IMPLEMENTING CHILDSTAT

A "how-to" guide for child welfare and other client-serving systems

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Child Welfare Policy Group and PolicyLab at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia would like to thank those who generously shared their time, expertise and experiences to help produce this publication. We thank Sarah Zlotnik, Peter Croughan and Kathleen Noonan of PolicyLab for researching and writing expertise, as well as Leila Feister, a writer and editor who specializes in issues, programs and policies that affect children, communities and service systems. We thank the staff at New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and the City of Philadelphia's Department of Human Services for their help in developing this guide, giving us the opportunity to observe ChildStat meetings and dedicating their time to answering our questions. We also thank the creators of ChildStat – John Mattingly, former ACS commissioner and Jan Flory, former ACS deputy commissioner for the Division of Child Protection – for their consultation on this work.

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February 2015

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THE GOALS OF CHILDSTAT ARE TO:

- Improve overall system performance and case-level decision making through a regular discussion of practice norms and tracking of data measures;
- Provide real-time feedback to leaders on current practice, system barriers, outputs and outcomes; and
- Provide feedback to the field on agency leaders' expectations and quality practice.

I. INTRODUCTION

ChildStat is a management accountability and quality improvement process that uses a unique combination of aggregate data analysis and case dialogue to drive positive outcomes for children and families. ChildStat draws on qualitative and quantitative information during a weekly review attended by executive leaders, field practice managers and quality improvement staff. The ChildStat forum is intended to foster a shared sense of accountability and system-wide problem solving about critical issues affecting child and family outcomes.

The New York City (NYC) Administration for Children's Services (ACS) created ChildStat in 2006, modeled after the CompStat program that was established by the NYC Police Department in 1994. ACS adapted this model for its child protection services (CPS) as part of a comprehensive initiative to strengthen child safety. The growing use of ChildStat by child welfare jurisdictions is part of a larger shift by public systems to become more data driven and to regularly review data in a public forum to encourage shared responsibility.

The ChildStat process enables participants from multiple levels of the agency to jointly examine field performance on open cases in the context of the agency's practice model.

CHILDSTAT'S THREE CORE FEATURES ARE:

1. Routine review of management zones to compare each zone's performance with agency-wide averages;
2. Synthesis and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information to refine practice and strengthen performance; and
3. Participation of leaders, quality improvement staff and field practice managers from across the agency in the problem-solving review.

This manual serves as an overview and implementation guide for jurisdictions interested in adopting ChildStat. Because ChildStat started within NYC's child protection services, ACS' child welfare model and language serve as our baseline to describe the process. However, the ChildStat process works in many client-serving settings (e.g., health care, mental health care, education) and we hope readers broadly apply the framework provided here.

Chapter II of this guide provides a history of ChildStat. In Chapters III and IV, we explore the core features and the process of conducting a review. In Chapter V, we conclude with lessons learned and implementation recommendations. The appendices include additional implementation resources.

SOURCES OF DATA USED TO DEVELOP THE GUIDE

- Policy and government documents about the history and process of ChildStat
- Academic literature related to ChildStat, CompStat and PerformanceStat
- Observations of ChildStat reviews conducted by NYC's ACS and the City of Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Interviews with the ACS leadership team that adapted CompStat for child welfare and with leaders and staff from NYC and Philadelphia, including agency executives, field practitioners and quality improvement staff

Representatives from both jurisdictions, including the founding adapters, reviewed the guide before publication.

II.
HISTORY

New York City's ACS developed ChildStat in 2006 as part of a comprehensive initiative to strengthen child safety. The model was based on the success of NYC Police Department's (NYPD) CompStat program, which began under NYPD Commissioner William Bratton in 1994 as a strategy to reduce the city's crime rate and improve police system performance. In CompStat, NYPD executive leaders and precinct commanders meet weekly in a public forum to rigorously review and discuss precinct-level crime statistics and police activity. CompStat is driven by four core principles: (1) accurate and timely intelligence, (2) rapid deployment, (3) effective tactics and (4) relentless follow-up and assessment. [1]

CompStat originated with statistics-heavy management meetings — often attended by 200-plus observers from across the police department — using maps of crime incidents and statistics on crime trends. At the beginning of each meeting, precinct commanders and their teams presented their data and answered questions from the police commissioner and the commissioner's senior leadership team. CompStat provided one of the only opportunities for precinct commanders to interact with top leaders. This public forum with peers and leaders fostered precinct commanders' increasing sense of responsibility and accountability for achieving results. [2]

CompStat is credited with dramatically reducing NYC's crime rate and its success spurred widespread replication across the country. Within five years, more than 150 police departments nationwide had implemented a similar policing model, a dramatic shift in how police departments were using data and supporting performance accountability. [3]

Beyond policing, CompStat's success led to a wave of reforms to municipal government and public agency leadership models, an approach often referred to as "PerformanceStat." Robert Behn of the Kennedy School of Government defines the common traits of PerformanceStat as:

A jurisdiction or agency is employing a PerformanceStat leadership strategy if, in an effort to achieve specific public purposes, it holds an ongoing series of regular, frequent, integrated meetings during which the chief executive and/or the principal members of the chief executive's leadership team plus the director (and the top managers) of different sub-units use current data to analyze specific, previously defined aspects of each unit's past performance; to follow up on previous decisions and commitments to produce results; to examine and learn from each unit's efforts to improve performance; to solve performance-deficit problems; and to set and achieve the next performance targets. [4]

In NYC, in addition to ChildStat, other agencies using PerformanceStat

[1] Buntin, J., & John F. Kennedy School of Government. (1999). *Assertive policing, plummeting crime: The NYPD takes on crime in New York City* (p. 22). Cambridge, MA: Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Case Program.

[2] Buntin, J., & John F. Kennedy School of Government, 18.

[3] Weisburd, D., Mastrofski, S., Greenspan, R., & Willis, J. (2004). The Growth of CompStat in American Policing. *Police Foundation Reports, 4* (6).

[4] Behn R. (2008). *The Seven Big Errors of PerformanceStat.* Cambridge, MA: Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

programs include the Parks Department (ParkStat), Human Resources Administration (JobStat) and the Probation Department (Statistical Tracking Analysis and Reporting, STARS). The success of department-based PerformanceStat led to using PerformanceStat to view citywide data in Baltimore.

