Strategic Planning

for Child Welfare Agencies

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Managers of child welfare agencies today are facing severe fiscal pressures and demands for accountability from state leaders and legislators, and from federal funding agencies. To justify their budgets, build public support and satisfy funding sources, child welfare agencies need to continually improve their performance. A strong strategic planning process is a powerful management technique that agencies can use to establish and move towards improved outcomes for children and families.

Child welfare agencies use a number of different planning processes that have the potential to improve agency performance. These include:

- The five year Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)
- The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)
- The IV E Review Program Improvement Plan (PIP)
- The IV E training plan
- The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) plan
- The Statewide Foster and Adoption Recruitment Plan
- The five year Chaffee Independent Living Plan
- Plans developed in response to settlement agreements or consent decrees
- Other integrated state or agency strategic plans

By laying out a general process for strategic planning, this guide is intended to help child welfare agencies produce effective plans. The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement promotes integrated planning, and encourages states to develop integrated CFSPs, or agency plans that incorporate as many of the agency's other plans as possible. We also are aware that the requirement to produce PIPs is an immediate planning challenge for states, and that many states have done strong work in response to this challenge. This guide highlights the federal requirements for the planning processes for the CFSP and the PIPs, and draws many examples from these types of plans.

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement has been providing technical assistance to states involved in strategic planning and has developed a framework for strategic planning with four distinct stages:

- Prepare
- Plan
- Implement
- Revise

After discussing strategic planning – what it is and why we do it – the guide describes the four stages of the process in detail and illustrates each stage with examples from state and county practice.

A number of attachments provide additional detail and background. These include:

Attachment 1: federal planning requirements

Attachment 2: standards on planning developed by national organizations,

Attachment 3: resources on strategic planning, including technical assistance and written materials

Attachment 4: state and county contacts for planning examples highlighted in this document

Attachment 5: quotes on aspects of strategic planning from the literature

Attachment 6: planning structure examples

Attachment 7: checklist – strategic planning process

PART 1 Strategic Planning

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is a continual process for improving organizational performance by developing strategies to produce results. It involves looking at the overall direction of where the agency wants to go, assessing the agency's current situation, and developing and implementing approaches for moving forward. Planning is strategic when it focuses on what the agency wants to accomplish, and on moving the agency towards these larger goals. By constantly focusing attention on a shared vision and on more specific goals and objectives, strategic planning has the potential to permeate the culture of the agency, becoming a tool for creating systemic change. Leaders at all levels – directors, managers, supervisors and caseworkers, as well as external partners – are engaged in developing a sense of direction and in identifying priorities.

Effective strategic planning is an active partnership in which agency leaders work collaboratively with a broad range of staff and stakeholders both inside and external to the agency to define the agency's vision and goals, and to develop and implement plans to meet them. Strategic planning needs to be led by agency decision makers, engage managers and staff at all levels, and actively involve a broad range of stakeholders.

Strategic planning is not a one-time event but an ongoing process for systemic change that involves four stages. Agencies need to prepare to plan by visioning, conducting assessments, and implementing a planning process. Then they can plan, by developing, writing and finalizing the plan. It is critical to implement the plan by managing, supervising, and monitoring progress on the plan. Finally, the plan needs to be revised to keep it current and active, which involves updating the plan as needed. Throughout the process, ongoing communication of the plan is critical.

Prepare

Plan

Implement

Revise
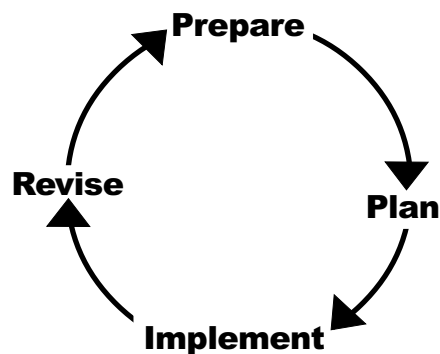
This continuous cycle is similar to the casework process, such as child and family assessment and case planning. The strength of the family case plan or service plan is dependent on the quality of the assessment of the family's needs and the strategies that have been developed in the plan for building on the family's strengths with appropriate services and resources. Routine case reviews help to monitor the implementation and progress of the plan and also assess the effectiveness of the plan in helping families reach their outcomes and goals. If the plan is not helping, then it is time to reassess and revise the strategies of the plan. Just as a strong case planning process is critical to achieving individual child and family goals, a strong strategic planning process is critical to achieving agency goals.

Defining the Terms

We have all experienced the confusion that results when a planning process uses undefined or inaccurate terms. Sometimes what one person says in no way resembles what another person hears. When this happens in an organization, the confusion can lead to frustration, misunderstanding and mistakes. When it happens in the strategic planning process, it can lead to wasted effort and even failure of the plan.

Child welfare agencies use a variety of terms to describe the content of strategic plans. For example, some use "goals" and others use "outcomes" to describe the aim or result of the agency's work. In the Annual Report to Congress, the federal government calls "reduce recurrence of abuse and neglect" an outcome, while in the CFSR process it is a "performance indicator" of progress towards a broader outcome of children being protected from abuse and neglect. Use of terms is guided by the context in the agency—the federal requirements for the planning process, the terms that are required by state processes or laws, or the terms that are familiar to those involved in the planning process.

To avoid misunderstanding and confusion planners should choose terms early on, define them, and then use these terms consistently throughout the planning process. Once terms are defined, the group needs to ensure that everyone understands, and agrees to use the same terms.

Those involved in strategic planning in an agency can use any set of terms as long as they are defined clearly and used consistently throughout the planning process. The set of terms and definitions that we use for the content of a strategic plan, and examples to illustrate the terms, is detailed in Figure 1—Strategic Planning Terms.

Figure 1
Strategic Planning Terms

	TERMS	ONE DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
What we want to accomplish	OUTCOMES	Desired results or expected consequence	Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.
	GOALS	Aim, purpose, direction or priorities of plan that can be measured	The state will increase the percentage of cases where children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.
What we will do to get there	STRATEGIES	Broad or overarching efforts to be undertaken to achieve the agency goals or outcomes	Implement intensive home-based family preservation services statewide to increase the number of children who are able to remain safely in their own homes
	OBJECTIVES	Measurable steps towards accomplishment of goal or outcome within a specific timeframe	Expand existing intensive home-based family preservation services in at least 2 counties in each region by January 1, 2004
	ACTION STEPS	Specific actions that will be undertaken to accomplish the strategies or objectives and demonstrate progress toward the goals and/or outcomes	Request for proposals will be issued in at least 2 counties in all regions for intensive home-based family preservation services by April 1, 2003.
How we will know if we are making progress	MEASURES	Evidence of achievement of the goals and/or outcomes. There are two types of measures: **Quantitative Measures:** Indicators of progress that can be expressed in numerical terms, counted or compared on a scale **Qualitative Measures:** Indicators of progress that are process oriented and difficult to capture in numerical terms	(For Family Preservation Services) **Quantitative Measure:** The percentage of children safely maintained in their own homes will increase by 5% (from the baseline of 85% to 90%) within 24 months. **Qualitative Measure:** Request for proposals for family preservation services issued for Region I by April 2004.
	BENCHMARKS	Interim and measurable indicators that will be assessed to determine if progress is being made toward achieving the established goal.	**Quantitative Benchmarks:** A 5% increase in the number of families receiving family preservation services in Region 1 by January 1, 2004. Baseline measures for comparison would be the current number of families receiving family preservation services in Region I as of January 1, 2003. **Qualitative Benchmarks:** Contractual Family Preservation services implemented in Region I by January 1, 2004.

Select Format

Those involved in planning need to choose a format for the type of plan they want to produce. A matrix that creates a visual picture of the agency's plan is an effective way to organize a large amount of information in a format that is easy to communicate and share with staff, stakeholders and external partners. An accompanying narrative can provide information necessary to understand the matrix and to further explain the content of the plan.

A standard format for any strategic plan should include answers to three key questions (Refer to Figure 1 for examples):

What do we want to accomplish?

- Outcomes (the desired results or expected consequences of the plan) and/or
- Goals (the aim, purpose, directions or priorities of the plan that can be measured). As defined in federal PIP instructions, goals: "should document the negotiated percentage of improvement toward meeting the national standards or negotiated quantitative measure of improvement."

What will we do to get there?

- Strategies (broader efforts undertaken to achieve agency goals or outcomes)
- Objectives (the measurable steps taken to accomplish the goal or outcome within timeframes)
- Action steps (more specific actions undertaken to accomplish the strategies or objectives and demonstrate progress toward the goals and/or outcomes)

How will we know if we are making progress?

- Measures:
    - o Quantitative Measures: Indicators of progress that can be expressed in numerical terms, counted or compared on a scale
    - o Qualitative Measures: Indicators of progress that are process oriented and difficult to capture in numerical terms
- Benchmarks (defined in federal PIP instructions: "interim and measurable indicators that will be assessed to determine if progress is being made towards achieving the established goal").

Strategic plans also need to include:

- Leads or responsible parties: individuals or units assigned responsibility for carrying out the strategies, objectives, or action steps
- Timeframes: expectations about when plan activities and goals will be initiated and or accomplished.

Why do strategic planning?

It's the right thing to do

> **Improve outcomes:** The strategic planning process is a powerful tool that states can use to improve outcomes for children and families. This is especially important as increasing attention is being paid to agency performance on outcomes. Under the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), state performance on key outcomes is tracked and reported annually to Congress. Many of these same outcomes have been incorporated into the Child and Family Services Review (CFS review) process. Under the CFS reviews, state performance on outcomes is assessed and reported, and areas needing improvement must be addressed in Program Improvement Plans (PIPs).
>
> **It is best practice:** Organizations that have developed national standards for the management of child welfare agencies—the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), the Council on Accreditation of Services for Children and Families (COA), and the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA)—all specify that agencies should develop a strategic plan. (See Attachment 2—National Standards for Planning)

We need to do it

> **Increase accountability for child welfare agencies:** There is a national movement to increase accountability for child welfare services in light of media coverage regarding tragic child abuse and neglect cases, child fatalities, children "lost" within child welfare systems, and the lack of data on child welfare. Strategic planning can produce data on agency performance and show the agency's commitment to quality services for children and families.
>
> **Focus purpose:** Joint development, distribution and implementation of the strategic plan make all the staff and stakeholders more aware of the agency's purpose and overall direction. It helps assure that everyone is working together in a concerted effort toward the same purpose.
>
> **Strategic allocation:** A strategic planning process provides a framework within which agencies can make decisions about priorities and allocation of resources. This is especially helpful when budgets are tight.
>
> **Provide direction and meaning to day-to-day work:** When strategic plans are fully implemented, they help caseworkers see how their day-to-day work with families is connected to agency goals. A strategic plan can also help managers at all levels see how the work they supervise helps the agency move in desired directions.
>
> **Adapt to change:** The continual cycle of strategic planning allows states to look at needs, evaluate progress, and adapt the agency's activities as needs change.
>
> **Capitalize on strengths:** Strategic planning processes focus on identifying both areas needing improvement and areas of strength within the agency and in the community. Then, when the planning group is selecting and prioritizing outcomes and strategies, they can build on strengths to address areas of need.

Integrate multiple plans: Federal requirements for the five-year Child and Family Service Plan include integration of multiple plans such as: elements of the PIP, the Title IVE training plan, the CAPTA annual plan, the statewide foster and adoption recruitment plan, and the Chaffee Independent Living Five-year Plan. While many states have just attached each as separate sections or appendices, strategic planning can provide a forum to examine and integrate multiple plans. At any opportunity, such as when a new five-year CFSP is due, the state should work towards integrating other state plans which may have been developed since previous CFSPs were completed.

Coordinate efforts and avoid duplication: A strategic planning process helps agencies coordinate work across units and divisions and avoid duplication. For example, human service agencies that have a common vision to support families can coordinate Title IVB family support programs with prevention efforts funded under the economic assistance/TANF program and maximize the effectiveness of both programs.

We are required to do it

Federal requirements:
Child and Family Service Plans (CFSPs): State child welfare agencies are required to develop comprehensive five-year child and family services plans (CFSPs) under Title IV-B. The CFS review process was developed in response to a 1994 Congressional mandate to assure compliance with State Plan requirements. The review thus builds directly on requirements for the CFSP, and the elements of the PIPs developed in response to the CFS review process must be integrated into the CFSP.

Program Improvement Plans (PIPs): The child and family services review process is a comprehensive assessment of agency strengths and needs, focused on seven specific outcomes and seven systemic factors. The final report specifies the areas needing improvement to reach substantial conformity with federal standards. States must then develop program improvement plans (PIPs) that specify how they will make systemic improvements.

State requirements:
State level requirements for planning have often been established in response to calls for greater efficiency and/or increased accountability. In some states, legislators have required child welfare agencies to define agency goals and priorities, and/or to report regularly on outcomes. In others, governor's offices or planning offices have launched planning initiatives to move the government forward, requiring agencies to participate in a process of setting goals, developing work plans to achieve them, and regularly assessing progress. To the extent possible, these state level planning processes should be coordinated with federally required planning processes.

Strategic Planning: How to Do It

To conduct an effective strategic planning process, agencies must engage in all four stages of the strategic planning process:

- Prepare
- Plan
- Implement
- Revise

The steps involved in each stage are described in more detail in the sections that follow, and are illustrated in Figure 2 (Strategic Planning Process)

Figure 2
Strategic Planning Process

Preparation	Plan	Implement	Revise
Visioning With stakeholders, develop or update agency vision, mission, guiding principles **Assessment** Gather internal and external data Analyze Draw conclusions **Develop and implement planning process** Be inclusive and engage major actors Establish planning structure Establish process for collecting input to develop the plan Clearly define roles and responsibilities Training	**Develop plan** Review assessment; build on analysis **Prioritize** Consider needs, strengths and resources **Answer these questions:** What do we want to accomplish? What will we do to get there? How will we know if we are making progress? **Draft Plan** Circulate draft for additional input; revise **Finalize plan** Share with stakeholders and staff Obtain official approval	**Communicate plan** Distribute Ongoing communication of plan **Manage plan** Leadership assigns responsibilities **Supervise** All managers supervise the actual work Local plans developed and implemented **Monitor and report progress** Reporting system for plan Build on existing information systems and quality assurance systems Monitor progress	**Review progress on plan** Review progress • Towards goals and outcomes • Towards implementing the plan activities **Reconvene planning process and revise plan** Reconvene planning groups Ongoing assessment process Draft revised plan Circulate revised draft for input Finalize revised plan Communication of revised plan Implement and monitor revised plan

STAGE **1** Preparation

The three critical steps in stage 1 that must be accomplished prior to developing and writing a plan are visioning, assessment, and implementing a planning process. In each of these areas, agencies should review what is already in place – any vision statements that have been developed, assessments that have been conducted, or organized groups that are engaged in planning or that provide stakeholder input. The agency should build on what exists, supplementing and further developing it as necessary.

Visioning

Planners should examine any broad statements that exist about the ultimate ends envisioned for the future. A number of different terms are used for these broad statements, including:

- *Vision:* an ideal and unique image of the future and/or
- *Mission:* the purpose of the agency, and why it exists and
- *Guiding Principles, Values and Beliefs:* the standards and ideals that guide the agency in what agency services and systems look like and in how services are delivered

A vision or mission statement is important, as it expresses where the agency is going. An agency that knows where it is going is more likely to get there, as the direction helps guide choices of what the agency wants to accomplish and what it will do to move in that direction. It also points to indicators that can allow the agency to know when it has achieved its purpose. A strong vision provides the framework for the rest of the strategic planning process.

