

OMB Control No: 0970-0307

Expiration Date: 09/30/2019

State Court Improvement Program 2019 Annual Self-Assessment Report

This self-assessment is intended as an opportunity for Court Improvement Programs (CIPs) to review progress on required CIP projects, joint program planning and improvement efforts with the child welfare agency, and ability to integrate CQI successfully into practice. Questions are designed to solicit candid responses that help CIPs apply CQI and identify support that may be helpful.

1. **CQI Analyses of Required CIP Projects** (Joint Project with Agency and Hearing Quality Project) *It is ok to cut and paste responses from last year, but please update according to where you currently are in the process.*

Joint Project with the Child Welfare Agency [Parent Representation for indigent parents at the beginning of cases in which abuse and neglect allegations could result in termination of parental rights.](#)

Provide a concise description of the joint project selected in your jurisdiction.

[The Parent Representation Task Force, established in 2012, is a collaborative Court Improvement Program effort between the Judiciary, Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, Casey Family Programs, Kellogg Foundation, University of Mississippi School of Law, Mississippi College School of Law Mission First Legal Aid Office, the American Bar Association, Mississippi Center for Legal Services, Mississippi Attorney General's Office, Office of State Public Defender and the Mississippi Judicial College.](#)

History of Parent Representation

[As of 2018, ten counties provide attorneys to represent indigent parents at the beginning of cases in which abuse and neglect allegations could result in termination of parental rights. Pilot sites which began in 2012 are Adams, Forrest, and Rankin counties. Harrison County became a site in 2013. Hancock County was added in 2015. DeSoto County Youth Court became a site in 2016. Hinds County and Bolivar Counties joined as parent representation sites in 2017. The Task Force identified new sites, Jackson County and Pearl River County, for parent representation programs in Youth Courts in May 2017 and collaborated with Casey Family Programs, Kellogg Foundation, and County Boards of Supervisors regarding funding and implementation. All site counties have provided matching funding for the project in that county.](#)

[In the fall of 2017 and early 2018, Jackson and Rankin Counties became expansion and deepening sites adding a social worker to each parent representation teams. In 2018 Pearl River County became an expansion site. Forrest expanded representation from only the Zero-to-three population to all children and families entering that system. Pearl River County became the newest expansion site. Casey Family Programs provided matching funding for the expansion and deepening projects in the counties.](#)

In 2018-2019, five counties independently relying on county funds implemented parent representation for indigent, custodial parents: Lafayette, Lauderdale, Lamar, Warren and Yazoo. As of 2019, sixteen counties provide parent representation prior to TPR. At TPR, an attorney is appointed for parent(s) in all 82 counties.

Prior to 2012, Madison County historically appointed attorneys for every case regardless of indigence status, usually the custodial parent, at the Shelter Hearing. However, both parents are provided an attorney if there are enough public defenders available and there is a conflict between the parents. The appointment stays in place through the TPR process if the case reaches that stage. Parents can hire their own lawyer if they choose to do so.

Standards for Parent Representation and for Attorneys Representing Parents

[The Parent Representation Task Force developed and adopted Standards for Parent Representation and Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents. The Office of State Public Defender requires data from parent representation sites based on “ABA Indicators of Success” – system infrastructure: Appointment of Counsel, Timely Appointment, Caseload Control, Continuity of Representation, Multi-disciplinary staffing and Training and Technical Assistance. The Standards are trained multiple times annually. Parent attorneys participated in trainings in 2016-2019 through ABA Parent Attorney Training and Children and the Law Conferences \(2019 - 12 parent attorneys, AG, Access to Justice, and Justice\) and/or National Association of Counsel for Children \(2018 – 10 parent attorneys and AGs\) and multiple training opportunities through the Office of State Public Defender.](#)

Parent Representation Task Force Institutionalized

[In 2018, the Parent Representation Task Force became institutionalized through the Mississippi Children’s Justice Commission as a multidisciplinary tool for accountability and consistency across the parent representation sites.](#) The Parent Representation Task Force continues to meet quarterly and a Strategic Leadership Team was created in 2019 to provide direction for expansion of the program.

Legislative Action

[Legislation was passed in 2016 granting authority to youth court judges to appoint attorneys for parents where allegations of abuse or neglect are made. Legislation was passed in 2017 transitioning parent representation from a task force to being housed with the Office of State Public Defender beginning July 1, 2017. \\$200,000 was provided for the purpose of maintaining](#)

[the current pilot sites and expansion into one or more additional sites. 2018 Legislation appropriated \\$200,000 for parent representation](#) and increased in 2019 to \$278,500.

Three Branch Government Convening Regarding Parent Representation

[On February 27-28, 2018, the Parent Representation Task Force finalized plans for the Three Branch Government Convening sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation at the Mississippi Capitol February 28, 2018. Legislators, Casey Family Program Representatives, Kellogg Grant Manager, the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court, Justice of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals Judge, Office of State Public Defender representatives, Department of Child Protection Services representatives, CIP Director, Youth Court Judges, Juris in Residence and Parent Representatives attended. The program highlighted the critical needs of expansion of the parental representation to other counties in the state and the crucial role played by each branch. The program opened with a recitation of the journey traveled by unrepresented parents in abuse and neglect circumstances in Mississippi Court Systems when their children are removed. The journey included the obstacles encountered and the fundamental unfairness of the possibility of loss of such a foundational right of parenting due to the denial of legal representation at such a critical moment in the family's life. Another speaker, a former foster child, spoke of the excruciating journey through the eyes of the child. Other speakers spoke of the present state of the effort in Mississippi and the amazing success of the past few years, lifting Mississippi from the only state in the nation not providing any type of representation to model systems in several counties. The Commissioner of Child Protection Services added the wholehearted support of that executive agency to the effort. The Mississippi plan was presented advising of the commitment of our partners to continue personnel and fiscal investment in the program provided the state is on board in continuing to appropriate funds to supplant grant funds as Mississippi gradually expands. Legislators were educated of the fiscal need in the present and looking to the future. The entire experience was well received and we believe educated and advanced the prospects of parental representation in Mississippi. Christopher Church, Law and Policy Director, University of South Carolina School of Law, Children's Law Center, Director of Capacity Building Center for Courts, and Data Technology for Casey Family Programs, presented current data on children removed from homes in Mississippi, impact of placement into foster care for Mississippi financially, and current timeframe for reunification.](#)

The Kellogg Foundation sponsored the Second Three Branch Government Convening March 7, 2019, with a larger attendance by the Legislators. Data showing a significant reduction in the number of children in foster care among counties with parent attorneys was presented: 55% reduction in Hancock County (continuing to over 60% reduction by April 2019) and 55% reduction in Rankin County.

Resource Counsel

[Casey Family Programs funded the establishment of a statewide Resource Counsel through the Mission First Legal Aid Office to serve and assist all parent representation attorneys and teams throughout the state. The Resource Counsel implemented monthly Virtual Training Meetings in June 2018 to provide technical assistance and practice tips to public defenders and volunteer](#)

[attorneys serving as parent representatives in child protection matters in Youth Court.](#) In 2018-2019, there has been an increase in TA requests from court staff and judges, including court administrators. Some of the issues involved time of appointment, indigence determinations, county reimbursement when there is no dedicated parent representation program, and one-on-one education to the bench on best practices in their courts for family engagement and embracing new dynamics with newer parent representation sites or shifts in parent representation sites. Resource Counsel conducted information sessions remotely via Adobe Connect to provide TA assistance to attorneys across the state and provided TA assistance for two matters on appeal. Assisted in curriculum development for parent attorney trainings and conferences in the state. Conducted four court site observations with reviews: Desoto, Jackson, Hancock, Hinds, and Rankin.

