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## Illinois Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol FY2018 Annual Evaluation

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## **Illinois Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol FY2018 Evaluation**

### **1. Introduction and Purpose**

The Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol (CERAP) is a safety assessment protocol used in child protection investigations and child welfare services in Illinois. This “life-of-the case” protocol is designed to provide workers with a mechanism for quickly assessing the potential for moderate to severe harm to a child in the immediate or near future and for taking quick action to protect children. Workers utilize the protocol at specified milestones throughout the life of an investigation or child welfare case to help focus their decision-making to determine whether a child is safe or unsafe, and if unsafe, decide what actions must be taken to assure their safety. When immediate risk to a child’s safety is identified, the protocol requires that action be taken, such as the implementation of a safety plan or protective custody.

Each year since 1997, the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) has conducted an evaluation related to the reliability and validity of the CERAP. Due to increased scrutiny of the safety of children served in intact family cases, the CERAP Advisory Committee requested an analysis of caseworker compliance with safety assessment procedures among intact family cases. According to procedures, DCFS and private agency staff are required to use the CERAP at the following milestones for intact family cases:

1. Within 5 working days after initial case assignment and upon any and all subsequent case transfers. Note: If the child abuse/neglect investigation is pending at the time of case assignment, the Child Protection Service Worker remains responsible for CERAP safety assessment and safety planning until the investigation is complete. When the investigation is completed and approved, the assigned intact worker has 5 work days to complete a new CERAP.
2. Every 90 calendar days from the case opening date.
3. Whenever evidence or circumstances suggest that a child’s safety may be in jeopardy.
4. Every 5 working days following the determination that a child is unsafe and a safety plan is implemented. Such assessment must continue until either all children are assessed as being safe, the investigation is completed or all children assessed as unsafe are removed from the legal custody of their parents/caregivers and legal proceedings are being initiated in Juvenile Court. This assessment should be conducted as if there was no safety plan (i.e., would the child be safe without the safety plan?).
5. Within 5 working days of a supervisory approved case closure.

## 2. Sample

In this report, an intact family case is defined as one in which all children remained in the home on the case opening date; in other words, no children were removed from the home and placed into substitute care. Intact family cases that were open for 7 days or less were excluded from the analyses, as were cases in which any child in the family entered substitute care within 30 days of the case open date. Intact family cases opened in FY2014 – FY2017 were included in the analyses. The cut-off date of the analyses in the report is December 31, 2017.

## 3. Results

First, some descriptive statistics about CERAP completion among intact family cases are provided. Next, CERAP compliance for four of the five milestones will be presented. CERAP compliance of the milestone “whenever evidence or circumstances suggest that a child’s safety may be in jeopardy” is not included in the report because there is no way to define it using administrative data.

### 3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 shows the number of intact family cases opened each fiscal year between 2014 and 2017, inclusive. It also displays the number and percentage of these cases that had at least one CERAP completed by a caseworker<sup>1</sup> between the case open date and the case close date, as well as the number and percentage that did not have any CERAP completed. Between 84-88% of all intact family cases had at least one CERAP completed by a caseworker. The median number of CERAP assessments completed by a caseworker during the case was 3; most families had between 2 and 6 CERAP safety assessments completed by a caseworker during the case (see Table 2).

Table 1. Intact Family Cases With At Least One CERAP Safety Assessment Completed

FY	Intact Family Cases Opened	At least one CERAP		No CERAP	
		N	%	N	%
2014	5,459	4,594	84.2%	865	15.9%
2015	4,431	3,714	83.8%	717	16.2%
2016	4,151	3,560	85.8%	591	14.2%
2017	4,775	4,202	88.0%	573	12.0%

Note: CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

<sup>1</sup> Some intact family cases had CERAP assessments completed by an investigator between the case open date and the case close date. This may have occurred because the investigation was still pending when the intact family cases was open or because there was an additional screened-in report on the family while the case was open, which resulted in a new investigation. Since we were interested in CERAP completion by caseworkers during the intact family case, assessments completed by investigators were excluded from the analyses in this report.