A vision or mission should be known within the agency, and shared by others who serve the same population. If an agency does not have a vision statement, or has one that is outdated, top management should lead a collaborative visioning process to produce or update the vision. Key features of this process include:

- Leadership – the active role of agency leaders in articulating a vision and/or bringing all key staff and stakeholders together to develop a vision.
- An ongoing, inclusive process – bringing together a broad range of staff and stakeholders to discuss what is important to them.
- Communication – discussion among staff and stakeholders of the ideal future that each envisions and identification of common themes.

In order to move the vision forward, top leadership has to be involved in creating and communicating the image of the future, and reinforcing it at all levels of the organization. This can be done by:

- Using the vision to drive the decisions of the agency, including resource, policy and service delivery decisions.
- Using the vision to guide the selection of goals and objectives in strategic plans.

- Continually using the vision to involve stakeholders in the decision-making process.
- Ensuring that managers and staff use the vision in discussions with partners to encourage collaborative efforts.
- Communicating the vision and mission broadly in initial and ongoing training.
- Training caseworkers, supervisors and managers on guiding principles that have a direct link to their day-to-day casework.
- Posting the vision, mission and guiding principles throughout the agency's buildings.
- Including the vision or mission on all agency materials and communications – web pages, publications, reports, letterhead, staff business cards.
- Including a discussion of agency vision, and how the applicant would contribute to it, in the personnel selection process.

Through this type of commitment, the vision becomes operationalized, with staff and stake-holders making it their own, seeing it in relation to the job that they do and reinforcing it at every level. It permeates the culture of the organization and creates shared vision with those outside the organization.

In one state

Guiding Beliefs for Alaska's Foster and Adoption Recruitment Plan

In order to respond to concerns raised by the CFSR process on the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents, Alaska decided to develop a strong statewide foster and adoption recruitment plan that could be included in the state's PIP. The state formed a core planning team that included a broad cross section of representatives, including foster and birth parents, private non-profit providers, staff from field offices and agency managers, and central office leadership. With the assistance of a consultant who served as an objective facilitator, this core team met and discussed what their core beliefs were about foster care and adoption. The process forced everyone to think through what they saw as their role, and what role others should play in the system. They defined a philosophical framework of guiding beliefs, which included, for example:

- There is a respectful relationship between the agency staff and the consumer (resource family or birth family). We view both the birth family and the resource family as experts on the needs of the child. We rely on this expertise and we solicit their perspectives in case planning.
- We assess situations fairly. We do not enter meetings with pre-judgments about anyone's motives.
- We support and encourage the relationship between the resource family and the birth family to meet the needs of the child.

Out of this framework the core team defined messages that reflect the framework, and one of the strategies in the plan is "revised messaging," so that the new messages are integrated into all forms of communication – including literature and telephone protocols. Throughout the planning process the core team often returned to the guiding principles to ask if the strategies and actions they were con-sidering were consistent with the framework.

In one state ————————————

Mississippi's Visioning

As the first state to pilot the Child and Family Service Reviews, Mississippi's Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Child & Family Services (DCFS), began a visioning process in 1995, convening a summit with CFS review partners to examine the findings and recommendations from the final report. National Resource Centers provided technical assistance to the state as they worked to respond to the report. One response was to develop and conduct a statewide vision conference to: develop the vision; gather stakeholders together to build true partnerships; engage the broader child welfare community and acknowledge a collective responsibility for the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families; and cement this statewide commitment to build a new improved child welfare system. The first vision conference was held in 1996, and involved representatives from twelve "domains" of stakeholders, key agency staff and staff from other DHS divisions. The conference clarified the mission, principles and values of the agency:

> The mission of DHS: to promote self sufficiency and personal responsibility for all Mississippians by providing services to people in need through optimizing all available resources to sustain the family unit and encourage traditional family values.

> The mission for the DCFS social service system: to protect vulnerable children and adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation; support family preservation and community living; and to prevent family violence and disruption.

The guiding principles to achieve the missions include:
• a unified service system organized around the needs of the community;
• mutually agreed upon roles and responsibilities;
• use of natural and community supports;
• the development and use of local services; and
• a quality service system to protect vulnerable children and adults.

The basic values and beliefs to support child welfare practice were also identified:
• permanency—children have the right to live in a permanent family setting with the opportunity to form lifetime relationships;
• safety—children have the right to live in an environment free from harm and/or the sense of impending harm; and
• well-being—children have the right to be reared by primary caretakers who display sincere, dedicated responsiveness to the child's educational, developmental, psychological and physical needs.

The agency published and widely distributed the mission, principles and values and used the mission to focus strategic planning efforts on developing a Program Improvement Plan in response to the CFSR pilot, and later to help structure the agency's CFSP, published in June 1999 to cover the period of 2000–2004. The original vision conference is now an annual event called the Mississippi Permanency Partnership Network Conference. This conference maintains a focus on the mission, principles and values of the agency, and participants review progress towards the outcomes for children and families. ———————————

In one state

Utah's Practice Model and Performance Milestone Plan

The Director of the Utah Division of Child and Family Services decided that he wanted to have more consistent practice within the agency to improve performance, so he charged a Deputy Director with the task of developing a practice model. The Deputy Director created a Practice Model Development Team, a broad-based group that included division staff, parents, foster parents, universities and other community partners. They worked to develop a set of practice principles based on the mission of the division. In developing the principles they held 46 community meetings and sent drafts to over 50 "consultants" from various service systems to get input and suggestions. The DCFS mission is:

> … to protect children at risk of abuse, neglect, or dependency. We do this by working with families to provide safety, nurturing, and permanence. We lead in a partnership with the community in this effort.

The seven principles that were developed are:
- protection,
- development,
- permanency,
- cultural responsiveness,
- partnership,
- organizational competence, and
- professional competence.

From these principles, the agency formulated a set of key practice skills that would put these values and principles into action. The five skills are: engaging, teaming, assessing, planning, and intervening.

In the late 1990s the DCFS was working to comply with a settlement agreement, and the judge ordered the agency to work with a neutral third party to develop a plan to improve their performance. The first milestone in the plan that was developed was "practice model development, training and implementation." The agency developed training in each of the five skill areas defined under the practice model and has provided this training to all of the agency's staff. Everyone from support staff to top managers are required to receive training in all five practice skills which define what the agency expects about how services will be delivered. These practice skills have become widely known and discussed, as everyone has become aware of what they require – for instance, that a team needs to be assembled to work with the child and family and the caseworker.

El Paso County's Vision and Guiding Principles

The El Paso County Department of Human Services has a strong vision and guiding principles, and a focus on communicating and using the vision has resulted in staff and stakeholders who are engaged in moving the agency towards that end. The vision is "to eliminate poverty and family violence in El Paso County." The related mission is "to strengthen families, assure safety, promote self-sufficiency, eliminate poverty and improve the quality of life in our community." The guiding principles are:

System of care must:
- be family-driven,
- protect the rights of families,
- allow smooth transitions between programs,
- build community capacity to serve families,
- emphasize prevention and early intervention, and
- be effectively integrated and coordinated across systems.

Services must be:
- culturally respectful;
- continually evaluated for outcomes;
- delivered by competent staff;
- accessible, accountable and comprehensive;
- individualized to meet the needs of families; and
- strengths-based and delivered in the least intrusive manner.

The Division of Children and Family Services has developed a related vision statement: "that all children will live in safe, healthy families who are self-sufficient and capable of providing long-term stability and guidance to the children in their care." The focus of managers and staff in all the Division programs and throughout the department is on the larger agency vision—eliminating poverty and ending family violence. The vision itself is widely known within the Division. It is printed on the back of business cards, included in training, and discussed by supervisors and managers. Personnel procedures have been revised to inform applicants for Department jobs of the vision, and to ask how the prospective employee would contribute to that vision. A focus on the vision has facilitated collaboration, as over a dozen agencies have co-located with the Department to join forces on common priorities.

Assessment

An assessment is a product developed by gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing information to identify resources, strengths, motivation, functional components and other factors at a point in time that can be used to enhance functioning and promote growth. (Zastrow).

A strong assessment can help agencies to identify strengths that can address weak areas, and to become familiar with the capabilities of existing data sources. Planners can draw on this knowledge when they establish what the agency wants to accomplish and the measures and indicators that will be used to track progress.

A basic assessment process involves three steps:

- Gather all information on agency operations and performance that currently exists from both internal and external sources. It is critical to look at both services delivered directly by the agency and services delivered by contractors or grantees. The agency is ultimately held accountable for all of these services, and in many states contractors form a critical part of the service delivery system. Agencies should look for:

    - data and reports from information or reporting systems;
    - federal reports on AFCARS and NCANDS data;
    - program reports or agency/department level reports on agency services;
    - management reports;
    - quality assurance reports;
    - reports of citizen review panels/Foster Care Review Boards; and
    - internal or external audits, research, evaluations, or special studies.

    Agencies may need to expand on available information by gathering new data. For example:

    - request data reports that are not routinely produced;
    - conduct surveys or focus groups of external stakeholders; and/or
    - solicit feedback through community meetings, forums, or "listening sessions."

- Analyze and synthesize the information. Agency managers, and/or the broader planning groups should examine the information for strengths and weaknesses of the agency, and any contributing factors. For example, if data shows that there is a high rate of repeat maltreatment, analysis may point to contributing factors such as availability of services or risk assessment practices.

- Draw conclusions. The analysis should lead to some conclusions, often referred to as assumptions or hypotheses, about what the agency could do to have impact on these areas. For example, one hypothesis could be that increasing the service array in specific areas would lead to a decrease in rates of repeat maltreatment.

If the agency already knows what outcomes they want to focus on, the assessment can be focused on targeted areas. For example: if the state is going through the Child and Family Services Review process, the assessment tools used in the statewide assessment and the on-site review focus on gathering both internal and external information on agency performance on the seven specific outcomes and seven related systemic factors.

Assessments need to be conducted as part of the preparation for planning, and on an ongoing basis as part of the evaluation and revision of the plan. Since states are required to use the federal tools to assess their agency every two to five years, it makes sense to consider using these tools on an ongoing basis. The three stages of the CFS review process constitute a comprehensive assessment of how well the agency is doing in achieving specific outcomes and systemic factors. Managers can use the statewide assessment instrument, the on-site case review protocol and the stakeholder interview instruments on an ongoing basis by:

- incorporating the Statewide Assessment Instrument as the basis for the Annual Progress and Service Report (APSR) to assess annual performance on the Title IV-B Child and Family Service Plan; and

- incorporating the on-site case review instrument and stakeholder interview instruments as part of their Quality Assurance System to monitor progress and improve performance in their program improvement plans.

States can also draw on approaches used by other states such as surveys and focus groups, to gather additional information. (see Attachment 4 - Resources).

In one state ──────────────

Conducting a Statewide Assessment
in a County Administered System—Ohio

To conduct the statewide assessment portion of the child and family services (CFS) review in a county-administered system, agency officials ensured extensive input from a broad range of stake-holders, agency staff, and representatives from the state's 88 counties. The assessment was completed by an Executive Leadership Committee, subcommittees, and regular video and audio conferences with the counties.

The Executive Leadership Committee (ELC) included a broad range of representatives, and it met monthly to provide guidance and oversight to the CFS review process. The agency worked to assure the support and involvement of counties by including directors from small, medium and large counties. Membership also included directors from other state departments that provided services for children, advocacy groups representing public and private agency perspectives, juvenile court representatives and guardian ad litem representatives.

Subcommittees were also formed and were assigned to different areas of the assessment—the outcomes and the systemic factors. Each subcommittee included a broad range of staff from the state, counties and advocacy groups who provided input based on their areas of expertise. The subcommittees gathered all of the existing information on their areas, drawing on existing data, quality assurance reports, internal management system reports, and other studies, evaluations and reports.

A major strategy used to complete the assessment was to consult broadly with counties. County directors had been briefed about the CFS review and were provided with information on the process at the monthly ELC meetings. The agency organized a series of "educational forums" held weekly over a three-month period covering each part of the statewide assessment, including all of the outcome areas and systemic factors. Weekly videoconferences were held with state staff broadcasting to county Offices of Jobs and Family Services. The same program was repeated by teleconference, allowing anyone who was not able to travel to the videoconferencing site to call in and be part of the session. These sessions educated the counties about the review, and solicited feedback on specific issues in the assessment — such as service array — from those in the field. Counties helped fill out the assessment by sharing information about innovative practices, and challenges and barriers in their counties. The draft assessment was also disseminated to all 88 county directors for input. ──────────────

Conducting a Statewide Assessment in Arizona

Arizona conducted an assessment of the child and family services delivery system to complete the statewide assessment portion of the child and family services review process. Two central office policy specialists were assigned to lead the statewide assessment, and three staff from different local offices were assigned to work with them. They oversaw a process that involved gathering and analyzing existing data and information, identifying gaps, and gathering additional information through surveys and focus groups. A wide range of stakeholders were engaged in the process, which was presented as an opportunity for the whole state to make program improvements by identifying the real needs of the system and by discussing how these needs could be addressed in preparation for developing a plan.

The project leads convened "think tanks" of state and local staff and met with managers to review existing data on the outcomes and systemic factors that were the focus of the assessment. They worked to identify and resolve issues about how accurate the data was, and broke the data down in different ways to understand better what it meant, particularly when the data identified an area of weakness. For example, on the number of children with more than two placement settings, they looked more deeply at the numbers. They discovered that their AFCARS data program was overcounting placement settings and were able to revise their program and resubmit the data. They broke the data down by age and confirmed their hypotheses that the multiple placements were experienced by older children. In addition to the data, those involved gathered all the additional information they could find, including results of recent focus groups and evaluations, court system data base reports, other statistical reports, and the annual reports (APSRs) produced for the IVB plan. They then organized all of this data and information and identified areas for which they needed more information. They then used multiple approaches to gather that information and to consult with stakeholder groups for their input. This included:

• reviewing a random sample of cases to get quantitative data on issues such as the timeliness of court hearings.
• asking for time at meetings of existing groups to inform them about the assessment and to gather their input. For example, staff conducted a focus group at a scheduled meeting of the state's youth advisory board.
• conducting focus groups (for example, of foster parents).
• distributing written surveys (for example, to community advisory councils and members of the statewide advisory council).
• conducting telephone surveys (for example, of biological parents).

Staff and external experts were called on to write the draft report for each of the outcomes and systemic factors, drawing on all of the information and analysis.

Develop and implement a planning process

Be inclusive and engage major actors:

A broad-based planning process is required by federal regulations (See Attachment 1 – Federal Requirements). For example, federal regulations require that the CFSP:

> "describe the internal and external consultation process used to obtain broad and active involvement of major actors across the entire spectrum of the child and family services delivery system in the development of the plan."

For the CFSP and the PIP, the plan must be developed jointly by state and federal staff in consultation with a broadly representative review team.

