

**Building the Child Welfare Team  
'Promising Practices'  
2001 Phone Poll Results**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **BACKGROUND**

Child welfare agencies throughout the United States are in the midst of implementing the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). A 'promising practices' phone poll, recently conducted by the Institute for Child and Family Policy at the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, asked child welfare agency and court improvement project representatives to identify how meeting ASFA requirements has changed the way that child welfare agencies do business. The poll results indicate that in recognition of the complexities of the ASFA legislation child welfare agencies are launching a variety of training and administrative activities designed to support agency staff, court personnel and other community partners as they carry out the provisions of ASFA.

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS**

The results of the poll show that child welfare managers, supervisors and workers generally have some understanding of the intent of ASFA and have received training on its requirements and implementation. All states polled have done training on ASFA, often this training included community partners, guardians, advocates, foster parents and court personnel. Court training is of particular interest since the relationship of the child welfare agency and the court is an important factor in how smoothly cases move through the system.

When asked what skills were needed by child welfare managers, supervisors and workers to implement ASFA, respondents mentioned casework skills most frequently. This result seems surprising as managers and supervisors don't usually do case work as part of their day to day jobs. Yet, given that many agencies reported that implementing ASFA was, in effect, performing 'good casework practice', enhancing skills in casework practice may be understandable. Other skills often mentioned by poll respondents were communication, collaboration and understanding ASFA requirements --- all are reasonable skills to expect given the emphasis by ASFA on increased interaction with stakeholders.

The poll also showed that child welfare agencies have made changes in agency structure and internal communication as part of ASFA implementation. However, agencies were less likely to have changed performance appraisals, job descriptions or staff recruitment practices as a result of ASFA.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The project team will distribute the *Building the Child Welfare Team, 'Promising Practices' 2001 Phone Poll Results* report to respondents, child welfare agencies and other interested entities and will use the poll data to inform the development of a curriculum on ASFA implementation and data use skills for child welfare managers and supervisors. We hope this report and the related training will be productive forums for sharing throughout the child welfare community promising administrative practices that have proved helpful to individual child welfare agencies as they work to meet the challenge of implementing ASFA.

## INTRODUCTION

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 was passed in response to a growing national concern about the extended periods of time that children spend in foster care. ASFA mandates tighter timeframes and establishes three goal areas for child welfare systems--attaining safety, permanency and well being for children in care. ASFA requires the development of outcome measures in each goal area on which all states must report and changes the procedures for federal reviews of public child welfare systems. These requirements, in combination with the mandates of other relevant legislation and regulations, substantially change the way child welfare systems are to be managed.

Federal legislation also provides for the development of three major child welfare data collection systems--NCANDS (National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System), AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Report System) and SACWIS (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Systems). It is now possible to use data to evaluate performance in child welfare programs and to establish clear measures of success. However, if these federal mandates and systems are to inform practice, child welfare professionals must put them to use.

To support that aim, the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, funded the Institute of Child and Family Policy at the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, to develop an approach to training that integrates ASFA mandates with the effective use of child welfare data to support decision making at both the case and system levels. Working collaboratively with child welfare agencies, the Muskie project team will develop, deliver and disseminate a train the trainer curriculum for public child welfare managers and supervisors. The curriculum will enhance their capacity to understand and implement the mandates of ASFA and strengthen their ability to use data to improve outcomes for children in the system.

This project began in September 2000 and will last for three years. The workplan for the three years is summarized below:

- In Year 1 of the project the project team will collaborate with the Kentucky child welfare agency and a national multi-disciplinary advisory council, to develop an ASFA implementation 'promising practices' analysis, create ASFA implementation competencies and design a curriculum to train child welfare managers and supervisors on data use and ASFA implementation skills.
- In Year 2, in collaboration with at least three state child welfare agencies (Kentucky and two others), the project team will field test, evaluate and revise the core curriculum.
- In Year 3 the project team will implement a national dissemination plan that provides intensive training of trainers in ten additional child welfare agencies, briefs ACF regional office staff, establishes a peer to peer consultation capacity and customizes the core curriculum to promote utilization by institutions of higher education that train child welfare professionals.

One of the Year 1 tasks was to develop an analysis of 'promising practices', in other words to determine what activities worked the best for child welfare agencies and courts as they supported staff in implementing ASFA. To collect this information the project team polled child welfare agencies and selected court improvement project personnel to determine what administrative, training and organizational activities they have already undertaken to implement ASFA. This report presents the initial findings from the poll that will be used to inform the curriculum development.

This report includes an **Executive Summary** that provides a brief description of the entire report. The **Introduction** describes the curriculum development project and the role the 'promising practices' play in the development of the curriculum. The **Methodology** section describes how the poll was conducted, the design of the instruments to collect the data and the approach to data analysis. The **Results** section summarizes the data that we collected and presents remarks from respondents that illuminate the 'promising practices'. The **Concluding Remarks** section highlights the lessons learned from the poll and the value of the 'promising practices' analysis to the development of the curriculum itself. The **Appendices** include documents showing frequencies, samples of the poll instruments and a listing of the individuals who participated in the poll.

Please visit the website for this project, <http://www.muskie.usm.maine.edu/asfa>, to view or download this report, a full description of the project and the individual state poll results.

## METHODOLOGY

### CHILD WELFARE AGENCY POLL

The child welfare agency poll was conducted by telephone in November and December of 2000 by members of the Muskie project team. The team developed and used a data collection instrument that assessed areas in which meeting ASFA requirements might have impacted staff or changed the way the agency does business. The final instrument consisted of nine questions. (A copy of the final phone poll instrument appears in Appendix C in this document.) Most of the questions were open ended, allowing the interviewer to explore topics in some detail.

The nine questions covered a variety of topics. They were:

- **Understanding of ASFA.** How would you rate your staff's understanding of ASFA?
- **Skills.** What skills do managers, supervisors, and workers need to have to implement ASFA?
- **Activities.** What activities has the agency undertaken as part of ASFA implementation?
- **Training.** How is training on ASFA handled?
- **Information System.** How well does the state's information system support implementation of ASFA?
- **Staff support.** What worked best in supporting staff as they implement ASFA requirements?
- **Barriers.** What were the barriers to the agency's support of staff as they implement ASFA?
- **General Remarks.** Do you have any other comments to make regarding the best way to implement ASFA?
- **County based.** How does the fact that a state is county-based impact implementation of ASFA?

This phone poll was conducted by contacting the office of the director of the division or department in each state that serves children and families. That office was asked to identify the person in that state who would be the best source of information about the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Project team staff then contacted these individuals and conducted the poll that took approximately 30 minutes to complete over the phone.

Responses were received from 47 states. Only the states of Georgia, Kansas, and New Hampshire did not respond. The information on county-administered states represents the responses of 11 states where the child welfare system is state supervised, county administered. Responses were also received from two states that are regionally administered Tennessee and Washington. One response was from a state with a bifurcated system, Nevada, where two large urban counties are county administered, while the rest of the state is state administered.

Once the poll was completed, the projects team e-mailed or faxed a copy of the completed instrument to the respondent for review and comment. When the respondent's comments were returned, the project team coded and entered data into a statistical analysis program. Frequencies were run to enable the project team to get an overview of the results. Since

respondents could give more than one response to a question, the percent figures used represent the total number of times each response was given divided by the total number of responses to that question. A complete print out of the frequencies appear in Appendices A and B. In addition, because a large portion of the data collected was qualitative, several direct quotes from the participants are presented in the **Results** portion of the report to more comprehensively explain the details of the responses.

## **COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT POLL**

The project team decided that a sample of opinions regarding implementation of ASFA from the court's perspective would be useful because meeting the requirements of ASFA often means increased collaboration and cooperation between child welfare agencies and court personnel. The team selected at random court improvement projects in four states. The four states selected were Florida, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. In each of these four states, the project team contacted the person who was listed as the director of the state's Court Improvement Project. That person was asked if he or she could respond to the poll or if he or she could suggest another person. Although the sample size was small, the team felt that information from even a few states would give them some idea of court issues regarding ASFA, this would result in some helpful 'best practices' and provide another perspective to the curriculum development process.