Amid this growing trend, ACS adapted CompStat for child welfare. ChildStat, which retains many of the principles and methods of its policing precursor, began under the leadership of then-Commissioner John Mattingly after a child death led to a wide-scale review of ACS' approach to child safety. ChildStat was at the core of this system reform as a data-driven approach to measure outcomes and track areas for improvement. ChildStat began by focusing on the performance of child protection services, given that department's centrality and connectedness to other ACS divisions. The child protection services function within ACS is called the Division of Child Protection (DCP). After its success in shifting DCP's culture of practice, performance and accountability, the ChildStat model expanded to foster care in 2010 and ACS preventive services in 2011. In 2010, New Jersey and Philadelphia adopted the ChildStat model.

Beyond policing, CompStat's success led to a wave of reforms to municipal government and public agency leadership models.

III.

THREE CORE FEATURES

Like its policing precursor, ChildStat is a management accountability and quality improvement process that drives positive outcomes for children and families. Its three core features are:

ONE

Routine review of management zones to compare each zone's performance with agency-wide averages.

TWO

Synthesis and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information to refine practice and strengthen performance.

THREE

Participation of leaders, quality improvement staff and field practice managers from across the agency in the problem-solving review.

This chapter describes each core feature in detail. (For definitions of NYC child welfare terms, see Appendix A: Key terminology.)

FEATURE 1: Routine review of management zones

ChildStat examines system performance and case practice by management zones to foster performance accountability and improve frontline practice. NYC's child welfare services are provided geographically, with approximately 3,200 investigation staff across the city's five boroughs. Each borough is divided into two to five smaller management zones. Each zone contains about 70 staff members, with a director and three to six managers each overseeing a team of supervisors and caseworkers.

By breaking the child protection services division into smaller management zones, leaders create a comprehensive picture of case practice at a local level and develop stronger lines of accountability between staff and central management.

NYC's ChildStat reviews each zone two to three times per year. Data on a zone's performance are compared to performance data from the previous review and from the overall system. By looking at a zone's aggregate data trends over time, agency leaders can assess the zone's strengths, needed improvements and the impact of changes to policy and practice. This model also allows comparisons between managerial zones to understand which challenges are zone-specific, borough-specific or being experienced throughout the system.

ChildStat examines system performance and case practice by management zones to foster performance accountability and improve frontline practice.

FEATURE 2: Synthesis of quantitative aggregate data analysis and qualitative information

ChildStat merges two quality-improvement approaches — quantitative aggregate data analysis and qualitative case dialogue — to monitor practice and system issues, with the aim of strengthening performance. Reviewing aggregate data and specific case performance provides a holistic picture of case practice on the ground and highlights various dimensions of a zone's performance.

Aggregate data analysis

Aggregate data provide a comprehensive picture of the zone's performance. ChildStat tracks approximately 20 indicators that reflect the agency's priorities and key practice norms. The review aggregates data, focusing on zone activity in a time frame specific to each indicator (typically during the previous 90 days).

The data are divided into three categories: workload management, timeliness and practice. Workload management data measure stressors on staff and paint a picture of a region's available resources (e.g., open cases per caseworker). Timeliness data measure how quickly a region is performing certain tasks (e.g., timely completed investigation) and can be used to highlight areas for improvement. Practice data measure completion of certain required tasks and often reflect requirements from the state or the federal Child and Family Services Review (e.g., percentage of on-time case closures). Selecting a measure to track in ChildStat elevates it as a case practice priority. (See Figure 1 for sample aggregate data indicators.)

For each indicator, data about the zone's performance are compared with data about overall agency performance. Comparing performance across the zone, borough and agency helps to separate local challenges from regional ones, which can lead to more targeted interventions. It also can help highlight areas of high performance from which other zones could learn.

Aggregate data are an accountability tool. Managers know the standards for which they are accountable, and these standards are communicated consistently and clearly across the agency. The standards become targets for improving performance. At the ChildStat meeting, field practice managers are expected to be ready to discuss the cases and practices that explain their zone's trends. Presenting their own data in front of peers, instead of having it presented through quality-improvement staff or distributed digitally, further increases individual and team accountability.

Qualitative case review and dialogue

The case review is a tool for grounding the aggregate data in practice. The inclusion of qualitative case information reflects an adaptation from the CompStat model to the work of public child welfare agencies. This component of ChildStat is designed to “move beyond the numbers” and root the data analysis with a tangible example of an active child welfare case. The case review involves an in-depth examination of an open case file to summarize its history and current status and assess decision making and case practice. The cases are selected randomly from within a zone under review. Findings are summarized in a document that serves as the basis of the case dialogue at the ChildStat meeting.

The qualitative case dialogue during the ChildStat meeting enables agency leaders to examine a zone’s performance in the context of the agency’s practice model. It involves a summary of the case review by zone managers and a conversation between agency leaders and field practice managers about case practice. The process of examining a case connects agency leaders more closely with frontline practice. Often, elements in the case story corroborate trends observed in the data, and vice versa. Agency leaders direct the dialogue and attempt to distill practice lessons from the case.

FIGURE 1: SAMPLE AGGREGATE DATA INDICATORS

Workload Management	Timeliness	Practice
☑ Caseload averages	☑ 7-day assessment approvals	☑ Indication rates
☑ Pending rates/averages	☑ Investigation conclusions within 60 days	☑ Service outcomes of indicated cases

Source: Adopted from a ChildStat review by NYC’s ACS in 2013

FEATURE 3: Combined participation of leaders, field practice managers and quality improvement staff

ChildStat provides a system-wide forum for senior agency leaders, field practice managers and quality improvement staff to communicate core priorities and reinforce and improve the practice model. ChildStat is led by the agency commissioner, the commissioner's immediate leadership team and top leaders responsible for the division under review (e.g., child protection, foster care, preventive services). Quality improvement staff are responsible for ChildStat's logistics, including preparing the aggregate data and conducting the case review with the analysis of case practice. Field practice managers are involved in ChildStat when their zone is under review. Frontline caseworkers do not typically participate in ChildStat, but they receive feedback from the review via their manager. (For more about roles, see Figure 2.)

By regularly convening individuals across divisions (e.g., legal, human resources, information technology), ChildStat provides an opportunity for solving problems and fostering shared accountability across the agency. The in-depth look into one division provides a lens for examining how other divisions are performing their roles. And the focus on what happens at a case level helps agency leaders and division heads better understand what happens on the front lines.