The planning process should be structured to ensure input from all the critical players, including agency decision-makers, staff and stakeholders:

Agency decision makers: The mandate to undertake strategic planning should come from the Executive Director of the agency who must be engaged in the process and intend to use his/her authority to adopt and implement the plan throughout the agency. The agency management team should also have a formal role in the planning structure.

State level staff should not be limited to the division or area actually undertaking the planning, but should include all interrelated divisions or areas. For example, if the Division of Child and Family Services is planning for the CFSP, they should include Division Directors and staff from Economic Assistance (TANF), Child Support, Child Care, Youth Services, and Policy and Planning,

Agency Staff: The agency needs to involve staff and managers at all levels. State office plans developed by an individual or small group at the state level have little direct impact on the work of a county social worker and, from the perspective of the field, often don't reflect the real issues and problems staff deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Regional, service area or county level staff to be considered should include:
- regional, service area or county directors or chiefs;
- supervisors;
- local support staff such as field liaisons, quality assurance staff, trainers, etc.; and
- front line staff/ social workers.

Stakeholders: Federal requirements, national standards and the literature on strategic planning consistently point to the need for public agencies to involve a broad range of stakeholders in strategic planning. Stakeholders and external partners might include:
- Indian tribes;
- consumers of services;
- parents;

- public agencies—health/ Medicaid, mental health, education;
- private non-profit agencies/service providers;
- community-based organizations;
- federal and federally assisted programs serving children and families;
- state and local government officials;
- professional, civic or voluntary organizations;
- advocacy organizations;
- courts—judges, guardians ad litem, court staff and personnel, Court Improvement Program staff;
- law enforcement;
- media;
- clergy/faith communities;
- business/industry; and
- foster/adoptive parents or associations.

In one state

Oklahoma —Engaging Tribes in Planning

In preparation for the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) Oklahoma organized a diverse 53-member Child and Family Service Committee including three tribal representatives. As part of the statewide assessment process, the agency held three tribal focus groups in Shawnee, Oklahoma City and Tahlequah, providing an opportunity for tribes to have input about their perceptions of the child welfare system and services provided to Indian children and families. The on-site portion of the CFS review included three tribal reviewers. In the case sampling for the review, four tribal custody cases were included. While 14% of the children in care in Oklahoma are Native Americans, this tribal representation was a step towards ensuring that the planning group and process reflects the background of children served. While Oklahoma was not required to address ICWA in the PIP, the state voluntarily decided to include program improvement strategies with tribes in their PIP to respond to concerns heard during the CFSR process about tribal engagement in service delivery to Native American youth. It was hoped that this would improve the relationships between the agency and tribes, improve the service delivery system and improve child welfare practice.

In one state ————————————————

Engaging Stakeholders in the Planning Process - Kansas

Kansas held a Statewide Stakeholder Meeting as the first step in an integrated strategic planning process following the completion of the CFS review in 2001. This two-day meeting brought together representatives of the Kansas child welfare system to develop an ongoing strategic planning and quality assurance process for Kansas's child welfare system. Participants included foster and adoptive parents, representatives of the Youth Advisory Board, media, politicians, agency staff from all levels and from all regions of the state, universities and various service providers. All state agencies were represented including health, mental health, and education. Legal and judicial representatives were also involved.

Expectations for the planning session were clearly defined. Presentations identified Kansas's priorities including: family-centered child welfare practice, integrated strategic planning and continuous quality improvement or quality assurance. Participants were asked to address areas needing improvement and were assigned to workgroups based on their experience, expertise and knowledge to ensure broad and inclusive representation needed for quality planning. The groups had access to four sources of data: 1) CFS review statewide assessment, 2) CFS review final report, 3) James Bell Associates External Evaluation Report and Lawsuit Settlement Monitoring Reports; and 4) internal data. With the help of the facilitators, each workgroup documented their conclusions and presented the priorities they identified for program improvements to the larger group. These were then synthesized into a report that was used as the basis for the PIP and assisted the agency in development of:
• the 2001 program improvement plan,
• the FY 2003 state plan,
• an integrated strategic plan for child welfare,
• the FY 2002 and FY 2003 Kansas child welfare budget request,
• the FY 2003 Children & Family Policy business plan, and
• the FY 2003 Quality Management Strategy for Title XIX Managed Care. ————————————————

Establish Planning Structure

To establish a planning structure, states can either build on established structures or develop new groups. The planning structure may include any or all of the following:

- a core group of agency decision makers usually comprised of senior management staff.
- a large planning group, usually advisory in nature, which includes representatives from a broad range of agency staff, stakeholders and external partners.
- subcommittees created to work on specific areas.
- clear leads and or co-leads of subcommittees to facilitate the work and keep the committee on task. Utilizing agency staff and stakeholders as co-leads is an excellent way to partner and gain more participation of stakeholders in the process.
- agency staff assigned to support the process.

Communication is a key to a productive and effective planning process, especially when the planning structure includes multiple groups within and outside of the agency. Some agencies establish separate groups to integrate and coordinate the work of the subcommittees, and to provide a link between those groups and the decision making group.

Figure 3
Planning Structure
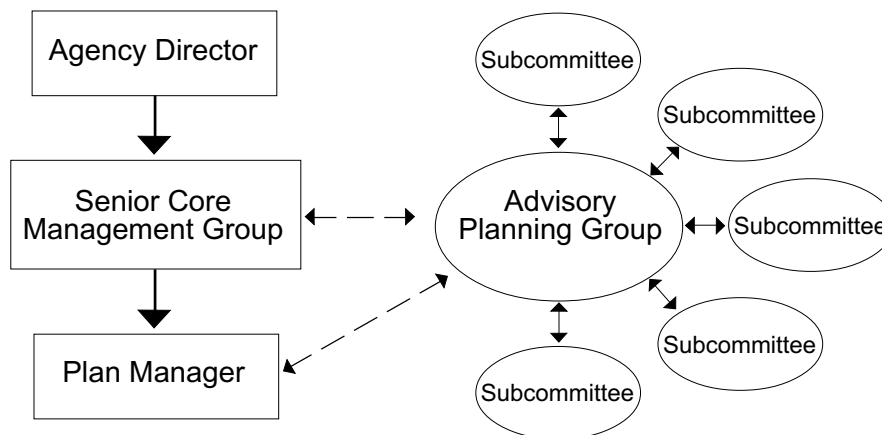
In creating a planning structure, the agency should consider building on any established planning groups including those used for other plans such as Title IV E, the CFSP or consent decrees. The agency should review the composition of the planning group and expand it as necessary to be inclusive.

The core and the large planning group can also link with established groups to obtain additional stakeholder input. Examples of groups to consider include: Citizen review panels, Foster Care Review Boards, Foster or Adoptive Parent Advisory Boards or Independent Living Youth Advisory Boards.

Establish Process for Collecting Input to Develop the Plan

In the preparation stage, agency management must decide on an approach to use to develop and write the plan. Developing the plan can be done in a variety of ways and may include some or all of the following steps:

- Obtain technical assistance to develop the process to be used by the planning groups to accomplish their work.
- Use consultants and/or experienced facilitators to conduct the planning group sessions.
- A core group reviews the assessment findings and defines priorities, overarching themes, and areas needing improvement.
- The larger planning group further defines and reaches consensus on priorities and target areas.
- The large planning group develops possible strategies and actions for the plan.
- Subcommittees develop detailed plans to address specific areas.
- The large planning group examines all of the subcommittee's recommendations and defines what the agency wants to accomplish, what it will do to get there and how it will know if it is making progress.
- Staff draft versions of the plan, integrating all of the input collected from this process.
- Drafts are circulated and revised based on recommendations and input.

The core group and the planning group both need to draw on the information collected and the analysis done during the assessment. These groups should start work early to investigate the potential strategies that can move the agency towards its goals or outcomes.

Clearly define roles and responsibilities

The agency needs to decide what the planning groups will do and how they will have input at every point of the planning process—in visioning, assessment, developing the groups' roles and responsibilities, developing and writing the plan, implementation, reviewing and monitoring of progress, and revising the plan.

Training

Depending on the type of plan being developed, planning group members should be trained on group responsibilities, strategic planning, and the issues and requirements of the type of plan they are developing. For example, if the planning groups have come together in response to a CFS review to develop the Program Improvement Plan, it would be helpful for members to receive an overview of the CFS review process, the CFS review findings, the PIP requirements, and current state priorities. It often makes sense to integrate the training throughout the planning process, beginning with an overview and then providing more in-depth training on specific topics as needed.

Mississippi's Planning Structure

Mississippi's senior management team has taken the lead in the strategic planning process for the agency, and they continue to serve as the core decision-making body for planning. Mississippi then evaluated the existing infrastructure (advisory boards, steering committees, task forces, etc.), and determined that the existing CFS Review State Advisory Board, established as part of the CFS review pilot, was the most appropriate body to build on for stakeholder engagement in the planning process. It was broad-based and included state, local, and community-based agencies and organizations as well as parents, consumers, professionals and advocacy organizations. It was decided that additional representatives were needed to make it truly inclusive. Mississippi identified 12 "domains" of stakeholders that needed to be represented in all DCFS efforts and added new members to the Board to assure representation from all of these areas. These domains were:

- health/mental health,
- education,
- professional/civic/voluntary organizations,
- media,
- clergy/faith community,
- business/industry,
- foster/adoptive parents/advocates,
- law enforcement,
- consumers,
- elected public officials/legislators,
- service providers, and
- judicial/legal.

In addition, tribal representation and involvement was identified as a priority.

It was determined that by enhancing its role and responsibilities, this CFS Review State Advisory Board could be strengthened to serve a dual purpose. It became known as the State Level Citizen Review Board while retaining the duties of the CFS Review State Advisory Board. The State Level Citizen Review Board responsibilities include comprehensive evaluation of Mississippi's child welfare system and progress in achieving the outcomes and goals of the Child and Family Service Plan.

Five additional groups expanded their roles to serve as state level citizen review panels and coordinate with the State Level Citizen Review Board. These five panels included:
• the Mississippi Permanency Partnership Network Advisory Board,
• the Children's Justice Act Task Force,
• the State Level Child Fatality Review Board,
• the Children's Trust Fund Board, and
• the State Level Case Review Team.

These five panels evaluate particular aspects of the child welfare system. They prepare reports based on their assessments and evaluations and are responsible for feeding this information to the State Level Citizen Review Board.

The State Level Citizen Review Board further developed their internal structure to accomplish their responsibilities:
• DCFS provided support staff;
• a chairperson was appointed from among the external representatives; and
• three committees were established for safety, permanency, and well-being.

Clear responsibility for plan development and management was assigned to a State Office senior management staff who worked closely with the ACF Regional Office Program Specialist to coordinate joint planning with the Senior Management Core Decision Making Team and the State Level Citizen Review Board.

Director

Senior Management Team — — State Level Citizen Review Board

Mississippi Planning Structure

Citizen Review Panels:
• The Mississippi Permanency Partnership Network
• The Children's Justice Act Task Force
• The State Level Child Fatality Review Board
• The Children's Trust Fund Board
• The State Level Case Review Team

Kentucky's Planning Process and Structure

As part of their effort to strengthen their CFSP, Kentucky established a Child and Family Service Planning Group (CFSPG). This CFSPG convened in January 2002 to develop the strategic planning process for Kentucky's CFSP. The group, along with agency leadership, developed a basic planning structure:

- Two primary groups would develop and manage the plan:
  - A Core Group comprised of agency leadership, key decision makers and essential agency staff is ultimately responsible for developing and implementing the plan.
  - The CFSPG, comprised of community stakeholders, external partners, service providers and agency staff, serves as a primary advisory planning group.
- There are three sub-committees or workgroups around the federal outcome areas of safety, permanency and well-being.
- Each sub-committee has a leader to facilitate the specific work activities and responsibilities of the committee.
- Additional committees or workgroups can be developed on an as needed basis. The Division of Policy Development and the Division of Protection and Permanency would share lead responsibility for the CFSP and required federal reporting.

Those involved decided on the following planning process:
- An assessment would be conducted to target needs for planning.
- An intensive Strategic Planning Retreat would be held to involve diverse participants including the CFSPG, the Core Team, additional community stakeholders, external partners, service providers and state, regional and county child welfare staff.
- Based on the work completed at the retreat, a draft plan would be developed.
- The draft would be widely circulated for review and input.
- Planning groups discuss the input and recommend revisions to the draft.
- A final draft would be completed and distributed for review and comment.
- The final CFSP would be submitted internally for agency approval.
- The CFSP would be submitted to ACF Regional Office for approval.

In three states
Implementing a Planning Process

Building on an existing planning structure - Nebraska
Nebraska decided to build their planning structure for the PIP on an existing CFS Review Advisory Team. It was determined that the Team was diverse and represented the many stakeholders and external partners required as part of the Title IV-B requirements for the CFSP. In addition, this Team was already familiar with and oriented to the CFS review process and could actively participate in the PIP development and implementation. This group carried out PIP planning activities, including analyzing the areas needing improvement, collecting and gathering input related to strategies and approaches, and drafting the PIP. The Team has become a standing group with an ongoing role related to implementation and monitoring the outcomes of the PIP.

Integrating recommendations from workgroups - Utah
Utah built on structures that were in place for the state's performance milestones plan to develop a planning process for the Child and Family Services Review and for developing the PIP. As in many planning processes, the process for the CFSR includes a core decision-making group and a broad-based CFSR team with workgroups assigned to different areas. In addition to this, however, Utah also established a facilitation group whose job is to integrate the work of the subcommittees, and coordinate it with existing agency initiatives. For example, if three subcommittees recommend training, the facilitation group integrates this training and coordinates it with existing agency training programs.

Analyzing the CFSR assessment – Iowa
After completing their statewide assessment for the CFSR process, Iowa immediately established an organizational structure to support the development of their Program Improvement Plan. This included analysis teams to study the underlying issues and research strategies to address areas that needed improvement. This has given the agency a "head start" so that they can develop a PIP more quickly once they receive the final report.

Illustrations for the Utah and Iowa Planning Process can be found in Attachment 6.

STAGE 2 Plan

Once the agency has looked at the vision, conducted an assessment, and implemented a planning process and structure, it is ready to plan. The planning stage includes the following steps:

• develop the content of the plan and produce a draft document,

• circulate the draft plan for input and make necessary revisions, and

• finalize the plan.

Develop the plan

In order to develop and write the plan, those involved in the process need to review the assessment, prioritize and develop the content of the plan.

Review Assessment

Those involved in planning need to base their work on the findings of the assessment. Planners need to review the assessment information, and build on the analyses and conclusions drawn in the preparation stage to define the agency goals and outcomes, select strategies and develop approaches to measuring progress. The assessment is critical to addressing the three key questions any plan must answer:

What do we want to accomplish? Assessments often highlight areas needing improvement, and these can help guide agencies in choosing a focus for what the agency wants to accomplish.

What will we do to get there? The information gathered during the assessment, and the analyses and hypotheses developed, can help planners choose more specific strategies or objectives to be pursued in order to get to the goals and outcomes

How will we know if we are making progress? The assessment of available data and information also lays the foundation for the measures and indicators that will be used in the plan and the systems that need to be developed to track progress on these measures.

The planning processes defined by federal regulations for child welfare agencies require that the agencies base the development of a plan on an assessment process that gathers and analyzes available information (See - Attachment 1—Federal Requirements):

• For the CFSP, federal regulations state that "the State must base the development of the CFSP vision, goals, objectives…on an analysis of available baseline information and any trend over time on indicators" in specific areas.