The project team conducted the court improvement project part of the poll in January 2001. A data collection instrument, similar to the one used for the child welfare agency personnel, was developed to gather information about implementation of ASFA from the court improvement project's point of view. The poll took about 30 minutes to complete. (A copy of this instrument appears in Appendix D.)

The questions covered a variety of topics. They were:

- **Understanding of ASFA.** How would you rate the child welfare agency in terms of their understanding of ASFA requirements?
- **Skills.** What skills do child welfare supervisors and workers need to implement ASFA?
- **Activities.** As part of ASFA implementation have the court and child welfare agency undertaken or changed any day to day or joint activities or method of communication?
- **Sharing information.** Is the court getting the information it needs from the agency?
- **Training.** How is training on ASFA handled?
- **What worked best?** What has worked best for the court in terms of working with the child welfare agency as it implements ASFA requirements?
- **Barriers.** What does the court view as barriers in working with the agency as it implements ASFA?
- **General Remarks.** Do you have any other comments to make regarding the best way to implement ASFA?

## RESULTS

### CHILD WELFARE AGENCY POLL

#### Understanding of ASFA

Respondents were asked to rate their agency's staff in terms of their understanding of ASFA requirements by ranking the level of understanding of managers, supervisors and workers on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'comprehensive'. The average ratings appear below:

Staff	Average Rating
Managers	4.08
Supervisors	3.62
Workers	3.06

Respondents were asked to comment on the rating they gave. Eighteen (18) comments were given regarding managers. Of those, 44.4% indicated that managers had more training on ASFA than supervisors and workers. When commenting on the rating for supervisors, of the 13 comments made 61.5% indicated that supervisors had a good understanding of some elements of ASFA but not others. Comments regarding the rating of workers were more diversified: among 25 comments made, 32% indicated that workers had a good understanding of some elements but not other elements, 24% indicated that high staff turnover rate affects worker understanding and 16% indicated that workers had just started training.

In terms of understanding of ASFA then, managers ranked ahead of both supervisors and workers. The comments made suggest that managers are ranked higher in understanding because they have had more training, while supervisors know the ASFA requirements that pertain specifically to their areas of responsibility. Workers' understanding is good; they practice the requirements but may not know ASFA as the source of the requirements and high staff turnover affects their understanding.

#### Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Understanding of ASFA:

From a practice perspective, the workers understand and are implementing the ASFA principles. They may not, however, know that the practice is a requirement of ASFA and related regulations. (CO)

Some of our workers are in very specialized roles and jobs so they know their piece of ASFA very well; however, they have a less comprehensive understanding than supervisors and managers. (AK)

#### Skills

Respondents were asked to list the skills that managers, supervisors and workers need to have to implement ASFA. The top skills for each are listed below.

**Manager's Skills**  
(N =142)

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Case work	13	9.8
Collaborative	11	8.3
Understanding requirements of ASFA	11	8.3
Understanding how to implement ASFA requirements	10	7.6
Using data effectively	10	7.6

**Supervisor's Skills**  
(N = 150)

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Case work	13	8.7
Communication	12	8.0
Collaboration	11	7.3
Understanding how to implement ASFA requirements	11	7.3
Using data effectively	10	6.7

**Workers' Skills**  
(N = 133)

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Case work	20	15.0
Collaboration	10	7.5
Communication	10	7.5
Understanding how to implement ASFA requirements	11	8.3

Interestingly the skill most often mentioned for managers, supervisors and workers is casework. Among the skills mentioned most often in all three categories were collaborative skills and understanding of how to implement ASFA requirements. Respondents thought that communication was an important skill for supervisors and workers, but less important for managers. Using data effectively was a skill respondents thought managers and supervisors should have but that it was far less important for workers.

**Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Skills:**

Managers need to be able to prepare other agencies for the practice changes resulting from our implementation of ASFA. (NY)

Managers need to be able to sell staff the idea that ASFA requirements are good for families as well as being federal requirements. (ME)

Managers need the same skills to implement ASFA as they usually need. They need to have knowledge of laws and federal policy implemented in the context of Vermont, no matter if it is ASFA or Title IV E, etc. They need to know what the requirements are and why they are doing what they are doing. (VT)

Concurrent planning requires people to be able to deal with conflict resolution around case management issues. We need to be more skilled at bringing up differences of opinion and mediating the differences on a case by case basis. (ND)

An ability to determine what data they need to do their job, how to use tools to analyze the data and how to put the results of that analysis into action with their staff. (OR)

Supervisors need to know what to do to meet ASFA requirements while maintaining a good clinical practice; they must maintain a balance between the two. (MA)

Concurrent planning is a challenge to implement. Workers now must quickly establish strong relationships with families and discuss with them often difficult and conflicting messages about services, potential outcomes and treatment plans. All of this must be accomplished in a very fast period of time. (OK)

Staff need to know that ASFA requires major changes system wide and that supports and resources will change to allow an opportunity for success for children and families in very short timelines. (DE)

Workers need to maintain a quality approach in spite of short time frames. (VT)

### **Activities**

Respondents were asked if, as part of the ASFA implementation, the agency had undertaken any activities in five areas. A brief summary of the responses appears below. Selected participant remarks, which appear below as well, are very informative regarding any changes made. They give specific details of the activity undertaken, why it worked and, in some instances, how it differs from practice and procedures before ASFA.

Agency structure. Of the 46 states responding to this question, 45.7% had changed agency structure based on ASFA. Among the changes mentioned most often were that a department or unit had been restructured, staff had been added or a procedure or process had been changed.

Internal communication. Of the 45 states responding to this question, 80% had undertaken ASFA related activities in the area of internal communication. Activities mentioned most often were an increase in communications, circulating written material about ASFA and more interaction among team members.

Performance appraisals. Of the 46 states responding, 16 states have undertaken ASFA related activities in the area of performance appraisals. The activity mentioned most often was that performance appraisals had been changed to reflect ASFA mandates.

Job descriptions. Of the 46 states responding, 10 states have changed job descriptions as part of their ASFA implementation activities.

Staff recruitment. Of the 45 states responding, only 7 states have implemented any activities in staff recruitment in response to ASFA.

### **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Activities:**

Arizona hired a Statewide Permanency Coordinator who reviews the cases of children in care 15 of the last 22 months and works with the Districts to support the development of case specific plans and services. (AZ)

Connecticut created an in-house legal division in July of 1998 in anticipation of increased legal work as a result of ASFA. It has 8 staff attorneys assigned to the 14 regional offices. (CT)

Alaska hired new staff for several of the field offices to focus on children listed on the transition list and then on children who have been in care the longest. (AK)

Florida has agency child welfare attorneys in most of the districts. Those attorneys used to report to the local administrator, now they report to general counsel in the state office. (FL)

We started a mediation process for kids in care whose goal has been changed to adoption. The mediation responsibility is contracted out. The mediator is appointed by the contract agency. The mediator works with the family to work out a mutually acceptable arrangement regarding TPR. (MA)

We revised licensing standards so there is one process for foster/adoptive families. New positions were added for licensing supervisors. (MS)

The Division of Youth and Family Services formed new units, called Regional Permanency Units, in each of our four geographic regions. These units are comprised of experienced DYFS staff. The workers in these units take on tasks that move cases toward permanency. They do not assume total responsibility for a case, but rather, they supplement the work of the regularly assigned caseworker. (NJ)

We changed our agency structure and added a Policy Planning and Research Division to handle new data requirements. (TN)

At state administrative level, we have blended out of home care, adoption and out of home services. (UT)

As part of the on going administrative process, we send out management reports to the regions that contain data on performance at the case level and progress toward outcomes. These reports are issued monthly. (IL)

We are using and looking into ways to get accurate information out quickly so we are using more teleconferencing and video conferencing and are looking into setting up chat rooms. Technology is taking on a new and more immediate importance for us. (NY)

Maryland's training includes developing web site materials that focus on the new directions that need to be taken to comply with ASFA requirements. The web site has been successful in making staff more aware of the requirements. (MD)

There are regularly scheduled management meetings devoted to ASFA issues. Protective services, foster care and adoption personnel, as well as staff from the regional offices attend the meetings. Those attending take information back to the counties. This is especially important for regional staff who provide technical assistance to the counties. (Ohio is a county administered state) (OH)

