

**Children's Bureau**  
**Child and Family Services Reviews Round 3**  
**Case Review Criterion 1**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Case Review Criterion 1**

The state operates an internal case review process at least annually that assesses statewide practice performance for the key child welfare areas using a uniform sampling process and methodology.

**General**

Questions

[What is the role of the Measurement and Sampling Committee \(MASC\)?](#)

[When should states obtain consultation from the Measurement and Sampling Committee \(MASC\)?](#)

[How does a state schedule a consultation call with the Measurement and Sampling Committee \(MASC\)?](#)

Answers

**What is the role of the Measurement and Sampling Committee (MASC)?**

The Measurement and Sampling Committee (MASC) of the Children's Bureau (CB) serves in a consultation role with states in the development and application of various sampling and measurement methods for the Child and Family Services Reviews Round 3 case review process. MASC will also consult with states on Program Improvement Plans. To ensure consistent use of sound sampling methodologies, MASC reviews case review sampling plans and methodologies for all states before the CB approves states to conduct their own case reviews. MASC applies the CFSR case review requirements and criterion 1 as detailed in [Technical Bulletin #7](#) when providing consultation to states. States may propose alternative sampling strategies based on their unique needs, which the CB will consider individually. MASC does not have a decision-making role. MASC members are statisticians, specialists with experience in state SACWIS systems, data specialists, and CFSR Unit program specialists. MASC meetings always include CB Regional Office (RO) State Specialists and the assigned CFSR Unit lead.

**When should states obtain consultation from MASC?**

MASC reviews state sampling plans and methodologies before finalization and approval by the CB. Ideally, MASC calls with states proposing to conduct their own reviews will occur when the state has submitted a draft sampling proposal to the CB Regional Office (RO) State Specialists and the assigned CFSR Unit lead. However, MASC is available to provide information and consultation to CB ROs and states as needed throughout CFSR Round 3 to

answer questions and assist states with development and modification of case review sampling approaches.

## **How does a state schedule a consultation call with MASC?**

Initial consultation calls with MASC are scheduled at the discretion of CB Regional Office (RO) State Specialists and the assigned CF SR Unit lead. Follow-up consultation with MASC is coordinated through the RO and CF SR Unit lead or at the conclusion of a MASC call when next steps are discussed. Once an initial MASC call has occurred, follow-up and confirmation of final sampling methodologies *may* be handled through review of e-mails and documentation provided by the state.

### **1.1 Statewide Representative Sample and Schedule**

The state's sampling methodology must have a statewide case review schedule that selects cases randomly from the entire state universe; or a stratified schedule of counties or jurisdictions, which consists of a cross-section of state child welfare practice and includes the largest metropolitan area and significant Tribal or other populations that are representative of state demographics. That same stratification will then be replicated for ongoing performance measurement.

#### Questions

[How representative does the sample need to be of the population served by the state child welfare agency?](#)

[How many review sites or counties should the state include in the CF SR if the state is not using a statewide simple random \*fixed\* sample?](#)

[How can states use the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System \(AFCARS\) submission to assure that significant geographical areas and other significant populations are included in the sample frame?](#)

[What sampling methodologies are other states using?](#)

[Does the Children's Bureau recommend that CF SR case reviews extend through the 6-month review period or that reviews be completed in a shorter period of time \(e.g., first several months of the review period\)?](#)

[What does the state case review schedule need to include?](#)

#### Answers

**How representative does the sample need to be of the population served by the state child welfare agency?**

Using a statewide simple random sample will ensure the sample is representative of the state. If a state proposes to stratify or use a selection of cases from the state population, the sample should include at least the largest metropolitan area, key program areas, Tribal and other significant populations, and a geographical cross-section of the state (urban and rural). At a minimum, the sample should align with guidelines used for Traditional Reviews: the

largest metropolitan area and two additional sites selected in partnership with the CB using available federal or state data to determine representativeness of the state. States must submit an example sample frame (the universe of cases used to identify the foster care and in-home services random sample) to MASC for review and verification. States consult with the committee regarding the state's proposed sampling plan, sample frame, and applicable proposed stratification and sites. A statistician on the committee also analyzes the required identifiers for both data sets to help determine whether the proposed sampling plan (including stratification and sites) are representative of the state.