Resource Counsel also worked with courts establishing reunification celebration events and worked with parent attorneys to gather positive reunification stories to share in the local press.

The Resource Counsel Project engaged agency executives to brainstorm models for increased parent representation and expansion opportunities under the new IV-E fund availability. During the state team planning meeting in DC, an idea was born to establish a parent advisory board, similar to the foster youth advisory group and foster parent advisory group the agency currently has in place. The plan is to develop a parent advisory board over the next few months.

Additionally, the Resource Counsel Project engaged Access to Justice as we explore the narrative around civil legal aid as a tool of prevention. The Resource Counsel Staff Attorney was mobilized to work on collateral legal issues for vulnerable families in areas of housing, expungements, and government benefits 2018-2019. By 2020, the goal is to provide additional focus on collateral areas, while continuing to roll out an interdisciplinary parent representation program model in Rankin.

In the Rankin Parent Representation site, a transition in the interdisciplinary model from one with a social services coordinator to one with a Master's Level Licensed Social worker, who joins us with experience working for the Agency. Collaborative efforts continue with the Rankin County Youth Court to identify a parent partner to grow the Representation Model.

Current Action Plan: To do Court Site Observation and Reviews in All Parent Rep Sites by End of Calendar Year 2019.

Example of Progress

2018-2019 example of amazing work in Hancock County, parent representation site and change in judicial leadership site. A meeting with Hancock County Court Team, JIR, CIP Director, Christopher Church and Melissa Carter occurred June 5, 2019. The data

for Hancock County is in the link below. This is an impressive safe reduction of children in foster care. <https://tinyurl.com/Hancock2019a>

Comments from the group:

1. Something remarkable, intentional to change outcomes is happening in Hancock County
2. Decrease is different than what is happening in other states. Something has turned the dial dramatically.
3. In 2017 there were 449 in foster care; in March 2019 there are 153; on June 5, 150. Of the 150, 36 are pending adoption, have a placement and expected to finalize by end of the year. 72 are pending TPR (some “legacy” cases that are 2-3 years pending, but some new cases as Judge is not letting the new ones linger). Of the 72, not all have a permanent placement identified.
4. CPS is still investigating about the same number of cases; Court is managing cases from the onset.
6. Discharge numbers look great and relative care is high
7. Most kids in care are not older than 12; not many kids in congregate care
8. Parent attorneys provided in every case to parent child was removed from and before shelter hearing if possible
9. Re-occurrence (Re-entry is trending down)
10. Data shows kids are not being re-abused so safety has not been compromised by the reduction
11. Take away – the 42 currently in foster care represent harder, more chronic cases
12. CPS is doing a better job at finding the other parent
13. Data showed a peak in 2014, 506% increase in removals, fewer exiting.
14. 2019 data shows a 65% decrease with downstream effects
15. Take away – no unintended consequences of reduction noted i.e. aging out or emancipation
16. 1-4 children continue to come in to care which is in line with statewide numbers.
17. Incarcerated parents are transported to hearings. Some are appointed counsel if child was removed from the incarcerated parent
18. Kids are allowed in the courtroom and to speak to the Judge. This has made a huge change in moving cases, because Judge has another viewpoint of what is happening in the family.
19. Reunification Day planned.
20. Youth Court facility has been made more family- friendly, with one table for everyone in the case to sit around, so parents are not sitting by themselves. “Hope” artwork from local artists lines the walls and hallways and makes you smile to see them.

Action Plan: (1) Look at cases that are not moving. Why? (2) Adoptive Parent recruitment essential. (3) Explore need for in-patient facility in Hancock (4) Continue speaking to Board of Supervisors with updates; community organizations, and faith based groups. (5) Work toward Border Agreements for placement with relatives. (6) Work with CPS regarding informing the Judge on in-home cases (informal adjustment cases), so that the Court is aware of cases and receives progress reports.

Progress with Parent Attorney in Hancock County: The parent attorney has designated office space at the court house to meet with clients separate and apart from the waiting room. The parent attorney is appointed at or before shelter. The parent attorney has a manageable caseload. The parent attorney has an office separate and apart from the court house, equipped with all office equipment and supplies needed to carry out day to day activities.

Action plan: (1) The parent attorney will work with CPS to be made aware of dates and times for family team meetings. (2) The parent attorney will utilize the TA services of the Resource Counsel Project at Mission First as necessary.

New Collaboration between Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama

In April 2019, a new collaboration was formed between Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama to address similar challenges across all three states. An agreement was reached to share information, resources for combined trainings for parent attorneys and to develop border agreements for placement of children with relatives. Another possible shared project would be work on advertising to educate the public

Identify the specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome this project is intended to address.

Outcome 1:

Promote change in Mississippi law to include representation for indigent parents in child protection cases where there are allegations of abuse/neglect which may result in termination of parental rights;

Ongoing progress has been made with the Mississippi Legislature recognizing parent representation, authorizing youth court judges to appoint attorneys for indigent parents at risk of removal of their children from the home, and two years of level funding at \$200,000, which an increased in 2019 to \$278,500 for parent representation expansion.

Outcome 2:

Institutionalize a Parent Representation Task Force for accountability, consistence across the parent representation sites and expansion into other sites; Completed 2017.

Outcome 3:

Transfer oversight of parent Representation and Parent Attorneys to the Office of the State Public Defender effective July 1, 2017 pursuant to 2017 Legislation; Completed 2017.

Outcome 4:

Develop uniform collection of data in the parent representation counties and statewide to track the timeliness of appointment of counsel at the beginning of the case to prevent to unnecessary removal of children and hasten reunification when removed.

[Continuing improvement is a priority for consistent data collection for all parent representation sites.](#) As of June 2019, the Parent Representation Task Force requested assistance from Angela A. Robertson, Ph.D., Research Professor and Associate Director, Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University, to conduct an evaluation of the parent representation project by the January 2020 Legislative Session.

[Outcome 5: Inform the judiciary and the agency representatives that better outcomes occur for children and families when the courts endeavor to maintain children safely in their homes.](#) Ongoing.

Data has been presented to about 600 judiciary and agency staff regarding better outcomes at training conferences May 13, 14 and 15, 2019 provided by Casey Family Programs, Robert Wyman, Judicial Engagement Team, and by five state judicial leaders and two tribal judges participating in the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Conference in 2018. Mississippi experienced a number of judicial changes in 2019, several in Parent Representation sites (Hinds County Youth Court, Lamar County Youth Court, Warren County Youth Court, Harrison County Youth Court, and Lee County Youth Court) who will attend the 2019 NCJFCJ conference. Others attending are Chief Justice, MBCI, Mississippi Supreme Court Justice, Jurist in Residence, Madison County Youth Court, and Rankin County Youth Court Judge.

[Outcome 6: Inform the judiciary of trauma-informed practice for families educating on historical trauma experienced by families entering the youth court system and the trauma caused to the child and families by involvement in the system.](#) Ongoing.

Data has been presented to the judiciary and agency regarding better outcomes at training conferences May 13, 14 and 15, 2019 provided by Casey Family Programs, Robert Wyman, Judicial Engagement Team regarding NEAR sciences-Neurology, Epidemiology, ACEs, and Resilience training.

