

Georgia's Improvement Planning Process

Georgia began its program improvement process prior to the federal CFSR onsite review. As part of its statewide self-assessment, DFCS held community forums regarding the agency's programs and services across the state. Participants included technical advisors, county and regional staff, state office leadership, youth, consumers, providers, child welfare advocates, and other stakeholders.

Additionally, surveys were conducted among parents, caregivers and other stakeholders (including front line staff), as well as county and regional directors. Through the community forums and stakeholder surveys, the state began to scrutinize initiatives and assess their scalability for statewide incorporation.

Recognizing the vital role the community and stakeholders play in the success of families, the agency has engaged partners throughout its self-assessment and PIP development processes. The agency sponsored a PIP kickoff meeting in July 2007 with over 160 attendees, including technical advisors, county and regional staff, state office leadership, youth, consumers, providers, child welfare advocates, and other stakeholders.

Meeting participants were divided into workgroups corresponding to themes identified in the CFSR process as follows:

- Family engagement
- Case planning/family team meetings
- Courts
- Data/quality case review
- Assessments

These workgroups met several times in the summer and fall of 2007 and submitted recommendations to the state for program changes to improve outcomes. In December 2007 the state submitted its proposed PIP. After meetings and telephone conferences with national and regional ACF representatives, a revised PIP was submitted in March 2008 and again in June 2008. The state received additional feedback and is submitting another revision in August 2008, which is expected to be fast-tracked for higher level review and hopefully approval.

In the meantime, the state has initiated several improvement initiatives and is receiving federal technical assistance in a number of areas, including risk and safety assessment; permanency outcomes, adoptions, outcomes for older youth, caseworker-child visitation, and development and implementation of a Family-Centered Practice Model, one of the state's key PIP strategies.