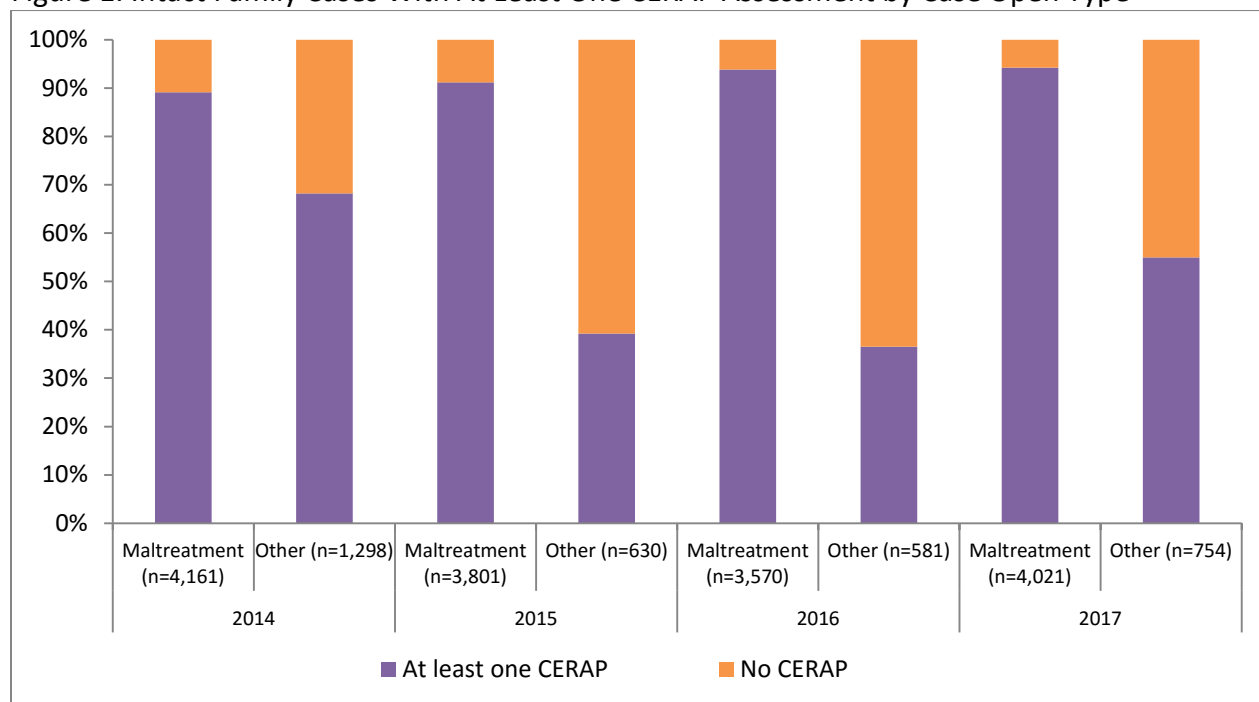
Table 2. Number of CERAP Assessments Completed During Intact Family Cases

FY	Intact Family Cases Opened	Number of CERAP Assessments				
		Min	25 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Median	75 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Max
2014	5,459	0	2	3	5	158
2015	4,431	0	2	3	6	126
2016	4,151	0	2	3	6	69
2017	4,775	0	2	3	5	79

Note: CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

Intact family services can be opened for a variety of reasons, not all of which are related to indicated child abuse or neglect. Although intact family cases require CERAP assessments regardless of the case open reason, we examined whether or not the presence of at least one CERAP assessment among intact family cases was related to the case open reason. Case open codes in SACWIS were coded into several categories that included physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, behavior problems, dependency, and other reasons (see Appendix A for the specific case open codes included in each of these categories). Physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect open codes were combined into a larger category of cases opened due to maltreatment; behavior problems, dependency, and other case open categories were combined into an “other” group. Figure 1 shows the percentage of intact family cases opened for maltreatment and other reasons each year that had at least one CERAP safety assessment completed by a caseworker during the case. The percentage of intact family cases opened for reasons related to maltreatment that had at least one CERAP was very high – 94% in FY2016 and FY2017. Intact family cases opened for reasons other than maltreatment were much less likely to have at least one CERAP assessment completed by a caseworker: between 36.5% and 68.2% of intact family cases opened for non-maltreatment reasons had at least one CERAP (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Intact Family Cases With At Least One CERAP Assessment by Case Open Type



Note: The case open reasons of “maltreatment” include physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. The case open reasons of “other” include behavior problems, dependency, and other reasons. CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