[Outcome 7: Achieve permanency faster reducing significantly the amount of time a child spends in foster care.](#)

There has been a significant safe reduction of the number of children in foster care in Mississippi from March 2018-March 2019; notably in Hancock County Youth Court as of June 2019, 60% safe reduction and Rankin County Youth Court 50% safe reduction. The Agency reports a significant increase in adoptions finalized from 302 in SFY 2017 to 647 in SFY 2018. [Progress in Reduction of Children in Custody reported by Christopher Church, Fostering Court Improvement, to the Parent Representation Task Force, 2018 Mississippi Legislative members and staff, and restated at the Mississippi Children's Justice Commission on June 8, 2018 follows:](#)

["As of March 31, 2018, there were just under 5,000 children in foster care in Mississippi, a 17% decrease over the past 12 months. That is the first reduction in the number of children in foster care in Mississippi in over a decade. We are confident parent representation has played an important role in helping the local courts and CPS staff decrease the number of children](#)

unnecessarily removed from their parents.” Further, Mr. Church stated this decrease was “nothing short of amazing”.

In Adams County, there has been a 10% decrease during the period referenced
In Bolivar County, there has been a 44% decrease during the period referenced
In DeSoto County, there has been a 21% decrease during the period referenced
In Forrest County, there has been a 24.5% decrease during the period referenced
In Hancock County, there has been a 19.7% decrease during the period referenced
In Harrison County, there has been a 6.5% decrease during the period referenced
In Hinds County, there has been a 29% decrease during the period referenced
In Jackson County, there has been a 23.9% decrease during the period referenced
In Lamar County, there has been a 7.7% decrease during the period referenced
In Lauderdale County, the average monthly removal rate has lowered from 4.9 per 10,000 to 3.8 per 10,000 during the past 6 months
In Madison County, there has been a 17.4% decrease during the period referenced
In Pearl River County, there has been a 17.3% decrease during the period referenced
In Rankin County, there has been a 49.3% decrease during the period referenced
In Warren County, there has been a 13.6% decrease during the period referenced

The data indicates that congregate care is following the same downward trend as the removal trend.

As of June 17, 2019, 4,750 children are in care according to MDCPS Commissioner Jess Dickinson. Goals are (1) Prevention of removal for allegations of neglect and foster care prevention, (2). Continue decrease in removals of children, and (3) Increase services provided to families stabilized.

2019 Data from Christopher Church

Data for **Rankin** County October 2003 through March 2019 by Quarter shows 62.5% **reduction** in numbers of children in foster care; **Adams County** 40.8%; **Hancock County** 59.3%; **Hinds County** 40.2%; **Desoto County** 33.0%; **Harrison County** 20.7%; and **Jackson County** 26.5%. This is a 28% reduction in the last 24 months.

*Some counties have an **increased** foster care population unrelated to parent representation: **Pontotoc County** 5.8% and **Lamar County** 48.9%, (both sites are expected to be the next expansion sites);

Lauderdale County 20.2% (has implemented PR with County funds); and **Jones County** 21.1%

Outcome 8: Providing that the court at each hearing will, through its proper reasonable efforts inquiry questions, ensure that well-being services are provided children in their placements. Ongoing.

Recent updates to the Mississippi Youth Courts Information Delivery System provide for an in depth reasonable efforts entry, not allowing the person to continue in the system without identifying what reasonable efforts the agency made to (1) prevent removal; (2) to complete the permanent plan and the concurrent plan; and (3) to achieve the permanent plan. In addition,

MYCIDS was updated to require specific findings that it was contrary to the welfare of the child to remain in the home.

Approximate date that the project began: 2012

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work? Theory of Change.

In 2018-2019, the Parent Representation Project

How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)

Mississippi was identified as the last State to provide representation for indigent custodial parents when a child is removed from the home due to allegations of abuse and/or neglect.

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II) *If you do not yet have a theory of change and/or would like assistance, please indicate such in the space below.*

Parent attorneys will provide legal representation to indigent custodial parents in youth court so that parent attorneys can work with parents advocating for appropriate services and compliance with service plans; so that parents will be better supported and engaged, parents will successfully complete service plans and judges will be better informed; in order that there are fewer removals, shorter times to permanency, and fewer re-entries.

As preliminary data indicates, Mississippi has experienced a 17% decrease in the number of children in foster care over the last 12 months ending March 2018, and 28% reduction in the last 24 months during the period from 2003-March 2019. Parent Representation in seventeen sites, has contributed to educating legislators regarding benefits of parent representation and judicial training regarding the trauma of removal on children, the need to ensure reasonable efforts were conducted to prevent removal or, if after removal, to obtain reunification to achieve the goal of safely maintaining children at home when possible. Judicial changes in 9 County Youth Courts and 9 Referee Youth Courts have also impacted the reduction of children in care. The parent representation program is a catalyst for the cultural shift from unnecessary removal to prevention services in the home when child can remain safely.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)

[Yes. Mississippi expects the Legislature to increase funding for parent representation in the next legislative term by additional funding in the budget. The Parent Representation Task Force continues to work to identify and support expansion into all counties in Mississippi beginning with those experiencing high removal rates. The task force has identified two Clusters of Counties for expansion: First, Lee, Pontotoc, Union, Alcorn, Tishomingo, Prentiss, Itawamba and Monroe. Second, Lamar, Marion and Perry, Forrest and Pearl River. The Task Force will promote more funding in the legislature to supplant foundation funding in operating counties so as to access those funds to accomplish expansion.](#)

What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)

Provide education to the Legislative regarding the benefits of parent representation to children, parents and the state through the Three Branch Government Convening held March 7, 2019. Legislative funding increased from \$200,000 in SFY 2018 and 2019 to \$278,500 for SFY 2020. Lamar County obtained a match for a parent attorney for the remainder of 2019 with the expectation of grant funds becoming available. Forrest County fully funded parent representation in SFT 2019. Pearl River County received a two year funding 2019-2020 from Casey and County matching funds. A large number of judges retired or did not seek re-election for 2019, which allowed judicial changes in nine out of twenty-two County Youth Courts and nine out of sixty referee counties. The new judges have received training regarding safety vs. risk and trauma of removal. The judges are analyzing their individual court data to set goals to safely reduce the number of children in care and to prevent removal where services can be provided to the family with the children remaining in the home. New judges have been provided with Enhanced Resource Guidelines (NCJFCJ) and Child Safety Guide (ABA). The new judges have embraced prevention and allowing children to remain in the home when safe to do so, with services provided to stabilize the families.

What is being done or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V).

Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc) or data efforts you have in place or plan to have in place to assess your efforts. If you have already evaluated your effort, how did you use this data to modify or expand the project?

As of June 2019, the Parent Representation Task Force requested assistance from Angela A. Robertson, Ph.D., Research Professor and Associate Director, Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University, to conduct an evaluation of the parent representation project by the January 2020 Legislative Session.

- I. [Outcome: High quality parent representation is now occurring in Harrison and Hancock Counties \(via Casey\), two of the three highest ranking counties of substantiated cases involving child victims and in Hinds County, the largest metropolitan county, \(Kellogg funds were made available to employ two part-time parent attorneys in Hinds County to handle a large volume of cases\). Rankin, another high population areas, benefits from the program. The project expanded to Desoto County, another high](#)

[population area \(which started earlier due to local funding and Casey Family Programs match\). Rural representation is provided in Adams County \(Casey\) and Bolivar County, with high poverty rates \(via Kellogg\). The outcomes have been excellent so far. The program expanded to Jackson County in October 2017 employing a parent attorney and a parent representation program manager and the County has assumed full responsibility for funding parent representation. Pearl River County is the newest expansion site in July 2018 with a one and one-half years \[matching funds from Casey Family Programs\]\(#\). \[Reunification celebrations occurred in Rankin County Youth Court, Jackson County Youth Court\]\(#\), Forrest County Youth Court and Hancock County Youth Court in 2019.](#)

What is being done or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V). Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc) or data efforts you have in place or plan to have in place to assess your efforts. If you have already evaluated your effort, how did you use this data to modify or expand the project?