FIGURE 2: OVERVIEW OF KEY PARTIES INVOLVED IN CHILDSTAT

SYSTEM ROLE	PARTICIPANTS*	KEY ROLES
Senior Agency Leaders	Key agency leaders across all sectors, including: • Commissioner • Deputy Commissioners • Chief of Staff • Senior executive staff heading various departments (e.g., child protection services, prevention, foster care, performance management, finance, human resources, general counsel)	• Set tone • Drive agenda • Review aggregate data (zone and agency data) • Lead case dialogue • Reinforce agency model • Identify new practice norms and policy recommendations
Quality Improvement Staff	Staff involved directly in ChildStat and in building data systems to support case practice, including: • Case review staff • Data review staff • Core performance management staff	• Prepare aggregate and zone data • Prepare case summary • Organize the ChildStat meeting
Field Practice Managers	Of the zone under review: • Assistant Commissioner of the borough • First Deputy of the zone • Deputy Directors of the zone • Managers • Supervisors • Frontline staff involved in selected case review	• Lead local preparation for aggregate data review and case dialogue • Present case at ChildStat meeting • Identify lessons learned for zone • Share recommendations across zones

** Specific positions vary from one jurisdiction to another*

IV.

CHILDSTAT REVIEW

The ChildStat review process has three phases: [5]

PHASE 1: Preparation involves selecting, reviewing and summarizing a randomly chosen open case; assembling and previewing the aggregate quantitative data; and agency leaders ensuring that the management zone under review is ready for the ChildStat meeting.

PHASE 2: The ChildStat meeting is the core of the review process, bringing agency leaders, field practice managers and quality improvement staff together to discuss the aggregate data analysis, engage in the case dialogue and identify successes and areas for improvement.

PHASE 3: Follow-up ensures that the zone-specific and system-wide practice recommendations generated during the ChildStat review are implemented and tracked.

This chapter explains how each phase is implemented, including key tasks, who is responsible for them and the time and workload involved.

[5] Note: If a jurisdiction conducts a ChildStat review every week, as in NYC, these phases occur in tandem; one zone will prepare for ChildStat the same week that another zone attends a ChildStat meeting.

FIGURE 3: OVERVIEW OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN IMPLEMENTING CHILDSTAT

ROLE	PREPARATION	CHILDSTAT MEETING	FOLLOW-UP
Senior Agency Leaders	Preview aggregate data and case review Prepare questions on data and cases Set meeting agenda and priorities	Chair the meeting and manage case dialogue Pose questions to field managers Identify and distill areas for improvement Articulate and affirm practice norms	Debrief with zone practice managers Identify trends in zone successes and challenges across ChildStat sessions
Quality Improvement Staff	Preview aggregate data for system and zone Review selected case history and file Prepare to present at meeting	Present aggregate data and overview of case review Summarize case history and status Respond to and ask questions Clarify case procedures Make suggestions to improve system	Debrief with agency leaders Discuss recommendations with zone staff Implement recommendations for zone and system improvement
Field Practice Managers	Select case for review Review case Prepare case summary Assemble data Share data and case summary with agency leaders and field practice staff	Manage all meeting logistics Answer data-related questions Recommend zone and system changes	Incorporate recommendations into practice norms and policies

PHASE 1: Preparation

During the preparation phase, field practice leaders work with zone managers to prepare the aggregate data and case for review and to plan the ChildStat meeting logistics. Quality improvement staff select, review and summarize the case chosen for the dialogue, in addition to preparing the aggregate data. Agency leaders preview the aggregate data and case review to generate questions and set the agenda for the ChildStat meeting.

Preparing the aggregate data

It takes approximately two weeks to prepare aggregate data for a ChildStat meeting (see Figure 4 for timeline). Activities include:

1. Analyzing the data. Quality improvement staff compile data for each ChildStat review, usually from the agency's SACWIS system or existing data warehouse. Then they analyze the data to compare the zone's performance on each indicator to borough and agency outcomes. They also compare the zone's current data to data from its previous ChildStat review.

2. Assembling the data. After the data are analyzed, quality improvement staff assemble the findings in an accessible presentation deck. Typically, they present data graphically (e.g., in bar or line graphs and pie charts) using Excel or another data management program. Clear keys and color-coding can make the data more user-friendly. The graphics are then placed into a PowerPoint slide deck to be displayed on a large screen and distributed at the ChildStat meeting. The data deck contains approximately 20 slides, one for each indicator. (For sample slides, see Appendix B.)

3. Distributing the data to agency leaders and field managers. One week before the ChildStat meeting, quality improvement staff distribute the aggregate data to agency leaders and the zone's practice managers so they can begin preparing for the ChildStat meeting.

Preparing the qualitative case

While some quality improvement staff assemble the aggregate data, additional staff prepare the case review (see Figure 5 for timeline). Activities include:

1. Selecting the case for review. Quality improvement staff select the case with ample time to conduct the review and prepare the case summary, which usually means three weeks before the ChildStat meeting. They select the case randomly from cases in the target zone that meet predetermined criteria. By examining active cases, it allows the case review and case dialogue to inform case practice in real time. (The case selection process has varied over time, depending on data trends and system priorities. Previously, cases were deliberately selected to enable in-depth examination of specific mental health, domestic violence or substance abuse concerns). Because

FIGURE 4: TIMELINE FOR AGGREGATE DATA PREPARATION

TASK	NO. OF BUSINESS DAYS BEFORE CHILDSTAT MEETING
Analyze and assemble data	10
Distribute aggregate data to agency and zone leaders	5

Source: Based on protocol used by NYC ACS in 2013

FIGURE 5: CASE REVIEW PREPARATION TIMELINE

TASK	NO. OF BUSINESS DAYS BEFORE CHILDSTAT MEETING
Select case	15
Review case	10-15
Write case review summary	5-10
Distribute case summary to agency and zone leaders	5

Source: Based on protocol used by NYC ACS in 2013

each zone is reviewed several times per year, quality improvement staff select a case from a different field manager each time.

2. Reviewing the case. The review team analyzes the degree to which case practice was successfully executed and managed throughout the child protection services process. The case review is designed to describe the "life of a case" and to provide a snapshot of case practice, drawing mainly from the case record in the family's file. Reviewers can also incorporate other data as long as the data are available to the caseworker, supervisor and manager in the normal course of case practice. In NYC, these additional data sources include: educational records, Supplemental Security Income/ public assistance, family income and criminal and domestic violence reports.

