

**STATE OF LOUISIANA
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW
REVISED/RENEGOTIATED
PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN
NOVEMBER 15, 2006 PROGRESS REPORT**



**LOUISIANA PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN
NOVEMBER 15, 2006 PROGRESS REPORT**

Louisiana developed its original Program Improvement Plan (PIP) in September 2004 to address deficiencies noted in the 2003 Child and Family Services Review. The targeted completion date was September 30, 2006, and a great deal of progress had been made both on reaching data goals related to national standards and benchmark completion when Hurricane Katrina, followed closely by Hurricane Rita, devastated southern Louisiana, disseminated the population of the state's largest urban area throughout the country, and disrupted all normal operations of the Office of Community Services, including PIP progress.

Subsequently, with the cooperation and assistance of our Federal partners, a renegotiated/revised PIP was submitted on June 14, 2006 and approved on June 19, 2006, with an extended completion date of September 30, 2007. This revised PIP focuses on short-term recovery efforts to assure safety, well-being and permanency for Louisiana's children including those who were displaced to other states as a result of the hurricanes. While addressing these short-term recovery efforts, Louisiana is taking advantage of the opportunities brought about by the storms to assess and plan for long-term reform. The reform efforts will be targeted toward a redesign of front-end efforts emphasizing prevention and decreasing the number of children in residential and emergency care facilities. These reform activities are underway with the support of the National Resource Centers and the Casey Family Foundation.

The renegotiated/revised PIP provides a proactive approach toward recovery from the devastation left in the wake of the hurricanes and focuses on the six child welfare outcomes Louisiana had not achieved in the Child and Family Services Review:

Safety 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect.

Safety 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible.

Permanency 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Well Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Well Being 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Well Being 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

DATA GOALS

The renegotiated/revised PIP included achievement of three national data goals:

Reunification: Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, what percentage was reunified in less than twelve months from the time of the latest removal from home?

National Standard:	76.2% or more
Louisiana Baseline:	68.5%
PIP Goal (original):	72.3%
PIP Goal (renegotiated):	70.92% (based on 2.42% sampling error)
Federal FY 05 Data:	71.10% (goal met)

Adoption in Twenty-Four Months: Of all children who exited care to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than twenty-four months from the time of the latest removal from home?

National Standard:	32% or more
Louisiana Baseline:	18.9%
PIP Goal (original):	21.8%
Federal FY 05 Data:	24.5% (goal met)

Placement Stability: Of all children served who have been in foster care less than twelve months from the time of the latest removal from home, what percentage have had no more than two placement settings?

National Standard:	86.7% or more
Louisiana Baseline:	80.9%
PIP Goal (original):	85%
PIP Goal (renegotiated):	81.9% (based on 1% or ½ sampling error, rounded up)
Federal FY 05 Data:	82% (goal met)

During a conference call on November 2, 2006, the state, ACF Regional Office and Children's Bureau agreed that Louisiana had met another data goal:

Recurrence of Maltreatment: Of all children associated with a substantiated, indicated, or alternative response victim finding of maltreatment during the first six months of the reporting period, what percentage had another substantiated, indicated, or alternative response victim finding of maltreatment within a six-month period?

National Standard:	6.1% or less
Louisiana Baseline:	8.7%
PIP Goal (original):	7.8%
Federal FY 05 Data:	6.6% (goal met)

Achievement of the remaining data goal has not yet been determined:

Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care: Of all children who were served in foster care during the reporting period, what percentage were found to be victims of

maltreatment? A child is counted as having been maltreated in foster care if the perpetrator of the maltreatment was identified as a foster parent or residential facility staff.