**How many review sites or counties should the state include in the CFSR if the state is not using a statewide simple random fixed sample?**

The minimum number of review sites (jurisdictions, counties) required for the CFSR is three: the largest metropolitan area and two additional counties or jurisdictions that are representative of state demographics.

**How can states use the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) submission to ensure that significant geographical areas and other significant populations are included in the sample frame?**

The CB encourages states to use the state information system to extract a foster care sample of AFCARS-defined reportable cases for a 6-month sample period. State information systems are more dynamic and current than an AFCARS point-in-time report and often include other helpful data elements (e.g., region/division, case/program type). While not required, AFCARS data submissions can be used and sorted by Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) county codes to sort by geographic area. Other AFCARS case file identifiers the state could filter and use to understand the demographics of the foster care population served are race, age, date of entry, case plan goal, placement setting, and time in foster care.

**What sampling methodologies are other states using?**

Here are some examples of sampling methodologies that the CB has approved:

Example 1: The state plans to conduct 240 case reviews during its 6-month CFSR case review period. The review includes 180 foster care cases and 60 in-home services cases. To ensure a statewide representative sample, the state was divided into 6 geographical zones of equitable case size and mix. The state uses a rolling monthly sample to review 40 cases in each zone over the 6-month review period; 1 zone per month.

Example 2: The state plans to conduct 120 case reviews during its 6-month CFSR case review period. The state selected 13 counties to review. The counties include two large metro areas, a cross-section of small and medium-sized counties from across the state, and three counties with significant Tribal populations. The state will select the 120 cases to review using a simple random fixed sample, stratifying by county and case type based on each county's proportionate representation of cases in the state.

Example 3: The state plans to review the minimum number of 65 cases during the 6-month case review period: 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home services cases. The state will use a simple random fixed sample to select the 65 cases. The state has reviewers in all four of

its regions who will review cases and conduct interviews across the state simultaneously based on the statewide random sample.

**Does the Children’s Bureau recommend that CFSR case reviews extend through the 6-month review period or that reviews be completed in a shorter period of time (e.g., first several months of review period)?**

The CB does not recommend one approach over another with respect to the length of time a state takes to complete the case review. When deciding on the time frame, states should consider their capacity for conducting reviews and performing quality assurance, the location and travel required, and the ability to replicate the process and/or need to make adjustments. States that select a rolling monthly or quarterly sampling approach will review an even number of cases each month or quarter of the 6-month period.

**What does the state case review schedule need to include?**

States must submit a case review schedule that identifies the number and types of cases to be reviewed by geographic area and dates during the 6-month case review period. For example, case reviews will occur at this [jurisdiction/geographic area] during these [dates] and will include a review of [number and type] case records. There is not a prescribed format for states to document the proposed schedule. A table or calendar are two examples of acceptable formats.

**1.2 Sampling Methodology**

The state must use a simple random sample design but may include additional stratification to achieve an adequate representation of key program areas.

Questions

[What are the options for CFSR sampling methodologies?](#)

[What is a simple random \*fixed\* sample?](#)

[What is a \*rolling\* monthly or quarterly sample?](#)

[What is a simple random sample?](#)

[Are states required to stratify the case sample?](#)

[What does the sampling plan need to include?](#)

[What should states consider when developing the CFSR sampling methodology as it relates to Program Improvement Plans?](#)

Answers

**What are the options for CFSR sampling methodologies?**

States have the option to use a fixed sampling approach where the sample is pulled one time prior to the case review period or to use a rolling monthly or quarterly sampling approach where states update their sample every month or quarter of the 6-month case

review period. When deciding on the sampling approach, states should consider their capacity for each approach and their ability to replicate the process for ongoing continuous quality improvement (CQI) and reporting progress on the state Program Improvement Plan.

