



Highlights of [GAO-03-611T](#) a testimony before the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The District of Columbia (DC) Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) is responsible for protecting thousands of foster care children at risk of abuse and neglect and ensuring that critical services are provided for them and their families. Representative Tom Davis, Chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform, asked GAO to discuss the extent to which CFSA has taken actions to address the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 and other selected performance criteria, adopted and implemented child protection and foster care placement policies, and enhanced its working relationship with the D.C. Family Court.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-611T

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cornelia Ashby at (202) 512-8403 or ashbyc@gao.gov.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Issues Associated with the Child and Family Services Agency's Performance and Policies

What GAO Found

CFSA took actions to address six of the nine ASFA requirements related to the safety and well-being of children and met or exceeded four of the eight performance criteria GAO included in its study.

CSFA has established many foster care policies, but caseworkers did not consistently implement the six GAO examined. In addition, CFSA's automated system lacked data on policy implementation for 70 percent of its foster care cases. The table summarizes three of these policies and the percentage of cases for which the data indicated the policy was implemented.

Table 2: The Extent of Implementation of Selected Foster Care Policies

Policy	Percent of foster care cases for which the policy was implemented (N= 943)
Initiate face-to-face investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect within 24 hours of receiving an allegation on CFSA's child abuse hotline	26
Complete a safety assessment within 24 hours of face-to-face contact with the child	13
Complete a risk assessment within 30 days of receiving an allegation on the hotline	73

Source: FACES data and GAO analysis.

CFSA has enhanced its working relationship with the Family Court. Frequent dialogue now occurs between CFSA's top management and the Family Court, CFSA has expanded its legal services to support court activities, and CFSA participates in various planning committees with the court. However, hindrances remain, such as scheduling conflicts between the two entities; unclear roles and responsibilities of caseworkers, attorneys, and judges; and caseworkers who are not familiar with cases that have been recently transferred to them.