### 3.2 Milestone Compliance

#### 3.2.1 Milestone 1 – Within 5 Days of Case Assignment

The first milestone for intact family cases is “within 5 working days after initial case assignment and upon any and all subsequent case transfers. Note: If the child abuse/neglect investigation is pending at the time of case assignment, the Child Protection Service Worker remains responsible for CERAP safety assessment and safety planning until the investigation is complete. When the investigation is completed and approved, the assigned intact worker has 5 work days to complete a new CERAP.”<sup>2</sup> The data source used for the current analyses does not have an unambiguous field that indicates the “case assignment date.” The least ambiguous date available in our data source is family “case open date,” which precedes case assignment date. Therefore, to measure compliance with this milestone, we assumed that case assignment to an intact family caseworker occurs within 10 calendar days of the case opening date and CERAP completion should therefore occur within 15 calendar days of the intact family case opening date.

The third and fourth columns in Table 3 show the number and percentage of intact family cases that had a CERAP completed within 15 days of case opening, regardless of the

<sup>2</sup> Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) (2013). *Procedures 300 Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect Appendix G—Child Endangerment Risk Assessment*. Springfield, IL: Author.

milestone number that was checked on the CERAP form; the percentage has been 70% or more in each of the last four fiscal years and has been increasing over that time period – from 70% in FY2014 to 80% in FY2017. When we examine only those CERAP assessments that were completed within 15 working days of case opening and had the correct milestone checked, the percentage drops slightly – from 66.8% in FY2014 to 76.3% in FY2017 (see Table 3).

Table 3. CERAP Compliance for Milestone 1 – Within 5 Days of Case Assignment

FY	Intact Family Cases Opened	CERAP completed within 15 days		CERAP completed within 15 days and milestone 1 checked	
		N	%	n	%
2014	5,459	3,799	69.6%	3,649	66.8
2015	4,431	3,271	73.8%	3,092	69.8
2016	4,151	3,189	76.8%	3,038	73.2
2017	4,775	3,820	80.0%	3,643	76.3

Note: CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

The directions for milestone 1 indicate that “if the child abuse/neglect investigation is pending at the time of case assignment, the Child Protection Service Worker remains responsible for CERAP safety assessment and safety planning until the investigation is complete. When the investigation is completed and approved, the assigned intact worker has 5 work days to complete a new CERAP.” Therefore, we reran the analyses after excluding any intact family cases that had pending investigations on the case opening date (see Table 4). If you compare the number of intact family cases in Table 3 and Table 4, you can see that between 45% and 53% of intact family cases had a pending investigation when the family case was opened.

Table 4 displays the number and percentage of intact family cases that had a CERAP assessment completed within 15 calendar days of their case opening date, after excluding cases with pending investigations at case opening. As in Table 3, the results in the third and fourth columns included any CERAP assessment that was completed during this time period, regardless of the milestone number that was checked on the CERAP form. The percentage of intact family cases with a CERAP completed within 15 working days of case opening has been over 67% in each of the last four fiscal years and has been increasing over that time period – from 67.6% in FY2014 to 76.1% in FY2017. When we examine only those CERAP assessments that were completed within 15 working days of case opening and had “milestone 1” checked, the percentage drops slightly – from 64.7% in FY2014 to 72.5% in FY2017.

Table 4. CERAP Completion for Milestone 1 After Removing Pending Investigations

FY	Intact Family Cases with No Pending Investigations	CERAP completed within 15 days		CERAP completed within 15 days and milestone 1 checked	
		n	%	n	%
2014	2,980	2,014	67.6%	1,928	64.7%
2015	2,362	1,667	70.6%	1,585	67.1%
2016	2,035	1,452	71.4%	1,388	68.2%
2017	2,251	1,712	76.1%	1,631	72.5%

Note: CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

### 3.2.2 Milestone 2 – Every 90 Days From Case Opening

When an intact family service case is opened, a CERAP should be done “every 90 calendar days from the case opening date.” The sample for analyses of this milestone includes only those family cases that were open more than 90 days. For each family case, the number of 90-day intervals that the case was open was calculated; for example, a family case that was open for 200 days would have two 90-day intervals and therefore should have two CERAP assessments completed that were checked with milestone #2. Compliance with this milestone was examined by calculating the percentage of intact family cases that had a) the correct number of CERAP assessments completed every 90 days, b) at least one CERAP assessment completed every 90 days, or c) no CERAP assessments completed every 90 days (see Table 5). In addition, we examined the percentage of intact family cases that had the correct milestone checked for each of the CERAP assessments that were completed every 90 days (see Table 6).