[A committee was established at the May 2017 meeting to analyze the current data and to develop standard measurements across all the parent attorney sites. The Office of State Public Defender is monitoring and collecting data, as well as supervising and training parent attorneys.](#)

[What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?](#)

[Continued assistance of the CBCC through Christopher Church's technical data assistance.](#)

[Mississippi requests assistance in finding funding sources for the expansion which is the subject of a letter from Chief Justice William Waller, Jr. to Commissioner Milner May 31, 2018.](#)

Hearing Quality Project:

Provide a concise description of the joint project selected in your jurisdiction.

[Projects regarding hearing quality are ongoing and include Parent Representation for the indigent custodial parent in sixteen counties and the Jurist in Residence who functions as a liaison between the courts and MDCPS to promote quality hearings and quality preparation for hearing. Further, the Jurist in Residence meets regularly with the Commissioner of Child Protective Services to coordinate efforts to prevent children from being unnecessarily removed from the home or to achieve reunification faster where appropriate to do so.](#)

Child and Family Services Review:

[The Child and Family Services Review is a project to collaborate and participate with the Department of Child Protection Services in the Child and Family Services Review in 2018, to assist with any resulting Program Improvement Plan, to improve outcomes for children. Collaborate and contribute to the Annual Progress Services Report regarding court and tribal](#)

collaboration. The purposes of this collaboration are to improve timeliness of hearings, quality of hearings, encourage compliance with individual service plans, achievement of reunification, adoption or other permanent plan as appropriate.

The judiciary participated in meetings prior to the review, conducting training for the Youth Court Teams in Hinds, Harrison, Pontotoc and Union Counties, as well as Washington County, which was a potential site for review, but ultimately not chosen. Collaboration continues with reporting for the Annual Progress Services Report as well as participation in developing the Program Improvement Plan which is required based on the CFSR results. The CIP and judiciary expect to participate in the Child and Family Services Plan drafting in 2019.

Approximate date that the project began: Parent representation 2012 to present; Jurist in Residence 2015 and CFSR March 2018

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?
Theory of Change

How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)

Identifying/Assessing Needs: Federal Review of case files for compliance with federal guidelines occurred in September 2018.

The Judiciary, AOC and MDCPS participated in the monthly CFSR webinar sponsored by the CBCC.

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II) *If you do not yet have a theory of change and/or would like assistance, please indicate such in the space below.*

The theory of change involves developing the Program Improvement Plan and determining the Court's role in the Agency completing the PIP. The judiciary spent three days assisting the Agency by identifying the court's responsibility for completing the PIP.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)

Yes. Judicial training provided to the four county locations designated for review was implemented as an intervention for better outcome. Review of current data and language in court orders continues and will produce awareness of areas needing improvement and encourage changes. Judicial training for counties selected for review began in March 2018 with Hinds, the largest metropolitan county, and Harrison, largest foster care population, participating. CFSR orientation was also conducted in June 2018 for Pontotoc and Union Counties, a cluster of counties served by Referees and located in rural Mississippi. The Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court convened the meetings. All four counties reviewed data from Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System (MACWIS/MDCPS) and Mississippi Youth

[Court Information Delivery System \(MYCIDS/AOC\) to address timeliness measures and language in court orders.](#)

What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)

[Child Protection Services monitored the progress of the CFSR. AOC will enlist the judiciary in holding hearings timely and providing orders to CPS timely with required language for Title IV-E reimbursement ongoing.](#)

What is being done or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V) *Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc) or data efforts you have in place or plan to have in place to assess your efforts. If you have already evaluated your effort, how did you use this data to modify or expand the project?*

[The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services will monitor and evaluate the project through the Continuing Quality Improvement Unit. Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System \(MYCIDS\) will be reviewed periodically to determine where improvement is occurring and where areas needing improvement remain.](#)

[MYCIDS modified the attorney relationship field to include the option to allow the Court to generate an appointment order for the relationships of Attorney for Parents, Mother or Father. In the release scheduled for the end of July 2018, modifications were included to require and collect data for Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal, Reunify and the necessary court findings prior to the Disposition hearing.](#)

A second MYCIDS modification in 2019 involves fields to enter specific reasonable efforts by the Agency to prevent removal, to report reasonable efforts toward completing the permanent plan and the concurrent plan, and reasonable efforts to achieve the permanent plan.

What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?

Continue assistance by Christopher Church to provide data analysis to the judiciary and Legislature.

II. Trainings, Projects, and Activities For questions 1-9, provide a *concise* description of work completed or underway to date in FY 2019 (October 2018-June 2019) in the below topical subcategories.

For question 1, focus on significant training events or initiatives held or developed in FY 2019 and answer the corresponding questions.

1. Trainings

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, training curriculum/program, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
Data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judiciary, Child Protection Services	Training occurs in specific counties or groups of counties with attendance varying		Data entry into MYCIDS will be accurate, timely and complete. Participants will be able to articulate reasonable efforts and generate quality orders.	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Hearing quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Parent Defenders Asst. Attorney Generals		<p>Office of State Public Defender presented trainings starting in June 2017 focusing on skills development and motion practice. Parent Defenders must complete one of the training programs annually to be certified. In 2017, 49 lawyers were trained from 39 counties that have presided over 78% of child removals in the past five years.</p> <p>Additional training was held in Harrison County in April and October 2018 and Oxford in August. 56 attorneys were trained; 45 lawyers are certified representing 36 counties.</p> <p>Technical assistance is provided through the Youth Court Resource Counsel project which has been expanded to include contractors specializing in parent representation. Three attorneys are on contract to assist with Youth Court training and TA. OSPD connects certified parent attorneys</p>	<p>To provide parent attorneys with the necessary skills and certification for parent representation.</p> <p>To collect data regarding:</p> <p>Number of cases open at the beginning of the month;</p> <p>Opened cases during the month;</p> <p>Closed cases during the month;</p> <p>Number of shelter hearings participated in each month;</p> <p>Number of adjudicatory hearings participated in each month;</p> <p>Number of review hearings participated in each month;</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
-----------------	---	--	--	---	--	--

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, training curriculum/program, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
				through a dedicated listserv. Jurist in Residence routinely meets with courts where areas need improvement. JIR Letters on hearing quality are listed on the Mississippi Supreme Court website.	Number of family meeting during the month; and Number of other in-person meetings with clients during the month.	
Improving timeliness/permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Multidisciplinary group of Judiciary, MDCPS, Law Enforcement, Educators, CAC, and Service Providers	May 13, 2019 181 May 14, 2019 211 May 15, 2019 161	Training by Robert Wyman, Casey Judicial Leadership Team, “ABA Child Safety: A Guide for Judges and Lawyers” regarding assessing safety vs. risk, reasonable efforts, preventing removal of children from the home. “From Adversity to Resilience and Hope” a brief overview of the NEAR sciences: Neurology, Epidemiology, ACEs, and Resilience.	To change the MS culture of removing children from home to keep them safe to assessing if the child can remain in the home safely with services provided to the family or removing safety threat. MS has made a significant shift to maintaining children safe at home.	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Quality legal representation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<p>Office of State Public Defender presented trainings starting in June 2017 focusing on skills development and motion practice. Parent Defenders must complete one of the training programs annually to be certified. In 2017, 49 lawyers were trained from 39 counties that have presided over 78% of child removals in the past five years.</p> <p>Additional training, “Engaging Families from Prevention to Permanency,” was held in Harrison County in April and October 2018 and Oxford in August. 56 attorneys were trained; 45 lawyers are certified representing 36 counties.</p> <p>On June 21, 2019 “Parent Defender Seminar” was trained.</p> <p>Technical assistance is provided through the Youth Court Resource Counsel project which has been expanded to include contractors specializing in</p>	<p>To provide parent attorneys with the necessary skills and certification for parent representation.</p> <p>To collect data regarding:</p> <p>Number of cases open at the beginning of the month;</p> <p>Opened cases during the month;</p> <p>Closed cases during the month;</p> <p>Number of shelter hearings participated in each month;</p> <p>Number of adjudicatory hearings participated in each month;</p> <p>Number of review hearings participated in each month;</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
------------------------------	---	--	---	--	--

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, training curriculum/program, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
				parent representation. Three attorneys are on contract to assist with Youth Court training and TA. OSPD connects certified parent attorneys through a dedicated listserv.	Number of family meeting during the month; and Number of other in-person meetings with clients during the month.	