We started an e-mail newsletter. It includes information about ASFA, but also includes information on other topics as well. (TN)

New Mexico is a consent decree state. Due to that and the requirements of ASFA, our performance appraisal system for managers, supervisors and staff includes outcomes, such as meeting staffing requirements and reviewing data, which they are evaluated against. (NM)

Virginia is a county administered state. Performance reviews are done at the county level. A review tool is being developed so that local agencies can look at themselves. The tool is modeled on the federal review tool. (VA)

Performance appraisals are linked to qualitative reviews. Utah developed its own process for qualitative review. A team reviews selected files, similar to federal reviews, and interviews the participants in the cases. Supervisors and caseworkers are rated on those reviews, including reviews for ASFA requirements. (UT)

Wisconsin is a county administered state. It is presently piloting a revised performance appraisal in 10 counties to review the performance of the county agencies. It is based on the elements in the federal review. They have also issued a policy directive for county status reports on children identified who have met ASFA TPR timelines. (WI)

Our job descriptions, particularly for managers, are starting to reference the ability to understand and use data in decision making. (AL)

## Training

Respondents were asked to describe the training given to staff in their state. Statewide training sessions on ASFA were mentioned most often as a method of training. Agency staff, including training unit staff and central office staff, were mentioned most frequently as doing the training. Others who were mentioned as providing training included consultants (17.9%), state university staff (where the agency had a partnership with the university for training) (14.3%), court staff (10.7%) and regional staff (8.3%).

Forty-eight responses were made regarding whether training on ASFA is incorporated into other training provided; 73% of the comments indicated that ASFA training was incorporated, 16.7% indicated it is incorporated into new worker training and 10.4% indicated it was not incorporated into on-going training.

### Training Methods

(N = 87)

Method	Frequency	Percent
Statewide training sessions on ASFA	29	33.3
Part of regular in-service, pre-service training	17	19.5
Forums and conferences on ASFA topics	10	11.5
ASFA discussed at regularly scheduled meeting	9	10.3
Managers were trained; then trained others	9	10.3
Interactive video training on ASFA topics	5	5.7
Teleconferences on ASFA topics	3	3.4
Staff attended training given by federal group	3	3.4
Circulating information about ASFA	2	2.3

Most agencies (84.4%) had done training with or for the courts. When asked to describe the training, respondents replied as follows:

### Training with or for Courts

(N = 50)

Method	Frequency	Percent
Joint training sessions attended by agency and court staff	21	42.0
Agency and court staff work together on the local level	14	28.0
Court Improvement Project events are attended by agency staff	5	10.0
ASFA workgroups composed of agency and court staff	4	8.0
Agency staff have trained court personnel	4	8.0
Agency published a newsletter for court staff	2	4.0

## **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Training:**

We do child welfare training, not ASFA training. (NY)

A series of forums was held throughout the state attended by field staff and stakeholder groups. In each region or parish community partners were included. ASFA philosophy and changes were explained to these groups. (LA)

Program managers responsible for foster care and federal funding provided the initial statewide training. The training was given to managers, supervisors, private agencies, tribes, legal personnel, federal funding staff and persons responsible for the statewide information system. Supervisors then trained workers. A second training occurred around the new electronic case plan form. The case plan incorporates a lot of ASFA requirements and requires staff to respond to issues of safety, permanency, individualized service, concurrent planning and compelling reasons. The training included a review on the intent and requirements of ASFA. Later training was also provided to foster parent trainers. (WA)

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, in conjunction with the PA Bar and American Bar Association, convened 4 one day sessions for various groups that share in the implementation of ASFA, such as judges, child welfare directors, agency attorneys, mental health reps, CASA's and parent and child attorneys. Entitled, "The Pennsylvania Implementation of ASFA: Sharing the Responsibility", the day started off with an overview of ASFA from the national perspective. Then it moved into panel discussions from each group represented covering the strategy they were using to implement ASFA, what they found to be the most difficult challenges and what was the most positive aspect for them. Over lunch, each group discussed the 3 most important issues for them relating to ASFA and what resources/support they needed. The remainder of the day was spent on joint implementation planning. These sessions were taken seriously by participants, very well received and extremely effective. Folks stayed the whole day and were actively engaged in the problem solving process. (PA)

Every year Florida hosts a conference for court and child welfare personnel. During the conference there will be professional workshops and circuit break-outs offering opportunities for localities to look at problems and develop action plans. While ASFA itself isn't the prime agenda item, issues its implementation can raise, such as concurrent planning, timelines and procedure changes, are included on the agenda. The event is 3 days long and draws over 1,000 participants, approximately half from child welfare and half from the courts. (FL)

As part of our new worker and on-going staff training we routinely offer two courses utilizing local juvenile judges: Testifying in Juvenile Court and Permanency & Termination of Parental Rights. We also utilize the juvenile judges in providing a one day course for foster parents: Juvenile Justice for Foster Parents. (IA)

An Attorney General is assigned to work with the agency. He works with the Court Improvement Project to provide training for judges and court staff. Training will be implemented within the next year through the Court Improvement Project - training will be directed to social services staff and court personnel. (WY)

## Information Systems

Respondents were asked to rate the support provided by the state information system for the work of managers, supervisors and workers in implementing ASFA on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'outstanding'. The average rating was 3.14. Among states that rated their information system as a 1 or a 2, comments indicated there was a SACWIS system in use but it did not adequately support user needs or there was not a SACWIS system in place.

### Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Information Systems:

We have a SACWIS system in place. People are getting used to using reports and we are still dealing with the issue of getting workers to use the system and to make sure data is accurate. One method that has worked is to circulate data and ask workers to correct, if necessary and return. (NE)

We have a new SACWIS system; it is just a year old. It does a nice job incorporating ASFA information, for example we have ASFA alerts for children in care 15 of the last 22 months, and risk assessments with a question regarding concurrent planning. However because the system is so new, we have no baseline data on outcomes. Our focus has been on implementing the system, getting the bugs out and making it user friendly for the social workers. The analysts have just started looking at reporting for ASFA and planning for those reports we need. (ID)

We are constantly enhancing our SACWIS so that it supports ASFA. We are not fully there yet but we are consistently working to update and improve the system. (AR)

## Staff Support

Shown below are the activities mentioned most often by the child welfare agency respondents as working well in supporting staff as they implement ASFA requirements.

### Most Effective Practices for Staff Support

(N = 113)

Practice	Frequency	Percent
Training	21	18.6
Increased communication	14	12.4
Resources available to support staff	13	11.5
Collaborative efforts with stakeholders	13	11.5
View ASFA as good casework practice	10	8.9
Provide management support	10	8.9

## **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Staff Support:**

Colorado created a video for workers to use when discussing permanency with families.(CO)

Idaho created a brochure for families, which discusses permanency planning for children in clear, respectful language. The Idaho regional staff asked for help explaining concurrent planning to families because, despite up front discussions between the social workers and the families, some families were having difficulty understanding the options and process. This brochure gives families something tangible to look over when they are ready. (ID)

The Director developed and managed a process that resulted in priority objectives for the agency regarding permanency and placement. A driving belief that guides our practice is that 'the state makes a poor parent'. The Director monitors progress toward meeting the objectives and continues to discuss them with County Directors and staff. These objectives are not special projects, they are integrated into our day to day work. (SC)

For the past several years, we focused on SACWIS---developing it, implementing it and trying to work with it. We had a lot of staff resistance and many workers felt that their work was more about RICHIST than about families. When the Child and Family Services Review came along, it helped us shift our focus back onto practice and children and see RICHIST as a tool to help us with that. The review instrument was so strong and such a good teaching tool that all of a sudden, as we were implementing it, the lights went on and folks clearly saw casework again and the elements of good casework. The review helped us see ASFA as good casework practice. (RI)

Oregon is planning to implement co-case management of TANF and Child Welfare cases and ultimately will be working to integrate alcohol, drug and mental health case management also. (OR)