Among intact cases opened for more than 90 days, between 30-40% did not have any CERAP assessments completed at 90 days intervals while the case was open; around a third had at least one CERAP completed at the 90 day milestones; and between 25-30% had all of the CERAPs completed at each 90 day interval (see Table 5). If the additional criteria is added so that only those CERAPs that have Milestone 2 checked are counted, compliance rates drop (see Table 6), and less than 20% had all the CERAP assessments completed on time and with milestone 2 checked.

Table 5. CERAP Completion Every 90 Days

FY	Intact Family Cases Opened	NO CERAPs		At Least One CERAP		ALL CERAPs	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
2014	4,686	1,942	41.4%	1,620	34.6%	1,124	24.0%
2015	3,801	1,273	33.5%	1,364	35.9%	1,164	30.6%
2016	3,527	1,057	30.0%	1,413	40.1%	1,057	30.0%
2017	4,077	1,515	37.2%	1,424	34.9%	1,138	27.9%

Notes: Only intact family cases that were opened more than 90 days were included. CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

Table 6. CERAP Completion Every 90 Days with Milestone 2 Checked

FY	Intact Family Cases Opened	NO CERAPs with milestone 2 checked		At least one CERAP completed with milestone 2 checked		ALL CERAPs completed with milestone 2 checked	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
2014	4,686	2,740	58.5%	1,306	27.9%	640	13.7%
2015	3,801	1,897	49.9%	1,219	32.1%	685	18.0%
2016	3,527	1,589	45.0%	1,339	38.0%	599	17.0%
2017	4,077	2,078	51.0%	1,280	31.4%	719	17.6%

Notes: Only intact family cases that were opened more than 90 days were included. CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

### 3.2.3 Milestone 4 – Every 5 Days if Child is Unsafe

A CERAP has to be completed “every 5 working days following the determination that a child is unsafe and a safety plan is implemented. Such assessment must continue until either all children are assessed as being safe, the investigation is completed or all children assessed as unsafe are removed from the legal custody of their parents/caregivers and legal proceedings are being initiated in Juvenile Court.” Compliance with this milestone was assessed by examining whether or not a CERAP was completed within 5 days of a prior CERAP that had an unsafe safety decision, after removing the unsafety decisions that were made by investigators. The first step in the analysis was to determine how many CERAPs with unsafe decisions were present among the intact family cases each year (see Table 7). Each year, between 32-41% of the CERAP assessments completed by caseworkers had an unsafe determination (see third column).

Table 7. CERAP Assessments with Unsafe Safety Decisions

FY	Total CERAP Assessments	CERAPs with an UNSAFE decision		CERAPs with an SAFE decision	
		n	%	n	%
2014	24,052	7,812	32.5%	16,238	67.5%
2015	23,685	9,678	40.9%	14,002	59.1%
2016	22,092	8,736	39.5%	13,353	60.4%
2017	20,833	8,059	38.7%	12,766	61.3%

Notes. There were between 2 to 9 CERAP assessments with no safety decisions recorded between 2014 and 2017. CERAP assessments with an unsafe decision that occurred after December 23, 2017 were excluded from the analysis because the dataset for this analysis ended on December 31, 2017. CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

Table 8 displays the percentage of these that had a subsequent CERAP completed within 5 days of the unsafe CERAP. Over the past four fiscal years, between 59% and 69% of the CERAP assessments with a decision of “unsafe” were followed by another CERAP within 5 days.



After adding and the criterion of milestone 4 checked, the percentage drops slightly to between 56% and 65% (see sixth columns in Table 8).

Table 8. CERAP Completion for Milestone 4

FY	CERAP with an UNSAFE decision	Another CERAP completed within 5 days		Another CERAP completed within 5 days and milestone 4 checked	
		n	%	n	%
2014	7,812	4,585	58.7%	4,340	55.6%
2015	9,678	6,148	63.5%	5,775	59.7%
2016	8,736	5,612	64.2%	5,275	60.4%
2017	8,059	5,545	68.8%	5,234	65.0%

Note: CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

### 3.2.4 Milestone 5 – Within 5 Days of Case Closure

The last CERAP milestone for intact family cases is “within 5 working days of a supervisory approved case closure.” Intact family cases that were still open on December 31, 2017 were excluded in the analyses for this milestone. Compliance with this milestone was assessed by examining: (1) whether the intact family case had a CERAP completed within 30 working days prior to or 5 working days after the family case close date and (2) whether milestone 5 was checked. The timeframe for this analysis was expanded to 30 days of case closure rather than 5 days because the procedures involved in “officially” closing an intact family case in SACWIS can take more than 5 days.