• PIPs must build directly on the comprehensive assessments conducted through the CFS review by addressing all of the areas needing improvement identified in the final report of the CFS review process.

Prioritize

Planners need to identify priority areas for planning. They should consider both the needs of the agency and how they can build on agency strengths. Questions to consider include:

- What are the most significant issues the agency faces?
- Where can improvements be made?
- What strengths exist that can be built on?
- Which target areas will have the greatest impact on outcomes?
- What resources (staff, funds) are available or could be available?

Answer these questions

After reviewing the assessment and prioritizing target areas, planners need to develop the content of the plan. They need to answer the three key questions and ensure that leads and timeframes are identified.

What do we want to accomplish?

Those involved in planning need to define clearly what the agency wants to accomplish, often expressed as the agency goals or outcomes. Outcomes are often broader statements about the desired results of agency work, while goals are more specific priorities that can be measured. Often several goals relate to an outcome. These statements of what the agency wants to accomplish should build directly on the analysis done during the assessment. Below are some guidelines for developing the specific statements that express what the agency wants to accomplish:

- The agency vision should be used to guide the selection of goals and outcomes. This is a critical step in operationalizing the vision within the agency.

- Develop clear statements of goals and outcomes. If you know where you are going you are more likely to get there!

- Mandated goals or outcomes: Consider any mandated goals or outcomes for the type of plan you are developing. Federal regulations state that:

  - The CFSP must specify the goals, based on the vision statement, which will be accomplished during and by the end of the five-year period of the plan. The goals must be expressed in terms of improved outcomes for the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families and in terms of a more comprehensive, coordinated and effective child and family service delivery system

  - In the CFS review process, a state's substantial conformity will be determined by the state's ability to substantially achieve seven specific outcomes in the area of child safety, permanence and child and family well-being. In addition the state agency must satisfy criteria related to the delivery of services, or systemic factors. (See Attachment 1 – Federal Requirements)

    Since all states participate in CFSRs, states should be familiar with the CFS review outcomes and systemic factors, and consider how the goals and outcomes in any plan they develop can support the required performance in the CFS review process. (See Figure 4—CFS review Outcomes and Systemic Factors).

Figure 4

Child and Family Services Review
Outcomes and Systemic Factors

The seven outcomes are as follows:

Safety
1. Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
2. Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible.

Permanency
1. Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
2. The continuity of family relationships and connections are preserved for children.

Child and Family Well Being
1. Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
2. Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
3. Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

The seven systemic factors are:
1. Statewide information system
2. Case review system
3. Quality assurance system
4. Staff training
5. Service array
6. Agency responsiveness to the community
7. Foster and adoptive parent recruitment, licensing and retention

• Build on strengths: As planners look at the needs and strengths of the system they are working to improve, they should look for opportunities to build on strengths to address areas of weakness. For example:

   o if an identified weakness is lack of preventive service array statewide, but a strength is a county family preservation pilot program that has reduced the number of children who entered the foster care system, then the state may decide to reallocate financial resources to expand and replicate the pilot in additional counties.

   o if the assessment identifies as areas of need the lack of funds and supports for foster parents, but a strength is a well organized foster parent advisory board or statewide association, the planners might decide to build on that strength to address the areas of need. The agency could work collaboratively with the board or association to develop innovative new support services for foster parents by, for example:

      • utilizing experienced foster parents as volunteer mentors to new foster parents,

      • utilizing experienced specialized foster parents to provide additional training opportunities for foster parents, or

      • develop informal respite resources among existing foster parents by foster families volunteering to exchange respite time with other foster families.

- Consider available data: As states select goals and outcomes, they should consider what they will need to do to track progress towards these ends. This includes identifying indicators/measures that will be used, and considering the state of the available data and data systems that can be used to track these measures. Planners can build on data that is available or consider what would be involved in strategies for obtaining additional information.
- Integrate with other plans: If planners are developing one plan, they should consider whether the goals, outcomes, and related activities of that plan could be integrated with other plans that are guiding the agency's work. Federal regulations require child welfare agencies to incorporate the elements of the PIP into the goals and objectives of the state's CFSP.

What will we do to get there?

After determining what the agency wants to accomplish, the planning focus becomes what will be done to reach the goals and/or outcomes that have been established. Drawing on the assessment, the planning group needs to brainstorm and choose strategies, objectives and/or action steps that address these areas. According to federal regulations:

- the CFSP must include realistic, specific, quantifiable and measurable objectives that will be undertaken to achieve each goal; and
- the PIP must set forth the (goals and) action steps required to correct each area needing improvement. (See Attachment 1 – Federal Requirements.)

When choosing strategies and action steps, the planning group considers which steps will most likely move the agency toward their goals or outcomes. The agency can consider:

- knowledge about what is most likely to produce the desired results, from model programs, benchmarking or improvements made by similar agencies;
- strategies and action steps that make the most sense to stakeholders and staff;
- activities that can be undertaken with available resources;
- strategies and activities that can be sustained over time;
- approaches that address the significant barriers to change;
- strategies that take advantage of agency strengths; and
- pilots, demonstration projects or practice strategies implemented in targeted sites.

Many problems that child welfare agencies face, such as low permanency rates or high levels of re-abuse, are multi-faceted and complex. Agencies are often tempted to implement a single-faceted improvement to attempt to "fix" the problem in the short-term. However, systemic change that will be sustained over time often requires broader strategies that impact a number of different systems, but are more likely to produce long-term change.

How will we know if we are making progress?

A common mistake is to develop a plan that clearly defines what the agency wants to accomplish and what the agency will do to get there, but does not include a strategy for measuring progress. For example, some plans do not include measures or indicators to track progress,

while others include these in the plan but never implement the monitoring and reporting systems to gauge progress. Without indicators of progress that are tracked and reviewed regularly the agency cannot tell if implementation of the plan has made any difference, and the planning process risks being judged an unproductive drain on agency resources. To know if a plan is effective it is essential to routinely measure, review and evaluate all components of the plan.

Federal regulations for the CFSPs and the PIPs require states to track the progress being made on the plan (See Attachment 1 – Federal Requirements). Both must include:

- a description of the methods to be used to evaluate progress or to measure the results, accomplishments and annual progress towards the goals; and

- benchmarks.

There are two ways to monitor progress. One is to track the progress made towards the goals and outcomes, or towards what the agency wants to accomplish. This tracks the impact of what the agency is doing. The second is to track implementation of the specific strategies and action steps in the plan, or the activities the agency is implementing in order to accomplish the goals or outcomes.

There are different types of indicators or measures agencies can use to monitor progress in these two areas. A guide to program evaluation published by the Administration on Children and Families (ACF) defines two types of measures:

- Quantitative measures reflect "information that can be expressed in numerical terms, counted or compared on a scale." These are the numbers, rates, percentages or statistics that are used to measure progress, such as the number of available foster families, or the number of children adopted. Sources for these measures can be either agency data systems or program reports.

- Qualitative measures reflect "information that is difficult to measure, count or express in numerical terms." These include processes that assess participants' impressions, judgments or experiences with services, often through observation, intensive case reviews, interviews or focus groups. Examples include a family's impression about their involvement in the case planning process. (ACF, 1997.)

For any measure or indicator that uses numbers, the agency must gather baseline information on performance on that indicator. Having the baseline allows agencies to begin to track trends over time and to judge the significance of changes in the numbers. This will help the agency establish performance targets that state how much the agency intends to improve over specified periods of time. For example, the agency might aim to increase the percentage of foster/adoptive homes that reflect the racial/ethnic makeup of children in foster care. If 54% of the children in out of home care are other than white, and 36% of foster home placements are with other than white families, the agency might aim to increase from the baseline of 36% to 40% by January, 2005.

In monitoring progress towards the goals and outcomes, agencies need to choose indicators that measure the impact or the result of the activities and processes on moving the agency

towards its goals. For example, if the agency has a goal of increasing the number of children adopted, the indicator for the goal would be the number of children adopted. This is the ultimate result or outcome that the agency is aiming for, and it must be measured and tracked over time. In choosing indicators or measures to track progress towards goals and objectives, agencies need to consider the data they have available and how they can obtain additional data.

To monitor progress on strategies and action steps, agencies often use qualitative measures to track actions and steps taken to move towards broader goals or outcomes. For example:

Action step: Establish an adoptive parent advisory board to assist the agency in developing innovative strategies for adoptive parent recruitment
Measure: Adoptive parent advisory board is established by 4/1/03
                An adoptive parent recruitment plan including innovative strategies is developed by 6/1/03.

However, to the extent possible these measures should also reflect the impact of these activities. For example, a measure that reflects the impact would be:

Measure: Increase in the number of adoptive parent inquiries resulting from the implementation of the new recruitment strategies.

For most areas of strategic plans, there will be both long-term and short-term indicators of progress. For example, if a long-term goal is to increase the number of foster families from 1700 to 2000 over the next two years, a short-term indicator might be increasing the number of African American foster families from 500 to 600 over one year.

In developing the content for the plan, two additional components need to be addressed:
• who will be responsible for the activities within the plan, and
• when will the activities and goals be completed

Who will be responsible? Assigning leads or responsible parties is critical to ensuring that the plan is fully implemented and is typically done by senior management or the core planning group. The person who is responsible should have in their purview of authority the clear ability to accomplish the task. These leads will also play an important role in the management and supervision of the plan and will routinely report progress to the plan manager and/or planning group. Staff responsible for various activities must be clearly identified and must understand their responsibilities.

When will activities and goals be completed? The agency senior management or core planning group needs to review the overall plan and determine appropriate timeframes for initiating and completing the activities. Activities need to be sequenced based on realistic increments of time and availability of resources necessary to carry out the required work. The priority assigned to these activities needs to be reflected in the timeframes for initiation and completion in the plan. For example, safety is paramount, so if response times on child protection investigations need to be improved, the timeframes for the activities to improve response time should be immediate.

Draft Plan

Once a draft plan is developed, it should be circulated for additional input, and revised as necessary.

Finalize Plan

Finalizing the plan involves two steps:

- Share the final plan with the stakeholders and staff who provided input throughout the process. This gives the planning group an opportunity to explain how and why input was incorporated or not. It also gives staff and stakeholders an opportunity to review the plan in its final form and builds consensus on the plan. For CFSPs, a thirty-day public comment period is required.
- Have the plan officially approved by agency leaders and/or other responsible parties such as the Administration of Children and Families.

In one state
Developing a plan in Indiana

After Indiana received a draft of the final report from the CFS review process, the Director, the Deputy Director and the Director of Policy and Programs met to identify the key areas that the agency needed to address. There were a few areas that the managers had already identified as areas of concern. The state's internal quality assurance reviews (QAR) process had given the agency low scores on case planning. The agency had an ongoing initiative to improve child welfare training, and another to strengthen independent living. From the draft final report, the managers identified four other overarching areas of concern, for a total of seven proposed areas to be addressed in the planning process.

The Director of Policy and Programs and a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) team of almost fifty representatives from broad and diverse areas were charged with overseeing the development of the PIP. The team—providers and provider associations; foster and adoptive parent associations; court representatives, including attorneys and a judge; a prevention organization; universities; and representatives from all levels and all regions of the state agency—had tremendous experience with child welfare and a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children and families in Indiana.

The team received copies of the final report, discussed the seven potential areas of focus and organized into seven subcommittees, each developing a plan for one area. After each subcommittee's work was completed, the state PIP team met again for a daylong planning meeting. The subcommittees presented their recommended plans, and they realized that since many of the areas were interconnected, many subcommittees had developed similar plans. For example, three of the subcommittees recommended that the agency develop a concurrent planning process.

The subcommittee chairs drafted a program improvement plan, and circulated it to the PIP team for review and input. After revisions it was presented to the administration, and approved with few changes.

In one state
Collaborating with tribes in Oklahoma

In August 2002, a strategic planning meeting was held with both tribal and state staff as part of the process of developing the PIP. After an overview of the CFSR process and findings from the CFSR Final Report for Oklahoma, participants self-selected into one of six groups related to the areas of safety, permanency and well-being.

The groups discussed barriers, strengths, and possible action steps to address these barriers while building on strengths. The groups recommended various steps to accomplish the same goal—consistently involving the tribes on a local level. This activity generated a lot of energy, quality communication and good ideas for program improvements. Because of their success, the group decided to continue to work to develop a strategic plan for the state and tribes to specifically address the issues and concerns identified and to assure continued compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

In one state
Developing a plan in Kentucky

One of the first steps in the planning process in Kentucky was an intensive Strategic Planning Retreat. The Retreat was structured to provide orientation and training so that everyone participating would have a clear understanding of the expectations, roles and responsibilities. The group work process included three planning committees based on the CFS review outcome areas of safety, permanency and well-being. During each breakout session all three groups focused on the same themes for planning (for example, all three groups would work on assessment, case planning and family engagement). Following each breakout session, all three groups came together to compare results, prioritize strategies, and begin to integrate input. A special committee including representatives from the information system, quality assurance, program staff, and other key staff identified measures and methods for evaluating progress. This committee will also be convened as part of the follow-up needed after the retreat to specifically address the measures for the CFSP.

Following the retreat, the draft plan was sent out to all committee members and chairs and a series of conference calls were scheduled to review and further develop the draft plan. The special committee for evaluating progress worked on the draft plan with the responsible staff to further refine those areas of the plan.

Writing a Program Improvement Plan in DC

As the District of Columbia went through the child and family services reviews, the agency was also working to implement improvement strategies mandated by the modified consent order it was under, and was launching a strategic planning process. As DC worked to develop its Program Improvement Plan, it aimed to link the PIP with these other planning processes. The District involved a broad range of staff and stakeholders in developing the PIP, through broader planning groups and workgroups that developed a plan for each area needing improvement.

In crafting the PIP, workgroup participants identified seven overarching goals that key agency managers have taken responsibility for overseeing. These are:
• recruit and retain social workers,
• investigate abuse and neglect reports,
• expedite permanency for children,
• recruit and retain foster homes,
• promote agency and neighborhood-based services,
• enhance information systems, and
• monitor and evaluate the PIP (this includes implementing a multi-tiered quality assurance system that will use four primary strategies – supervisory case record reviews, quality assurance validation reviews, administrative reports and MIS data).

Then the plan, in both a narrative format and in a matrix format, lays out the "areas needing improvement" and addresses each with –
• What the agency wants to accomplish: a goal and % of improvement.
• How the agency will get there: this includes both a plan, or broader strategy, and specific action steps.
• How the agency will know if it is making progress: this includes methods to measure progress.

The plan also includes dates by which measurable benchmarks will be achieved and responsible parties. The seven system-wide goals impact on many of the areas targeted in the plan. For example, the plan notes that an area needing improvement is item 25 of the review – a process to ensure that each child has a written case plan developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions. To address the weaknesses in that area, one of the broader plans is to "ensure that direct service staff are provided skills and knowledge to conduct the case planning process with families." Numerous specific action steps include "modification of case plan and policies" and "training of program operations direct service staff, supervisors and program managers on case planning process, policies and documentation requirements." However, the narrative also notes a number of initiatives under the different broad goals that will support improved case practice. These include recruitment and retention of social workers, and strategies under expediting permanency that focus on improving clinical practice through creation of an office of clinical practice that has specialists in substance abuse, education, housing, and domestic violence available to work with social workers.