National Standard:	.57% or less
Louisiana Baseline	1.78%
PIP Goal (original):	1.64%
PIP Goal (renegotiated):	(to be determined when FY 05 data is available)
Federal FY 05 Data:	(data not yet available)

The Louisiana NCANDS data submitted was a correct data set. The perpetrator relationships were reported for the children abused and/or neglected while in foster care. The other perpetrator relationships were not reported. ACF had the ability to calculate the percentage of children abused and/or neglected while in foster care, but incorrect NCANDS commentary (corrected in November 2006) made this appear the wrong course to take. The NCANDS technical assistance team has been involved in and approved all decisions about the data submission. The proposed commentary for the NCANDS data set has been revised, approved by the NCANDS technical assistance team, and forwarded to ACF as follows:

Louisiana does not capture perpetrator relationship in an accurate fashion for 99% of relationships. With the consultation of the NCANDS technical assistance team, it was decided that the best method was to not to report this information, except for the Foster Home and Restrictive Care perpetrators.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

OBJECTIVE 1: The state will work in consultation with the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services to analyze current CPI data, practice and external factors as they relate to the current rise in foster care placements. (Outcome: Safety 2; Target Completion Date: May 31, 2007)

Strategy 1.1: To develop a series of data views that will provide further insight into the possible factors relating to the increase in children entering foster care. (Outcome: Safety 2; Target Completion Date: May 31, 2007)

Action Plan

Step 1: Create a list of variables or factors that may be contributing to the increase in placements, including regional and parish differences. (Due Date: May 31, 2006)

Achieved: The CPI program manager developed a list of variables and/or factors, and made a data request to Quality Assurance for reports regarding 10 identified factors/variables:

- Number of children who entered OCS custody during State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006

- Age, gender, race of children at time of foster care entry
- Reason for placement
- Type of initial placement: Relative, Foster Home, Residential
- If initial placement was relative, was it payable or non-payable
- Location of initial placement (within parish of residence, within region, or outside region)
- Previous history (CPI, Family Services, Day Care, Foster Care)
- Number of CPI cases for SFY 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006
- CPI open reason
- Number of CPI cases that resulted in OCS custody

Step 2: Gather or develop reports and data views relating to the list of variables and factors. (Outcome: Safety 2; Due Date: September 30, 2006)

Substantially Achieved: The Quality Assurance and Research Section developed reports and data views on factors identified by CPI as possible causes for the increasing number of children entering foster care.

- New Foster Care Entries (SFY and quarterly totals by region)
- Age at Time of Foster Care Entry (SFY by region)
- Gender of New Foster Care Entries (SFY by region)
- Race of New Foster Care Entries (SFY by region)
- Reason for Foster Care Entry (Open Reason)
- New Foster Care Entries by Placement Type (Residential; Payable/Non-Payable Foster Parent; Payable/Non-Payable Relative)
- Closure Outcomes for Live With Relative/Child Return Home/All Other
- Closure Outcomes at Approximate Time of 72 Hour Hearing
- Closure Outcomes at Approximate Time of Adjudication Hearing
- New Foster Care Entries with Previous Agency Involvement
- Child Protection Investigations by Victims (Number) (SFY)
- Child Protection Investigations by Victims (Closure Reasons) (SFY)
- Valid CPI Allegation Resulting in Custody within 30 Days
- Valid CPI Open Reason Substance Exposed Infant (Number open; Number valid; Number resulting in OCS custody)
- Statewide Child Protection Investigation Statistics (Number, Number Valid; Number Valid by Type; Number Removed from Home; Victim by Allegation Type/Age/Race/Gender; Perpetrator by Allegation Type/Age/Race/Gender (CY)

Only one data request could not be fulfilled: location of initial placement in relative proximity to child's home. This data could not be provided because the current system does not retain historical address data after an address has been changed. In light of the multitude of address changes that occurred following the hurricanes, it was determined that any data regarding the location of the original placement would not be reliable.

Steps 3 and 4 involve an analysis of the data to determine relationships to the increase in placements and distribution of analysis results to appropriate agency staff and stakeholders. Due date for completion of analysis is February 2007 and for distribution is May 2007.

Strategy 1.2: To examine changes in law and local practices that would have an effect on the rise in children entering care. (Outcome: Safety 2; Target Completion Date: May 31, 2007)

Action Plan

Step 1: Create a list of changes in law and agency practices that may be contributing to the increase in placements.

Achieved: The CPI Section Administrator identified two bills passed in the 2005 Louisiana Regular Legislative Session that impacted OCS child welfare practice and could be contributing to the increase in placements. Act 148 changed the way relative placements are made. Act 338 redefined neglect to include the CAPTA required activities relative to substance-exposed infants. Both laws resulted in changes in OCS policy and practice in the child protection, family services, and foster care programs, and could be contributory factors to the increase in placements.