The percentage of intact family cases that received a CERAP within 30 working days before or 5 working days after case closure ranged from 71.7% in FY2014 to 77.9% in FY2017 (see the fourth column in Table 9). When the criteria of “milestone 5 is checked” is added, the percentage decreased by a few percentage points, from 63.9% in FY2014 to 71.4% in FY2017 (see the sixth column in Table 9).

Table 9. CERAP Completion for Milestone 5

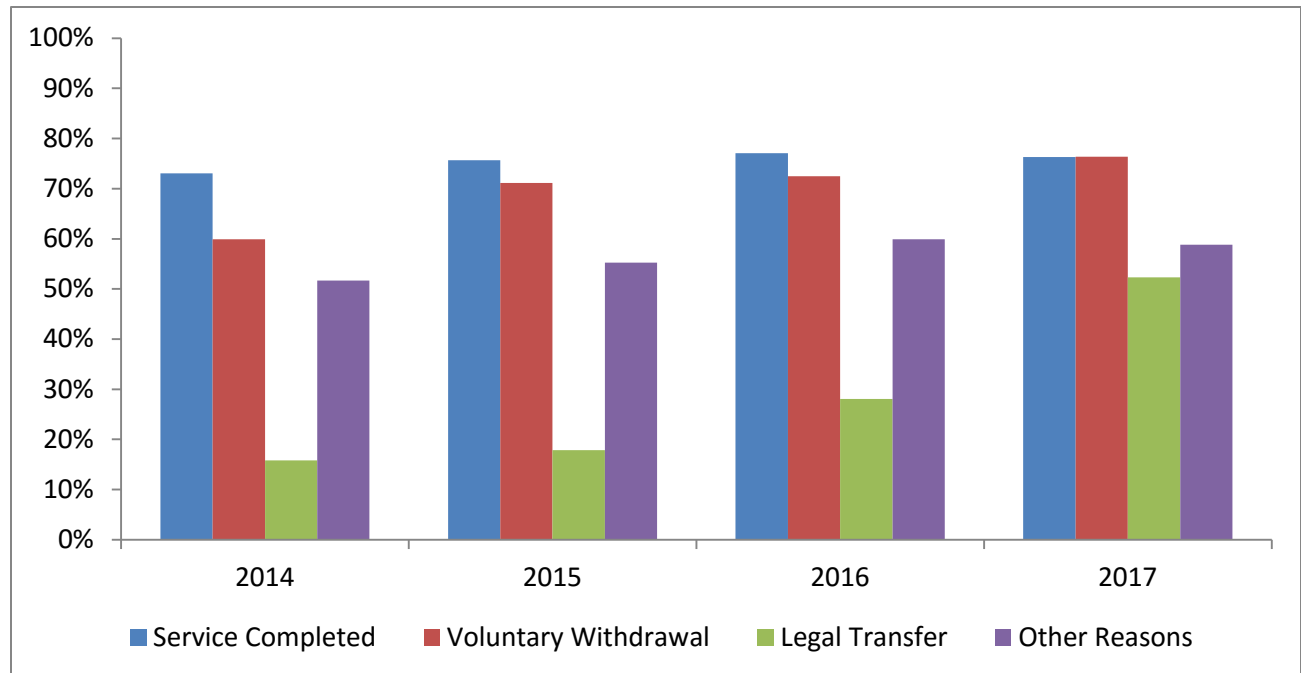
FY	Intact Family Cases	CERAP completed within 30 days before or 5 days after case closure		CERAP completed within 30 days before or five days after case closure and milestone 5 checked	
		n	%	n	%
2014	5,312	3,808	71.7%	3,394	63.9%
2015	4,150	3,098	74.7%	2,789	67.2%
2016	3,682	2,855	77.5%	2,612	70.9%
2017	3,202	2,495	77.9%	2,285	71.4%

Notes: Intact cases that were still open on December 31, 2017 were excluded. CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

Milestone 5 indicates that a CERAP is required within 5 days of a “supervisory approved” case closure. There is no variable in the data source to indicate which case closures are supervisory approved and which are not. However, we examined compliance with milestone 5 by the case close reason, which is listed in SACWIS, to see if there were any notable differences. Case closure reasons were categorized into four groups: (1) service completed, (2) voluntary withdrawal, (3) legal transfer, and (4) other reasons (see Appendix B for the specific codes included in each group).