Our clear vision for what we want North Carolina's services for children to look like has been a support through several struggles. The vision, which was at least 6 years in the making, sets the direction for all our decisions, services and priorities. The counties agree with the vision and that has helped us 'stay the course'. (NC)

"For while I ate, breathed and slept ASFA. I am pleased with the success of the effort. There has been no negative fallout." (Supervisor, IN)

What worked best was cooperation among stakeholders and key people. They were involved in the beginning on the ASFA committee and then were asked to do training on ASFA. The result was an atmosphere of support. People "embraced it and really believed in it". There was a whole spectrum of people who were saying the same thing consistently. The same information came from all levels. (IN)

We are constantly focusing on issues related to ASFA, especially outcomes and Child and Family Services Review. (KY)

We reinforced successes and that leads to buy in by staff. It is possible to see that the focus on moving kids who are stuck in the system into adoptive homes has produced results. It is harder to show how many kids have gone home; once staff can see that, it too will reinforce success. (ME)

ASFA was viewed as a change in policy. The agency has a system in place to handle major policy changes, including ASFA. The process for handling changes includes making change a priority and working to get staff buy-in by circulating information such as manuals and bulletins and incorporating changes into training sessions. The goal is to get people to buy into the change and understand why it is important. "Have to make changes caused by ASFA a way of thinking and implementation a priority." (MI)

The presence of two specialized staff members who helped with ASFA implementation worked for us. One was the county attorney who worked with the counties on various aspects of ASFA requirements. In addition, she did some of the training and disseminated information to county staff regarding ASFA. The second was a county social worker who worked in the central office for awhile to work with the counties as they implemented ASFA. (MN)

We developed case plans that have ASFA outcomes built in. (MO)

Frequent training and discussion of the ASFA requirements have been helpful in increasing the depth of staff understanding of ASFA. ASFA is complex and its system-wide implications cannot be understood and handled quickly. (NV)

We encourage staff and monitor how they are doing with implementation. (SD)

A series of meetings was held attended by central office staff, caseworkers and supervisors. Groups were small so there was opportunity for interaction and to talk about individual cases. The meetings helped empower staff to handle changes. (TN)

### **Barriers**

The barriers to the agency's support for staff as they implement the requirements of ASFA mentioned most often appear below.

#### **Barriers to Agency Support** (N = 106)

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Lack of resources - funding, staff, equipment, etc.	27	25.5
Difficult relationship with courts	13	12.3
Staff turnover	12	11.3
Limitations or lack of computer system(s)	9	8.5

#### **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Barriers:**

We'd like to hear how someone has been able to comply with ASFA with insufficient staff and a lack of cooperation and communication from other community and agency partners. (HI)

## County-Administered States

Of the 47 states where the poll was conducted, 11 were state supervised, county-administered states. These states were asked to what extent does the fact that their state is county-based impact ASFA implementation. Among the 17 comments received, almost a third (29.4%) indicated that the county-based system was responsive to local needs. Other comments were: communication is difficult (17.6% of comments); there are few uniform practice standards (17.6%); the approach is more fragmented and may be less efficient (11.8%); state control is limited (11.8%) as are resources (11.8%).

## General Remarks

In conclusion, respondents were asked if there was anything else they wanted to tell us regarding the best way to support staff as they implement the requirements of ASFA. The comments appear below:

- Request adequate and possibly additional resources to implement ASFA
- Provide specific skills training
- Don't get caught up in the specifics of ASFA; do the best casework possible
- Focus on good communication
- You have to view the changes caused by ASFA as a way of thinking and make implementing the changes a priority
- Provide management support for workers
- The process takes a long time
- Request greater federal support
- Have trained central office staff available to help
- Develop competent supervisors
- Existing legislation made ASFA implementation easier
- You need to understand how court resources affect ASFA implementation

## Selected Participant Remarks Regarding General Remarks:

As we continue to expand our cross system, joint decision making, we will increase our reliance on the use of teams in the casework process. Teaming, especially cross agency teaming, is a new approach for some of the staff and we need to provide a clear framework and philosophical base for team decision making. (CO)

One of the best ways to support staff is to improve the type, quantity and quality of services available for children and families. (OK)

ASFA should be viewed as 'good practice' and training should reinforce a focus on supporting best practice versus the requirements of ASFA. (AR)

The best way to support staff is to demystify ASFA and help staff see that ASFA is about what we want for families, not about the imposition of outside federal requirements. (AL)

The key is being able to obtain the resources necessary to keep caseloads at a reasonable level so the workers can meet best practice standards and get needed services to families in a timely manner. (AK)

Get management to organize the system, including policies, procedures and role expectations, to support workers. Workers will usually do what you want them to do but they need to understand the expectations. With ASFA, the practice issues are fairly straightforward; it is the system issues that are the challenges.(CA)

You have to think of ASFA not just as a child welfare problem, but as something that will take the efforts of everyone to implement. (IN)

It takes time to go out and give individual workers the support they need. You need to send support staff out to talk workers through cases on a case by case basis if necessary. (IN)

ASFA is very complicated. Managers and supervisors need to be able to break down the complexity into manageable pieces for field workers so they can handle the requirements. Management and support people need to be able to help people in the field. (KY)

Don't get caught up in the specifics of ASFA requirement. Provide the best service you can. (MA)

Review ASFA requirements frequently; there is training every 3 months for new workers. Times and dates are sometimes emphasized rather than quality of case planning. (MT)

Provide support for staff by allowing time for them to acquire knowledge they need. Administrators and managers need to let people use creativity in working with families. (OH)

Good casework is still the same; you just have to document it the right way. (TX)

The training about ASFA should include the philosophy behind ASFA; give a broader picture. Also, you need specific skills training to develop competent supervisors and a good information system to support casework. (WV)

## COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT POLL

### Understanding

Court improvement project personnel were asked to rate the child welfare agency staff in terms of their understanding of ASFA requirements on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'comprehensive'. The average rating given was 3.25. When asked why that rating was given, most participants (3 out of 4) said that child welfare agency staff had a good understanding of some elements of ASFA, but not others.

### Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Understanding:

The child welfare agency in Wisconsin operates in a state supervised-county administered system. The state staff is well educated regarding ASFA; however, understanding in the counties varies. There are staff shortages at the state level so sometimes no one is available to disseminate information into the counties. (WI)

### Skills

Court improvement project respondents were asked to list the skills that based on the court's experience to date, child welfare supervisors and workers need to have to implement ASFA. The skills mentioned most often are listed below.

#### Supervisor's Skills

(N = 13)

Skills	Frequency	Percent
Ability to develop a relationship with court where information is shared	3	23.1
Ability to explain the law and requirements to staff	2	15.4
Knowledge of the law and requirements	2	15.4
Ability to monitor staff to assure time lines are met	2	15.4

#### Worker's Skills

(N = 9)

Skills	Frequency	Percent
Knowledge of the law and requirements	2	22.2
How to testify in court regarding permanency and safety planning	2	22.2

As expected the skills that court improvement project personnel think supervisors and workers need to have are focused on their understanding of the law, information sharing and the ability of agency staff to testify in court regarding ASFA issues. Child welfare agency staff, however, think the top skills needed by supervisors and workers are understanding case work, communication, collaboration and an understanding of ASFA in general. With child welfare agency staff there was not the emphasis on knowledge of the law or testifying in court.

### **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Skills:**

They must know how to assist their staff to testify in court regarding permanency planning. They must help their staff have a clear understanding of safety---how to describe safe living conditions and how to testify that a child is safe. (PA)

Recognizing the extensive amount of information a worker must have in order to respond to a judge's questions during a hearing, the supervisor should take the time to observe more court proceedings to better understand the expectations of the courts and thus better prepare their workers to meet those expectations. (FL)

### **Activities**

Court improvement project respondents were asked if, as part of the state's ASFA implementation activities, the court and the child welfare agency had undertaken or changed day to day activities or changed communication. Respondents reported that changes had occurred in both areas. For example, work groups had been formed to deal with ASFA implementation and with case processing issues and mandatory court order forms were being amended jointly between the courts and the agency. In the area of communications, two thirds (66.7%) of the comments noted increased communication between the court and the agency staff.

