

seriousness and complexity of the remedies required for any areas determined not in substantial conformity, not to exceed two years.

(2) Particularly egregious areas of nonconformity impacting child safety must receive priority in both the content and time frames of the program improvement plans and must be addressed in less than two years.

(3) The Secretary may approve extensions of deadlines in a program improvement plan not to exceed one year. The circumstances under which requests for extensions will be approved are expected to be rare. The title IV-E agency must provide compelling documentation of the need for such an extension. Requests for extensions must be received by ACF at least 60 days prior to the affected completion date.

(4) Title IV-E agencies must provide quarterly status reports (unless ACF and the title IV-E agency agree to less frequent reports) to ACF. Such reports must inform ACF of progress in implementing the measures of the plan.

(e) *Evaluating program improvement plans.* Program improvement plans will be evaluated jointly by the title IV-E agency and ACF, in collaboration with other members of the review team, as described in the title IV-E agency's program improvement plan and in accordance with the following criteria:

(1) The methods and information used to measure progress must be sufficient to determine when and whether the title IV-E agency is operating in substantial conformity or has reached the negotiated standard with respect to statewide/Tribal service area data indicators that failed to meet the national standard for that indicator;

(2) The frequency of evaluating progress will be determined jointly by the title IV-E agency and Federal team members, but no less than annually. Evaluation of progress will be performed in conjunction with the annual updates of the title IV-E agency's CFSP, as described in paragraph (f) of this section;

(3) Action steps may be jointly determined by the title IV-E agency and ACF to be achieved prior to projected completion dates, and will not require any further evaluation at a later date; and

(4) The title IV-E agency and ACF may jointly renegotiate the terms and conditions of the program improvement plan as needed, provided that:

(i) The renegotiated plan is designed to correct the areas of the title IV-E agency's program determined not to be in substantial conformity and/or achieve a standard for the statewide/Tribal service area data indicators that is acceptable to ACF;

(ii) The amount of time needed to implement the provisions of the plan does not extend beyond three years from the date the original program improvement plan was approved;

(iii) The terms of the renegotiated plan are approved by ACF; and

(iv) The Secretary approves any extensions beyond the two-year limit.

(f) *Integration of program improvement plans with CFSP planning.* The elements of the program improvement plan must be incorporated into the goals and objectives of the title IV-E agency's CFSP. Progress in implementing the program improvement plan must be included in the annual reviews and progress reports related to the CFSP required in 45 CFR 1357.16.

(This requirement has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget under OMB Control Number 0970-0214. In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.)

[65 FR 4080, Jan. 25, 2000, as amended at 66 FR 58675, Nov. 23, 2001; 77 FR 929, Jan. 6, 2012]

§ 1355.36 Withholding Federal funds due to failure to achieve substantial conformity or failure to successfully complete a program improvement plan.

(a) *For the purposes of this section:*

(1) The term "title IV-B funds" refers to the title IV-E agency's combined allocation of title IV-B subpart 1 and subpart 2 funds; and

(2) The term "title IV-E funds" refers to the title IV-E agency's reimbursement for administrative costs for the foster care program under title IV-E.

(b) *Determination of the amount of Federal funds to be withheld.* ACF will determine the amount of title IV-B and

IV–E funds to be withheld due to a finding that the title IV–E agency is not operating in substantial conformity, as follows:

(1) A title IV–E agency will have the opportunity to develop and complete a program improvement plan prior to any withholding of funds.

(2) Title IV–B and IV–E funds will not be withheld from a title IV–E agency if the determination of nonconformity was caused by the title IV–E agency's correct use of formal written statements of Federal law or policy provided the title IV–E agency by DHHS.

(3) A portion of the title IV–E agency's title IV–B and IV–E funds will be withheld by ACF for the year under review and for each succeeding year until the title IV–E agency either successfully completes a program improvement plan or is found to be operating in substantial conformity.