3. Preparing the case review summary. Based on the case file review, quality improvement staff prepare a summary that includes: (1) a write-up of the case history and (2) an analysis of case practice and management decisions about the case. The case history is compiled from the case record and data sources listed above. The analysis of case practice and management is based on their assessment of:

- Home (e.g., sleeping arrangements, food)
- Family engagement by the caseworker
- Synthesizing information by the caseworker
- Interviewing and probing (of individuals involved with the case) by the caseworker
- Quality of supervision
- Safety and risk
- Collateral contacts (e.g., how well ACS engaged the school, medical providers, etc.)

The complete case review "summary" is five to six [6] pages long, depending on the amount of case history in the file. A week before the ChildStat meeting, quality improvement staff distribute a copy of the case summary to the commissioner, the commissioner's senior leaders and the director of the zone under review. This gives agency leaders time before the meeting to review the summary and prepare questions. It also provides time for managers to prepare their presentation and be ready to answer questions about the case.

It takes at least one full-time staff member two weeks (10 business days) to complete a review and write the case summary.

Preparing for the meeting

Agency leaders and field practice managers in the zone under review prepare for the ChildStat meeting one week before it is held. Activities include:

1. Leadership review of the data. Agency leaders preview the data to generate questions for the ChildStat meeting. Time constraints during the meeting usually prevent discussion about every slide, so agency leadership may pull out unusually positive or negative data or highlight slides that align with current system priorities.

2. Zone preparation. Field practice managers (in NYC, this is the borough commissioner and deputy borough commissioner) receive the case summary one week before the ChildStat meeting, and they receive the aggregate data three days before the meeting. In parallel to the leadership review of the data, these borough zone leaders review the data to prepare their data presentation and explanations. Four days before the ChildStat meeting, these field practice leaders meet with the zone director, zone managers and the supervising casework team to review the case file and work to understand the decisions behind the case record. Additional meetings with zone managers occur throughout the week to discuss the case. These meetings ensure that the zone is ready for the ChildStat meeting and provide an important opportunity for field practice leaders to work with zone managers to support strong case practice.

The day before the meeting, field practice leaders and all zone managers meet to plan their presentation of the case. Each manager in the zone is responsible for speaking about the case, even if he or she is not directly responsible for the case's management. This requirement emphasizes that the entire zone is responsible for all cases.

[6] The length of the case review summary has varied over time and across jurisdictions, ranging from 10-30 pages in the first five years of implementation in NYC to a more abbreviated and less cumbersome document in recent practice.

PHASE 2: The ChildStat meeting

Regular ChildStat meetings are the core of the review process. The commissioner and deputy commissioner for the division under review (e.g., child protection) chair the meeting and lead the discussion. In addition to management of the presenting zone, quality improvement staff and broader agency leaders from across the agency departments attend to answer questions that arise and help resolve issues. This enables case practice and zone outcomes to be reviewed in a social forum with managers' peers. Typically, more than 50 people attend. NYC also televises the meeting to each borough so that supervisors and caseworkers can watch in real time. (For an overview of the meeting participants, see Figure 6.)

Each zone's ChildStat meeting usually lasts about 1½ hours. In larger jurisdictions, such as NYC, two zones may be reviewed back-to-back.

At the start of the meeting, each attendee typically receives a copy of the case summary and data slide deck (see Figure 7 for a sample meeting agenda). This practice has varied over time based on leadership preferences and the facilities and technology available in the room where ChildStat is conducted.

The key components of the ChildStat meeting include welcome and framing, aggregate data presentation, case dialogue and recognition of outstanding performance.

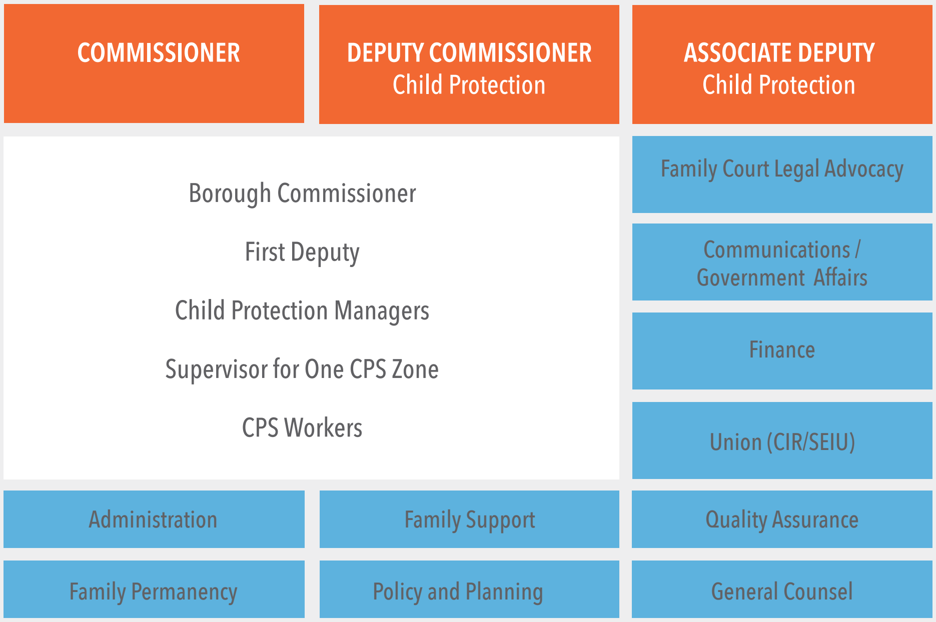
Welcome and framing

In NYC, the commissioner and deputy commissioner chair the meeting. The commissioner opens the session with a clear, succinct overview of ChildStat, including its process and purpose. This anchors the ChildStat meeting around its aim — improving child safety. Introductions then proceed around the room, including name, division and role. After introductions, borough and zone leaders give brief updates on major initiatives or developments, such as community events or new practice improvement programs.

Aggregate data presentation

NYC begins the ChildStat presentation with a discussion of aggregate data. The commissioner manages discussion of the performance metrics described by the data. Outliers, both positive and negative, should spark a discussion about what system-level or zone-specific factors contributed to the deviation. Highlighting positive deviations in the data creates a positive tone and helps participants learn from effective case practice.