### **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Activities:**

The Court and Child Welfare automated data systems now exchange information so that the Court knows key facts such as the case number, the date that services were accepted and the date that children went into placement and the agency knows up to date information on hearings from the Court's records. (PA)

The Court Improvement Project has had a Model Court Project in Philadelphia going for 2 years. Previously, instead of the case social worker, the DHS Court Representative often appeared in court to represent the department. Now, in every Model Court case and more and more in other dependency court cases, the social worker is expected to be in court prepared to testify on the safety of the child's placement. (PA)

At the state level a working group has been formed comprised of state agency staff and the Court Improvement Program coordinator. The purpose of the work group is to deal with ASFA implementation issues and to prepare for the federal review scheduled to take place in 2002 and 2003. The group meets twice a month. (WI)

At the county level, work groups comprised of the county agency director, agency supervisors, district attorney, corporation counsel, public defender and guardians ad litem court staff, have been set up to address case processing issues related to the ASFA requirements. (WI)

WI is in the process of developing a checklist for judges and social workers to determine when the next case event takes place. (WI)

## **Sharing Information**

The project team asked court improvement project respondents if they were getting information they needed regarding cases from the agency. All respondents said they were.

### **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Sharing Information:**

Communication between the agency and the court has increased. Sometimes communication is difficult because judges must deal with all kinds of cases in courts, not just child welfare which represent from 8-12% of the caseload. Agency staff doesn't receive training on court structure or what the courts do and what they need. Sometimes the state agency doesn't know how to communicate most effectively with judges because the agency doesn't fully understand the institutional structure and culture of the courts. (WI)

The court Bench book has been distributed to child welfare agency personnel and attorneys. Reasonable effort forms have also been distributed to agency staff. (MD)

## **Training**

Respondents were asked how they handled training on ASFA for court personnel. A number of different training methods were used. The ones mentioned most often were joint training sessions with the child welfare agency on the requirements of ASFA and attendance at conferences by judges, agency staff and masters that included ASFA topics.

### **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Training:**

Agency and court staff have different needs regarding information about ASFA so it is difficult to train them at the same time. Also, judges need to know different things about a case than the things caseworkers need to know. (WI)

## **What Worked Best**

Respondents most often said that the increased communication has worked best for them in terms of working with the child welfare agency as it implements the ASFA requirements.

### **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding What Worked Best:**

The Director of the Court Improvement Project is able to go to the agency and participate in planning discussions. It has helped to have someone with a court background to provide feedback in these discussions. (WI)

What worked in MD was having agency staff active on the Court Improvement Project and when the statute was revised the Attorney General got feedback from the agency. (MD)

## **Barriers**

Lack of resources including staff, funds, time was mentioned most often as a barrier in the court improvement project's work with the agency as it implements the requirements of ASFA.

### **Selected Participant Remarks Regarding Barriers:**

The rotation of judges and turnover of child welfare workers create a constant need to train and retrain on dependency issues and establish and refine relationships. (FL)

Lack of understanding of the responsibilities of the key stakeholders' responsibilities and how their organizations/institutions are structured. (WI)

Making sure that the agency understands the law, which is especially difficult in large jurisdictions. (MD)

Coping with lack of time and resources to provide needed training. (MD)

## **General Remarks**

When asked if they had any other comments to make regarding the best way to implement the requirements of ASFA, respondents made several which are listed below:

- You need individualized and local training in courts and agencies
- Court orders must specify that reasonable efforts were taken for the child and family
- You need more resources: staff, funds, etc.
- ASFA requirements don't reflect knowledge of the courts and the way judges need to deal with cases
- Information about ASFA would have had greater credibility if it had first come from the top court officers or by legal organizations recognized in the field
- ASFA is a well-written, comprehensive and complex piece of legislation and we continue to learn how to use its requirements positively for children and families.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results of this phone poll indicate that child welfare agencies are actively implementing ASFA---they have developed and provided ASFA training for staff, courts and community partners, they are beginning to make needed administrative and organizational changes and they tend to view ASFA requirements as 'good case practice'. Child welfare managers, supervisors and workers generally have a good understanding of ASFA and have received some training on its requirements. Child welfare respondents report that skills and knowledge in casework, communication, collaboration and understanding ASFA requirements are the key to implementing ASFA. From the court improvement project perspective child welfare supervisors and workers need to have knowledge of the law, its requirements and how to testify in court regarding permanency and safety planning. The poll also showed that child welfare agencies were more likely to have made changes in agency structure and internal communication as part of ASFA implementation and less likely to have changed performance appraisals, job descriptions or undertaken any staff recruitment as a result of ASFA.

An interesting finding was that respondents seldom mentioned the need for managers, supervisors and workers to use and understand data and how that skill links to the ASFA requirements for reporting. The fact that respondents gave an average rating of 3.14 on a scale of 1 to 5 to the information system currently in use may offer a partial explanation for this omission. It implies that not all systems provide the support needed, therefore, staff may not have access to the data they need to incorporate into management decision making. In spite of lack of system support, future ASFA training should include more material directed to information management and how to think about using data to support the achievement of positive outcomes for children and families.

Successful implementation of ASFA depends largely on the ability of child welfare supervisors and managers to understand and therefore incorporate the changes ASFA requires into their daily routine, practice and the work of those they supervise. Although supervisors and managers may not be involved in the details of casework, they still must supervise and direct staff to reduce the time children stay in foster care. In addition, supervisors and managers must become familiar with and comfortable working within a system that measures outcomes associated with delivering services to children and families, not just the process. As middle managers, they are responsible for leading the transition to a performance based system, while at the same time supporting frontline workers as they incorporate ASFA responsive practice changes into their ongoing casework. Child welfare supervisors and managers must be aware of the content of the laws and regulations, understand the reporting requirement and know how to select and use appropriate data to justify service planning and development, respond to federal requests for outcome information, allocate scarce resources and inform policy.

ASFA's mandates regarding the achievement of outcomes and the use of data carry clear expectations for supervisors and managers. However, the phone poll indicates that more work needs to be done to assure that the day to day responsibilities of child welfare supervisors and managers are informed by data and reports, to enhance skills needed to support collaboration with the courts and other community partners and build a framework for decision making in a 'teaming' environment.

In conclusion, the 'promising practices' highlighted throughout the **RESULTS** section of this report and detailed in the individual state poll responses on the website ---practices such as creating videos and brochures for workers to use when discussing permanency with families, building and communicating a clear vision for what the agency wants services for children to look like, reinforcing successes and developing case plans that have ASFA outcomes built in--- should prove a valuable source of information for child welfare agencies as they continue to develop ways to support staff and partners during the implementation of ASFA. In addition, the poll results provide the project team an excellent starting place to develop a curriculum for child welfare supervisors and managers which will enhance their capacity to implement ASFA, strengthen their ability to manage and increase the use of data to improve outcomes for children in the system.

Website: <http://www.muskie.usm.maine.edu/asfa>

**APPENDIX A. CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES – PARTICIPANT  
COMMENTS/FREQUENCIES**

1. How would you rate your agency's staff in terms of their understanding of ASFA requirements? We are particularly interested in the level of understanding of managers, supervisors and workers. Please rate their understanding on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'comprehensive'.

**A. Managers:**

POOR                      1            2            3            4            5                      COMPREHENSIVE  
N=46

Rating	Frequency	Percent
2.00	2	4.3
3.00	7	15.2
4.00	20	43.5
4.50	5	10.9
5.00	12	26.1

**Average of the Rating: 4.08**

N=18

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Had more training than supervisors or workers	8	44.4
Good understanding of some elements, not others	5	27.8
Staff already familiar with ASFA requirements	3	16.7
Understanding at a high level; use ASFA requirements daily	2	11.1

**B. Supervisors:**

POOR                      1            2            3            4            5                      COMPREHENSIVE  
N=45

Rating	Frequency	Percent
1.00	1	2.2
1.50	1	2.2
3.00	14	31.1
3.50	2	4.4
4.00	23	51.1
4.50	1	2.2
5.00	3	6.7

**Average of the Rating: 3.62**

**B. Supervisors (cont.):**

**N=13**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Good understanding of some elements, not others	8	61.5
Staff already familiar with ASFA requirements	3	23.1
Understanding at a high level, use ASFA requirements daily	2	15.4

**C. Workers:**

POOR 1      2      3      4      5      COMPREHENSIVE  
**N=43**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1.00	3	7.0
2.00	5	11.6
3.00	22	51.2
3.50	3	7.0
4.00	10	23.2

**Average of the Rating : 3.06**

**N=25**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Good understanding of some elements, not others	8	32.0
High staff turnover rate affects understanding	6	24.0
Just started training	4	16.0
Understanding at a high level, use ASFA requirements daily	3	12.0
Staff already familiar with ASFA requirements	2	8.0
New staff gets lots of ASFA information	2	8.0

2. Based on your agency's experience to date, what skills do you think managers, supervisors and workers need to have to implement ASFA?