(4) The amount of title IV–B and title IV–E funds subject to withholding due to a determination that a title IV–E agency is not operating in substantial conformity is based on a pool of funds defined as follows:

(i) The title IV–E agency's allotment of title IV–B funds for each of the years to which the withholding applies; and

(ii) An amount equivalent to 10 percent of the title IV–E agency's Federal claims for title IV–E foster care administrative costs for each of the years to which withholding applies;

(5) The amount of funds to be withheld from the pool in paragraph (b)(4) of this section will be computed as follows:

(i) Except as provided for in paragraphs (b)(7) and (b)(8) of this section, an amount equivalent to one percent of the funds described in paragraph (b)(4) of this section for each of the years to which withholding applies will be withheld for each of the seven outcomes listed in §1355.34(b)(1) of this part that is determined not to be in substantial conformity; and

(ii) Except as provided for in paragraphs (b)(7) and (b)(8) of this section, an amount equivalent to one percent of the funds described in paragraph (b)(4) of this section for each of the years to which withholding applies will be withheld for each of the seven systemic factors listed in §1355.34(c) of this part

that is determined not to be in substantial conformity.

(6) Except as provided for in paragraphs (b)(7), (b)(8), and (e)(4) of this section, in the event the title IV–E agency is determined to be in nonconformity on each of the seven outcomes and each of the seven systemic factors subject to review, the maximum amount of title IV–B and title IV–E funds to be withheld due to the title IV–E agency's failure to comply is 14 percent per year of the funds described in paragraph (b)(4) of this section for each year.

(7) Title IV–E agencies determined not to be in substantial conformity that fail to correct the areas of nonconformity through the successful completion of a program improvement plan, and are determined to be in nonconformity on the second full review following the first full review in which a determination of nonconformity was made will be subject to increased withholding as follows:

(i) The amount of funds described in paragraph (b)(5) of this section will increase to two percent for each of the seven outcomes and each of the seven systemic factors that continues in nonconformity since the immediately preceding child and family services review;

(ii) The increased withholding of funds for areas of continuous nonconformity is subject to the provisions of paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) of this section;

(iii) The maximum amount of title IV–B and title IV–E funds to be withheld due to the title IV–E agency's failure to comply on the second full review following the first full review in which the determination of nonconformity was made is 28 percent of the funds described in paragraph (b)(4) of this section for each year to which the withholding of funds applies.

(8) Title IV–E agencies determined not to be in substantial conformity that fail to correct the areas of nonconformity through the successful completion of a program improvement plan, and are determined to be in nonconformity on the third and any subsequent full reviews following the first full review in which a determination of

nonconformity was made will be subject to increased withholding as follows:

(i) The amount of funds described in paragraph (b)(5) of this section will increase to three percent for each of the seven outcomes and each of the seven systemic factors that continues in nonconformity since the immediately preceding child and family services review;

(ii) The increased withholding of funds for areas of continuous nonconformity is subject to the provisions of paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) of this section;

(iii) The maximum amount of title IV-B and title IV-E funds to be withheld due to the title IV-E agency's failure to comply on the third and any subsequent full reviews following the first full review in which the determination of nonconformity was made is 42 percent of the funds described in paragraph (b)(4) of this section for each year to which the withholding of funds applies.

(c) *Suspension of withholding.* (1) For title IV-E agencies determined not to be operating in substantial conformity, ACF will suspend the withholding of the title IV-E agencies' title IV-B and title IV-E funds during the time that a program improvement plan is in effect, provided that:

(i) The program improvement plan conforms to the provisions of §1355.35 of this part; and

(ii) The title IV-E agency is actively implementing the provisions of the program improvement plan.

(2) Suspension of the withholding of funds is limited to three years following each review, or the amount of time approved for implementation of the program improvement plan, whichever is less.

(d) *Terminating the withholding of funds.* For title IV-E agencies determined not to be in substantial conformity, ACF will terminate the withholding of the title IV-E agency's title IV-B and title IV-E funds related to the nonconformity upon determination by the title IV-E agency and ACF that the title IV-E agency has achieved substantial conformity or has successfully completed a program improvement plan. ACF will rescind the withholding

of the portion of title IV-B and title IV-E funds related to specific goals or action steps as of the date at the end of the quarter in which they were determined to have been achieved.

(e) *Withholding of funds.* (1) Title IV-E agencies determined not to be in substantial conformity that fail to successfully complete a program improvement plan will be notified by ACF of this final determination of nonconformity in writing within 10 business days after the relevant completion date specified in the plan, and advised of the amount of title IV-B and title IV-E funds which are to be withheld.

(2) Title IV-B and title IV-E funds will be withheld based on the following:

(i) If the title IV-E agency fails to submit status reports in accordance with §1355.35(d)(4), or if such reports indicate that the title IV-E agency is not making satisfactory progress toward achieving goals or actions steps, funds will be withheld at that time for a period beginning October 1 of the fiscal year for which the determination of nonconformity was made and ending on the specified completion date for the affected goal or action step.