Figure 2 shows the percentage intact family cases that had a CERAP completed either within 30 working days prior to or 5 working days after case closure and that were checked with milestone 5, grouped by case close reason. In each fiscal year, compliance with this milestone is highest among cases that were closed because services were completed (55.5% - 68.4%) and lowest among cases that were closed for legal transfers (36.7% - 52.3%).

Figure 2. CERAP Completion Within 30 Days Before or 5 Days After Case Closure by Case Close Reason



Notes: Intact cases that were still open on December 31, 2017 were excluded. CERAP assessments completed by an investigator were not counted in this analysis.

#### 4. Summary and Recommendations

The current report examined CERAP completion by caseworkers during an intact family case between FY2014 and FY2017. Using the most stringent criteria, meaning that the caseworker not only completed a CERAP safety assessment but also checked the correct milestone, completion rates varied substantially for the different intact family case milestones:

- Between **67% and 76%** of intact family cases each year had a CERAP assessment within 15 days of case opening, and the percentage has been increasing over time.
- Between **17-18%** of intact family cases had a CERAP completed every 90 days during the time that the case was open.
- Between **56% and 65%** of the intact family cases with an unsafe safety decision had another CERAP completed within 5 working days, and the percentage has been increasing over time.
- Between **64% and 71%** of intact family cases had a CERAP completed within 30 days prior to the case close date or within 5 days after it, and the percentage has been increasing over time.

In order to increase CERAP completion for the “every 90 days” milestone, the CERAP Advisory Committee recommends that:

- Agency Performance Teams (APT) should add CERAP completion to the list of things that are monitored.
- Since caseworkers are expected to update the family’s service plan every 90 days, it is recommended that workers receive a reminder to complete a new CERAP assessment when the service plan is updated.
- Alternatively, CERAP completion for this milestone could be added as a requirement in the case management information system before the caseworker is allowed to proceed with updating the service plan.

**Appendix A. Intact Family Case Open Types and Codes**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Open code</b>	<b>Open code description</b>
Physical Abuse	AB	Abuse
	AC	Abuse Control Group
	AF	Abuse/Family First
	AR	Abuse/Family First Reunification
	CA	Court Ordered Abuse
Sexual Abuse	SA	Sexual Abuse
	SC	Sexual Abuse/Control Group
	SF	Sexual Abuse/Family First
	SR	Sex AB/Family First Reunification
Neglect	CN	Court Ordered Neglect
	DN	Dependent/Neglect
	DR	Differential Response
	NC	Neglect/Control Group
	NF	Neglect/Family First
	NG	Neglect
	NR	Neglect/Family First Reunification
Behavior Problems/Dependency	CB	Child Behavior Problems
	CI	Child Illness/Handicap
	DP	Dependent
	PC	Parent Child Problems
	PF	Putative Father
Other Reasons	CH	Cuban/Haitian-Unmin
	AD	Adoption
	AA	Adoption Assistance
	DA	DASA Family Preservation
	DF	Donated Funds
	EF	Extended Family
	GS	Guardian Successor
	IC	Invest/Control Group
	IF	Invest/Family First
	MI	Missing
	OT	Other
	PA	Post Adoption
	PI	Pending Investigation
	PS	Preventative Services
	RA	Refugee Assistance-Unmin
	SG	Subsidized Guardianship
	SO	Serv to Other Agency
	TD	Unknown
	UF	Unfounded Family Preservation
	UM	Unwed Mother
UR	Unfounded Family Reunification	
UK	Unknown	
YI	Governor's Youth Initiative	

**Appendix B. Intact Family Case Close Types and Codes**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Closing reason code</b>	<b>Closing reason code description</b>
Service completed	SC	Service completed
Voluntary withdrawal	VW	Voluntary withdrawal
Legal transfer	CA	Completed adoption
	CR	Court order release
	CT	Court order not taken
	GS	Guardian Successor
	OA	Other agency services
	RA	Relative adoption
	RM	Reached Majority
	SG	Subsidized guardian
Other reasons	CD	Child Deceased
	MA	Move out of area
	NA	Non-active family
	OT	Other reason
	UK	Unknown
	UL	Unable to locate