



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

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April 20, 2021

Ms. Terry J. Stigdon, MSN, RN  
Director  
Department of Child Services  
302 W. Washington  
Room E306  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Ms. Stigdon:

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau (CB). I started in March 2021 and have already learned so much about states' opportunities and challenges. I am looking forward to continued partnership with the state of Indiana. I am writing on behalf of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), CB, to congratulate the State of Indiana on the successful completion of its Program Improvement Plan (PIP), developed and implemented as a result of the state's federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The state has met all PIP goals and has achieved all of its PIP measurement goals as agreed upon in the PIP measurement plan. As a result, the CB is rescinding all associated CFSR penalties.

The CB, in collaboration with the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS), conducted a CFSR of the state's child and family services programs during the week of June 6, 2016 to evaluate the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors enumerated in 45 CFR 1355.34. The review demonstrated that the state's child welfare program was not operating in substantial conformity with applicable federal requirements in seven outcome areas and six systemic factors. On December 28, 2016, the CB issued a final report of these findings to the DCS.

Indiana was found not to be operating in substantial conformity with the following outcomes:

- Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
- Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Indiana was also found not to be operating in substantial conformity with the following systemic factors:

- Statewide Information System
- Case Review System
- Quality Assurance System
- Staff and Provider Training
- Service Array and Resource Development
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Pursuant to 45 CFR 1355.35, on April 3, 2017 the state submitted to the CB a PIP addressing each outcome measure and systemic factor that were determined not to be in substantial conformity during the review. Following a period of negotiation, Indiana's PIP was approved on February 13, 2019 with an effective date of January 1, 2019. The PIP implementation period ended December 31, 2020.

Through an ongoing partnership, the CB and the DCS jointly assessed progress throughout the PIP implementation period. As a result, the CB has verified the state's completion of all required PIP goals during the PIP implementation period and the achievement of all its PIP measurement goals. Therefore, the CB is terminating the \$2,397,624 penalty associated with the CB's initial determination of non-conformity.

With support of its internal and external stakeholders, Indiana has accomplished many of its objectives during the PIP period. We wish to highlight a few areas where Indiana has been particularly successful:

- Goal 1 Strategy 1: Ensure timeliness of face to face contact by formalizing and institutionalizing a safety staffing process and establishing a monitoring mechanism for tracking timeliness of face-to-face contact.
- Goal 1 Strategy 3: Create comprehensive and timely safety plans that are monitored and updated appropriately throughout the life of a case.
- Goal 1 Strategy 5: The Indiana Office of Court Services (IOCS) and DCS will partner to strengthen probation practices for assessing the risk, safety, and needs of siblings/other children in the home.
- Goal 2 Strategy 1: DCS has dedicated resources – both internal and external – to collecting data and performing analysis on staff recruitment and retention. DCS will use those findings to execute strategies that result in improved recruitment and retention.
- Goal 3 Strategy 1: Rededicate all levels of the agency to the use of the DCS Practice Model and use of its five (5) core skills, teaming, engaging, assessing, planning, and intervening (“TEAPI”). The practice model includes practice principles and essential skills to effectively implement the agency's vision, mission and values. These principles and skills build upon practice that supports continuous quality improvement and the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being for children and families. Additionally, the practice model is grounded in four (4) core values: genuineness, empathy, respect and professionalism. These also set the tone for successful engagement by DCS in developing trust-based relationships with children, families, and stakeholders. Similarly, DCS focuses on these standards when engaged with co-workers as a sign of mutual respect, trust and support for fellow team members.
- Goal 3 Strategy 6: Probation: IOCS and DCS will work in partnership to strengthen probation practices on engaging of probation youth and families, and family centered case work practices.
- Goal 4 Strategy 2: Support practice improvements at regional level by engaging line staff, supervisors and management in CQI projects and data driven supervision.

As a result of discussions between the CB and the DCS, the DCS will continue efforts to implement, sustain, and monitor several PIP activities through the Indiana Child and Family Services Plan and Annual Progress and Services Report. We look forward to Indiana's continued analysis of trends and safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes utilizing the DCS's continuous quality improvement and quality assurance mechanisms.

The CB applauds Indiana for the commitment and dedication of leadership, frontline staff, partners, and stakeholders to implement changes and improvements to the state's child welfare system. We commend Heather Kestian and Heather Hendley who have, and continue to, facilitate, implement, and champion the PIP and the resulting system reform.

We look forward to continuing our work with your staff in their efforts to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of Indiana's children and families. Once again, congratulations on the successful completion of your PIP. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Cindy Lowder, Regional Program Manager, at (312) 886-4918 or by email at [cindy.lowder@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:cindy.lowder@acf.hhs.gov), or Charlene Blackmore, Child and Family Program Specialist, at (312) 886-4938 or by email at [charlene.blackmore@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:charlene.blackmore@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,



Aysha E. Schomburg, Esq.  
Associate Commissioner  
Children's Bureau

Enclosure

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