Agency policy changes reflecting the requirements of Act 148 were published as Policy/Procedure Memorandum 05-008 on August 10, 2005 and Memorandum 06-028 on March 30, 2006. Agency policy changes reflecting the requirements of Act 338 were published as Memorandum 06-012 on February 8, 2006 and Memorandum 06-082 on November 6, 2006.

Steps 2 and 3 involve a review of those changes to determine their relationships to the increase in placements and distribution of the results of the review to appropriate agency staff and stakeholders. The due date for the review of the changes is due in February 2007 and the due date for distribution of the review is May 2007.

Strategy 1.3: To examine external factors, including increased substance abuse, added stress on families due to hurricanes, decreased or overwhelmed services and other social/environmental factors that may be affecting the rise in children entering care. (Outcome: Safety 2; Target Completion Date: May 31, 2007)

Action Plan

Step 1: Create a list of possible external factors that may be contributing to the increase in placements.

Achieved: The CPI Section Administrator identified the following social/environmental factors that could be contributory to the increase in placements:

1) Factors resulting from hurricane disruption/damage/destruction:

Many of the factors that lead to increased child abuse and neglect are also associated with the conditions created by the hurricanes of 2005 (poverty, loss of employment, loss of family and community supports, increased isolation, cramped or inadequate housing). It is expected that there will be increased demand for vital social services due to feelings of depression, hopelessness and despair.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated many low lying parishes in Louisiana within the span of a month. Such wide spread destruction resulted in monumental changes in Louisiana's population due to the destruction of the city of New Orleans and many other areas of the state. The losses and life altering changes impacted the entire state due to major population shifts. Extended families were splintered; many finding themselves in other states with no prospect of reuniting in the near future, if at all. The loss of extended family connection may be more pronounced due to the culture in Louisiana, not only in New Orleans but in rural parishes throughout the impacted area.

Housing issues continue to be a major problem due to massive destruction of entire neighborhoods and rural towns. For those citizens who wish to return to their home communities, securing safe, affordable housing continues to be a struggle. Rental property is almost non-existent because of federal regulations concerning flood zones and rebuilding, and the decision to rebuild or tear down continues to be difficult for many homeowners.

Thousands of citizens continue living in FEMA trailers. Some of the trailers are located on private property as homes are being rebuilt, but many are in FEMA trailer parks. There are concerns about the adequacy of these structures and concern about entire families living in these trailers in cramped conditions for extended periods of time.

Loss of income and livelihood is an obstacle faced by many families dislocated due to the storms. Although construction jobs are plentiful in the impacted area, there are impediments to gainful employment particularly if one's skills, expertise and experience are not in construction. Many families in the low-lying coastal parishes lost their only means of making money...their fishing boat. Even for those whose ability to shrimp, crab, and fish was not destroyed by the storm, the infrastructure to support the fishing industry was impacted. Many others were employed in the tourism and services industries in New Orleans. While the city is slowly regaining its ability to support tourism, many of those workers are still without their pre-Katrina jobs.

In several of the impacted parishes, farmers have lost their crops. Some, such as the citrus farmers in Saint Bernard and Plaquemines parishes, the rice, crawfish, and sugar cane farmers of central Louisiana may never regain their livelihood due to salt water damages.

In light of the stressors faced by families in the aftermath of the hurricanes, the reduction in availability of resources to meet physical and mental health and substance abuse issues in the affected areas is especially concerning for the safety and well being of children and their families.

2) Factors associated with juvenile justice reform:

Prior to the hurricanes of 2005, efforts were underway to reform the juvenile justice system. One of the many results of this effort has been the reduction in the number of children in secure correctional facilities and the movement toward more group home placements in community settings. Another possible result of the reform efforts may be the increased placement of adolescents in foster care as an alternative to placement in a correctional facility.

Steps 2 and 3 involve a review of the identified external factors to determine relationships to increase in placements and distribution of the analysis of the results to agency staff and stakeholders. Step 2 is due in February 2006, and Step 3 is due in May 2007.