**What is a simple random *fixed* sample?**

A simple random fixed sampling approach refers to the process of pulling the sample one time prior to the case review period. A one-time sampling approach can be used to select cases randomly from the entire state universe or a stratified subset of the population (e.g., regions/counties, program types). A fixed sample has one sample period that runs from April 1 through September 30 (plus an additional 45 days for in-home cases) of the year prior to the state’s review year. The fixed sample period creates a period under review that can vary from 12 to 18 months depending on the date the case is reviewed because case activity is reviewed up to the time of the review. This approach does not require states to review the same number of cases each month and provides for flexibility in the review schedule proposed by the state.

**What is a *rolling* monthly or quarterly sample?**

A rolling monthly or quarterly sampling approach refers to the process of pulling the sample for each month or quarter of the 6-month case review period. For rolling monthly samples, each month the 6-month sample period advances 1 month. For example, case reviews conducted in April 2016 would have a sample period of 4/1/15 through 9/30/15 (plus an additional 45 days for in-home services cases). Case reviews conducted in May 2016 would be pulled from a sample period spanning 5/1/15 through 10/31/15 (plus an additional 45 days for in-home services cases), and so on. The final sample period for reviews completed in September 2016 would be pulled from a sample period spanning 9/1/15 through 2/29/16 (plus an additional 45 days for in-home services cases). For rolling quarterly samples, the sample would be selected similar to the monthly sample initially and then move forward by one quarter for the last 3 months of the case review period. See table below for states with a CFSR in 2016:

**2016 Reviews: Rolling *Monthly* Sample Periods and Periods Under Review**

Review Months	Rolling Monthly Sample Periods*	Periods Under Review
April 2016	4/1/2015 to 9/30/2015	4/1/2015 to Date of Review
May 2016	5/1/2015 to 10/31/2015	5/1/2015 to Date of Review
June 2016	6/1/2015 to 11/30/2015	6/1/2015 to Date of Review
July 2016	7/1/2015 to 12/31/2015	7/1/2015 to Date of Review
August 2016	8/1/2015 to 1/31/2016	8/1/2015 to Date of Review
September 2016	9/1/2015 to 2/29/2016	9/1/2015 to Date of Review

\*Add 45 days for in-home services sample periods

**2016 Reviews: Rolling *Quarterly* Sample Periods and Periods Under Review**

Review Months	Rolling Quarterly Sample Periods*	Periods Under Review
April 2016	4/1/2015 to 9/30/2015	4/1/2015 to Date of Review
May 2016	4/1/2015 to 9/30/2015	4/1/2015 to Date of Review
June 2016	4/1/2015 to 9/30/2015	4/1/2015 to Date of Review

<b>Review Months</b>	<b>Rolling Quarterly Sample Periods*</b>	<b>Periods Under Review</b>
<b>July 2016</b>	7/1/2015 to 12/31/2015	7/1/2015 to Date of Review
<b>August 2016</b>	7/1/2015 to 12/31/2015	7/1/2015 to Date of Review
<b>September 2016</b>	7/1/2015 to 12/31/2015	7/1/2015 to Date of Review

\*Add 45 days for in-home services sample periods

A rolling monthly or quarterly sample approach requires states to review a similar number of cases each month or quarter of the 6-month case review period to avoid potential bias created by more cases being reviewed during one part of the case review period. States cannot, for example, conduct most of the case reviews in April and the remainder in September. The CB will consider proposals from states to divide the metropolitan area case review into 2 months, such as the first and last month, to evenly distribute the approximate number of cases reviewed each month. States may also consider scheduling reviews each month based on regional stratification (e.g., a different region/geographic area every month with similar counts of cases). Another option is a rolling monthly sample approach based on a statewide sample; however, this approach potentially means being in every region every month, which may be difficult for states.

A benefit of using a rolling sample period is having more recent cases in the sample, which means reviewing more recent case practice and potentially having fewer cases eliminated when key case participants cannot be located for case interviews and having a more consistent period under review of 12 to 14 months versus 12 to 18 months.

### **What is a simple random sample?**

A simple random sample refers to a subset of cases that are chosen from the population at random. Using a simple random sample ensures that every case in the population has an equal chance of being selected.