STAGE 3 Implement the Plan

Too often, strategic plans are written, but never implemented, sitting unused on office shelves. In an effective strategic planning process, a plan is written that is then widely known and used both within the agency and in the broader community. The steps in this stage are critical to ensuring that plans that are written are then used to guide work within the agency and ongoing monitoring of agency progress.

The implementation stage involves several steps including:
* communicating the plan,
* managing implementation of the plan,
* supervising the actual work, and
* monitoring and reporting progress on the plan.

Communicate the plan

After the plan is finalized and approved, it needs to be published and shared with everyone who will implement the plan, including the planning group, agency staff and other external partners or stakeholders. For CFSPs, federal regulations require that every Indian tribe in the state must receive a copy of the plan. Approaches to distributing the plan include:
* publish hard copies and distribute them to press, legislators, agency heads, community leaders, tribes, etc.;
* post the plan on a state or department website;
* hold a press conference to announce the plan;
* convene stakeholder forums to share the plan;
* distribute copies to all staff;
* train managers, supervisors and staff on contents of plan; and
* reconvene the planning group to share and review the final plan.

As the plan is implemented and revised, it needs to be continually communicated. Just like the agency vision, the components of the plan need to be communicated and reinforced throughout the agency and the community. Approaches include:
* ensuring that any decision making process in the organization (policy, budget, etc.) considers the elements of the strategic plan;
* including updates on progress on the plan in meetings with agency managers;
* incorporating components of the plan into both initial and ongoing, in-service training for managers, supervisors and staff;
* continually assessing progress in accordance with the plan;

- having the planning group review and revise the plan regularly over time; and
- continually reporting on progress on plan to all major actors.

Distributing a plan in Nebraska

After Nebraska developed their agency strategic plan, the Nebraska Family Portrait (NFP), they used the following approaches to publicize and distribute the plan:

- A logo was designed, and brochures, wallet cards, pins and magnets were developed and distributed. These served to reinforce and remind everyone of the agency's vision and goals.
- A conference was held with over 200 stakeholders to release the plan, and these sessions were videotaped.
- Over 40 meetings were held throughout the state to provide information and education about the NFP.

Communicating the Performance Milestone Plan in Utah

After the Performance Milestone Plan was developed in Utah, it was published and distributed widely throughout the state. In addition, a concerted effort was made to assure that everyone within the Division was aware of and familiar with the content of the plan, and their role within it. The administrative team in each region of the state trained all of their managers and front line staff on the plan. To support the plan, the agency created a position of performance milestones coordinator in each region of the state and appointed a statewide coordinator. They work with the regional and state management staff to track and report on progress on the plan. In addition, training staff oversee training on the practice skills associated with the practice model, one of the main features of the plan. These staff work to track and ensure that staff have received all components of the training, and, more importantly, to mentor them in the new skills. They work to provide opportunities for staff to demonstrate and observe the skills, to practice them and to be coached in learning the skills in their own practice.

In addition, the administrative team on the state level, which consists of regional managers, the director, deputy director and other statewide managers, meets monthly, and always has the Performance Milestone Plan on the agenda. They regularly review progress on the plan and discuss areas that need increased focus or attention.

Manage the plan

Agency leaders are responsible for implementing and managing the plan. Usually, they assign a manager or managers with the authority to assign responsibilities and to ensure actions are completed. Agency leaders and plan managers need to work actively to assure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities under the plan, and to monitor implementation. As the plan often requires changes or actions by stakeholders outside of the child welfare agency, plan managers, in conjunction with other agency managers, need to communicate and coordinate with a whole range of other agencies and community-based groups.

Since the planning groups were instrumental in developing the plan, they also have a key role in ongoing management of the plan. Planning groups should convene on a regular basis to maintain a focus on the activities and outcomes in the plan. Their roles can include the following:

- reviewing the implementation of the activities in the plan;
- monitoring progress on the outcomes and measures in the plan;
- assisting agency management and the plan manager in carrying out the plan (by, for example, identifying additional resources or brainstorming on approaches to overcoming barriers);
- conducting comprehensive reviews of progress on the plan;
- assisting in development of quarterly and annual reports on progress; and
- using data or information from assessments to guide revisions to the plan.

Plan managers and planning groups should consider how to integrate the goals and outcomes of different plans developed by the agency. Coordinating agency plans can reduce the workload of implementing and reporting on separate plans, and can increase the effectiveness of the efforts to move towards goals.

Supervise implementation

Managers at all levels— state, regional or county, district and unit— must supervise the work being done on the plan. This happens:

- as the plan is "dropped down" so that staff members in charge of implementation are aware of their responsibilities and carry out their assigned roles;
- as the plan is communicated to all staff so that they are aware of the agency's vision, goals or outcomes, strategies and activities, and their role in the plan;
- as more specific workplans are developed on regional, county or unit levels to implement the strategies or action steps in a broad statewide plan; and
- as data on progress of the plan is reviewed and used at the practice level, by regional managers, supervisors and units.

Developing local plans engages managers and staff in implementing the plan, as they take ownership of local goals, strategies and action steps. These local plans guide the day-to-day work of local managers, supervisors and caseworkers. This is one way to assure that state-

wide strategic plans will impact practice. For statewide PIPs, some states are asking counties or regions to develop their own plans for how they will implement the PIP in their areas.

Usually local planning starts with the vision and outcomes defined on the state level. Local planners are asked to develop plans that support state level outcomes, through a planning process that basically mimics the state level planning process. Local managers are charged with:

- establishing a collaborative planning process to identify priority outcomes, strategies and/or objectives on the local level;
- identifying measures and benchmarks that will be used to track progress, and local level performance targets;
- developing a work plan with timeframes and leads;
- implementing the local level plan;
- monitoring progress using both state and local level data sources; and
- reporting progress to the state.

Local level planning groups and staff can also be involved in the ongoing process of reviewing progress and revising the state and local plans as necessary.

To support local planning, states need to:

- structure the planning process on the local level, clearly defining roles, responsibilities and timeframes;
- provide guidance on the state level vision, outcomes, strategies and objectives;
- provide a format for local plans; and
- provide a structure for reporting and monitoring local performance on outcomes, possibly linked to state quality assurance and information systems.

In one state

Developing local plans in Oklahoma

Oklahoma developed and implemented county Program Improvement Plans (PIPs), under which staff and stakeholders in each of the state's 77 counties produce local plans directly linked to objectives of the state level Program Improvement Plan. These county level PIPs ensure that counties share ownership of the state PIP, and allow them to target priorities based on their own specific strengths and needs.

The first step in the process was to provide training to all of the service areas and counties in preparation for developing their county PIPs. The training, offered to area directors, county directors and supervisors, included a review of Oklahoma's CFS review process including the statewide assessment, CFS review final report, and the state PIP. During the training, the counties identified three program improvement priorities and objectives, identified challenges and strengths, and focused on one priority area for development of strategies and steps for improvement using the county PIP format.

County directors were then responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the county level plans. For each of the county level priorities in the county PIP, the counties identified and included in their local plan one objective from the state PIP. Counties modified the objective to reflect their own baseline and targeted performance level. This process created a direct link to the state PIP, allowing the state office to track the progress on the specific objectives that each county is targeting. This is facilitated by the state's SACWIS system, which is able to report data on indicators and benchmarks in the plan at both the state and the local level.

Each county will be responsible for reporting progress on a monthly basis to the area director. The area director provides a quarterly report to state office. State office continues to monitor the county PIPs using the current system for county level reviews that mirror that CFS review process. In addition, an extensive case review system is being implemented in Oklahoma that provides an additional method for measuring progress on Program Improvement Plans.

Developing regional plans in Kansas

A major strategy for Kansas's Program Improvement Plan was to develop and implement regional program improvement plans. On the state level, Kansas is developing an Integrated Strategic Plan (ISP). The ISP is a single child welfare planning document which incorporates the CFS review PIP, IV-E Plan, and the Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP). This ISP is structured around outcomes, goals, activities, and measurements of progress toward goals.

In order to assure systemic change at the practice level, Kansas decided that the ISP would include a process for developing and implementing regional program improvement plans that were targeted to the local needs. Regional meetings were held to develop the regional PIPs. Prior to the regional meetings, Quality Assurance State Office staff collected, reviewed and categorized:
• the input from the Statewide Stakeholder Conference,
• findings from the statewide assessment,
• recommendations from the CFS Review Final Report,
• input from staff, and
• information and data from agency reports.

Drawing on all of these sources, the state staff compiled a list of priorities and areas needing improvement that each regional PIP needed to address. The regional PIPs were recorded in a standard format that included:
• measurable outcomes,
• action steps to achieve each outcome,
• the monitoring activities used to measure progress,
• the person responsible for each action step,
• the stakeholders involved in each action if appropriate, and
• the dates each action step was to be initiated and completed.

All regional plans were submitted to State Office for review and approval. Kansas plans to incorporate the regional PIPs into the ISP in 2003.

Monitor and report progress

In developing a plan, those involved need to consider available data and the systems they can set up to monitor progress. As the plan is implemented, managers need to develop these systems to track and report on progress. CFSP regulations stress the need to continue to gather data on progress throughout the life of the plan (See Attachment 1 – Federal Requirements). Regulations state:

> "Additional and updated information on service needs and organizational capacities must be obtained throughout the five year period to measure progress in accomplishing the goals and objectives cited in the CFSP."

In developing a reporting and monitoring system, agencies should draw on any existing systems that are producing program or performance data. In particular, planners should consider the state's existing information and quality assurance systems (such as case record reviews, customer satisfaction surveys, exit interviews, focus groups, internal or external research studies) to determine if those can be used to track indicators in the plan. They should also look at available outcome data from federal data systems.

If data is not available, the planning group and managers need to work with the appropriate staff to develop alternative tracking and monitoring systems. For example, if the quality assurance system conducts regular case reviews to assess the quality of services, planners could ask that additional questions be added to the case review tool. Any reports that are developed for monitoring progress on the plan can also become part of the state's regular reporting from the information systems or from the quality assurance systems.

Agency managers and those involved in planning should use the reports regularly – on a daily, weekly or monthly basis – to monitor progress on the plan. Most state planning groups also routinely review available progress reports on the activities of the plan and on outcome measures within the plan, providing an external view of agency performance. Most communicate their findings and necessary recommendations to the plan manager for improvements.

This information in reports can be used to produce regular progress reports required by federal planning processes. For both the CFSP and the PIP, agencies are required to review progress and report the results (See Attachment 1 – Federal Requirements):

> Annually, each state and each Indian tribe must conduct an interim review of the progress made in the previous year towards accomplishing the goals and objectives in the [Child and Family Services] plan…[and] on the basis of this review each state and Indian tribe must prepare and submit to ACF, and make available to the public, an Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR).

> States must provide a quarterly status reports… to inform ACF of progress in implementing the measures of the [Program Improvement] plan

Federal regulations also require that progress in implementing the PIP be included in the APSR reports on the CFSP.

Producing these regular reports required for the CFSP and the PIP provides agencies with the opportunity to regularly review and analyze their data on progress towards their goals and outcomes. If the agency has developed plans that use a matrix format, an additional column could be added to the form to report on progress.

In one state

Implementation and monitoring of the Program Improvement Plan in Delaware

Delaware's PIP clearly defines what the agency wants to accomplish in six outcome areas, and a plan coordinator oversees seventeen specific action plans that have been developed to move towards those outcomes. Progress is monitored by a number of indicators, tracked through data reports and through the state's revamped quality assurance system. The action plans address both putting new systems into place and developing structures that require managers to communicate and reinforce new expectations with caseworkers. There is also a specific action plan around redesign of the QA process to generate information on the measures in the PIP. The agency is producing regular reports that highlight progress on meeting the outcomes and goals in the plan.

The content of the plan focuses on six outcome areas where the agency did not meet federal standards and was in need of improvement. For each of these outcomes the plan clearly addresses the three key questions:

- What they want to accomplish: For each outcome the plan lists the indicators contributing to the non-conformity and goals. For example, under well being outcome #1, "families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs," the indicator contributing to non-conformity was "needs and services of children, parents and foster parents" and the agency goal is "by June 2002, 75% of cases reviewed for this outcome will be in substantial conformity."
- What the agency will do to get there: The plan lists and discusses actions for each of the outcomes. For example, under well being outcome # 1 there are three action areas: directed case conference, comprehensive assessment, and information sharing.
- How the agency will know if it is making progress: The plan lists and then discusses the method of measurement for each goal. For example, the method of measurement for the goal of "75% of cases reviewed for this outcome will be in substantial conformity" is the agency's internal quality assurance system.

Methods to measure progress in the plan include both data indicators and other measures drawn from the state's quality assurance system. The agency uses three sets of quality assurance case review tools for different kinds of cases, and has revamped these questionnaires to ask about and enforce the new expectations around CFS review outcomes.

A number of different types of action plans were developed to guide implementation of the plan, and were included in the first quarterly report. They all list at the top the outcomes being addressed, the lead for the action and a statement of what the action is (really a broader statement of the strategy). Then a matrix lists in three columns the steps/processes, the person responsible, and the timeframe.

In one state ————————————

Modifying quality assurance systems to track progress in North Carolina

North Carolina has revised their quality assurance system to monitor the outcomes in their Program Improvement Plan. The child welfare system is county-administered, and traditionally, state level quality assurance staff had conducted reviews on county level services. The agency redesigned the county level reviews to mirror the federal review instrument, so they could track performance on the CFS review outcomes. This redesign was an action step in the plan, and has been implemented in the state. As a first step in the county reviews, the counties complete a self-assessment. Then, state quality assurance staff work with county level representatives to conduct stakeholder interviews and in-depth reviews of a small number of cases. This process results in a cumulative score on each of the outcomes for the counties reviewed that quarter. The reports that are tracking progress on the plan include these cumulative scores, data on the state's performance on the national standards, and a matrix with a column to report on the status of the steps under each action area. ————————————

Revise

In this fourth stage, the planning group is in effect starting the cycle over again, by conducting an assessment of agency performance on the plan over the prior year and making needed revisions and updates to the plan.

Review progress

In the implementation stage, agencies need to develop reports and use them on a regular basis – daily, weekly or monthly – to monitor progress on the plan. In addition to this, a comprehensive review of progress should happen on an ongoing basis, probably quarterly, biannually or annually depending on the reporting requirements of the plan. For example, PIPs require quarterly reports, and the CFSPs require an annual report on progress. As progress is reviewed, those involved in planning continue to need to coordinate with quality assurance and information systems staff to build on and integrate plan reports with existing and new agency systems.

The ongoing monitoring and comprehensive reviews of progress should assess both progress towards the goals and outcomes, and the progress being made on implementing the plan activities.

Reconvene planning process and revise plan

In reviewing progress on the plan, agency managers should continually repeat the strategic planning process. On an ongoing basis the agency should conduct assessments of its performance by gathering and analyzing information on agency performance. The planning structure should be reconvened so that planning groups can review agency performance and reassess the goals, outcomes, strategies and action steps in the plan. The wide range of staff and stakeholders involved in the planning process should consider what changes should be made to the plan. Revisions should be made to the plan, and the draft revised plan should be circulated for comment and finalized. The revised plan should be communicated widely, and responsibilities and workplans need to be revised. The revised plan needs to be monitored and then revised again in this ongoing process. To the extent that the plan is updated, it can stay current and meaningful to the organization.