FIGURE 6: OVERVIEW OF CHILDSTAT MEETING PARTICIPANTS



LEGEND

- Chair of the meeting
- Presenting team from the zone under review
- Staff in attendance from other departments

FIGURE 7: CHILDSTAT MEETING AGENDA

	LEAD	TIME
Welcome	*Commissioner*	5 MIN.
Introductions	*Commissioner*	5 MIN.
Borough and Zone Updates	*Borough Commissioner and Zone Director*	5 MIN.
Aggregate Data Presentation	*Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner (questions)*	30-45 MIN.
Case Dialogue	*Zone managers (present) Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner (questions)*	30-45 MIN.
Recognition of Outstanding Performance	*Borough Commissioner*	3 MIN.

Common questions by the commissioner during the data discussion include:

- "What's going on in this particular indicator?"
- "Why do you think your zone exhibits a lower percentage than the borough overall?"
- "Why do you think you are doing well here?"

Not every slide can be addressed during the 30-45 minutes allotted for discussion. Typically, the commissioner and deputy commissioner select five or six of the most important slides that warrant detailed discussion either because of outlier data or because the indicators address system priorities. Slides not directly addressed at the meeting can be discussed during the zone's debriefing meeting.

Case dialogue

The field management team of the zone under review presents an overview of the selected case. Even though the case falls under the purview of only one manager, all managers from the zone under review should be familiar with the case and adopt equal responsibility for its outcomes. To help create a picture of the case during the presentation, a genogram of the family is posted onscreen highlighting relationships across the key family members.

Typically, the case presentation covers:

- family history,
- investigation of allegations,
- safety plan for the child,
- staff assessment of what's going on and what happened and
- updates since the case was selected for ChildStat review.

Agency leaders then lead a discussion, which is intended to tease out expected practice norms and decision-making processes. The commissioner may highlight ways in which the case illustrates findings in the aggregate data analysis of system performance. Typical questions for this discussion include:

- "When was the last child safety conference held and what was your reason for holding one?"
- "How well did we engage the family on this case?"

Zone managers are responsible for answering questions on the case. This role for managers is important to ChildStat's success because it reinforces their responsibility for the outcomes and for improving case practice.

Recognition of outstanding performance

Each ChildStat meeting concludes with recognition of outstanding performance in the zone. Individuals selected for recognition receive a certificate and pose for a photo with the commissioner.

PHASE 3: Follow-up

Although the ChildStat meeting is the cornerstone of the ChildStat process, the work to improve practice and system performance does not end there. A post-meeting debriefing provides a platform to help zones incorporate ChildStat lessons into case practice and zone management. After the meeting, managers often use the data with their teams to discuss some of the major takeaways and reinforce practice norms. In addition, system recommendations identified during the ChildStat review are incorporated into larger agency-wide efforts to improve outcomes.

Debriefings

Immediately after the ChildStat meeting, ACS leaders hold a central debriefing session with the field practice managers of the zone to review the ChildStat meeting and develop an action plan for improving case practice. The deputy commissioner for the Division of Child Protection and managers from the zones under review (including the borough commissioner, zone director and zone managers) attend the meeting. If multiple ChildStat meetings occur on the same day, both zones attend the same debriefing.

The debriefing is an opportunity for participants to have a more informal discussion about improving case practice. Typically, the agency leader who chairs the ChildStat meeting asks for feedback from first-time participants about their ChildStat experience. Then participants discuss any areas of improvement in their zone's practice that were identified by the aggregate data or case dialogue. A note-taker records the action plan that develops, and that plan is distributed to borough and agency leaders. If there are substantial case-specific action items that need immediate attention, borough leaders produce a report on the follow-up action within two weeks of the debriefing and send it to agency leaders to ensure accountability.

In addition to the central debriefing, managers from the zone under review organize a practice debriefing to review the ChildStat meeting with zone staff. These meetings are an additional adaptation of the CompStat model for child welfare and are intended as learning sessions to both affirm and reiterate practice norms and to identify areas in need of improvement. Attendance at these practice debriefings are recorded and presented to borough leadership.

System-level recommendations

In some cases, a ChildStat meeting may identify an area for systemic improvement. These issues are identified by agency leaders based on an individual ChildStat meeting or when themes surface repeatedly at different ChildStat meetings. When this happens, recommendations usually are incorporated into an agency's internal quality improvement process, led by agency leaders. This process typically involves defining the opportunity for improvement, identifying an accountable party to implement the change and establishing a timeframe for implementation. After the designated party begins implementing the recommendation, or the practice change has been disseminated to staff, it is important to close the ChildStat loop. Highlighting that a recommendation originated from a ChildStat meeting shows that the significant expenditure of time and effort played a key role in improving system performance.

Incorporating recommendations into practice

Field practice managers often use the data and discussion during ChildStat reviews to improve their management and supervision of caseworkers. Managers often share major takeaways from a ChildStat meeting with their supervisors, who in turn relay them to their frontline staff. Managers often can break down ChildStat data at the supervisor level to help manage frontline case practice. This informal mechanism for improving practice is possible because of ChildStat's high priority and visibility within ACS. (See Figure 8 for examples of how ChildStat discussions led to changes in NYC.)

FIGURE 8: CHILDSTAT DISCUSSIONS PRODUCE CHANGES IN PRACTICES AND NORMS

ChildStat reviews can change norms for system and frontline practices. For example:

1. During the case dialogue of ChildStat meetings, participants noted that investigations staff regularly read the abuse or neglect allegation verbatim during their first interaction with parents, placing families on the defensive. This practice was discouraged in the ChildStat meeting, leading to broader cross-system change in practice by staff.

2. When a commissioner asked zones to stop using the phrase "paramour" in ChildStat meetings, it ceased to be used system-wide shortly thereafter—a change achieved through word of mouth.

3. ChildStat reviews revealed that 40 percent of indicated cases were closed without services in 2006. This concerned leadership because the cases were serious enough to meet the standard for indication. During the ChildStat meeting, leaders repeatedly asked zones to explain the practice behind this rate. ACS leaders then activated a new norm that involved offering services to families even if a case was being closed and they emphasized this norm at ChildStat sessions. The rate dropped to 10 percent by 2013.

V.

LESSONS LEARNED

What lessons can we take from ChildStat's experiences to date? The following observations and recommendations are based on conversations with agency leaders (current and former), field practice managers and quality improvement staff, in addition to observations of ChildStat meetings in New York City and Philadelphia.