### **Are states required to stratify the case sample?**

States are not required to stratify the case sample. States may propose stratification to achieve an adequate representation of cases from regions, jurisdictions, and key program areas. For example, a state may review a different region every month and base the number of cases reviewed for that region on the regional proportion of cases statewide. States should be prepared to explain proposed stratifications (i.e., information about the population, sampling and case selection process for each population, and rationale). The CB will verify that proposed stratifications are representative of the state and that the sampling proposal will result in a random sample. States should consider the requirement to replicate a similar stratification as the one used for the CFSSR case review period to establish baseline(s) and targets for Program Improvement Plans for ongoing plan measurement.

### **What does the sampling plan need to include?**

States must provide the CB with a written copy of their sampling plan that identifies the proposed sampling approach (a fixed sample or a rolling monthly sample), how and when the state will select the sample (statewide or by jurisdiction/region/county), how the state plans to randomize the sample (what software will be used, a description of the randomization process), and the number of cases to be included in the oversample for each site or sample frame.

## **What should states consider when developing the CFSR sampling methodology as it relates to Program Improvement Plans?**

The CB encourages states to seek approval for a State Conducted Case Review and to consider the state's capacity to sustain the sample and case review approach beyond the CFSR as part of the state's ongoing CQI process. Most states will be required to develop a Program Improvement Plan, and CFSR case review findings may be used to establish the baseline and improvement goals if the state uses the same sampling plan and the CFSR Round 3 case review process to report ongoing progress on the Program Improvement Plan (Measurement Plan). Using the same sampling methodology for the CFSR case review and ongoing Program Improvement Plan reporting may prevent a state from establishing a prospective baseline for Program Improvement Plan goals during its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

### **1.3 Sample Size and Mix**

The sample must consist of a minimum of 65 cases served during the sample period with a minimum of 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home cases, inclusive of alternative response cases. Samples larger than 65 should reflect the state ratio of foster care to in-home cases as long as the minimums are met for both case types.

#### Questions

[How many cases should states review for the CFSR?](#)

[What are the case mix ratio requirements for foster care and in-home services cases if a state decides to review more than the required minimum of 65 cases?](#)

[Is there a minimum number of cases required to be reviewed at each site \(region, jurisdiction, county\)?](#)

[How many cases should be included in the oversample?](#)

[How many cases are other states reviewing for their CFSRs?](#)

#### Answers

### **How many cases should states review for the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR)?**

States are required to review a minimum of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) for the CFSR. CFSR Round 3 enables states to use a larger sample size up to a statistically valid sample; however, a statistically valid sample is not required. The CB encourages states to review as many cases as the state has capacity to review and to sustain reviewing throughout the Program Improvement Plan implementation period. The number of cases the state decides to review represents a balance between the level of confidence a state desires in the accuracy of the results representing statewide performance and the state's capacity and resources to conduct the reviews.

## **What are the case mix ratio requirements for foster care and in-home services cases if a state decides to review more than the required minimum number of 65 cases?**

States with case review samples larger than 65 cases should consider the actual ratio of foster care to in-home cases as long as the minimum number of required cases is met for both case types (40 foster care cases and 25 in-home services cases). However, there are circumstances when applying the actual state ratio may not work for a state with a sample size slightly larger than the minimum of 65 cases (e.g., 75 to 100 cases). Sometimes applying the state's ratio in these situations can result in having fewer than the required minimum number of case types to review. For example, a state may have two times the number of in-home services cases than foster care cases and the state's sample size is 90 cases. If the sample ratios represented the actual state ratio, then the sample would consist of 60 in-home services cases and 30 foster care cases, which would not meet the minimum requirement to review at least 40 foster care cases. In these situations, adjustments to the case mix ratio will be made with consultation and approval from the CB. When the case mix ratio differs by jurisdiction, the CB recommends that states adopt the state ratio to simplify the sampling plan; however, CB is open to considering regional ratios at the request of the state.

## **Is there a minimum number of cases required to be reviewed at each site (region, jurisdiction, county)?**

There is no minimum number of cases that must be reviewed at each site. States will want to consider the total sample size and the number of cases, case ratios, and any additional strata for that location compared to state totals.