OBJECTIVE 2: The state will work in consultation with the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning to develop and implement a protocol for case management and decision-making for displaced foster children and their biological parents. (Outcomes: Safety 1, Permanency 1, Well Being 1, 2, 3; Target Completion Date: June 30, 2007)

Strategy 2.1: To develop guidelines for worker contacts for continued assessment of safety and well being of foster children in foster homes or relative placements displaced due to the storms. (Outcomes: Safety 1, Permanency 1, Well Being 1, 2, 3; Target Completion Date: Completed)

Action Plan

Step 1: Meet with staff in New Orleans and Jefferson regions to draft preliminary guidelines for contacting foster children displaced by the storm.

Achieved: Meetings were held among State Office Foster Care and Residential staff and staff from Orleans and Jefferson regions to strategize and develop plans for assuring worker contact with children temporarily out of state due to hurricane evacuation.

Step 2: Prepare and distribute a memorandum using the results of the meeting with New Orleans and Jefferson Parish staff establishing guidelines for staff to follow for making contact with foster children displaced by the storm.

Achieved: Foster children in residential facilities who were relocated out of state were visited by a member of the State Office Residential staff. Foster children in residential, foster home, or relative placements who were relocated to other areas within the state were contacted by agency staff in the regions/parishes where the children were located. An instrument was developed for use in contacting foster children and their caretakers who had relocated out of state, and workers were instructed to use the instrument in making contact with these children and their caretakers.

Strategy 2.2: To develop action plans for finding missing biological parents, including maximizing use of Parent Locator Services (Outcomes: Permanency 1 and Well Being 1 and 3; Target Completion Date: August 31, 2006)

Action Plan

Step 1: Collect information from individual workers and supervisors in the New Orleans and Jefferson Regions on biological parents who were evacuated due to the storms and have not been located.

Achieved: Beginning in April 2006, a procedure was established by the State Office Foster Care Section to collect and update all missing parents and identifying information. An Excel worksheet and a Word template were created to collect information on missing parents. The courts in New Orleans and Jefferson resumed hearings early after the city reopened, and efforts to locate parents were coordinated among court personnel, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and OCS staff.

Step 2: Work with the National Resource Center and the Court Improvement Program (CIP) Coordinator to develop a hierarchy of procedures for assisting caseworkers in finding missing biological parents.

Achieved: When the renegotiated PIP was developed, a large number of biological families had not been located after having evacuated the hurricane impacted areas. Currently, all biological parents whose whereabouts were unknown due to hurricane evacuations have been located. In order to locate these parents, OCS consulted with the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning to discover innovative ways to find missing parents. Parent Locator Services and various internet search engines were suggested. Most of the suggested means of locating parents were already identified in agency policy. In addition to the methods proscribed in agency policy, special Katrina searches were done using information from various data sources including FEMA and the Red Cross.

Step 3: Implement specific procedures to assist caseworkers in finding biological parents.

Achieved: The assistance of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) was secured. Staff was directed to cooperate with inquiries from NCMEC and assured that they were bound by the same confidentiality requirements as OCS staff. Assistance was solicited from other states where some missing parents may have applied for public benefits or housing. Emphasis was placed on Foster Care Policy 6-411: Locating Absent Parents, which addresses Federal and State Parent Locator Services, DSS Client System search, Internet search engines as well as other resources.

Strategy 2.3: To develop broad guidelines for visitation and maintaining contact between foster children and their biological parents who remain separated due to the storms. (Outcomes: Permanency 1 and Well Being 1; Target Completion Date: Complete)

Action Plan

Step 1: Meet with staff in New Orleans and Jefferson regions to draft preliminary guidelines for visitation and maintaining contact between foster children and their biological parents who remain separated due to the storms.

Achieved: The Foster Care Section Administrator and Program Managers met with staff from the New Orleans and Jefferson regions and developed guidelines for assuring that foster children maintained contact with biological families despite displacement resulting from the hurricanes.

Step 2: As a result of the meeting with New Orleans and Jefferson Parish staff, issue a policy memorandum establishing the guidelines for visitation of displaced foster children and their families.

Achieved: Memorandum 06-024 was issued on March 22, 2006. This memorandum provides staff with guidelines for arranging and supervising visits between children in foster care and their biological parents. Additionally, Memorandum 06-005 was issued on January 17, 2006. This memorandum provides information regarding payment codes for crisis transportation and crisis travel related expenses for visitation among displaced children and their families.