Engagement & participation of parties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<p>Office of State Public Defender presented trainings starting in June 2017 focusing on skills development and motion practice. Parent Defenders must complete one of the training programs annually to be certified. In 2017, 49 lawyers were trained from 39 counties that have presided over 78% of child removals in the past five years.</p> <p>Additional training, “Engaging Families from Prevention to Permanency,” was held in Harrison County in April and October 2018 and Oxford in August. 56 attorneys were trained; 45 lawyers are certified representing 36 counties.</p> <p>Technical assistance is provided through the Youth Court Resource Counsel project which has been expanded to include contractors specializing in parent representation. Three attorneys are on contract to assist with Youth Court training and</p>	<p>To provide parent attorneys with the necessary skills and certification for parent representation.</p> <p>To collect data regarding:</p> <p>Number of cases open at the beginning of the month;</p> <p>Opened cases during the month;</p> <p>Closed cases during the month;</p> <p>Number of shelter hearings participated in each month;</p> <p>Number of adjudicatory hearings participated in each month;</p> <p>Number of review hearings participated in each month;</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
---------------------------------------	---	--	--	---	--	--

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, training curriculum/program, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
				TA. OSPD connects certified parent attorneys through a dedicated listserv.	Number of family meeting during the month; and Number of other in-person meetings with clients during the month.	
Well-being	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judiciary, Tribe, MDCPS and Community Leaders Approximately 200 Community Leaders, Agency Leaders, Grantors and Legislators attended the Summit	Varied by Pilot County Sites	Created the Family First Initiative through the Mississippi Commission on Children’s Justice. Held a FFI Summit in 2018; organized eight pilot jurisdictions: Lauderdale, Pearl River, Lee, Bolivar, Jackson, Hinds, Madison and Rankin Counties	To strategically build an integrated community-based social services model to stabilize and build self-sufficiency of at-risk families and prevent child maltreatment.	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, training curriculum/program, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
ICWA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	State Judiciary, Tribal Judiciary, MDCPS, MBCI Social Services	165	The Administrative Office of Courts, MDCPS and the Tribe collaborated to develop Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) training in 2011-2019 (scheduled for August 13, 2019) on the MBCI Reservation. ICWA training is included in the Child Welfare Professional Development curriculum and new curriculum being developed that is required for all new MDCPS social workers and support staff. In addition,	Participants to understand the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act. Participants to understand active efforts. Participants will ask ICWA questions at the beginning of the case and in subsequent hearings.	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

<i>Topical Area</i>	<i>Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?</i>	<i>Who was the target audience?</i>	<i>How many persons attended?</i>	<i>What type of training is it? (e.g., conference, training curriculum/program, webinar)</i>	<i>What were the intended training outcomes?</i>	<i>What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes</i>
Sex Trafficking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Judiciary, Tribe, MDCPS, CAC, CASA, Law Enforcement, Educators, Service Providers, Medical and Mental Health Professional	Approximately 500	CIP served on Planning Committee for the One Loud Voice Multidisciplinary Conference and sponsored keynote speakers and provided scholarships for Tribal members to attend.	Participants from all disciplines will hear the same principles of practice and apply principles to collaboration with other professionals in child welfare. Participants be trauma-informed and apply knowledge to practice.	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	County Court Teams under Child and Family Services Review Hinds Harrison Pontotoc Union *Washington was trained, but not chosen for review	Varied by County – entire court team	Training on what the CFSR is and how the Agency and Court are viewed as one entity. Instruction on Court's responsibilities to prepare for the review; training on requirements of IV-E language in court orders and why it matters.	Counties selected for review will have an understanding of the CFSR process; will understand requirements of compliance with title IV-E; and will have filed ready for reviewers on site.	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

On average, with ordinary funding levels, how many training events do you hold per year? 7

What is your best prediction for the number of attorneys and judges that attend a training annually?

[CIP Training Grant fully sponsors the Indian Child Welfare Conference each year in August with 150-184 in attendance.](#)
[CIP Training Grant annually provides the keynote speakers for One Loud Voice in April 2017 \(400 in attendance\) and 2018 \(450 in attendance\) and 2019 \(500 in attendance\).](#)
[CIP Training Grant provides keynote speaker\(s\) at the Annual Judges and Referees Conference in September 2017 \(80-100 in attendance\), scheduled for September 19-21, 2018.](#)
[CIP Training Grant fully sponsored the With Teamwork Our Kids Win Conferences in January 2017 \(1500 in attendance, three locations\).](#) In May 2019, CIP Training Grant funded With Teamwork Our Kids Win-Playing the Game (600 in attendance, three locations). Casey Family Programs provided the trainer, Robert Wyman, JD, Casey Judicial Leadership Team.
[CIP Training Grant fully sponsors the Annual Court Improvement Plan meeting of stakeholders \(50 participants\).](#)
[CIP Data Grant fully sponsors Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System training to judiciary and Child Protection Services staff \(approximately 1800 frontline workers and court personnel\).](#)

[CIP Training Grant sponsors annual regional trainings produced by the Office of State Public Defender regarding Parent Representation.](#)

[Mississippi CIP Training Grant develops or sponsors trainings covering quality and timeliness of hearings, permanency and wellbeing, and engagement and participation](#)

The Family First Prevention Services Act amends the Social Security Act adding an eligibility criterion for the training of judges and attorneys on the congregate care provisions of the Act. See the highlighted portion below.

(1)¹ IN GENERAL.— In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this section, a highest State court shall have in effect a rule requiring State courts to ensure that foster parents, pre- adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State are notified of any proceeding to be held with respect to the child, *shall provide for the training of judges, attorneys, and other legal personnel in child welfare cases on Federal child welfare policies and payment limitations with respect to children in foster care who are placed in settings that are not a foster family home*, and shall submit to the Secretary an application at such time, in such form, and including such information and assurances as the Secretary may require, including—

¹ Sec. 50741(c) of P.L. 115-123 revised sec. 438(b)(1) to add language regarding training. Effective as if enacted on 1/1/18 (sec. 50746(a)(1) of P.L. 115-123).

States have an option to delay implementation of the congregate care provisions by two years. The decision will have a direct impact on when judicial determinations and CIP training requirements must begin.

Do you know when your state plans to implement Family First? Yes No

If yes, when?

Have you been involved in planning with the agency on implementing Family First? Yes No

If yes, please describe how the CIP has been involved.

CIP Director and Judiciary have participated in meetings with the MDCPS leadership regarding timeframe for implementation and offering assistance in meeting the timeframe for implementation.

Have you been developing your Family First judicial training plan? Yes No

If yes, please describe what you have done.

The Judiciary was trained regarding prevention vs. removal at the Annual Judges and Referees Conference in September 2018 in anticipation of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services opting in early to implement the requirements of the Act. However, the Agency determined that it is not in a position to implement the Act at this time due to insufficient service providers that will qualify as QRTS.

