSP is between the lower and upper limit of the interval.

\*\*\* Data Period(s) Used for State Performance: Refers to the initial 12-month period and the period(s) of data needed to follow the children to observe their outcomes. The FY or federal fiscal year refers to NCANDS data, which spans the 12-month period October 1–September 30. All other periods refer to AFCARS data. "A" refers to the 6-month period October 1–March 31. "B" refers to the 6-month period April 1–September 30. The 2-digit year refers to the calendar year in which the period ends.

## Appendix B

### Summary of CFSR Round 2 Alabama 2007 Key Findings

The Children’s Bureau conducted a CFSR in Alabama in 2007. Key findings from that review are presented below. Because the Children’s Bureau made several changes to the CFSR process and items and indicators relevant for performance based on lessons learned during the second round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a state’s performance in the third round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the second round.

#### Identifying Information and Review Dates

<b>General Information</b>
<b>Children’s Bureau Region:</b> 4
<b>Date of Onsite Review:</b> August 13–17, 2007
<b>Period Under Review:</b> April 1, 2006, through August 13, 2007
<b>Date Final Report Issued:</b> May 28, 2008
<b>Date Program Improvement Plan Due:</b> June 4, 2008
<b>Date Program Improvement Plan Approved:</b> August 31, 2009

#### Highlights of Findings

<b>Performance Measurements</b>
A. The state met the national standards for <b>four</b> of the <b>six</b> standards.
B. The state achieved substantial conformity with <b>none</b> of the <b>seven</b> outcomes.
C. The state achieved substantial conformity with <b>four</b> of the <b>seven</b> systemic factors.

## Appendix B: Alabama 2007 CFSR Key Findings

### State's Conformance With the National Standards

Data Indicator or Composite	National Standard	State's Score	Meets or Does Not Meet Standard
Absence of maltreatment recurrence (data indicator)	94.6 or higher	97.8	Meets Standard
Absence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care (data indicator)	99.68 or higher	99.87	Meets Standard
Timeliness and permanency of reunifications (Permanency Composite 1)	122.6 or higher	124.2	Meets Standard
Timeliness of adoptions (Permanency Composite 2)	106.4 or higher	56.0	Does Not Meet Standard
Permanency for children and youth in foster care for long periods of time (Permanency Composite 3)	121.7 or higher	107.6	Does Not Meet Standard
Placement stability (Permanency Composite 4)	101.5 or higher	111.0	Meets Standard

### State's Conformance With the Outcomes

Outcome	Achieved or Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity

## Appendix B: Alabama 2007 CFSR Key Findings

Outcome	Achieved or Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity

### State's Conformance With the Systemic Factors

Systemic Factor	Achieved or Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Statewide Information System	Achieved Substantial Conformity
Case Review System	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Quality Assurance System	Achieved Substantial Conformity
Staff and Provider Training	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Service Array and Resource Development	Achieved Substantial Conformity
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Achieved Substantial Conformity
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity

## Appendix B: Alabama 2007 CFSR Key Findings

### Key Findings by Item

#### Outcomes

Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment	Strength
2. Repeat Maltreatment	Strength
3. Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-entry Into Foster Care	Area Needing Improvement
4. Risk Assessment and Safety Management	Area Needing Improvement
5. Foster Care Re-entries	Strength
6. Stability of Foster Care Placement	Area Needing Improvement
7. Permanency Goal for Child	Area Needing Improvement
8. Reunification, Guardianship, or Permanent Placement With Relatives	Area Needing Improvement
9. Adoption	Area Needing Improvement
10. Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	Area Needing Improvement
11. Proximity of Foster Care Placement	Strength
12. Placement With Siblings	Area Needing Improvement
13. Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	Area Needing Improvement
14. Preserving Connections	Area Needing Improvement
15. Relative Placement	Area Needing Improvement
16. Relationship of Child in Care With Parents	Area Needing Improvement
17. Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents	Area Needing Improvement
18. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	Area Needing Improvement
19. Caseworker Visits With Child	Area Needing Improvement
20. Caseworker Visits With Parents	Area Needing Improvement

## Appendix B: Alabama 2007 CFSR Key Findings

Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
21. Educational Needs of the Child	Area Needing Improvement
22. Physical Health of the Child	Strength
23. Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child	Area Needing Improvement

### **Systemic Factors**

Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
24. Statewide Information System	Strength
25. Written Case Plan	Area Needing Improvement
26. Periodic Reviews	Strength
27. Permanency Hearings	Area Needing Improvement
28. Termination of Parental Rights	Area Needing Improvement
29. Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers	Area Needing Improvement
30. Standards Ensuring Quality Services	Strength
31. Quality Assurance System	Strength
32. Initial Staff Training	Area Needing Improvement
33. Ongoing Staff Training	Area Needing Improvement
34. Foster and Adoptive Parent Training	Strength
35. Array of Services	Strength
36. Service Accessibility	Area Needing Improvement
37. Individualizing Services	Strength
38. Engagement in Consultation With Stakeholders	Strength
39. Agency Annual Reports Pursuant to CFSP	Strength
40. Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs	Strength

## Appendix B: Alabama 2007 CFSR Key Findings

Item	Strength or Area Needing Improvement
41. Standards for Foster Homes and Institutions	Strength
42. Standards Applied Equally	Strength
43. Requirements for Criminal Background Checks	Strength
44. Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes	Area Needing Improvement
45. State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements	Area Needing Improvement