Reviewing and revising the plan in Mississippi

Mississippi's strategic planning process features a review of the data and statistics directly related to CFSP outcomes for systemic reform in the areas of safety, permanency and child and family well being. The data demonstrates progress or lack of progress made by the state during the 12-month reporting period toward achieving the goals of the CFSP, and highlights areas for improvement, additional planning and necessary revisions to the strategies within the plan. Each year the state level Citizen Review Board draws on this information to develop their report on the progress of the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in managing the five-year CFSP for the prior 12-month period. This annual report also includes vital recommendations and input for continuous improvement to the plan and for the DCFS in continuing to execute the plan.

DCFS internal reports compiled for the APSR are related to the specific action steps, timeframes, systemic outcomes and client outcomes identified in the CFSP. These reports are used to write the APSR but are also provided to the state level Citizen Review Board and retreat participants to assist in plan review and revisions. Each year groups are established based on the basic structure of the plan for review and also based on areas of the plan identified that require updating or revisions. Each group reports their findings and recommendations for changes or additions that will improve, clarify, and/or update the existing plan for the upcoming year. All of the information collected from this process is then used to update the CFSP matrix and is incorporated into the APSR.

Reviewing and revising the plan in Utah

The Division has been publishing monthly updates on the Performance Milestone Plan, with articles and data on progress on the plan components. In addition to reviewing progress on the plan at their regular monthly meetings, the Division's administrative team holds an annual planning meeting to update the plan and decide on areas to focus on in the coming year. Since the plan was announced in 1999, the agency has met 80% of the goals laid out in the plan. As the plan was communicated throughout the agency and implemented, it has helped everyone within the agency – from managers to front line staff – to focus on the key priority of improving practice. In addition, the plan focused on having the agency become a self-correcting organization, where systems were in place to track and draw attention to performance in priority areas, and to take actions to make improvements where necessary. The plan defined priority areas and called for accountability structures, quality improvement committees and investments in management systems. While the agency has been able to achieve most of what is in the plan, it has not been able to meet two of the nine milestones, and will be negotiating with the judge overseeing the settlement agreement that led to the plan to try to make revisions in these areas. Due to the self-correcting mechanisms that have been put into place, the agency is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. As a consequence, when the agency went through the child and family services review process, the results pointed to areas the agency was already aware of. The plan has been a powerful tool to achieve improvements in practice and in systems within the agency.

The benefits of strategic planning can be experienced by agencies that are able to conduct the steps under each of the four stages:

- As agencies, guided by a vision, develop clear goals, outcomes, strategies and measures and communicate the plan, strategic planning can build consensus – both within the agency and with stakeholders – on a clear direction for the agency that can provide direction and guide choices.

- As the agency implements strategies to achieve outcomes, monitors the effectiveness of the strategies and revises them, the strategic planning process enables the agency to continually move closer to its goals.

- The continual cycle of planning – including regular reassessment of needs and strategies – helps agencies adapt to change, correct mistakes, and continually allocate resources to areas of most need.

- A strategic planning process can help agencies be more effective and efficient as strategies are developed to build on strengths, and efforts towards goals are coordinated across programs and systems.

As a broad range of agency staff and stakeholders are engaged in developing, implementing and revising a strategic plan, the plan becomes a living document that is known and used within the agency and the community. A strong strategic planning process can be a powerful tool for systemic change within child welfare agencies, focused on improving outcomes for children and families.

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This attachment describes some of the federal requirements for planning for child welfare agencies. The first table provides references to the federal regulations for planning processes that affect child welfare agencies. The second table presents the federal requirements of the Child and Family Services Plan and of the Child and Family Services Review Process, highlighting the similarities between these two required planning processes.

PLAN TYPE	REQUIREMENTS – FEDERAL REGULATIONS/LAW	
CAPTA PLAN	For States only, the CFSP also must contain information on…the Child Abuse and Neglect State grant program (known as the Basic State Grant) under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C. 5101 et. seq.).	45 CFR 1357.15(a)(2)
	The State's CFSP must explain whether and/or how funds under the CAPTA…are coordinated with and integrated into the child and family services continuum described in the [CFS] plan.	45 CFR 1357.15(o)(2)
INDEPENDENT LIVING PLAN	For States only, the CFSP also must contain information on…the independent living program under title IV-E, section 477 of the Act	45 CFR 1357.15(a)(2)
	The State's CFSP must explain whether and/or how funds under the…independent living programs are coordinated with and integrated into the child and family services continuum described in the [CFS] plan.	45 CFR 1357.15(o)(2)
EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER PROGRAM	Created in 2001 by the Preserving Safe and Stable Families Act (PSSFA), which added this program to the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. The program was funded for the first time in FY2003, so states are just beginning to implement this program to provide education and training vouchers for higher education to children in child welfare systems. Since it is now part of Section 477, information on it must be included in the CFSP (See Independent Living Plan above)	PSSFA or 2001 amended Chafee Foster Care Independence Program; added new section 477(i) to the Social Security Act
TRAINING PLAN	The State's CFSP must include a staff development and training plan in support of the goals and objectives in the CFSP which addresses both of the title IV-B programs covered by the plan. This training plan also must be combined with the training plan under title IV-E as required by 45 CFR 1356.60(b)(2). Training must be an on-going activity and must include content from various disciplines and knowledge bases relevant to child and family services policies, programs and practices. Training content must also support the cross-system coordination consultation basic to the development of the CFSP.	45 CFR 1357.15(t)
FOSTER AND ADOPTION RECRUITMENT PLAN	The APSR and the CFSP must describe the state's progress and accomplishments made with regard to the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflects the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.	Section 442(b)(9) of the Act

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN		CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW	
Consultation/Collaboration		**Consultation/Collaboration**	
The State and the Indian Tribe must base the development of the CFSP on a planning process that includes…broad involvement and consultation with a wide range of appropriate public and non-profit agencies and community based organizations, parents, including parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system	45 CFR 1357.15(d)(1)	The full child and family services review will…be conducted by a team of Federal and State reviewers that includes…representatives selected by the State, in collaboration with the ACF regional office, from those with who the State was required to consult in developing its CFSP, as described and required in 45 CFR 1357.15(L)	45CFR 1355.33(a)
The State's CFSP must describe the internal and external consultation process used to obtain broad and active involvement of major actors across the entire spectrum of the child and family service delivery system in the development of the plan	45 CFR 1357.15(L)(1)	Sources of information collected during the on site review…must include…interviews with key stakeholders both internal and external to the agency, which at a minimum, must include those individuals who participated in the development of the state's child and family service plan required at 45 CFR 1357.15(L)	45CFR 1355.33(c)
The Indian tribe's CFSP must describe the internal and external consultation process used to obtain the broad and active involvement of major actors providing child and family services within the Tribe's area of jurisdiction	45 CFR 1357.15(L)(2)		
For States and Indian Tribes the consultation process must involve – - all appropriate offices and agencies within the State agency or within the Indian tribal area - in a state-supervised, county-administered State, county social services and/or child welfare directors… - a wide array of State, local, Tribal and community-based agencies and organizations both public and private non-profit with experience administering programs of services for infants, children, youth, adolescents and families… - parents, including birth and adoptive parents, foster parents, families with a member with a disability, children both in and outside the child welfare system, and consumers of services from diverse groups	45 CFR 1357.15(L)(3)		

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN		CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW	
- for States, representatives of Indian tribes within the State - for States, representatives of local government… - representatives of professional and advocacy organizations… individual practitioners working with children and families; the courts; representatives of other States or Indian tribes…; and academicians… - representatives of State and local agencies administering Federal and federally assisted programs… - administrators, supervisors and front line workers… see 45 CFR 1357.15(L)(3)			
States must include in the ongoing coordination process representatives of the full range of child and family services provided by the state agency as well as other service delivery systems providing social, health, education and economic services…	45 CFR 1357.15(m)		
The CFSP must describe the on-going consultation process that each grantee will use to ensure the continued involvement of a wide range of major actors in meeting the goals and objectives…	45 CFR 1357.15(k)(4)		
Joint Planning		**Joint Planning**	
CFSP definition: A document developed through joint planning, which describes the publicly funded State child and family services continuum	45 CFR 1357.10(c)	The program improvement plan must be developed jointly by State and Federal staff in consultation with the review team	45 CFR 1355.35(a)
The CFSP will be approved only if the plan was developed jointly by ACF and the State (or the Indian tribe…	45 CFR 1357.15(b)(4)		

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN		CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW	
Vision, Outcomes and Systemic Factors		**Outcomes and Systemic Factors**	
The CFSP must include a vision statement which articulates the grantee's philosophy in providing child and family services and developing or improving a coordinated service delivery system. The vision should reflect the service principles at section 1355.25.	45 CFR 1357.15(g)		45 CFR 1355.34(b)
The CFSP must specify the goals, based on the vision statement, that will be accomplished during and by the end of the 5 yr. period of the plan. The goals must be expressed in terms of improved outcomes for and the safety, permanency and well-being of, children and families and in terms of a more comprehensive, coordinated and effective child and family service delivery system	45 CFR 1357.15(h)	A states substantial conformity will be determined by its ability to substantially achieve the following child and family service outcomes …in the area of child safety… in the area of permanence for children… in the area of child and family well-being	45 CFR 1355.34(c)
Some examples of references to the systemic factors in the CFSP are:		In addition…the State agency must also satisfy criteria related to the delivery of servicesThe systemic factors under review are…	
• The state must include in the CFSP a description of the quality assurance system it will use to regularly assess the quality of services	45 CFR 1357.15(u)	• Statewide information system • Case Review system • Quality Assurance system • Staff training • Service array	
• The state's CFSP must include a staff development and training plan in support of the goals and objectives in the CFSP…	45 CFR 1357.15(t)(1)	• Agency responsiveness to the community • Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention	45 CFR 1355.34(c)
• The state's CFSP must describe the publicly funded child and family services continuum	45 CFR 1357.15(n)(1)	All of the state plan requirements associated with the systemic factors must be in place, and no more than one of the state plan requirements fails to function [as described in the regulations]	
• The APSR must include			
…A description of the state's progress and accomplishments made with regard to the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflects the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed (see Section 422(b)(9) of the Act)	ACF-CB-Program Instruction-02-05		
…A description of the State's plan for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children			

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN		CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW	
Assessment		**Assessment**	
For FY 1995, the State must base the development of the CFSP vision, goals, objectives…on an analysis of available baseline information and any trends over time on indicators in the following areas:	45 CFR 1357.15(k)(1)	The full child and family services reviews will consist of a two phase process that includes a statewide assessment and an on-site review	45 CFR 1355.33(a)
• The well being of children and families • The needs of children and families • The nature, scope, and adequacy of existing child and family related social services		The statewide assessment must: (1) address each systemic factor under review…(2) assess the outcome areas of safety, permanency and well-being…(3) assess the characteristics of the agency that have the most significant impact on the agency's capacity to deliver services to children and families that will lead to improved outcomes; (4) assess the strengths and areas of the State's child and family service programs that require further examination through an on-site review	45 CFR 1355.33(b)
The state must collect and analyze State-wide information on family preservation and family support services…Other services that impact on the ability to preserve and support families may be included in the assessment	45 CFR 1357.15(k)(2)	Sources of information to be collected during the on-site review to determine substantial conformity must include…(i) case records…(ii) interviews with children and families whose case records have been reviewed…(iii) interviews with caseworkers, foster parents, and service providers for the cases selected…(iv) interviews with key stakeholders…	45 CFR 1355.33(c)
		ACF notifies the State agency in writing of whether the State is, or is not, operating in substantial conformity (final report)	

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN		CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW	
Writing the Plan		**Writing the Plan**	
The CFSP must include: an explanation of how this information and analysis were used in developing the goals, objectives, funding, and service decisions, including decisions about geographic targeting and service mix	45 CFR 1357.15(k)(3)	The Children's Bureau has developed a standard format that States are encouraged to use in preparing the PIP…	ACYF-CB-Information Memorand.-02-04
		The program improvement plan must…set forth the goals and the action steps required to correct each identified weakness or deficiency, and dates by which each action step is to be completed in order to improve the specific areas	45 CFR 1355.35(a)
The CFSP must include the realistic, specific, quantifiable and measurable objectives that will be undertaken to achieve each goal	45 CFR 1357.15(i)		
Each objective should include both interim benchmarks and a long term timetable as appropriate for achieving the objective	45 CFR 1357.15(i)	The program improvement plan must…establish benchmarks that will be used to measure the State's progress in implementing the program improvement plan	45 CFR 1355.35(a)
The CFSP must include a description of how the State and the Indian tribe will make available to interested parties the CFSP …	45 CFR 1357.15(v)	Required content for PIP includes…a specific percentage of improvement (goal) that will be achieved through the PIP for each statewide data indicators that does not meet the national standards (see IM for other required content and strategies for developing PIPs)	ACYF-CB-Information Memorand.-02-04
		The elements of the program improvement plan must be incorporated into the goals and objectives of the State's CFSP	45 CFR 1355.35(f)
Implement Plan/Evaluate Progress		**Implement Plan/Evaluate Progress**	
The CFSP must describe the methods to be used in measuring the results, accomplishments, and annual progress towards meeting the goals and objectives, especially the outcomes for children, youth and families	45 CFR 1357.15(j)	The program improvement plan must… describe the methods that will be used to evaluate progress	45 CFR 1355.35(a)
Additional and updated information on service needs and organizational capacities must be obtained throughout the 5 year period to measure progress in accomplishing the goals and objectives cited in the CFSP.	45 CFR 1357.15(k)(1)	States must provide quarterly status reports…to ACF. Such reports must inform ACF of progress in implementing the measures of the plan	45 CFR 1355.35(d)

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN		CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW	
Annual Assessment and Report		**Annual Assessment and Report**	
Annually, each State and each Indian tribe must conduct an interim review of the progress made in the previous year towards accomplishing the goals and objectives in the plan…On the basis of this review, each State and Indian tribe must prepare and submit to ACF, and make available to the public, an Annual Progress and Services Report	45 CFR 1357.16	Progress in implementing the program improvement plan must be included in the annual reviews and progress reports related to the CFSP required in 45 CFR 1357.16	45 CFR 1355.35(f)
The goals, objectives and services [in the plan] should reflect new information resulting from the CFSR process, including the statewide assessment and the on-site review findings	ACYF-CB-Program Instruction-02-05		
Program improvement development and implementation activities should be carried out with an eye towards incorporating changes as a long term intervention, and as such become the foundation for the next CFSP due on June 30, 2004	ACYF-CB-Program Instruction-02-05		

ATTACHMENT 2 National Standards for Strategic Planning

These three sets of national standards each have specific requirements for strategic planning. They provide information on what are seen as the model elements in strong strategic planning systems. Sources for these standards are listed below:

"COA's Standards and Self-Study Manual, 7th Edition, for Public Organizations," by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Children and Families, 2001. Available from the Council on Accreditation of Services for Children and Families, Inc., 120 Wall St., 11th Floor, New York, New York, 10005, (212) 797-3000