Ensure leadership buy-in

- Leaders should be closely involved with ChildStat. Without leadership buy-in, the process cannot succeed as a leadership management tool.
- Having leaders in the room during the ChildStat meeting enables staff to interact with upper management and gives practice staff a direct line to the people who can address system challenges. This is one of the most commonly cited benefits of ChildStat.
- Having staff from the administrative support division (e.g., human resources personnel, information technology and legal professionals) participate in ChildStat cultivates greater understanding of frontline practice and the work of the agency.

Frame the process as a learning tool

- The preparation, meeting and follow-up involved in ChildStat enable leaders and field practice managers to reinforce the agency's practice model and norms. This happens through modeling (e.g., teaming, engaging, how data are discussed) by agency leaders and through explicit conversations about system priorities.

Generate cross-agency buy-in

- It is critical for participants from across the system to attend ChildStat meetings to ensure that the process benefits from their help in solving problems and to increase their sense of ownership of recommended system improvements.
- Having staff who do frontline work present their own data and cases helps generate buy-in and ownership of the analysis and the outcomes.

Create a non-punitive environment

- Framing and tone are key to developing a "safe place" for constructive dialogue. For example, leaders can set the tone of the meeting through positively framed questions (e.g., "What could help you better complete X?" instead of, "Why didn't you complete X on time?")
- Recognizing positive practices, both during and after the meeting, can create a less punitive tone.
- Differentiating the quality improvement staff who handle ChildStat from those who measure compliance can help prevent caseworkers from perceiving ChildStat as another performance evaluation tool.

Actively integrate the data and case review

- The quantitative and qualitative components of ChildStat should reference each other as much as possible. The meeting chair can reinforce this connection verbally.

Commit sufficient resources

- ChildStat requires a deliberate commitment of time and resources, including staff time to prepare for and attend the review meeting. This resource commitment should be addressed up front.

Plan ahead

- Given the significant time expenditure necessary to run ChildStat, zones need sufficient notice of when their units will be up for review. In NYC, the ChildStat calendar is planned six months in advance.

Hold provider agencies accountable to the same process

- Some jurisdictions conduct their own "ProviderStat," while others roll provider agencies into the regular ChildStat process.
- Evaluating provider agencies helps to eliminate the impression that city staff are held to different standards than providers.

Build on ongoing quality improvement efforts

- Robust staffing and a culture of quality improvement are necessary to support a successful ChildStat process.
- The implementation of recommendations should be tracked and incorporated into the system's quality improvement plan.

Share progress on recommendations

- While ChildStat generates many system-level recommendations, it can be perceived as a unilateral process. Sharing the summary of recommendations with meeting attendees and discussing how agency leaders and field practice managers are considering them, closes the loop and demonstrates ChildStat's effectiveness.

VI.

APPENDIX

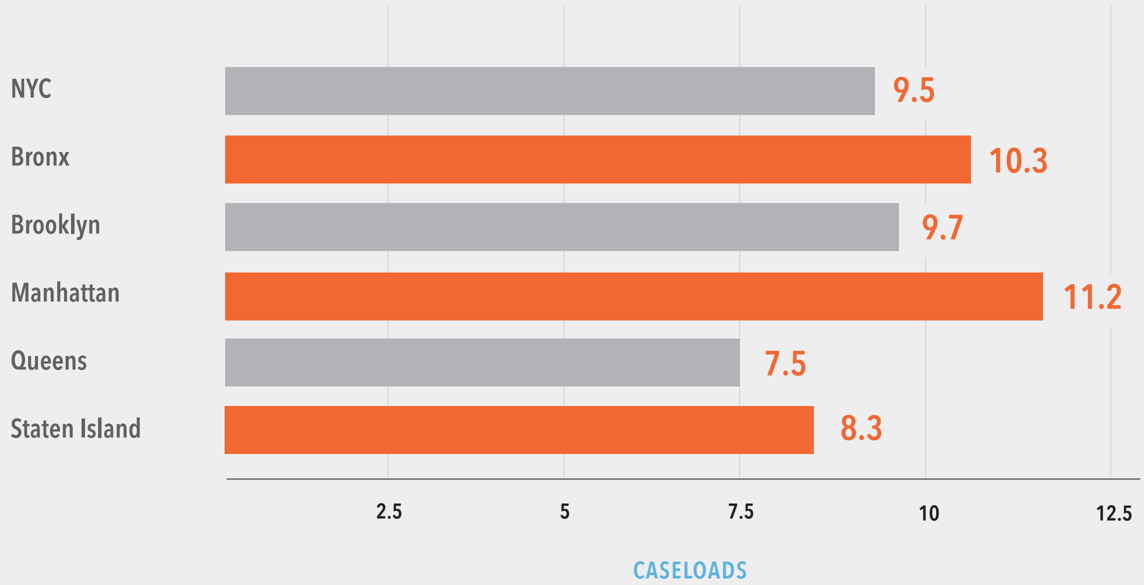
APPENDIX A: Key terminology

This guide is based on ACS' ChildStat model. We primarily used New York City-specific terms and structure, but offer the following definitions and explanation to ensure that the language is accessible to all readers.