## **How many cases should be included in the oversample?**

Samples should be selected from a randomly drawn oversample of cases subject to CB review. The CB recommends that states use the remaining cases in the sample frame (i.e., cases not randomly selected for review) as substitutes to replace any selected cases that are eliminated before or during the review. At a minimum, the CB encourages states to include approximately four to six times the number of cases planned for review in the oversample.

## **How many cases are other states reviewing for their CFSRs?**

States with a CFSR during the first year of the four-year CFSR round are reviewing between 65 and 240 cases, with the majority of states reviewing fewer than 100 cases. More states in the second year of the CFSR round are planning to have sample sizes larger than 100 cases.

### **1.4 Foster Care Sampling Frame**

The sampling frame for the state foster care population consists of the listing of children served statewide or by jurisdiction strata according to the state's AFCARS-defined reportable cases for the CB-defined sample period. To allow for ongoing review to occur in a timely manner, a state may use its AFCARS-defined reportable cases for each day in a quarter.

## Questions

**Why are states required to submit a foster care sample frame for State Conducted Case Reviews when the state is responsible for managing the case review sample?**

**Should unaccompanied refugee children be included in the foster care sample frame?**

**What are states required to include in the foster care sample frame submitted to the CB?**

**How do states submit the sample frame to the CB?**

**Do child names need to be deleted from the sample frame submitted to the CB?**

## Answers

**Why are states required to submit a foster care sample frame for State Conducted Case Reviews when the state is responsible for managing the case review sample?**

States provide the CB with an example of the foster care sample frame so CB can verify that the parameters align with AFCARS-defined reportable cases and pull the sample from the universe of all applicable foster care cases. The example sample frame and comparison also confirm the state's capacity to pull the sample and verify that it is defined in accordance with CB guidance.

**Should unaccompanied refugee children be included in the foster care sample frame?**

States must include unaccompanied refugee children in the foster care sample frame when these children are in foster care in the placement-and-care responsibility of the child welfare agency. This population of children is considered to be within AFCARS-defined reportable cases and thus is to be included in the CFSR sampling universe.

**What are states required to include in the foster care sample frame submitted to the CB?**

The sample frame for the state foster care population should consist of the listing of children served statewide or by jurisdiction strata according to the state's AFCARS-defined reportable cases for a specified sample period. States that propose using regions or districts instead of counties as review sites need to provide an abridged AFCARS file identifying the FIPS codes with the geographic areas selected for the case review. The file should contain the encrypted case numbers. Sample frames can be transmitted to the CB as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or other commonly used spreadsheet file. States should use a prior AFCARS period for the example sample frame rather than pulling the actual review period sample frame to meet approval deadlines. The CB encourages states to use updated data from their state information systems to pull the sample frames because they should include more current data than prior point-in-time AFCARS submissions. States should include only the required CFSR identifiers in the example sample frame submitted to CB: numerical identifier for each child, child's date of birth, current plan goal, entry date, and FIPS county code (and geographic strata as applicable). The CB will compare the state's sample submission with the actual AFCARS file for the same sample period to confirm that there are no significant differences indicating that the state's sample does not reflect the required AFCARS child population.

## **How do states submit a sample frame to the CB?**

The CB will provide states instructions along with the URL (Web address) to upload the example foster care and in-home sample frames to a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site. The secure website is used to facilitate the transfer of large data files from states to the CB. Standard files can be uploaded, as well as large, multi-megabyte (MB) data files. The CB will e-mail states a unique username and password separately from the instructions. There is one username per state, and it is intended to be shared only by key personnel within the state for the express purpose of uploading specific files to the secure site.

## **Do child names need to be deleted from the sample frame submitted to the CB?**

Yes. To protect confidentiality, child names may not be included in the example sample frame submitted to the CB. States should delete child names and include the encrypted AFCARS unique identifier for each child record.

## **1.5 In-Home Services Sampling Frame**

For in-home services cases, the set of information used to identify the sample population is a state list of in-home services (including alternative or differential response) cases opened for services for at least 45 consecutive days during the sampling period and in which no children in the family were in foster care for 24 hours or longer during any portion of the sample period. The in-home sample population should consist of the non-foster care cases served directly or through contract to ensure that all program areas are represented pursuant to the state's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP).