However, community primary prevention efforts to respond to basic human needs are rolling out through the state through judicial leadership in eight pilot counties. Beginning in August, 2018, the MS Family First Initiative Pilot County Steering Committees used a 3-step planning process to implement programs of primary prevention geared toward targeting the risk factors of families at risk of entering the foster care system. These counties include: Lee, Pearl River, Jackson, Bolivar, Hinds, Rankin, Madison, and Lauderdale. Each county went through the steps:

- 1) County-wide SWOT Analysis
- 2) Geo-data review and Priorities for Change Analysis
- 3) Action Planning development

In every community, stakeholders from all different walks of life worked together to critically evaluate the problem at a localized area. Volunteers in these counties bring experience from the judiciary, non-profit sectors, government agencies, faith-based community, the private business sector, health care, education, and more. Free legal clinics have been implemented by several Chancellors and are available on a weekly or monthly basis staffed by pro bono lawyers. A free web-based communication platform, Meet the Need, has been developed for case management and will be piloted in two counties. Mississippi’s Family First Initiative hopes to provide a more accurate reporting of services provided to families, identify gaps in services within communities, and capture data to assist the Initiative’s leadership in charting the next course of action for community and agency primary prevention within Mississippi. Another potential educational scholarship opportunity is being explored through a partnership with Johns Hopkins University and the Bloomberg American Health Initiative.

Partnership with the Access to Justice Commission: Mississippi’s Family First Initiative is partnering with the Mississippi Supreme Court’s Commission on Access to Justice to provide free legal services to families at risk of state intervention. One night a month, volunteer attorneys offer their services to pre-screened pro se clients. The Family Resource Center in Tupelo pre-screens the clients and offers a free space for the legal consultations to happen.

Progress by county is indicated below:

<p>Lee County</p> <p>Lee County has created an aggressive action plan targeting education, addiction, and poverty. Members worked with Mississippi’s Access to Justice to provide free legal clinics involving case work to prevent child removals. The committee selected a specific neighborhood, Haven Acres, and worked to build a rapport with its community. They have implemented reading clubs, summer learning programs, and quarterly neighborhood events to generate resource awareness and connect needs with resources.</p>	<p>Pearl River County</p> <p>As a result of this MS Family First Initiative, a new position was created at the Pearl River County Youth Court, Resource Coordinator tasked with connecting the youth court families with available resources. The committee has created a spreadsheet of organizations and services that is updated regularly. Pearl River County has seen several successful examples of intervention ranging from work on homes to donated dental work, all of which allowed for children to remain</p>
---	--

<p>Community members have large input in the planning process.</p>	<p>with their parents. Priorities for change include: employment, housing, and poverty.</p>
<p><i>Jackson County</i></p> <p>Efforts in Jackson County are unique in that members observed the major problem was awareness. Members identified several organizations and resources and the committee was successful in recruiting a large, diverse membership. As a result, the committee is working to improve connection of these resources with the community. They have started hosting regular resource fairs for the community with family-friendly events. Judge Sharon Sigalas is also working on several innovated court programs, including a holistic program for incarcerated parents of foster child(ren) and another program focused on aging-out preparedness. Committee members are prioritized three areas of care: employment, mental health treatment, and physical health care.</p>	<p><i>Bolivar County</i></p> <p>Efforts in Bolivar County are similar to Lee County. The committee has identified priorities for change: education, employment, transportation, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence prevention, and crime. Members of this committee are very active in the community and have provided the area with great opportunities. Pam Chatman, the steering chair, helped create a connection with FedEx out of Memphis. Several job fairs have happened, resulting in an influx of employment through a new, free shuttle service. The committee's action plan consists of two major goals: 1) an upcoming expungement clinic to assist with employment opportunities and 2) an upcoming resource fair to create awareness in the community and connect needs with resources.</p>

<p><i>Hinds County</i></p> <p>The committee in Hinds County reviewed the census and CPS geo data specific to their area and determined that additional input is necessary before deciding on exact priorities for change. Members would like as much residential involvement as possible and have started hosting meetings in local libraries and schools to generate community buy-in.</p>	<p><i>Rankin County</i></p> <p>Committee members have identified priorities for change – poverty and education – but are taking time to conduct further assessment. The committee seeks to have more involvement from residents regarding their specific needs. A survey is under development and will be distributed to community members.</p>
<p><i>Madison County</i></p> <p>Madison’s committee is seeking community buy-in and is in the process of planning a reception at the county courthouse. Members also seek to recruit more agencies and organizations in the area. The greatest challenge they face is creating public awareness of the need within the community. Priorities for change include: poverty, crime, substance abuse, and education.</p>	<p><i>Lauderdale County</i></p> <p>Lauderdale’s committee is taking additional time to further assess the needs within the community and are developing individualized action plans separate from the 3-step process designed by the state.</p>

2. Data Projects. Data projects include any work with administrative data sets (e.g, AFCARS, SACWIS), data dashboards, data reports, fostering court improvement data, case management systems, and data sharing efforts.

Do you have a data project/activity? Yes No (skip to #3)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Collect data from parent attorney sites to determine rate of removal, discharge, and length of time to reunification, adoption or other permanent plan. <i>(add narrative here)</i>	Fostering Court Improvement data projects	Evaluation/Assessment
Provide reports to each county judge or referee regarding compliance with federal timeliness measures.	Agency Data Sharing Efforts	Evaluation/Assessment
Provide training for MDCPS workers and 82 county youth courts to facilitate handling of court dockets, encourage better case management and provide uniform use of court orders to assist with the Title IV-E required language in orders for eligibility of children to receive board payments, who are in the custody of MDCPS	Agency Data Sharing Efforts	Implementation

(a) Do you have data reports that you consistently view? Yes No

(b) How are these reports used to support your work?

Reports are used to determine areas needing improvement in specific counties; identify deficiencies occurring statewide; assist in identifying counties where there are high removal rates, lower discharge rates, untimely hearings, and children remaining long-term in foster care. The Jurist in Residence works with individual judges to develop a plan to address the issues. Individual counties meet with a Justice of the Supreme Court and Attorney General assigned to MDCPS to address the backlog in termination of parental rights cases to identify barriers and areas needing improvement.

3. Hearing Quality. Hearing quality projects include any efforts you have made to improve the quality of dependency hearings, including court observation/assessment projects, process improvements, specialty/pilot court projects, projects related to court orders or title IV-E determinations, mediation, or appeals.

Do you have a hearing quality project/activity? Yes No (skip to #4)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Quality Improvement Center for Research-Based Infant-Toddler Court Teams in Forrest and Rankin Counties' Zero-to-Three programs.	Specialty/Pilot Courts	Evaluation/Assessment
Parent Attorney Training by Office of State Public Defender, ABA, and NACC	Specialty/Pilot Courts	Implementation
JIR one-on-one meetings with judges and JIR letters posted on the website	Court Observation/Assessment	Implementation

4. Improving Timeliness of Hearings or Permanency Outcomes. Timeliness and permanency projects include any activities or projects meant to improve the timeliness of case processing or achievement of timely permanency. This could include general timeliness, focus on continuances or appeals, working on permanency goals other than APPLA, or focus on APPLA and older youth.

Do you have a Timeliness or permanency project/activity? Yes No (skip to #5)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Parent Representation Projects in seventeen counties	Other	Evaluation/Assessment
Jurist in Residence liaison between the Courts and MDCPS	Other	Implementation
Jackson County Diversified Case Management Program to fast track long-stayer cases	Other	Implementation

5. Quality of Legal Representation. Quality of legal representation projects may include any activities/efforts related to improvement of representation for parents, youth, or the agency. This might include assessments or analyzing current practice, implementing new practice models, working with law school clinics, or other activities in this area.