"CWLA Standards of Excellence for the Management and Governance of Child Welfare Organizations," from the Child Welfare League of America, Washington, D.C., 1996 . Available individually and as a set from the Child Welfare League of America, c/o CSSC, P.O. Box 7816, Raritan, NJ, 08818-7816, (800) 407-6273

"Guidelines for a Model System of Protective Services for Abused and Neglected Children and Their Families," National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, Washington, D.C., 1999. Available from the American Public Human Services Association, (202) 682-0100 or pubs@aphsa.org

Standards	CWLA Standards	2001 Council on Accreditation Standards	NAPCWA Guidelines Protective Services
STRATEGIC PLANNING	The organization should have a strategic plan that details the organization's mission, vision, goals, strategies and the major actions it must undertake in the next three to five years to deal with the principal issues it will face as it moves toward achievement of its vision (2.9) The organization should translate its strategic plan into an annual operating plan that integrates the long-range direction of the strategic plan into the organization's daily activities (2.10) The annual operating plan should include measurable annual objectives, timelines, and evaluation criteria, as well as a process for monitoring the organization's progress. (2.10)	At least every four years, the organization conducts an organization-wide, long-term, strategic planning review that a. clarifies the organization's mission, values and mandates, b. establishes goals and objectives that flow from the mission and mandated responsibilities, c. assesses its strengths and weaknesses, d. assesses human resource needs; and e. identifies and formulates strategies for meeting identified goals (G2.3.01) Long term planning includes as assessment of community needs… (G2.3.02) Each of the organization's programs or services annually conducts short-term planning in support of the organization's long-term plan (G2.4)	In developing an agency's overall management plan, child welfare leaders formulate goals and objectives, identify actions to ensure implementation, and assume responsibility for resource acquisition, public relations, quality assurance, continuous program development, and effective service delivery (A)

Standards	CWLA Standards	2001 Council on Accreditation Standards	NAPCWA Guidelines Protective Services
		Short term plans address: a. short term goals and objectives, including budgetary objectives for the program or service; b. methods of assessing progress towards goals and objectives and specific tasks to be carried out in support of these goals and objectives; c. associated timelines; and d. personnel designated to carry out identified tasks (G2.4.02)	
VISION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT	The child welfare organization should be mission driven (1.1) The organization should have a written statement that sets forth its vision, goals, and long-term direction (2.8)

The organization should develop relationships, collaborations, and partnerships with a broad cross section of individuals and institutions in the community…(2.89) | The organization has a defined purpose which is responsive to the needs of individuals, families and groups in its community (G1.1)

Representatives from all stakeholder groups, including persons served, personnel from all levels of the organization, and other stakeholders, participate in the CQI process (Some important ways stakeholders can be involved…include opportunities to participate in defining the organization's mission and values, choosing service outcomes, helping to set the organization's long term direction, and/or reviewing the organization's overall performance in relation to established expectations) (G2.2) | |

Standards	CWLA Standards	2001 Council on Accreditation Standards	NAPCWA Guidelines Protective Services
EVALUATE AND USE INFORMATION	The organization should evaluate its services at regular intervals to determine whether those services are effectively meeting the needs of children and their families. The organization's procedures for conducting an evaluation of services should include…a commitment to using the findings to recommend changes in policies, programs and practices (2.79)	The organization evaluates its systems and procedures and uses its findings to improve its performance (G2.5) The organization takes continual action to improve services and promulgate solutions to the issues identified by its CQI activities (G2.11)	CPS management should regularly evaluate CPS programs, services, and personnel to ensure that all possible resources are in use to provide adequate, appropriate services to children and their families (J)
INFORMATION	The organization should have a management information system (MIS) for gathering and analyzing data related to strategic planning… (2.76)	The organization maintains the information that is necessary to effectively plan, manage and evaluate its services (G2.10)	
LINK TO BUDGET; FINANCIAL PLANNING	The organization's financial planning should be…conducted within the framework of the organization's strategic planning process (2.29) The organization's annual operating plan should be reflected in its annual budget (2.10)	The organization develops and allocates resources to accomplish its purposes (G6.1)	Management has the overall responsibility of advocating for sufficient resources to fulfill its mandate (F)

On Strategic Planning

National Performance Review, *Serving the American Public: Best Practices in Customer-Driven Strategic Planning: Federal Benchmarking Consortium Study Report,* National Performance Review, Washington, D.C., February, 1997. Available on NPR website: http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/papers/benchmrk/customer.html

> In this study, a team from 17 federal agencies studied their own planning processes and then partnered with leading edge public and private performers to identify the best practices, technologies and skills that can be used by the government to conduct strategic planning. The "best practices" identified and discussed include leadership, communication, advance planning and preparation, external and internal information, setting strategic direction, implementation and performance evaluation and reporting

Osborne, David and Plastrik, Peter, *Banishing Bureaucracy: The Five Strategies for Reinventing Government,* Penguin Books, Ltd, New York, New York, 1997

> This book describes five strategies that public agencies have found to be most effective in transforming their systems to create dramatic increases in effectiveness. These include changing the organization's purpose, incentives, accountability, power structure and culture.

Bryson, John M, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement.* San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988 and

Bryson, John M, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement.* San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, (Rev. Ed.) 1995

> This book is intended to help leaders and managers of public organizations understand what strategic planning is and how to apply it in their organizations. The text introduces the concept of strategic planning, describes and critiques the major approaches to strategic planning, and describes a multi-step approach to strategic planning that has been used effectively by a variety of agencies. The text draws on four examples (three public and one non-profit)

Bryson, John M and Alston, Farnum, *Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Plan: A Workbook for Public and Non-Profit Organizations.* San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.

> This workbook presents a series of worksheets for the strategic planning process: readiness assessment worksheets and then worksheets for each of the ten key steps in creating and implementing strategic plans. It is intended to be used in tandem with the book Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit organizations (Bryson, 1995) listed above.

Mercer, James L., *Strategic Planning for Public Managers.* Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1991

> This book is designed to help public officials develop their own strategic planning processes internally. It presents a 10 step model for strategic planning and describes how to conduct many of the steps, including tools preparing for strategic planning, for prioritizing issues and assessing strategies, and for performing assessments. It draws from examples and case studies of strategic planning efforts in public organizations.

On Agency Outcomes

Child and Family Services Reviews: Procedures Manual, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, Washington, D.C., August 2000. Available on the Children's Bureau website at http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb or hard copies from the child welfare review project at 301-495-1080 ext 3249 or email cw@jbs.1.com.

> The Procedures Manual includes written guidance to states on each part of the child and family services review process. Appendices include the instruments for the statewide assessment and the on-site review and other practical information on organizing the review process. Appendix I is the Pathway to Substantial Conformity, which lists the performance indicators for each of the outcomes and systemic factors, and provides information on how they will be rated.

Child Welfare Outcomes 1999: Annual Report, James Bell Associates, Arlington, VA, 2001. Sponsored by the Children's Bureau (DHHS), Washington, D.C. Available on the Children's Bureau website at http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/publications. Copies can also be obtained through the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information at 1-800-394-3366 or by e-mail at nccanch@calib.com.

> The Annual Report presents data on state performance on seven outcomes and associated performance measures. Data in the report is drawn from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and neglect Data System (NCANDS). This is the second of the annual reports on outcomes required under the Adoption and Safe Families Act(ASFA).

WEBSITE: http://ndas.cwla.org

> This is the site of the National Data Analysis System, managed by the Child Welfare League of America in cooperation with state child welfare agencies. This comprehensive, interactive database is integrating national child welfare data from many sources, and makes customized tables and graphs available to users through the Internet.

On Monitoring

Administration for Children and Families, (1997). *The Program Managers Guide to Evaluation*, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. and Administation for Children and Families, (1997), *Children's Bureau Evaluation Handbook (*a companion handbook)

> These publications can assist agencies in establishing monitoring structures for ongoing program improvement efforts. They discuss establishing implementation objectives and participant outcome objectives, how to get information to track progress and how to use and report the information. They focus on explaining the evaluation process and how it may be used to improve programs.

From The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

The publications and tools listed below are available on the Resource Center website: www.muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkid

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, Muskie School, University of Southern Maine. *A Framework for Quality Assurance In Child Welfare,* 2002. Supported by the Children's Bureau (DHHS).

> This guide presents a framework for quality assurance in child welfare, illustrates the framework with examples from state and county child welfare agencies, and includes other resources. The five step framework includes: adopt outcomes and standards, incorporate QA throughout the agency, gather data and information, analyze data and information, use the analyses and information to make improvements.

Assessment Tools: States Share Their Surveys and Focus Group Questions

> In the winter of 2002, some states expressed an interest in obtaining copies of survey or focus group questions that other states had developed for use in the statewide assessment portion of the child and family services review. In response to this interest, the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, during January and February of 2002, contacted the 17 states that had completed the first round of child and family services reviews in FY 2001. States were asked if they had developed surveys or focus group questions, and subsequently asked if they would share them with other states. These surveys and focus group questions are on the Resource Center website.

Managing for Outcomes in Child Welfare: Trainer's Manual

> This training curriculum provides child welfare managers and supervisors with an understanding of the concept of outcomes based management in child welfare, including how outcomes can promote the goals of safety, permanency and well being for children
>
> and families. The training offers participants the opportunity to identify 'real life' outcome-related program, practice and systems issues and then build work plans designed to implement needed changes, using a strategic planning model as a problem solving tool

Agency Inventory and Assessment Tool, in *Managing Care: Effective Strategies for Leaders,* Summer 2003

> This set of questions is intended to help child welfare agency administrators reach a deeper understanding of the ways that their agencies actually work by providing information on agency systems, practice principles and performance.

How Program Improvement Plans can Build on the Title IV-B Child and Family Services Planning Process, in *Managing Care: Strategic Planning for Child Welfare Agencies, Spring, 2002: Strategic Planning for Child Welfare Agencies*.

Teleconference Series: The Resource Center for Organizational Improvement's annual teleconference series is listed on the website. For the last few years, sessions have been offered on developing Program Improvement Plans.

From the Institute for Child and Family Policy:

Institute for Child and Family Policy, Muskie School, University of Southern Maine, *Bringing Together the Child Welfare Team.* Funded by the Children's Bureau (DHHS).

> This is a curriculum that child welfare agencies can use to enhance the capacity of public agency managers and supervisors to understand and implement the mandates of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and to strengthen their ability to use data to improve outcomes. The modules cover the impact of ASFA on the child welfare system, identifying and enhancing the skills needed to implement ASFA, bringing together the child welfare team and tips for using data to measure success. One module introduces strategic plans as a management tool that can be used to help establish common direction, set priorities, and devise indicators to measure progress. More information at project website: http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/asfa

Institute for Child and Family Policy, Muskie School, University of Southern Maine, *Using Information Management to Support the Goals of Safety, Permanency and Well Being.* Funded by the Children's Bureau (DHHS).

> This competency based curriculum offers child welfare supervisors opportunities to learn, enhance and practice the information management skills they need to improve child welfare practice. The eleven module curriculum can be customized to meet the needs of each agency. Topics include: identifying and using key data for casework supervison, the supervisors role in building commitment to change, using information management to achieve agency goals and data analysis tips, tools and techniques. More information on project website: http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/sacwis

Technical Assistance

This framework for strategic planning is intended to be a comprehensive overview of all of the steps that agencies need to consider when engaging in strategic planning. In practice, agencies can start at any point in the process, and many will have already completed or have in place some of the necessary steps or structures. For example:

- One state might have a strong quality assurance system, but needs to develop a stronger plan to define the outcomes for ongoing monitoring
- Another may have strong stakeholder involvement in planning processes and defined outcomes, but needs to conduct an assessment and develop a plan
- Another agency may have a number of different plans that need to be integrated into one plan that can be used as a management and evaluation tool.

Our technical assistance is designed to assist you in assessing the situation in your agency and then will be tailored to work with you on your needs. Some of the things that the Resource Center for Organizational Improvement has assisted agencies with include:

- Developing a planning structure, including, where appropriate, building on and linking with established groups
- Developing an effective process for producing useful plans
- Organizing processes and ongoing structures for broad stakeholder involvement in all aspects of planning, including visioning, assessment, developing and writing the plan, implementing the plan and monitoring the plan
- Helping to focus planning groups on producing the information and products needed for planning

- Providing formats, tools and instruments for the planning process
- Assessing and improving current IV-B to help prepare for PIPs
- Developing PIPs and integrating existing plans into the PIP so it serves as the integrated planning document for the agency
- Providing feedback, input and recommendations on PIPs and IVB plans
- Assisting states in implementing plans on the local level by developing more detailed work plans
- Developing strategies and processes for ongoing monitoring, reporting and evaluation of progress on the plan
- Developing an integrated strategic plan from a number of different plans

We are offering additional assistance to states around developing program improvement plans as a service for the Children's Bureau:

- States going through the CFSR process will be offered a two day training on developing program improvement plans, which will be provided within six weeks after the conclusion of the on-site review
- Assistance to the regional office and the state on identifying a state's technical assistance needs and coordinating technical assistance from the other resource centers.

Organizational Improvement Resource Center staff is available by phone, e-mail or on-site. Each state has ten free days on on-site technical assistance available in each federal fiscal year. Contact us at 1-800-HELP KID, or patn@usm.maine.edu

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On the four stage cycle...

The four cyclical stages of strategic planning are reflected in much of the literature on the strategic planning process in business, education, human services and government at all levels. For example, a widely cited book on strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations defines a ten-step Strategy Change Cycle that includes all the major components of preparation, planning, implementing and reviewing and revising. The cycle calls for initiating and agreeing on a strategic planning process, establishing the organizational vision, mission and mandates, and assessing the organization's internal and external environment. Then in the planning step, organizations should identify strategic issues facing the organization, formulate strategies to manage these issues, and then review and adopt the strategic plan. Finally, organizations should develop an effective implementation strategy and then reassess strategies and the strategic planning process (Bryson).

On developing a vision statement...

The leader's job is to create a vision (Swigget)

Leaders must inspire a shared vision. They must envision the future – then enlist others. They must then enable others to act. They do this by fostering collaboration and strengthening others... Leadership is a learnable set of practices. It is a myth that only a lucky few can ever "decipher the code." (Kouzes and Posner)

Looking at the vision as part of the planning process allows agencies to be proactive in crafting a desired future, rather than simply reacting to what happens over time. (Boyle)

A clear vision or mission helps those involved in planning focus on the purpose of the agency. It helps to build consensus…(Osborne and Gabler)

Looking at what the agency wants for the future and comparing it to where the agency is now can "unfreeze" a situation and inspire people to initiate change (Harper)

A sense of urgency can be created by highlighting the contrast between where the agency wants to be (the vision) and where the agency is now (assessment). (Bryson).

On leadership involvement...

A widely used workbook on creating a strategic plan for public and non-profit organizations notes that one of two legitimate reasons for not undertaking strategic planning is if the organization lacks the commitment of key decision-makers (Bryson). Another guide to strategic planning articulates a common theme in the literature: "if there is no internal commitment to the plan, and no intent to implement it, strategic planning is a waste of time and energy" (Romney).

Steering not rowing...

Literature on "reinventing government" and making public agencies more effective in reaching their goals stresses the need for public agencies as a whole, and the managers within them, to shift from rowing to steering. When child welfare agencies conduct strategic planning they are shifting managers' efforts to setting direction and priorities for the agency (steering), while inviting stakeholders to take an active role in the the day to day work of the child and family services system (rowing).

