

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 P.L. 105-89(ASFA)

At a standing-room-only ceremony on November 19, 1997, President Clinton signed ASFA into law. Bipartisan groups from both houses of Congress created the new law, which passed in the House and Senate by an overwhelming margin, after months of negotiation and compromise. In its final form the law makes strides toward more quickly removing children from dangerous situations and providing states with incentives to find adoptive or other permanent homes for foster children with special needs.

ASFA was a response to reasonable efforts requirements articulated in the Child Welfare Act. Caseworkers' interpretations of reasonable efforts seemed to focus on preserving families to the extent of sacrificing safety and permanency. As a result, some children were returned from foster care to dangerous birth parents, and other children lingered in foster care in hopes of family reunification.

Outcome based child welfare practice has been implemented in Illinois through both federal and state means: ASFA (The Adoption and Safe Families Act), Performance-based contracting, and Outcomes Monitoring (implemented in Illinois as a result of the BH Consent Decree). All of these have contributed to the development of an outcome-based environment in Illinois. The main focus of this training will be on permanency. Illinois data developed to monitor performance in regards to permanency will be shared.