### Questions

#### [How does the CB define an in-home services case?](#)

#### [What information is helpful for states to review and share with the CB to define the in-home services population?](#)

#### [Are alternative/differential response program cases considered to be in-home services cases?](#)

#### [Can states exclude child protective services \(CPS\) investigation cases open 45 consecutive days or longer?](#)

#### [Can states exclude in-home services cases that are inactive and are open 45 consecutive days or longer due to pending closure?](#)

#### [Can states exclude juvenile justice or mental/behavioral health cases from the in-home services population?](#)

#### [When does the time frame start for determining that an in-home service case has been open at least 45 consecutive days?](#)

#### [Should in-home services cases that are open less than 45 consecutive days during the sample period and open for 45 consecutive days during the period under review be included in the sample frame?](#)

[Why was the required number of days for in-home services cases to be open shortened from 60 to 45 consecutive days?](#)

[What are some examples of how other states define the in-home services population that were approved by the CB?](#)

[What are states required to include in the in-home services sample frame submitted to the CB?](#)

Answers

**How does the CB define an in-home services case?**

In-home services cases are the state's non-foster care cases for which the state's title IV-B/IV-E agency is responsible either directly or through contractual arrangements, pursuant to the state's CFSP. To be included in the in-home services sample frame, the case must have been opened for services for at least 45 consecutive days, or the 45-day consecutive period must have started during the sampling period. The universe of in-home services cases includes alternative/differential response cases (including referrals to agency-funded community agencies for assessment and services) for states with this program type. In-home services cases also include juvenile justice cases and mental health cases for states that have these program/case types, even if these cases are not funded with federal funds when services are provided by the state IV-B/IV-E agency, either directly or through contractual arrangements. Post-reunification service cases that do not meet the exclusion criteria (e.g., child in foster care for 24 hours or more during the sample period) are also considered to be in-home services cases. States should consider state policy and the description of families served pursuant to the state's CFSP as a starting point for defining in-home services cases. The CB encourages states to consult with MASC regarding the state's proposed definition of in-home service cases. How states define the in-home services population for inclusion in the CFSP is subject to CB approval.

**What information is helpful for states to review and share with the CB to define the in-home services population?**

It would be helpful for states to review and share information about the state's non-foster care cases with the CB and MASC. Information that would be helpful to review includes a description of the different non-foster care case types, the number and ratios of these case types statewide and by proposed sample jurisdiction, the total number of in-home services cases statewide, the sampling approach (e.g., statewide), how many cases meet the state's proposed criteria, how long cases are open before the proposed criteria for inclusion/exclusion occur, and the state's rationale for any adjustments or stratification proposed to avoid the over- or underrepresentation of particular in-home services case types.

**Are alternative/differential response program cases considered to be in-home services cases?**

An alternative/differential response program case is considered to be an in-home services case when the state's title IV-B/IV-E agency provides this program type, either directly or through contract. The CB generally includes the assessment phase of alternative/differential response in the in-home sample because the potential exists for families to receive safety-

related services during that time. In addition, these cases are considered non-foster care cases for which the title IV-B/IV-E agency serves directly or through contract and is included in the state CFSP. The CB does not require the alternative response program to be in every county to include these cases in the sample frame. If the state/jurisdiction has a large number of alternative/differential response cases relative to the rest of its in-home services cases, the state may want to consider proposing a limit on the proportion or number of these cases included in the random sample to avoid overrepresentation.

**Can states exclude child protective services (CPS) investigation cases open 45 consecutive days or longer?**

The CB will consider state proposals to exclude pure investigative casework that does not include service provision or safety planning and/or management from the in-home sample. The CB starts with a broad approach to define in-home services cases and may support limiting the sample in situations where the work is pure investigation work and the state is clear that services, including safety planning and/or management or other type of services, are not provided. Some states include investigation cases in the in-home sample because service provision occurs during the investigation.