Strategy 2.4: To develop a case decision-making model in conjunction with the courts to assist workers in making placement choices for foster children evacuated and continuing to live out of state due to the storms. (Outcomes: Permanency 1 and Well Being 1; Target Completion Date: September 30, 2006)

Action Plan

Step 1: Establish a task force comprised of Orleans and Jefferson staff, supervisors, attorneys and representatives of the Orleans and Jefferson courts to create a basic placement decision-making model relating to case decisions for out of state children.

Achieved: An informal task force consisting of OCS staff, CASA, and the courts has been in continuous contact since the reopening of the courts to facilitate and assure appropriate placement decision making for children residing in other states due to hurricane evacuation.

Step 2: With the help of the task force, create the basic placement decision-making model relating to case decisions for out of state children.

Achieved: A “Katrina Class” has been established to identify children displaced because of the hurricane, and Katrina Class Casework has been established to facilitate case plan implementation and movement toward permanence. An instrument was developed for Katrina Class Case Reviews, and was used to assess the appropriateness of the placement and to identify an individualized plan for each Katrina Class child. OCS has received and continues to receive assistance from private and governmental entities (Casey Foundation and National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning) in this endeavor.

Step 3: Publish the decision-making model in a memorandum to staff and shared with the courts as a guide for case decisions.

Achieved: As of March 1, 2006 as many as 250 foster children remained out of state. As of November 14, 2006, only 57 children are out of state. All of the children who had goals of reunification have returned to Louisiana. Of the children who remain out of state, 39 have a goal of adoption, 15 have a goal of Alternative Planned Living Arrangement, and 3 have a goal of transfer of guardianship. Twenty-four of these children are placed with relatives, and the remaining 33 are placed in foster homes. With input from partners, the decision making model already in agency policy continued to be used in a case-by-case manner with each Katrina class child, in- and out-of state. The essential elements of this model are the best interest of the child and close review by the court with emphasis on the safety, well being, and permanency of each child.

Objective 3: The state will work in consultation with the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and the National Resource Center for Legal and Judicial Issues, to provide more qualified legal representation for children and/or parents in the child welfare system. (Outcomes: Permanency 1 and Well Being 1; Target Completion Date: June 30, 2007)

Strategy 3.1: To assist in the recruitment, training, and retention of qualified legal representation for children and families impacted by the storm. (Outcome: Permanency 1; Target Completion Date: August 31, 2006)

Action Plan

Step 1: Work with National Resource Centers to develop a plan for recruiting and training qualified legal representation for storm impacted families and children.

Achieved: The Louisiana Court Improvement Program has worked with National Resource Centers to develop seven online Continuing Legal Education (CLE) courses, available to attorneys throughout the state. These CLSs are to be posted on the Louisiana Children's Legal Advocacy Resource Online (CLARO) and are expected to generate interest and train attorneys to provide qualified legal representation for storm impacted children and families. The CLEs include the following:

- ASFA 101 Part I
- ASFA 101 Part II
- Permanency Options Part I
- Permanency Options Part II
- Foster Parents: Notice and Opportunity
- Professionalism (legal v. social work)
- Ethics (legal v. social work)

Step 2 involves implementation and monitoring the effectiveness of the courses in recruiting and training qualified legal representatives and is due for completion by June 30, 2007.

Strategy 3.2: To develop training on how to advocate for children and families in the context of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. (Outcomes: Permanency 1 and Well Being 1; Target Completion Date: June 30, 2007)

Action Plan

Step 1: Work with the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and the Louisiana Court Improvement Program to develop training on how to advocate for children and families in the context of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Achieved: Training has been developed by the Louisiana Court Improvement Program and the National center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning on how to advocate for children and families in the context of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. One live training (6 hours, including ethics and professionalism) has already been delivered in Shreveport, LA on October 20, 2006. Future trainings that have been scheduled at this point include the following:

- New Iberia, November 28, 2006
- Leesville, November 29, 2006
- New Orleans, December 14, 2006
- Monroe, January 27, 2007
- Alexandria, March 1, 2006

Step 2 involves delivering the training to specific OCS staff, qualified attorneys, and service providers, and is due for completion by June 30, 2007.