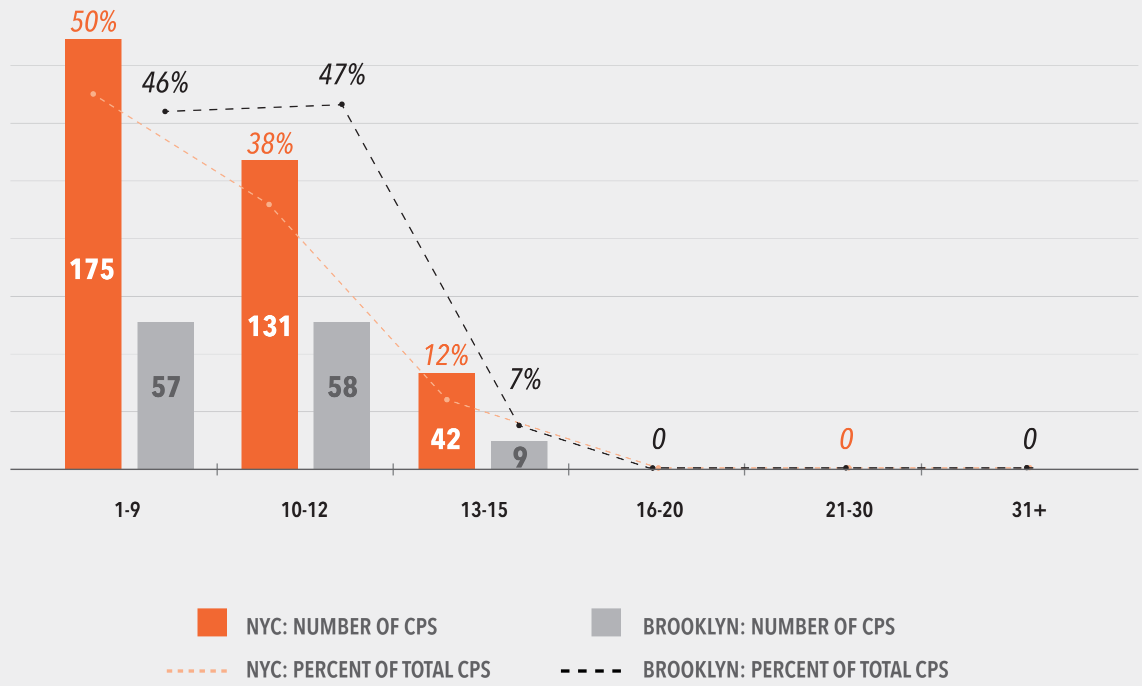
TERM	DEFINITION
Borough	The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is regionally divided into five boroughs corresponding to New York City's five counties.
Division of Child Protection (DCP)	DCP is the division within ACS primarily responsible for responding to reports of child abuse or neglect.
Family Service Unit (FSU)	FSU oversees cases with court-ordered supervising.
Unit	Each zone is divided into smaller units, typically three or four per zone. There are three to six managers per unit.
Zone	Each borough is divided into two to five zones.

APPENDIX B: Sample ChildStat slides

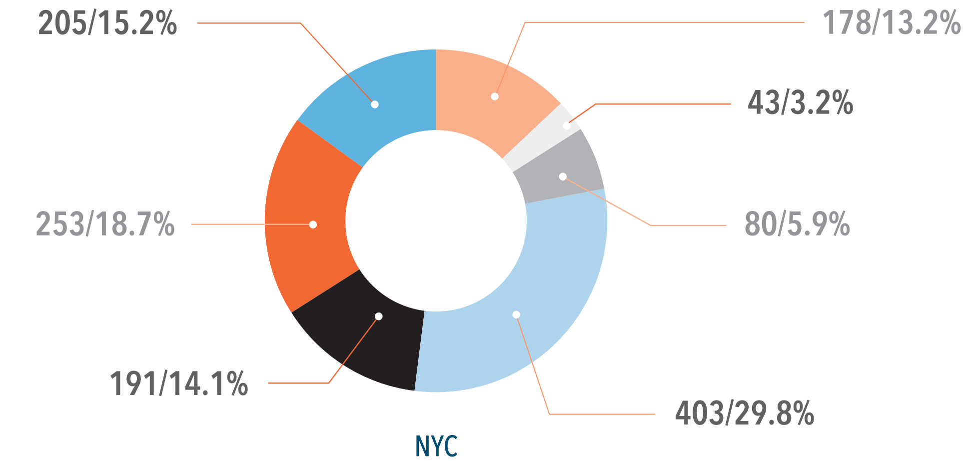
Average FSU caseload by borough – March 9, 2013

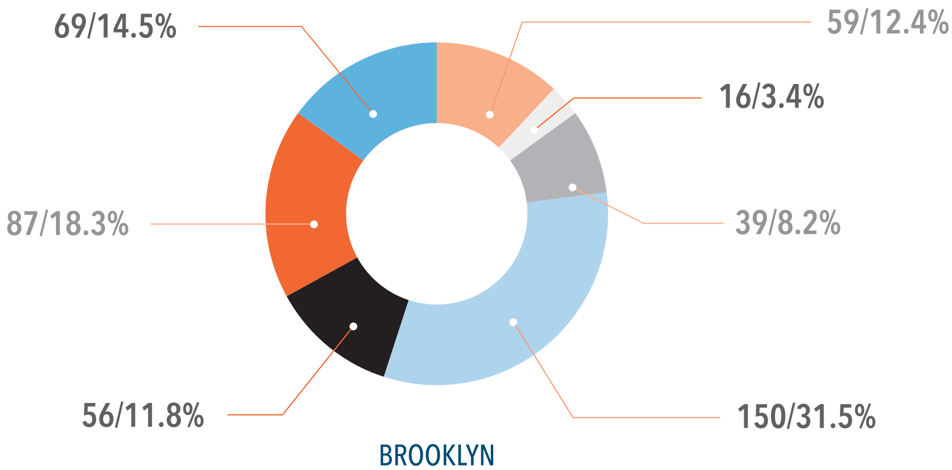


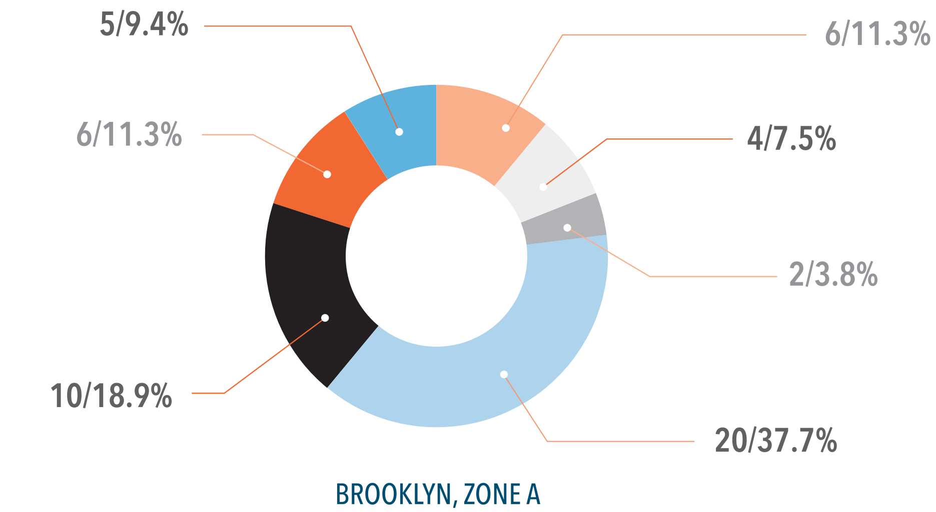
CPS FSU caseload dispersion – March 9, 2013