**A. Managers:**

**N=142**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Case work	13	9.8
Collaboration	11	8.3
Understanding the requirements of ASFA	11	8.3
Understanding how to implement ASFA requirements	10	7.6
Using data effectively	10	7.6
Basic management	8	6.1
Familiarity with new requirements for practice	8	6.1
Communication	5	3.8
Dealing with challenge of time frames	5	3.8
Meet ASFA requirements while maintaining good practice	5	3.8
Understanding the philosophy of ASFA	5	3.8
Familiarity with available resources	4	3.0
Focus on implication of policies, safety, permanency and well being	4	3.0
Supporting workers	4	3.0
Developing and managing outcomes	3	2.3
Facilitation	3	2.3
Interaction with court	3	2.3
Maintaining good relationship with court	3	2.3
Negotiation	3	2.3
Strategic planning	3	2.3
Modeling best practice	3	2.3
Critical thinking	2	1.5
Decision making	2	1.5
Same skills as before ASFA	2	1.5
Documentation skills	2	1.5
Problem solving	2	1.5
Need to know how ASFA, MEPA, ICWA interact	2	1.5
Change management	2	1.5
Advocacy skills	2	1.5
Ability to train others	2	1.5

## B. Supervisors

N=150

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Case work	13	8.7
Communication	12	8.0
Collaboration	11	7.3
Understanding how to implement ASFA requirements	11	7.3
Using data effectively	10	6.7
Supporting workers	9	6.0
Familiarity with new requirements for practice	8	5.3
Understanding the requirements of ASFA	7	4.7
Decision making	6	4.0
Meeting ASFA requirements while maintaining good practice	6	4.0
Basic management	5	3.3
Critical thinking	5	3.3
Monitor implementation of ASFA by workers	5	3.3
Ability to train others	4	2.7
Skills to deal with time lines	4	2.7
Dealing with challenge of time frames	3	2.0
Developing and managing outcomes	3	2.0
Documentation skills	3	2.0
Maintaining good relationship with court	3	2.0
Modeling best practice	3	2.0
Understanding the philosophy of ASFA	3	2.0
Assessment skills	2	1.3
Facilitation skills	2	1.3
Focus on implication of policies, safety, permanency, well	2	1.3
Familiarity with available resources	2	1.3
Interaction with court	2	1.3
Negotiation skills	2	1.3
Need to know how ASFA, MEPA, ICWA interact	2	1.3
Maintain successful relationships with stakeholders	2	1.3

### C. Workers

N=133

Skills	Frequency	Percent
Case work	20	15.0
Collaboration	10	7.5
Communication	10	7.5
Understanding how to implement ASFA requirements	11	8.3
Familiarity with new requirements for practice	8	6.0
Meeting ASFA requirements while maintaining good practice	6	4.5
Negotiation skills	6	4.5
Understanding the requirements of ASFA	6	4.5
Dealing with challenge of time frames	5	3.8
Decision making	5	3.8
Advocacy Skills	4	3.8
Familiarity with available resources	4	3.8
Focus on implication of policies, safety, permanency, well being	4	3.8
Team building skills	4	3.8
Using data effectively	4	3.8
Critical thinking	3	3.0
Facilitation skills	3	3.0
Interaction with court	3	3.0
Time management	3	3.0
Maintaining successful relationship with stakeholders	2	1.5
Change management	2	1.5
Developing and managing outcomes	2	1.5
Documentation skills	2	1.5
Maintaining good relationships with the court	2	1.5
Problem solving	2	1.5
Skills to deal with time lines	2	1.5

3. As part of your ASFA implementation has your agency undertaken any activities in the following areas:

**Agency structure?** Yes or No. If yes, please describe.

N=46

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	45.7
No	25	54.3

N=36

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Restructured department or unit	9	25.0
Added additional staff	7	19.4
Changed procedures or process	5	13.9
Added new department, unit or division	4	11.1
Added new position	3	8.3
Began a new process or procedure	3	8.3
Moving workers from one unit to another	3	8.3
Changed a training process	2	5.6

**Internal communication?** Yes or No. If yes, please describe.

N=45

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	36	80.0
No	9	20.0

N=70

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Increase in communications	27	38.6
Circulating written material about ASFA	11	15.7
More teamwork, interaction among team members	8	11.4
Training on ASFA	8	11.4
Establishing new working groups	7	10.0
Developing/using websites to disseminate information	3	4.3
Expanding role of existing groups to include ASFA topics	3	4.3
Using of teleconferences to disseminate information	3	4.3

**Performance appraisals?** Yes or No. If yes, please describe.

**N=46**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	16	34.8
No	30	65.2

**N=17**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Changed to reflect ASFA mandates	13	76.5
Implementing performance appraisal based on federal review	2	11.8
Set up performance based contracts for providers	2	11.8

**Job descriptions?** Yes or No. If yes, please describe.

**N=46**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	10	21.7
No	36	78.3

**N=10**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Some descriptions changed, but not all	3	30.0
Some tasks reassigned or restructured	3	30.0
Filling new position(s)	2	20.0
Now based on job performance plans	2	20.0

**Staff recruitment?** Yes or No. If yes, please describe.

**N=45**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	7	15.6
No	38	84.4

**N=5**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Changed way of evaluating job candidates	3	60.0
Added staff	2	40.0

4. How do you handle staff training on ASFA?

A. Please describe the training.

N=87

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Statewide training sessions on ASFA	29	33.3
Part of regular in-service, pre-service training	17	19.5
Forums and conferences on ASFA topics	10	11.5
ASFA is discussed at regularly scheduled meetings	9	10.3
Managers were trained; then trained others	9	10.3
Interactive video training on ASFA topics	5	5.7
Teleconferences on ASFA topics	3	3.4
Staff attended training given by federal group	3	3.4
Circulate information about ASFA	2	2.3

B. Who does the training?

N=84

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Agency staff	23	27.3
Outside consultants	15	17.9
Partnership with state university; their staff trains	12	14.3
Training unit staff	11	13.1
Court staff	9	10.7
Central office staff	7	8.3
Regional staff	7	8.3

C. Is the training just on ASFA or is it incorporated into other training that you provide?

N=48

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Incorporated	35	73.0
It is incorporated into new worker training	8	16.7
Not incorporated	5	10.4

D. Have you done any training with or for the courts? Yes or No. If yes, please describe.

N=45

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	38	84.4
No	7	15.6

**D. Have you done any training with or for the courts? (cont.):**

**N=50**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Joint training sessions attended by agency and court staff	21	42.0
Agency and court staff have worked together on local level	14	28.0
Court Improvement Project events attended by agency people	5	10.0
ASFA workgroups composed of agency and court staff	4	8.0
Agency staff have trained court personnel	4	8.0
Agency published a newsletter for court staff	2	4.0

5. How well does your information system support the work of managers, supervisors and workers in implementing ASFA? Please rate the support provided by your system on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'outstanding'

POOR            1            2            3            4            5            OUTSTANDING

**N=47**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1.00	3	6.4
1.50	1	2.1
2.00	8	17.0
2.50	1	2.1
3.00	15	31.9
3.50	1	2.1
4.00	13	27.7
4.50	1	2.1
5.00	4	8.5

**Average of the Rating: 3.14**

**A. Why did you give your system that rating?**

**N=46**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
The SACWIS system in use provides good support	14	30.4
Using a system that does not support child welfare work	13	28.3
System does provide adequate support for child welfare work	12	26.1
Using a SACWIS system not able to provide support	7	15.2