**Can states exclude in-home services cases that were open for 45 days or longer but were inactive prior to the 45 days due to pending case closure?**

In-home services cases that are inactive (i.e., the agency no longer has intent to serve the family) that are not closed according to agency policy are subject to inclusion in the sample frame. The CB encourages states with a high volume of these cases to discuss with the CB the situation, the state's case closure policy, and a proposal to limit the number of these cases included in the random sample.

**Can states exclude juvenile justice or mental/behavioral health cases from the in-home services population?**

States must include juvenile justice and mental/behavioral health cases when these families are served directly or through contract by the state's title IV-B/IV-E program. The CB will consider state proposals to limit the number of these cases in the random sample to avoid overrepresentation.

**When does the time frame start for determining that an in-home services case has been open at least 45 consecutive days?**

The date to begin counting when a case is open 45 consecutive days is determined by the state in consultation with the CB. The date used should be the point when the state begins the potential provision of services, including safety services (safety planning and/or management). Some states have policy or determine that services begin at day one of intake or case assignment. Other states determine that a case is open for services at the conclusion of the investigation or family assessment.

**Should in-home services cases that are open less than 45 consecutive days during the sample period and open for 45 consecutive days during the period under review be included in the sample frame?**

The sampling frame for in-home services includes cases opened for services for at least 45 consecutive days, or cases that began a 45-day consecutive period during the sampling period. States, particularly those concerned about not having an adequate number of in-home services cases in the sample frame, can include cases open for at least 1 day during the sample period that remained open for 45 consecutive days during the period under review. States that want to include this provision should provide this information, including the proposed time frames for pulling the sample as described in the sampling methodology submitted to the CB for approval.

**Why was the required number of days for in-home services cases to be open shortened from 60 to 45 consecutive days?**

The CB shortened the time frame for in-home service provision from 60 to 45 days to capture more short-term, in-home casework and alternative/differential response practices that may have been excluded with the 60-day time frame.

**What are some examples of how other states define the in-home services population that the CB approved?**

Example 1: The state has an alternative response program that is short-term by design (open no more than 60 days without approval). Every alternative response case receives an assessment and may receive services and safety and risk management during the assessment process. The state uses the intake report date as the start date for the case being open for 45 consecutive days because the decision is made at intake to assign the case to the alternative response track. Cases assigned to the investigation track are excluded from the sample frame because investigation work will be reviewed in other types of cases included in the CF SR random sample (e.g., investigations opened for services, foster care cases). For ongoing in-home services cases, the 45-day time frame is calculated from the date the investigation was completed and assigned for ongoing in-home services.

Example 2: The state has a multi-track program response that includes preventative services, alternative response, and investigations. Cases accepted at intake are assigned to one of the three tracks. The state proposed to exclude the preventative service cases from the in-home sample because such cases exclusively result in information and referral to community services at the point of intake. Alternative response cases are included in the in-home services sample frame because every family receives a comprehensive assessment and may receive services during the assessment process. The start date for the case being open a minimum of 45 consecutive days is the date it is assigned to alternative response. To ensure that alternative response cases are not overrepresented in the sample, the state limits the percentage of these cases that are included in the random sample. Investigation cases are included in the in-home services sample frame because the state potentially provides safety services (safety planning and/or management) and/or other types of services (e.g., substance abuse evaluation) during the investigation period. When the state reviews and applies case-specific elimination, cases that were open for more than 45 days but are closed after the investigation with no safety or other types of service provision are eliminated from the random sample.

**Example 3:** The state's in-home services population includes investigations that resulted in development and management of a safety plan, cases that opened for services after the investigation, and cases that remain open for post-reunification services where no children in the family were in foster care for 24 hours or longer during any portion of the review period. For cases with investigative services in the past 45 days, the state uses the date the case was assigned to an investigator to determine when the case was open for 45 consecutive days. The 45-day start date for post-reunification service cases is the first day of the sample period. The state's title IV-B/IV-E agency also provides in-home services for juvenile probation cases. These cases will also be included in the in-home services sample population. To ensure that investigations and juvenile probation cases are not overrepresented in the sample, the state limits the percentage of these cases included in the random sample.