Service outcome of indicated cases, investigations closed – November 2012





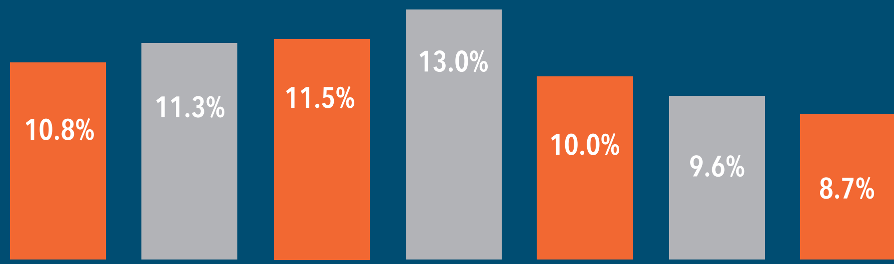


LEGEND

- Foster care
- FSU
- FSU with preventive
- Preventive only
- Open FSS no services
- Referred to CBS
- No services

This table does not reflect cases awaiting available slot in a preventive agency

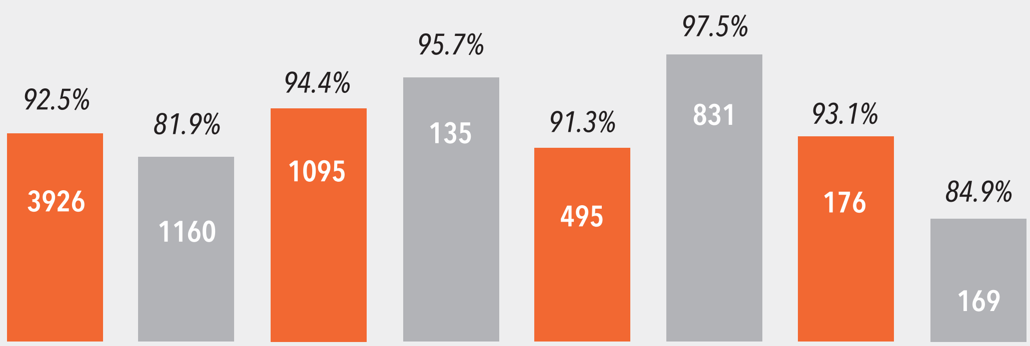
Percent of cases with an indicated investigation in May 2012 and a repeat indicated investigation within six months



	NYC	BRONX	BROOKLYN	BROOKLYN, ZONE A	MANHATTAN	QUEENS	STATEN ISLAND
Number of cases with indicated investigations	2234	618	799	115	329	385	103
Number of cases with repeat indicated investigations	241	70	92	15	33	37	9

A case is said to have an indicated repeat investigation if any one of the children, including children with no role, had an indicated repeat investigation within six months of the close of the initial investigation. Initial indicated investigation closed and followed by another indicated investigation within six months.

Investigations completed on time – Start dates Nov. 12-Dec. 9, 2012



DAYS TO COMPLETION	NYC	BRONX	BROOKLYN	BROOKLYN, ZONE A	MANHATTAN	QUEENS	STATEN ISLAND	OSI
0-60	92.5%	89.1%	94.4%	95.7%	91.3%	97.5%	93.1%	84.9%
61-65	6.2%	8.9%	4.7%	3.6%	7.8%	2.1%	5.3%	10.6%
66-70	0.7%	1.1%	0.5%	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%	1.6%	3.0%
71-80	0.3%	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.5%
81-90	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
More than 90	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.5%
Total Investigations	**4,244**	**1,302**	**1,160**	**141**	**542**	**852**	**189**	**199**

Bars represent percent of investigations completed on time. "OSI" stands for Office of Special Investigations.

APPENDIX C: Related resources

ChildStat: Getting results in protecting children
NYC ACS, Children's Services Update, Fall 2007.

ChildStat: Leading systems-level improvements based on case-level experience
National Child Welfare Workforce Training Institute webinar by Jan Flory, September 2011.

The seven big errors of PerformanceStat
Harvard University Kennedy School of Government policy brief by Robert Behn, February 2008.

APPENDIX D: Implementation checklist

The following questions can help a jurisdiction determine whether its system has the capacities and competencies to implement and effectively sustain ChildStat:

Roles and responsibilities

- ☐ Do you have sufficient leadership buy-in? Have leaders dedicated time to attend meetings?
- ☐ Who will compile the aggregate data?
- ☐ Who will compile the case review?

Data

- ☐ Does the jurisdiction have sufficient data capacity to examine data at the supervisor, manager, zone and borough (local) levels?
- ☐ What data sources will you use?
- ☐ Can your data come from existing quality improvement data? (It is easier if they do.)
- ☐ Which data indicators will you start with? (It's easier to start with fewer.)
- ☐ What is your plan to add or modify data elements over time?

Frequency and set up

- ☐ What service will you focus on (e.g., foster care, investigations)?
- ☐ How will you subdivide jurisdictions into zones?
- ☐ How frequently will you hold ChildStat meetings?
- ☐ Will there be space to meet with managers and senior agency leaders?

ChildStat rollout

- ☐ Will you be able to hold practice sessions in zones to familiarize teams with the model? How will you identify implementation champions?
- ☐ How will you build ChildStat over time?

APPENDIX E: Sample indicators

The following indicators provide a sample of the types of data measured and presented during a ChildStat review. This list is based on a regional ChildStat performed by NYC ACS in March 2013.

- ☐ Average CPS caseload by borough/zone
- ☐ Caseload trends
- ☐ Average Family Service Unit caseload by borough*
- ☐ CPS Family Service Unit caseload dispersion
- ☐ Completion of 24-48 hour face-to-face contacts, intakes
- ☐ 7-day safety assessment approvals, intakes
- ☐ Investigations completed on time
- ☐ Percent of investigations completed within specified timeframes
- ☐ Indication rates
- ☐ Instant Response Team joint interviews with children (number and percent)
- ☐ Instant Response Team case location
- ☐ Service outcome of indicated cases, investigations closed
- ☐ Service outcomes of indicated cases, investigations closed no services
- ☐ Contracted Purchased Preventive Services capacity and utilization
- ☐ Time from referral to case opening
- ☐ Percent of cases with an indicated investigation and a repeat indicated investigation within six months
- ☐ Repeat maltreatment trends
- ☐ Child safety conference recommendations

** The Family Service Unit oversees cases with court-ordered supervision.*