On stakeholder involvement...

Public agencies must "create and maintain a dialogue with all those who have an impact on or are involved in any way with the achievement of the mission including customers, stakeholders and employees" (Monahan).

On staff involvement...

Team-based agencies where employees are empowered to identify areas of concern and work with others to address them, create environments where innovation flourishes (Kanter).

On assessment...

In order to make systemic change within the organization we must first create a climate where people have an opportunity to be heard and for the truth to be heard – in other words, confront the "brutal facts" of the current reality (Collins)

On implementation...

As widely noted in the literature, implementation is critical to the success of strategic plans. One observer notes: "Although necessary, a strategic plan and top management desires are not sufficient to make change happen. Success lies in implementation." (Fogg, p. 7)

Attached are two additional examples of planning structures:

> UTAH: The attached Powerpoint presentation illustrates the planning process in Utah, and describes the role of each group involved in the process of developing and conducting the child and family services review and developing the program improvement plan. This structure built on the structure that was in place to develop the state's performance milestones plan.

> IOWA: The graphic on page 76 illustrates the role of each group in the Iowa planning process, and their relationship to one another – the oversight committee, the eight analysis teams, DHS Administrative parties, the Child Welfare Partnership Group and federal partners. It also describes "Resource Availability" to support the planning process.

1

Planning Process

CFSR Team Work Groups

Feasibility Group

Facilitation Group

Decision Group

Planning Group Regional

2

CFSR Team

- State Level Planning Process
  - Program Improvement Plan
  - Child and Family Services Plan
- Overall PIP planning activities
  - Prioritize work
  - Assess/Identify underlying needs
- Develop Plan
- Track implementation
- Recommend revisions in strategies as needed
- Evaluate progress
- Participate in planning for 5-year CFSP

3

CFSR Team Work Groups

- Address categories identified in CFSR
- External partner leader and internal agency co-leader

4

CFSR Team Work Groups

- Each work group to:
  - Establish work process and time frames for group activities
  - Complete work within specified time lines for overall PIP
  - Involve others essential to group activities not currently represented in group
  - Identify additional information needed to complete group work
  - Explore underlying needs from a statewide perspective
  - Identify state-level outcome targets with baseline and benchmarks
  - Identify state-level strategies to achieve outcome targets
  - Identify how progress will be measured
  - Use standardized planning format

5

Facilitation Group

- Facilitate planning process at all levels
- Standardize planning format
  - Within agency when actions internal to agency
  - From relevant partner agencies when actions external to agency
- Facilitate flow of information from CFSR work groups to feasibility and approval groups
- Consolidate written plans of work groups into statewide plan
- Submit and negotiate with SCF for approval
- Track implementation
- Gather data and prepare progress reports

6

Feasibility Group

Provide state level feedback to work groups, facilitation group, and decision group pertaining to feasibility/capacity of agency to complete proposed plan activities

- Programmatic requirements; Federal and State law; regulations; rules
- Contracts/payment issues
- Budget/grants/revenue
- SAFE support
- Data collection and reporting
- Training needs
- Implementation worker impact

Request similar review from partners when plan activities pertain to them

7
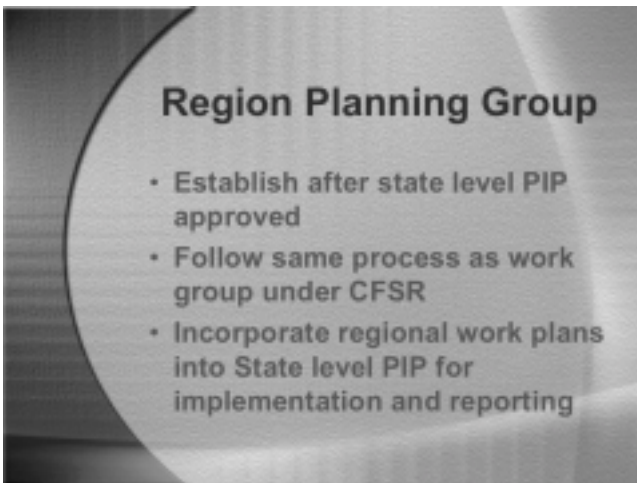
Decision Group

- Set vision, tone, direction for planning process/global focus
- Approve broad categories to be addressed within scopes of mandates
- Ensure proposed plan is consistent with agency goals/responsibility
- Verify agency capacity to complete plans
- Approve state level plan

8

Region Planning Group

- Establish after state level PIP approved
- Follow same process as work group under CFSR
- Incorporate regional work plans into State level PIP for implementation and reporting

CFSR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN STRUCTURE PROPOSAL

1. OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE COMPILES

2. DHS ADMINSTRATIVE REVIEW
SAMs
FOSU DA
BDPS DA
PATNERS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

REVIEW

3. CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP GROUP REVIEW

4. TO FEDERAL PARTNERS FOR REVIEW

5. REVISIONS BASED ON FEDERAL REVIEW AND COMMENTS

SAM REVIEW

SAM REVIEW

ADMIN TEAM AGREEMENT
[BETWEEN PARTNER DEPARTMENTS]
FACILITATED BY DIVISION ADMINSTRATORS

CFSR Oversight Committee Responsibilities
1. Coordinate Information Flow Between Teams
2. Provide Administrative Updates of Progress
3. Facilitate and Coordinate Technical Assistance
4. Assist with or Facilitate Systems Issues Decision Making
5. Plan coordination and integration within 4B & existing costructs and strategic planning
6. Reports to the DHS Administrative Review Team
Members Recommended: *CIP, JCS, DE, DPH, DHS-RBA,BDSP[lead], FOSU, one member of each analysis team, legislator, SAM.*
Co-Leads: *Cheryl Zach & Krys Lange*

Analysis Team 1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect
Assigned : 1. Recurrence Maltreatment
Service Area: Dubuque, Lead Susan Davison
Assigned staff: Cheryl Zach
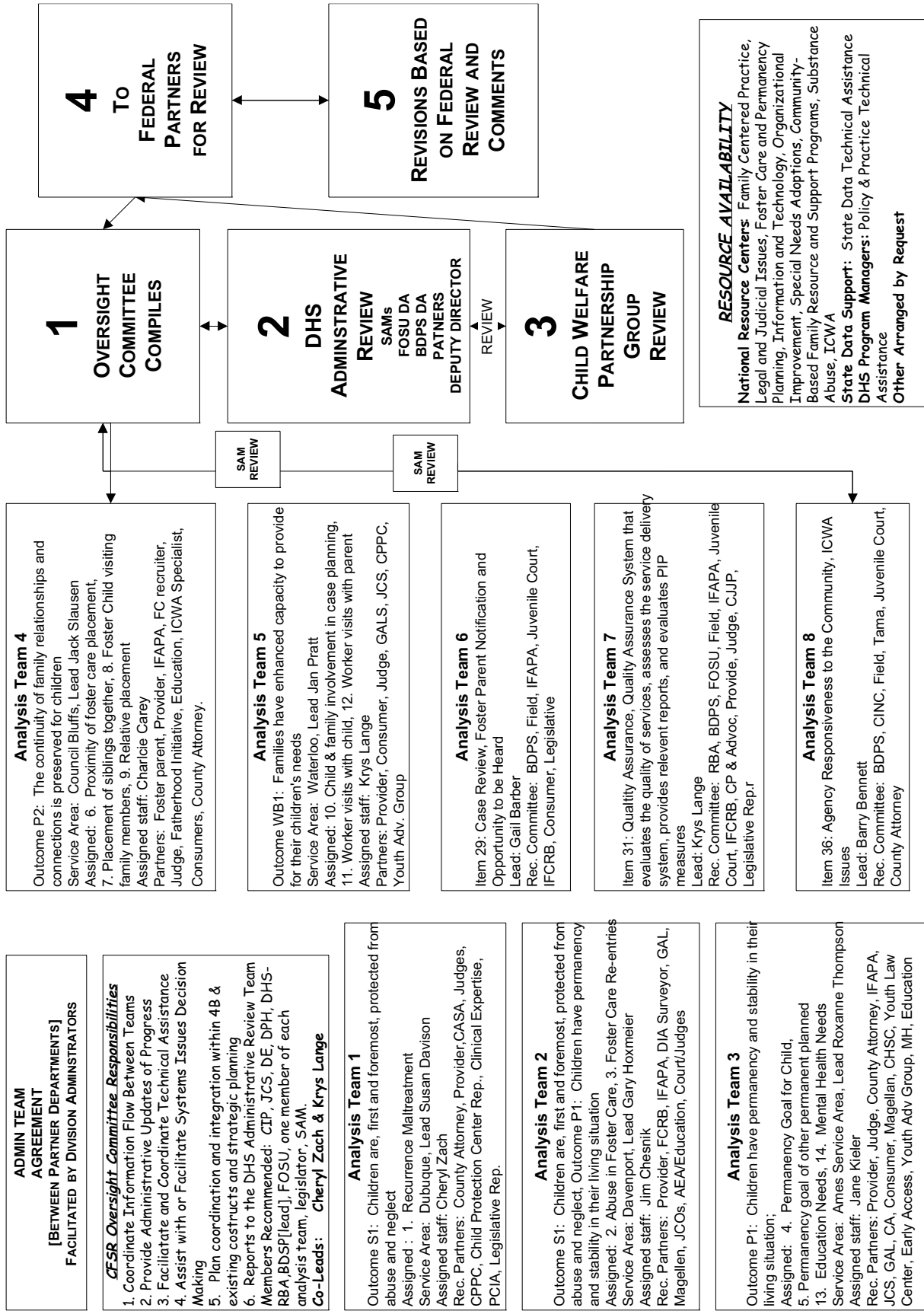Rec. Partners: County Attorney, Provider,CASA, Judges, CPPC, Child Protection Center Rep., Clinical Expertise, PCIA, Legislative Rep.

Analysis Team 2

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect, Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situation
Assigned: 2. Abuse in Foster Care, 3. Foster Care Re-entries
Service Area: Davenport, Lead Gary Hoxmeier
Assigned staff: Jim Chesnik
Rec. Partners: Provider, FCRB, IFAPA, DIA Surveyor, GAL, Magellen, JCOs, AEA/Education, Court/Judges

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Analysis Team 3

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situation;
Assigned: 4. Permanency Goal for Child,
5. Permanency goal of other permanent planned
13. Education Needs, 14. Mental Health Needs
Service Area: Ames Service Area, Lead Roxanne Thompson
Assigned staff: Jane Kieler
Rec. Partners: Provider, Judge, County Attorney, IFAPA, JCS, GAL, CA, Consumer, Magellan, CHSC, Youth Law Center, Early Access, Youth Adv Group, MH, Education

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Analysis Team 4

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children
Service Area: Council Bluffs, Lead Jack Slausen
Assigned: 6. Proximity of foster care placement, 7. Placement of siblings together, 8. Foster Child visiting family members, 9. Relative placement
Assigned staff: Charlcie Carey
Partners: Foster parent, Provider, IFAPA, FC recruiter, Judge, Fatherhood Initiative, Education, ICWA Specialist, Consumers, County Attorney.

Analysis Team 5

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs
Service Area: Waterloo, Lead Jan Pratt
Assigned: 10. Child & family involvement in case planning, 11. Worker visits with child, 12. Worker visits with parent
Assigned staff: Krys Lange
Partners: Provider, Consumer, Judge, GALS, JCS, CPPC, Youth Adv. Group

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Analysis Team 6

Item 29: Case Review, Foster Parent Notification and Opportunity to be Heard
Lead: Gail Barber
Rec. Committee: BDPS, Field, IFAPA, Juvenile Court, IFCRB, Consumer, Legislative

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Analysis Team 7

Item 31: Quality Assurance, Quality Assurance System that evaluates the quality of services, assesses the service delivery system, provides relevent reports, and evaluates PIP measures
Lead: Krys Lange
Rec. Committee: RBA, BDPS, FOSU, Field, IFAPA, Juvenile Court, IFCRB, CP & Advoc, Provide, Judge, CJP, Legislative Rep.r

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Analysis Team 8

Item 36: Agency Responsiveness to the Community, ICWA Issues
Lead: Barry Bennett
Rec. Committee: BDPS, CINC, Field, Tama, Juvenile Court, County Attorney

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RESOURCE AVAILABILITY
National Resource Centers: Family Centered Practice, Legal and Judicial Issues, Foster Care and Permanency Planning, Information and Technology, Organizational Improvement, Special Needs Adoptions, Community-Based Family Resource and Support Programs, Substance Abuse, ICWA
State Data Support: State Data Technical Assistance
DHS Program Managers: Policy & Practice Technical Assistance
Other Arranged by Request

PREPARATION	PLAN	IMPLEMENT	REVISE
Vision ☐ With stakeholders, develop or update agency vision, mission, guiding principles **Assessment** ☐ Gather internal and external information ☐ Analyze the information ☐ Draw conclusions **Develop and Implement Planning Process** ☐ Engage major actors: 　☐ Agency decision makers 　☐ Agency staff 　☐ Stakeholders ☐ Establish planning structure ☐ Establish process for collecting input to develop the plan ☐ Clearly define roles and responsibilities ☐ Training for planning group ☐ Define Planning Terms ☐ Select Plan Format	**Develop Plan** ☐ Review assessment; build on analysis ☐ Prioritize; consider needs, strengths and resources ☐ Answer these questions: 　☐ What do we want to accomplish? (Goals and Outcomes) 　☐ What will we do to get there? (Strategies, Objectives, Action Steps) 　☐ How will we know if we are making progress? (Indicators, Measures, Benchmarks) 　☐ Who will be responsible? 　☐ When will activities and goals be completed? **Draft Plan** ☐ Circulate draft and revise plan **Finalize Plan** ☐ Share final plan with stakeholders and staff ☐ Obtain official approval	**Communicate Plan** ☐ Distribute ☐ Ongoing communication of plan **Manage the Plan** ☐ Leadership assigns responsibilities **Supervise Implementation** ☐ All managers supervise actual work ☐ Local plans developed and implemented **Monitor and Report on Progress** ☐ Develop reporting system for plan ☐ Build on existing information systems and quality assurance systems ☐ Monitor progress	**Review Progress** ☐ Review progress: 　☐ towards goals and outcomes and 　☐ towards implementing plan activities **Reconvene planning process and revise plan** ☐ Reconvene planning groups ☐ Ongoing assessment process ☐ Draft revised plan ☐ Circulate revised plan for input ☐ Finalize revised plan ☐ Communicate revised plan ☐ Implement revised plan ☐ Monitor revised plan

Strategic Planning
for Child Welfare Agencies

Elizabeth Frizsell, Mary O'Brien, and Lynda Arnold

A strong strategic planning process is a powerful management technique that agencies can use to establish and move towards improved outcomes for children and families. This guide is intended to help child welfare agencies produce effective plans by laying out a four stage cyclical planning process that involves preparing, planning, implementing and revising the plan. After discussing strategic planning – what it is and why we do it – the guide describes the four stages of the process in detail and illustrates each with examples from state and county practice. As a broad range of staff and stakeholders are engaged in developing, implementing and revising the strategic plan, the plan can become a living document that is known and used within the agency and the community. Appendices provide additional information on national standards, federal requirements, resources, contacts, examples, and a strategic planning process checklist.

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