### **What are states required to include in the in-home services sample frame submitted to the CB?**

The example in-home services sample frame should consist of the state listing of in-home services cases open for at least 45 consecutive days. Consideration of whether certain types of cases are included in the sample is not dependent on the level of documentation such as a formal assessment or a written safety or case plan. The in-home services sample frame is a separate file/list from the foster care sample frame. The list should exclude families with children who were in foster care for 24 hours or longer during any portion of the review period. States that plan to use regions or districts instead of counties as review sites should identify the corresponding geographic area for each case included in the sample frame. The CB requires identifying information similar to the foster care sample frame, with a key difference of listing cases by family, not by child. The required identifiers for the in-home services sample frame includes a numerical identifier for each family, case open date, case closure date (if applicable), case type, and FIPS county code. Although the CB does not have a specific in-home services data set to compare the example sample frame, the CB will review and analyze the data to confirm that there are no significant concerns with the sample frame and that it reflects the agreed-upon in-home services case population.

### **1.6 Case Elimination Requirements**

The state has a process in place to consistently address and document the CB-required and state-specific case elimination requirements.

#### Questions

[Should states apply case elimination criteria before creating the sample frame, before selecting the random sample, or during review of the random sample?](#)

[Can states eliminate foster care cases if the case is open less than 30 days?](#)

[Can states eliminate cases that were already reviewed one or two years prior?](#)

[Can states eliminate cases when a conflict of interest is identified?](#)

[Can states eliminate cases when the child is in a juvenile justice facility?](#)

## Answers

### **Should states apply case elimination criteria before creating the sample frame, before selecting the random sample, or during review of the random sample?**

Generally, states apply some case elimination parameters when developing the logic for each of the sample frames. States that propose limiting the sample frame to prevent a case program type from being overrepresented in the random sample may choose to apply all or some of the parameters when pulling the random sample from the sample frame (universe of cases). Some statewide information systems may not support case elimination criteria being applied when producing the sample frame or pulling the random sample and may need to do this work during the case-specific elimination process.

### **Can states eliminate foster care cases if the case is open less than 30 days?**

No. The foster care sample frame is to include all of the state's AFCARS-defined reportable cases for the defined sample period. States are not to exclude foster care cases based on the rationale that a case open for a limited amount of time does not have much case activity to review. The CB understands there may be limited applicability of the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions (OSRI) for some short-term cases. The OSRI includes instructions for these situations, for example, on how to address cases when a permanency goal has not been established due to the limited amount of time the child has been in foster care. When the state has a large number of short-stay children entering care, the CB will consider state-specific criteria to limit those types of cases in the sample so they will not be overrepresented in the sample.

### **Can states eliminate cases that were already reviewed one or two years prior?**

No. The case elimination criteria does not include a provision to eliminate a case based on its being selected and reviewed during a prior review period for either a CFSR or state review. Under these circumstances, the period under review will have changed to represent a different period of practice. In addition, eliminating these cases could bias the sample for cases that involve children in care for longer periods of time or that have a large sibling group. If a case selected for the CFSR was included in a different type of case review conducted by the state (e.g., CQI, Quality Service Review (QSR), targeted review) for the same sample period, states should invite the family to participate in the CFSR and clarify the different purpose or different time period of the subsequent review.

### **Can states eliminate cases when a conflict of interest is identified?**

When a conflict of interest issue is identified for a case selected for the CFSR, states should attempt to reassign the case to another reviewer instead of eliminating the case.

### **Can states eliminate cases when the child is in a juvenile justice facility?**

No, not for this reason alone. Juvenile justice cases are reviewable if the child is included in the state's AFCARS population for the sample period, the child welfare agency provided services either directly or through contractual arrangements, and no other CFSR case review elimination criteria applies. States may propose state-specific elimination of cases for situations in which case selection would result in overrepresentation of juvenile justice cases. When this occurs, states are asked to manage case elimination after the random

sample is produced (unless it is not an AFCARS reportable case) because limiting these cases in the foster care sample frame will make it difficult for the CB to reconcile during the sample review and analysis process.