Do you have a quality legal representation project/activity? Yes No (skip to #6)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Parent Representation Task Force and PR Strategic Team Leadership expansion to other sites	Other	Develop Theory of Change

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Collaboration with MS, LA and AL to provide training for parent attorneys, to seek funding for parent representation and to develop border agreements between the states	Assessment	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Extensive training provided to parent attorneys by the Law Schools; ABA; NACC and OSPD	Other	Implementation

6. Engagement & Participation of Parties. Engagement and participation of parties includes any efforts centered around youth, parent, foster family, or caregiver engagement, as well as projects related to notice to relatives, limited English proficiency, or other efforts to increase presence and engagement at the hearing.

Do you have an engagement or participation of parties project/activity? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Quality Parent Representation	Parent Engagement	Evaluation/Assessment
Judicial Engagement Team	Other	Implementation
Jurist in Residence Court Observation	Other	Implementation

7. Well-Being. Well-being projects include any efforts related to improving the well-being of youth. Projects could focus on education, early childhood development, psychotropic medication, LGBTQ youth, trauma, racial disproportionality/disparity, immigration, or other well-being related topics.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on well-being? Yes No (skip to #8)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Quality Improvement Center for Research-Based Infant-Toddler Court Teams in Forrest and Rankin Counties' Zero-to-Three programs.	Early Childhood Development	Implementation
One Loud Voice Multidisciplinary Training	Trauma	Implementation

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Mississippi Children’s Justice Commission Family First Initiative to educate communities on the needs and resources in their communities and develop outreach to provide services to families, to prevent neglect which is the highest percentage of reasons for removal in MS.	Education	Selecting Solution

8. ICWA. ICWA projects could include any efforts to enhance state and tribal collaboration, state and tribal court agreements, data collection and analysis of ICWA compliance, or ICWA notice projects.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on ICWA? Yes No (skip to #9)

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
9 th Annual Indian Child Welfare Conference to train the basics of ICWA, work through scenarios to determine best practice, and to learn from past case regarding Native American children in the child welfare system	Tribal Collaboration	Planning
MOU with MBCI, Courts and MDCPS, which outlines responsibilities of each entity when a Native American child is identified.	State/Tribal Court Agreements	Implementation
Quarterly Collaboration between CIP, MBCI Social Services and MDCPS to staff cases	Tribal Collaboration	Implementation

9. Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (PSTFSA). PSTFSA projects could include any work around domestic child sex trafficking, the reasonable and prudent parent standard, a focus on runaway youth, focus on normalcy, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement the act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on PSTFSA? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Annual One Loud Voice Multidisciplinary Conference	Sex Trafficking	Selecting Solution

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Mississippi Family First Initiative – Community based prevention efforts addressing poverty, crime, education, unemployment, lack of transportation and human resources.	Other	Identifying/Assessing Needs
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

III. CIP Collaboration in Child Welfare Program Planning and Improvement Efforts

1. Please describe how the CIP was involved with the state’s CFSP due June 30, 2019.

a. Does the CFSP include any of the following:

legal/judicial strategies the CIP/Agency Joint Project the CIP Hearing Quality Project

If yes, please describe.

The specific language has not been drafted for the CFSP regarding CIP involvement, but the Agency indicates the CFSP will discuss the collaboration with the Mississippi Commission for Children’s Justice, the Mississippi Family First Initiative, the collaborative work on IV-E reimbursement for youth court attorneys, the efforts to expand parent representation and the periodic joint trainings.

The CFSP will also track the strategies of the PIP in its final approved form. The 1st Submission of the MDCPS PIP on May 16, 2019, which requires expansion and agency commitment to continue the work with the courts beyond the PIP.

Develop court role guidance for parents: MDCPS will work with the Administrative Office of Courts to develop a set of materials that can be provided to each family explaining Mississippi’s youth court processes, the purpose of each type of youth-court hearing, and the role of each person involved in the youth-court case.

Develop media plan to advocate for increased parental representation: MDCPS will work with the Administrative Office of Courts to develop a comprehensive media, public relations, and legislative educational plan to advocate for increased state funding for parental representation in youth court.

Develop plan for claiming IV-E reimbursement for parent representation attorneys: MDCPS will work with the Administrative Office of Courts to develop a plan to claim IV-E reimbursement for parent representation attorneys.

2. Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in the most recent/upcoming title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review in your state.

Commented [CB1]: The PIP will need to include here, and in most areas of the PIP, a mechanism by which you will know these activities are having the intended impact. Materials and plans alone usually don’t change practice or outcomes.

Commented [CB2]: Did MS review the data/information available from the areas of state with parent representation showing its positive impact as part of PIP development? That information would be helpful to include in the narrative to make the connection/support the inclusion of the proposed strategies.

Commented [CB3]: Will MDCPS’ commitment be to continue this work beyond the PIP – perhaps in the CFSP? If so, that should be included in the PIP to strengthen it.

Commented [CB4]: It is the understanding of the regional office that Mississippi intends to utilize IV-E representation funding exclusively to fund agency representation. This needs to be clarified.

CIP Director attended briefing at the beginning of the title IV-E Review and the exit conference. CIP provided training regarding the requirements of title IV-E for the judiciary at the 2018 Annual Judges and Referees Conference.

3. Please describe how the CIP is or was involved in preparing and completing round 3 of the CFSR and PIP, if required, in your state. *Please check all the ways that the CIP or Court Personnel were involved (or plan to be involved) in the CFSR and PIP Process. Feel free to add additional narrative to explain your involvement in the process.*

- were not involved at all
- were involved in planning the statewide assessment
- were CFSR reviewers
- were interviewed for CFSR
- were invited to the exit conference at the close of the CFSR review
- were invited to the final CFSR results session at the conclusion of the report
- Final CFSR report was shared with you
- Final CFSR report shared with courts broadly across the state
- were a part of a large group of stakeholders engaged to assist in design of the PIP
- high level of inclusion during the entire PIP process
- made suggestions for inclusion in the PIP
- suggestions made by CIP for inclusion in the PIP were put forward by the child welfare agency
- had an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the PIP before it was submitted
- meet (or plan to meet) ongoing with the child welfare agency to monitor PIP Implementation

[CIP participated in the Annual Stakeholder Planning Meeting \(2015-2019 CFSP/APSR Collaboration\) March 22, 2018, which was a joint collaboration of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services \(MDCPS\) with The Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\), Children's Bureau \(CB\) and the Administrative Office of Courts \(CIP Director\).](#)

[The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court convened an orientation to CFSR meeting in March 2018 with Hinds County \(largest metropolitan county\) and Harrison County \(Coastal county with largest number of foster children\) and a second meeting in June 2018 with Pontotoc County and Union County \(rural and referee counties\) in preparation for the September 2018 CFSR. Data was reviewed and plans made to verify data regarding cases in compliance with timeframe for hearings, filing of petitions, and permanency. The meeting included training regarding required language in court orders to draw down Title IV-E funds for children in foster care.](#)

The current version of the PIP includes (check all that apply):

- court strategies court/agency shared strategies
- the court/agency joint project described above the CIP hearing quality project
- specific practice changes that judges will make
- specific practice changes that attorneys will make

4. What strategies or processes are in place in your state that you feel are particularly effective in supporting joint child welfare program planning and improvement?

Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice

The Supreme Court established and supports the efforts of the Commission on Children's Justice. The commission is composed of key decision makers from across the Child Welfare system and meets quarterly to identify and address gaps in the delivery of justice to child welfare involved families. The commission is divided into several committees which address the well-being of children and families in the system and develop strategies to bring reform and resolution to those areas. The Commission is the major state-wide collaborative entity determining needs and marshalling support for change.