**B.** If a rating of 1 or 2 is given, probe as to the status of the SACWIS system.

**N=14**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
SACWIS system in use, but does not support user needs	9	64.3
There is no SACWIS system in place	5	35.7

**6.** What has worked best for you in terms of supporting staff as they implement the ASFA requirements?

**N=113**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Training	21	18.6
Increased communication	14	12.4
Having resources available to support staff	13	11.5
Collaborative efforts with stakeholders	13	11.5
Seeing ASFA as good casework practice	10	8.9
Management support	10	8.9
Revising policy to reflect ASFA	7	6.2
Monitoring implementation	6	5.4
Additional funding	3	2.5
Additional staff	3	2.5
More effective use of computer system	3	2.5
Supporting legislation	3	2.5
Using data to support ASFA implementation	3	2.5
Change management process	2	1.8
Effective implementation team	2	1.8

7. What do you view as barriers to your agency's support for staff as they implement the requirements of ASFA?

**N=106**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Lack of resources - funding, staff, equipment, etc.	27	25.5
Difficult relationship with courts	13	12.3
Staff turnover	12	11.3
Limitations or lack of computer system (s)	9	8.5
Lack of understanding/knowledge about ASFA	6	5.7
Heavy workload	6	5.7
Lack of support	6	5.7
Difficulty meeting ASFA requirements	6	5.7
Large number of cases	5	4.7
Differences in interpretation	5	4.7
Lack of services	4	3.8
Lack of time	3	2.8
Lack of training	2	1.9
Problems caused by county-based system	2	1.9

8. (For County based systems only.) To what extent does the fact that your state is county-based impact your ASFA implementation?

**N=17**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Responsive to local needs	5	29.4
Lack of uniform practice standards	3	17.6
Communication is difficult	3	17.6
Approach is more fragmented; less efficient	2	11.8
Lack of state control	2	11.8
Lack of resources (funding, staff, equipment) in smaller counties	2	11.8

**Note:** County Based states: AL, CA, CO, NC, ND, NY, OH, PA, WI, VA, and MN. Data included.

Regionally Administered states: WA and TN. Data not included.

Bifurcated state: NV. Data not included.

9. Is there anything else that you want to tell us regarding the best way to support staff as they implement the requirements of ASFA?

N=57

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Need adequate or additional resources to implement	9	15.8
Specific skills training	9	15.8
Don't get caught up in the specifics of ASFA; do the best casework possible	8	14.0
Focus on good communication	7	12.3
Have to view changes caused by ASFA as a way of thinking and make implementation a priority	5	8.8
Management support for workers	4	7.0
The process takes a long time	3	5.3
Greater federal support	3	5.3
Trained central office staff available to help	3	5.3
Develop competent supervisors	2	3.5
Existing legislation made ASFA implementation easier	2	3.5
Understanding how court resources affect ASFA implementation	2	3.5

**APPENDIX B. COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS – PARTICIPANT  
COMMENTS/FREQUENCIES**

1. How would you rate the child welfare agency staff in terms of their understanding of ASFA requirements? Please rate the understanding on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'comprehensive'.

POOR            1            2            3            4            5            COMPREHENSIVE

N=4

Rating	Frequency	Percent
2.00	1	25.0
3.00	1	25.0
4.00	2	50.0

**Average of the Rating: 3.25**

**Why did you give them that rating?**

N=5

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Good understanding of some elements, but not others	3	60.0
Understanding is at a high level; had lots of training	1	20.0
Lack of resources: staff, funds, etc.	1	20.0

2. Based on the court's experience to date, what skills do you think child welfare supervisors and workers need to have to implement ASFA?

**A. Supervisors?**

N=13

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Ability to develop relationship with court where information is shared	3	23.1
Ability to explain law and requirements to staff	2	15.4
Knowledge of the law and requirements	2	15.4
Monitor staff to assure time lines are met	2	15.4
Ability to set up hearings and court dates	1	7.7
Knowledge of gathering information about families for court use	1	7.7
How to testify in court regarding permanency and safety planning	1	7.7
Ability to identify resources	1	7.7

**B. Workers?**

**N=9**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Knowledge of the law and requirements	2	22.2
How to testify in court regarding permanency and safety planning	2	22.2
Ability to develop relationship with court where information is shared	1	11.1
Ability to make decisions quickly	1	11.1
Concurrent planning skills	1	11.1
Knowledge of gathering information about families for court use	1	11.1
Monitor staff to assure time lines are met	1	11.1

**3.** As part of your state's ASFA implementation, have the court and the child welfare agency undertaken or changed any day to day joint activities? Yes or No. If yes, please describe.

**N=4**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	4	100.0
No	0	0.0

**N=11**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Work groups formed to deal with ASFA implementation	2	18.2
Mandatory court order forms being amended jointly between courts and agency	2	18.2
Work groups set up to work with case processing issues	2	18.2
Meetings held to work on court case load	1	9.1
Model court cases being held	1	9.1
Agency attorneys working with Court Improvement Project an ASFA requirements	1	9.1
Developing checklists for judges and social workers to discuss next steps	1	9.1
Review hearings and TPR trials	1	9.1

**A. Has communication changed?** Yes or No. If yes, please describe

**N=4**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	4	100.0
No	0	0.0

**A. Has communication changed?(cont.):**

N=6

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Increased communication between court and agency staff	4	66.7
Communication is difficult	1	16.7
Distribution of material among court and agency staff ( written and electronic)	1	16.7

**B. Are you getting the information you need regarding cases from the agency? Yes or No.  
If no, please describe.**

N=4

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	4	100.0
No	0	0.0

N=5

Comments	Frequency	Percent
More information shared between court and agency since ASFA and the Federal Reviews	1	20.0
Increased written reports and more social workers are appearing in court to testify	1	20.0
Trouble in some jurisdictions, getting information is difficult	1	20.0
Problems getting information in a timely manner	1	20.0
The Court and Child Welfare data systems now exchange information	1	20.0

4. How do you handle training on ASFA for court personnel?

**A. Please describe the training.**

N=14

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Joint training session on the requirements of ASFA	2	14.3
Conference attended by judges, agency staff and masters, included ASFA topics	2	14.3
Discussions with director of the Courts who sent written information to all judges	1	7.1
Distribute a bi-monthly Judges packet which discusses ASFA issues, provides opinions on how to interpret statutory provisions and lists special training opportunities	1	7.1
Training on the Title IV-E reviews	1	7.1
Training on the new court information management system(MAGIC), included some ASFA topics	1	7.1
3-Day Dependency Court Improvement Project summit	1	7.1
Presentations on ASFA	1	7.1
Quarterly bulletin distributed to more than 900 locations, focuses on one specific topic, often an ASFA topic	1	7.1
Meetings between judges and agency about ASFA	1	7.1
Seminars about the roles of judges in child abuse and neglect cases	1	7.1
Checklist being developed for use by judges and the agency staff to determine next steps	1	7.1

**B. Who does the training?**

N=8

Comments	Frequency	Percent
The Court Improvement Project personnel	3	37.5
Court Staff	2	25.0
Consultants	1	12.5
National Conferences	1	12.5
Attorneys	1	12.5

**C. Is the training just on ASFA or is it incorporated into other training that you provide?**

N=4

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Incorporated into other training	3	75.0
ASFA training is separate from other training	1	25.0

**D. Have you done any training with or for the child welfare agency? Yes or No. If yes, please describe.**

N=4

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	50.0
No	2	50.0

N=4

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Joint training attended by Court and agency staff	2	50.0
Difficult to train jointly both courts and agency staff need to know different things regarding ASFA	1	25.0
Agency staff invited to one day of Judicial training at a conference	1	25.0

**E. Have you done any training with or for the agency attorneys? Yes or No. If yes, please describe.**

N=4

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	50.0
No	2	50.0

N=4

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Joint training among judges, mediators, parent's attorneys, clerks of courts, guardians and child welfare personnel, including staff attorneys	2	50.0
Agency invited to one day of Judicial training at a conference	1	25.0
District Attorney or the Corporation Counsel handle training of the agency Model Courts Projects trained private attorneys	1	25.0

5. What has worked best for you in terms of working with the child welfare agency as it implements the ASFA requirements?