(ii) Funds related to goals and action steps that have not been achieved by the specified completion date will be withheld at that time for a period beginning October 1 of the fiscal year for which the determination of nonconformity was made and ending on the completion date of the affected goal or action step; and

(iii) The withholding of funds commensurate with the level of nonconformity at the end of the program improvement plan will begin at the latest completion date specified in the program improvement plan and will continue until a subsequent full review determines the title IV-E agency to be in substantial conformity or the title IV-E agency successfully completes a program improvement plan developed as a result of that subsequent full review.

(3) When the date the title IV-E agency is determined to be in substantial conformity or to have successfully completed a program improvement plan falls within a specific quarter, the amount of funds to be withheld will be computed to the end of that quarter.

§ 1355.37

(4) A title IV-E agency that refuses to participate in the development or implementation of a program improvement plan, as required by ACF, will be subject to the maximum increased withholding of 42 percent of its title IV-B and title IV-E funds, as described in paragraph (b)(8) of this section, for each year or portion thereof to which the withholding of funds applies.

(5) The title IV-E agency will be liable for interest on the amount of funds withheld by the Department, in accordance with the provisions of 45 CFR 30.18.

[65 FR 4081, Jan. 25, 2000, as amended at 66 FR 58675, Nov. 23, 2001; 77 FR 930, Jan. 6, 2012]

§ 1355.37 Opportunity for public inspection of review reports and materials.

The title IV-E agency must make available for public review and inspection all statewide or Tribal assessments (§1355.33(b)), report of findings (§1355.33(e)), and program improvement plans (§1355.35(a)) developed as a result of a full or partial child and family services review.

[77 FR 931, Jan. 6, 2012]

§ 1355.38 Enforcement of section 471(a)(18) of the Act regarding the removal of barriers to interethnic adoption.

(a) *Determination that a violation has occurred in the absence of a court finding.*

(1) If ACF becomes aware of a possible section 471(a)(18) violation, whether in the course of a child and family services review, the filing of a complaint, or through some other mechanism, it will refer such a case to the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) for investigation.

(2) Based on the findings of the OCR investigation, ACF will determine if a violation of section 471(a)(18) has occurred. A section 471(a)(18) violation occurs if a title IV-E agency or an entity in the State/Tribe:

(i) Has denied to any person the opportunity to become an adoptive or foster parent on the basis of the race, color, or national origin of the person, or of the child, involved;

(ii) Has delayed or denied the placement of a child for adoption or into foster care on the basis of the race, color,

45 CFR Ch. XIII (10-1-24 Edition)

or national origin of the adoptive or foster parent, or the child involved; or.

(iii) With respect to a title IV-E agency, maintains any statute, regulation, policy, procedure, or practice that on its face, is a violation as defined in paragraphs (a)(2)(i) and (2)(ii) of this section.

(3) ACF will provide the title IV-E agency or entity with written notification of its determination.

(4) If there has been no violation, there will be no further action. If ACF determines that there has been a violation of section 471(a)(18), it will take enforcement action as described in this section.

(5) Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (Pub. L. 95-608) does not constitute a violation of section 471(a)(18).

(b) *Corrective action and penalties for violations with respect to a person or based on a court finding.* (1) A title IV-E agency or entity found to be in violation of section 471(a)(18) of the Act with respect to a person, as described in paragraphs (a)(2)(i) and (a)(2)(ii) of this section, will be penalized in accordance with paragraph (g)(2) of this section. A title IV-E agency or entity determined to be in violation of section 471(a)(18) of the Act as a result of a court finding will be penalized in accordance with paragraph (g)(4) of this section. The title IV-E agency may develop, obtain approval of, and implement a plan of corrective action any time after it receives written notification from ACF that it is in violation of section 471(a)(18) of the Act.

(2) Corrective action plans are subject to ACF approval.

(3) If the corrective action plan does not meet the provisions of paragraph (d) of this section, the title IV-E agency must revise and resubmit the plan for approval until it has an approved plan.

(4) A title IV-E agency or entity found to be in violation of section 471(a)(18) of the Act by a court must notify ACF within 30 days from the date of entry of the final judgment once all appeals have been exhausted, declined, or the appeal period has expired.

(c) *Corrective action for violations resulting from a title IV-E agency's statute,*