Mississippi Family First Initiative an arm of the Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice:

In 2018 Mississippi established an additional Court Improvement Program Objective to (1) develop a responsive coordinated effort to provide services to people in need, (2) establish seamless communication between resources, (3) educate communities and provide strategic direction to wrap around the people of their county in need of assistance, (4) make children a priority at the state and local level, (5) stabilize families in Mississippi, (6) prevent children and families from "falling through the cracks," and (7) earn the trust of those in need by demonstrating that communities are there to help. The creation of the Family First Initiative will enable Mississippi to plan and implement the requirements of the Family First Service Prevention Act by developing evidence-based services which are trauma informed and rated as "Supported" or "Well Supported" service providers.

Mississippi Commission on Guardianship and Conservatorship of the Estate, of the Adult and of the Child:

An additional Commission was appointed in 2017 to review the Guardianship and Conservatorship Statutes of the Estate, of the Adult and of the Child and make recommendations for consistency between the statutes, define terms and consolidate into one location for each category. Three Sub-Committees have studied each category separately and anticipate making recommendations for revisions September 2018 to introduce to the Legislature. The Uniform Guardianship and Conservatorship Act was signed by the Governor May 29, 2019.

Parent Representation Task Force Institutionalized and creation of the Parent Representation Strategic Leadership Team to move representation to additional counties.

5. What barriers exist in your state that make effective joint child welfare program planning and improvement challenging?

Lack of Qualified Residential Treatment Service providers in Mississippi with evidence-based and trauma-informed practices for prevention of removal of children from the home. This barrier has cause the Agency to delay implementation of the FFPSA, which delays receipt of funding for parent attorneys, child attorneys, guardians ad litem and agency attorneys.

6. Does the state child welfare agency currently offer professional partner training to judges, attorneys, and court personnel as part of its Title IV-E Training Plan?

If yes, please provide a brief description of what is provided and how.

Yes. [Mississippi is exploring professional partner training with the Commissioner of Child Protection Services, with the assistance of Casey Family Programs, the Mississippi Judicial College and The Mississippi Supreme Court. In September 2018, the Judiciary received extensive training on Title IV-E requirements for funding.](#)

If no, have you met with child welfare agency leadership to discuss and explore utilizing professional partner training for judges, attorneys and court personnel?

7. Have you talked with your agency about accessing Title IV-E funding for legal representation for parents or for children? Is the agency planning to seek reimbursement? If yes, describe any plans, approaches, or models that are under consideration or underway.

Yes, several discussions have occurred between the Judiciary and the Agency regarding Title IV-E funding for legal representation for parents and children. The Agency is agreeable to accessing the funding and is exploring how to implement the program. Both the Judiciary and Agency have reviewed what other states are doing to identify the model that will work for Mississippi.

IV. CQI Current Capacity Assessment

1. Has your ability to integrate CQI into practice changed this year? If yes, what do you attribute the increase in ability to?

Conversations between the Judiciary and the Agency have resulted in an agreement to share data regarding specific court orders which do not comply, and reason for non-compliance, with Title IV-E requirements via a Smartsheet that will be available in real time so that the JIR can meet with individual judges/counties to correct the orders.

2. Which of the following CBCC Events/Services have you/your staff engaged in in the 2019 Fiscal Year?

- Designing & Evaluating Effective Trainings Workshop
- CQI Consult (*Topic: Parent Representation; Safe reduction of children in foster care*)
- Constituency Group- Hearing Quality Constituency Group- Safety Decision Making
- Constituency Group- CFSR Constituency Group- Quality Legal Rep
- Constituency Group – ICWA Constituency Group – Anti-Trafficking
- Constituency Group – New Directors Constituency Group – APPLA/Older Youth
- CIP All Call — *What % of All Calls does your CIP participate in? 75% (100% unless scheduling conflict)*

3. Do you have any of the following resources to help you integrate CQI into practice?

- CIP staff with CQI (e.g., data, evaluation) expertise
- Consultants with CQI expertise
- A University partnership
- A statewide court case management system
- Contracts with external individuals or organizations to assist with CQI efforts
- Other resources: _____

3a. Do you record your child welfare court hearings? Yes No

If yes, are they audio video (Some YCs do and some do not record)

3b. Can you remotely access your court case management system? *For example, Odyssey systems often allow remote access to case files.* Yes No

4. Consider the phases of change management and how you integrate these into practice. Are there phases of the process (e.g., Phase I-need assessment, Phase II-theory of change) that you struggle with integrating more than others?

Evaluation

5. Is there a topic or practice area that you would find useful from the Capacity Building Center for Courts? Be as specific as possible (e.g., data analysis, how to evaluate trainings, more information on research about quality legal representation, how to facilitate group meetings, etc.)

How to evaluate trainings and continued information about quality legal representation.

Self-Assessment – Capacity Continued

We would like you to assess your current capacities related to knowledge, skills, resources, and collaboration by responding to the following 2 sets of questions. In questions 6 and 7, we ask about CQI. When we say CQI we mean the entire change management process including root cause analysis, theory of change, strategy selection, implementation and evaluation.

6. Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have a good understanding of CQI.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I understand how to integrate CQI into all our work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar with the available data relevant to our work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I understand how to interpret and apply the available data.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The CIP and the state child welfare agency have shared goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The CIP and the state child welfare agency collaborate around program planning and improvement efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have the resources we need to fully integrate CQI into practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have staff, consultants, or partners who can answer my CQI questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. How frequently do you engage in the following activities?

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
We use data to make decisions about where to focus our efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
We meet with representatives of the child welfare agency to engage in collaborative systems change efforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We create theories of change around systems change projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We use evaluation/assessment findings to make changes to programs/practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We evaluate (beyond monitoring outputs) our efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

Definitions of Evidence

Evidence-based practice – evidence-based practices are practice that have been empirically tested in a rigorous way (involving random assignment to groups), have demonstrated effectiveness related to specific outcomes, have been replicated in practice at least one, and have findings published in peer reviewed journal articles.

Empirically-supported- less rigorous than evidence-based practices are empirically-supported practices. To be empirically supported, a program must have been evaluated in some way and have demonstrated some relationship to a positive outcome. This may not meet the rigor of evidence-base, but still has some support for effectiveness.

Best-practices – best practices are often those widely accepted in the field as good practice. They may or may not have empirical support as to effectiveness, but are often derived from teams of experts in the field.

Definitions for Work Stages

Identifying and Assessing Needs – This phase is the earliest phase in the process, where you are identifying a need to be addressed. The assessing needs phase includes identifying the need, determining if there is available data demonstrating that this a problem, forming teams to address the issue.

Develop theory of change—This phase focuses on the theorizing the causes of a problem. In this phase you would identify what you think might be causing the problem and develop a “theory of change”. The theory of change is essentially how you think your activities (or intervention) will improve outcomes.

Develop/select solution—This phase includes developing or selecting a solution. In this phase, you might be exploring potential best-practices or evidence-based practices that you may want to implement as a solution to the identified need. You might also be developing a specific training, program, or practice that you want to implement.

Implementation – the implementation phase of work is when an intervention is being piloted or tested. This includes adapting programs or practices to meet your needs, and developing implementation supports.

Evaluation/assessment – the evaluation and assessment phase includes any efforts to collect data about the fidelity (process measures: was it implemented as planned?) or effectiveness (outcome measures: is the intervention making a difference?) of the project. The evaluation assessment phase also includes post-evaluation efforts to apply findings, such as making changes to the program/practice and using the data to inform next steps.