N=9

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Increased communication	3	42.9
Having sub-committees that deal with interagency issues	1	14.3
Director of Court Improvement Projects involvement in planning discussions	1	14.3
Agency's active involvement in the Court Improvement Project	1	14.3
Good working relationship among court and agency staff	1	14.3

6. What do you view as barriers to your work with the agency as it implements the requirements of ASFA?

N=6

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Lack of resources; staff, funds, time, etc.	2	33.3
Federal and state law not clear on what a permanency hearing is	1	16.7
Timelines for TPR are too short, unable to make informed decisions in every case	1	16.7
Lack of understanding of the key stakeholders responsibilities and how they are structured	1	16.7
Lack of understanding of the law	1	16.7

7. Is there anything else that you want to tell us regarding the best way to implement the requirements of ASFA?

N=6

Comments	Frequency	Percent
Need individualized and local training in courts and agencies	1	16.7
Court orders must specify reasonable efforts were taken for the child and family	1	16.7
Need more resources: staff, funds, etc.	1	16.7
ASFA requirements don't reflect knowledge of the courts and the way judges need to deal with cases.	1	16.7
Information about ASFA would have had greater creditability if it had first come from the top court officers or by legal organizations recognized in the field	1	16.7
ASFA is a well written, comprehensive and complex piece of legislation that we continue to learn how to use its requirements positively for children and families	1	16.7

**APPENDIX C. CHILD WELFARE AGENCY - POLL INSTRUMENT**

1. How would you rate your agency's staff in terms of their understanding of ASFA requirements? We are particularly interested in the level of understanding of managers, supervisors and workers. Please rate their understanding on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'comprehensive'.

a. Managers:

POOR            1        2        3        4        5            COMPREHENSIVE

Comments:

b. Supervisors:

POOR            1        2        3        4        5            COMPREHENSIVE

Comments:

c. Workers:

POOR            1        2        3        4        5            COMPREHENSIVE

Comments:

2. Based on your agency's experience to date, what skills do you think managers, supervisors and workers need to have to implement ASFA?

a. Managers?

b. Supervisors?

c. Workers?

3. As part of your ASFA implementation has your agency undertaken any activities in the following areas:

- Agency structure? \_\_\_\_\_No \_\_\_\_\_Yes If yes, please describe.
- Internal communication? \_\_\_\_\_No \_\_\_\_\_Yes If yes, please describe
- Performance appraisals? \_\_\_\_\_No \_\_\_\_\_Yes If yes, please describe.
- Job descriptions? \_\_\_\_\_No \_\_\_\_\_Yes If yes, please describe.
- Staff recruitment? \_\_\_\_\_No \_\_\_\_\_Yes If yes, please describe.

4. How do you handle staff training on ASFA?

a. Please describe the training.

b. Who does the training?

c. Is the training just on ASFA or is it incorporated into other training that you provide?

d. Have you done any training with or for the courts? \_\_\_\_\_No \_\_\_\_\_Yes If yes, please describe.

5. How well does your information system support the work of managers, supervisors and workers in implementing ASFA? Please rate the support provided by your system on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'outstanding'.

POOR            1            2            3            4            5            OUTSTANDING

a. Why did you give your system that rating?

b. If a rating of 1 or 2 is given, probe as to the status of the SACWIS system.

6. What has worked best for you in terms of supporting staff as they implement the ASFA requirements?

7. What do you view as barriers to your agency's support for staff as they implement the requirements of ASFA?

8. (For County based systems only.) To what extent does the fact that your state is county-based impact your ASFA implementation?

9. Is there anything else that you want to tell us regarding the best way to support staff as they implement the requirements of ASFA?

Do you mind if we call you again if we need additional information?

\_\_\_\_\_No  
\_\_\_\_\_Yes

Thank you for your time, help and expertise. I will send you a copy of my write-up of this conversation for your review and comment as well as a copy of the 'promising practices' poll report when it is completed

## APPENDIX D. COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - POLL INSTRUMENT

1. How would you rate the child welfare agency staff in terms of their understanding of ASFA requirements? Please rate the understanding on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'comprehensive'.

POOR            1            2            3            4            5            COMPREHENSIVE

a. Why did you give them that rating?

2. Based on the court's experience to date, what skills do you think child welfare supervisors and workers need to have to implement ASFA?

a. Supervisors?

b. Workers?

3. As part of your state's ASFA implementation, have the court and the child welfare agency undertaken or changed any day to day joint activities? \_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_No If yes, please describe

a. Has communication changed? \_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_No If yes, please describe

b. Are you getting the information you need regarding cases from the agency? \_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_No If no, please describe.

4. How do you handle training on ASFA for court personnel?

a. Please describe the training.

b. Who does the training?

c. Is the training just on ASFA or is it incorporated into other training that you provide?

d. Have you done any training with or for the child welfare agency? \_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_No If yes, please describe.

e. Have you done any training with or for the agency attorneys? \_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_No If yes, please describe.

5. What has worked best for you in terms of working with the child welfare agency as it implements the ASFA requirements?

6. What do you view as barriers to your work with the agency as it implements the requirements of ASFA?

7. Is there anything else that you want to tell us regarding the best way to implement the requirements of ASFA?

Do you mind if we call you again if we need additional information?

No  
 Yes

Thank you for your time, help and expertise. I will send you a copy of my write-up of this conversation for your review and comment as well as a copy of the 'promising practices' poll report when it is completed

**APPENDIX E. CHILD WELFARE AGENCY INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED**

*We thank the following individuals for sharing their time and expertise during this poll.*

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<b>Washington</b>	<p>Lonnie Locke  Program Manager  Washington Department of Social &amp; Health Services  P.O. Box 45710  Olympia, WA 98504  Phone (360) 902-7932  <a href="mailto:lolo300@dshs.wa.gov">lolo300@dshs.wa.gov</a></p>
<b>West Virginia</b>	<p>Michael O'Farrell  Director, Division of Services for Children and Families  West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources  350 Capitol St., Room 691  Charleston, WV 25301-3704  Phone #: (304) 558-6444  mofarrell@wvdhhr.org</p>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<p>Mark Mitchell  Manager, Child Welfare Services Section  Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services  1 West Wilson, Rm. 455  P.O. Box 8916  Madison, WI 53708-8916  Phone #:(608) 266-2860  mitchms@dhfs.state.wi.us</p>
<b>Wyoming</b>	<p>Jan Stiles  Social Services Consultant  Wyoming Department of Family Services  Hathaway Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  2300 Capital Avenue  Cheyenne, WY 82002  Phone #:(307) 777-3569  jstile@state.wy.us</p>

**APPENDIX F. COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED**

*We thank the following individuals for sharing their time and expertise during this poll.*

<b>Court Improvement Project Contact Information</b>	
Florida	<p>Patricia Badland                      Deborah Lacombe                      Office of the State Courts Administrator                      Supreme Court Building                      500 South Duval Street                      Tallahassee FL 32399-1900                      Phone #: 850.487.1414  <a href="mailto:Badland@flcourts.org">Badland@flcourts.org</a></p>
Maryland	<p>Althea Stewart Jones                      Director, Court Improvement Project                      Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts                      Maryland Judicial Center                      580 Taylor Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl                      Anapolis, MD 21401                      Phone #: (410) 260-1296  <a href="mailto:Althea.stewart.jones@courts.state.md.us">Althea.stewart.jones@courts.state.md.us</a></p>
Pennsylvania	<p>John Buggy                      Director, Court Improvement Project                      Philadelphia Family Court                      1801 Vine Street, Room 208                      Philadelphia, PA 19103                      Phone #: (215) 686-7786</p>
Wisconsin	<p>Michelle Jensen                      Director, Court Improvement Project                      Wisconsin State Court                      110 E. Main Street, Suite 410                      Madison, WI 53703                      Phone #: (608) 266-1557                      Fax # (608) 267-0911  <a href="mailto:michelle.jensen@courts.state.wi.us">michelle.jensen@courts.state.wi.us</a></p>