FINAL REPORT

4th Mini Children and Family Service Review

Western Service Area

October 19, 20, and 21, 2010

Executive Summary
Children and Family Services Review
Western Service Area

This document presents the findings from the 2nd Mini-Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the Western Service Area. The Nebraska CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) team has identified Mini-CFSR as an important activity for assessing the performance of each service area and the state as a whole with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and their families. The Mini-CFSR is scheduled to take place in each service area, quarterly in the years 2010 and 2011.

The Western Service Area's 4th Mini-CFSR was conducted from October 19 to 21, 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review was October 1, 2009 to October 1, 2010. The findings were derived from file reviews of 14 cases (8 foster care and 6 in home services) which were randomly selected from all child welfare cases which were open at some time during the period under review. The reviews also included interviews with parents, children, foster parents, CFS specialists, and other service providers to assess items 17-20 within the review tool.

In the Western Service Area, 3 of the 14 cases reviewed were brought to the attention of DHHS for juvenile justice services and 5 of the cases were non court involved. Cases reviewed were from the following local offices: Gering, Lexington, McCook, North Platte and Sidney.

The first level reviews of the cases were completed by 7 staff from DHHS. A second level review of 100% of the cases was completed by Terri Farrell- DHHS and Lori Posvar- DHHS.

Background Information

The mini CFSR is modeled after the Federal CFSR and assesses the service area's performance on 23 items relevant to seven outcomes.

With regards to outcomes, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement (ANI) is assigned to each of the 23 items incorporated in the seven outcomes depending on the percentage of cases that receive a Strength rating in the onsite case review. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed are rated as Strength. Performance ratings for each of the seven outcomes are based on item ratings for each case. A service area may be rated as having "substantially achieved," "partially achieved," or "not achieved" the outcome. The determination of whether a service area is in substantial conformity with a particular outcome is based on the percentage of cases that were determined to have substantially achieved that outcome. In order for a service area to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. The standard for substantial conformity is based on the standard set for the Federal CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our country's most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of

performance should be acceptable. The focus of the CFSR process is on continuous quality improvement; standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to the goal of achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being.

A service area that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must work with their local CQI team to develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of concern associated with that outcome.

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes

The 4th Mini-CFSR identified several areas of high performance in the Western Service Area with regard to achieving desired outcomes for children. Although the service area did not achieve substantial conformity with any of the seven CFSR outcomes, the service area did achieve overall ratings of Strength for the individual indicators pertaining to the following items: services to protect child(ren) in the home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care (item 3), foster care re-entries (item 5), adoption (item 9), proximity of foster care placement (item 11), and placement with siblings (item 12)..

The Mini-CFSR also identified key areas of concern with regard to achieving outcomes for children and families. Concerns were identified with regard to Safety 2- children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate, which was substantially achieved in 50% of the cases reviewed. Within this outcome, Item 4- risk assessment and safety management, was rated a Strength in 50% of the cases reviewed.

Concerns were also identified with regard to Permanency Outcome 1- children have permanency and stability in their living situations, which was substantially achieved in 50% of the cases reviewed. Within Permanency Outcome 2, the Western Service Area achieved ratings of 63% for Item 7- permanency goal for child and 50% for Item 9- adoption.

Additionally, concerns were identified with regard to Well-Being Outcome 1- families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs, which was substantially achieved in only 21% of the cases reviewed. The lowest ratings within this outcome were for Item 17- needs and services to children, parents, and foster parents, which was rated a Strength in 36% of the cases reviewed; Item 18- child and family involvement in case planning, which was rated a Strength in 43% of the cases reviewed; and Item 20- caseworker visits with parent(s), which was rated as a Strength rating for only 33% of the cases reviewed.

KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Status of Safety Outcome S1

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	3	60%
Partially Achieved:	1	20%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	20%
Not Applicable:	9	64%

Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment
In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with child welfare agency policy. A new intake tool was implemented in 2003, which is based upon a priority response model with Priority 1 calling for a response by the worker within 24 hours of the time that the report is received by DHHS. Priority 2 designated reports are to have face to face contact with the alleged victim by Protection and Safety within 0 to 5 days from the time the intake is received and Priority 3 has a response time of 0-10 days. Data is generated monthly to ensure compliance with the response times.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 5 of the 14 cases. The item was rated a strength in 3 (60%) of the applicable cases and an area needing improvement in 2 (40%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In all cases, the investigations of child maltreatment were initiated and face to face contact with the child victim was made within a timely manner according to the priority assigned to the allegation.
- (1 in home case)
  - The investigation of a priority 3 child maltreatment report was initiated well within timeframes as face to face contact with the child victim was made on the same day that the report was received.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 in home cases)
  - For one case, there was no documentation in the case file to show when contact was made with the child for one of the reports received. There was also no documentation in this case to show that an investigation was completed or to show what determination had been made.
  - In one case, there were three reports received during the period under review. Timeframes were met for one of the reports received but were not met for the other two reports.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Documentation needs to include reasons why contact with the child(ren) was not made in a timely manner according to State policy.

Item 2: <u>Repeat maltreatment</u>

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had been at least one substantiated/inconclusive/petition to be filed maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated/inconclusive/petition to be filed report occurred within a 6 month period before or after the report identified. Cases were considered not applicable for assessment if the child or family had never had a maltreatment report.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 3 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 2 (67%) of the applicable cases and an area needing improvement in 1 (33%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 foster care case and 1 in home case) – In both cases there were no instances of repeat maltreatment occurring within six months.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 in home case)
  - In one case it was noted a second incident of maltreatment was reported within six months of the original report. There is no documentation in the case file to show that the second report has been investigated.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ It is noted that a majority of the cases reviewed (11 of 14) were not applicable to this item as there were no maltreatment reports in these cases found during the Period Under Review (October 1, 2009 to October 1, 2010).

☑ The review identified that improvement in this area may be gained through timely documentation of investigations.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Status of Safety Outcome S2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	7	50%
Partially Achieved:	4	29%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	21%
Not Applicable:	0	0%

Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal
For this item, reviewers were to assess whether in responding to a substantiated/inconclusive/petition to be filed maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 3 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 8 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In two of these cases, the children were reunified during the period under review and a variety of services including therapy, drug and alcohol testing and assessments were provided in order to successfully prevent re-entry into foster care.
  - In one case, while the child was removed without first having provided services to prevent entry into foster care, it was determined that immediate removal was necessary to ensure the safety of the child.
- (5 in home cases)
  - In all five of these cases, a variety of formal supports including family support, individual therapy, family therapy, child care and tracker services were provided to protect the children and prevent entry into foster care.
  - In three of the cases, reviewers specifically noted that extended family members were involved as informal supports and aided in protecting the children and preventing entry into foster care.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Reviewers identified that a wide variety of services are being provided to families to protect children and prevent entry or re-entry into foster care. These services include family support, family therapy, individual therapy, tracker services, school intervention services, case management and drug treatment and testing.

Item 4: <u>Risk of harm to child</u>

The assessment of Item 4 required reviewers to determine whether DHHS had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if the agency terminated the child's parent's rights as a means of decreasing risk of harm for the child (for example, a termination of parental rights would prevent a child from being returned to a home in which the child would be at risk) and has taken action to minimize other risks to the child (for example, preventing contact with individuals who pose a risk to the child's safety). If a case is/was open for services for a reason other than a court substantiated, inconclusive, petition to be filed or unfounded report of abuse or neglect, or apparent risk of harm to the child(ren) (for example, a juvenile justice case), reviewers were to document this information and rate the item as not applicable. Note, however, that for a child(ren) noted as a "child in need of supervision" or "delinquent", reviewers were to explore and determine whether there was a risk of harm to the child, in addition to the other reasons the case may have been opened, prior to rating it as not applicable. Cases were not applicable for assessment of this item if there was no current or prior risk of harm to the children in the family.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 7 (50%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 7 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
  - In all four of these cases, it was found that the safety of the target child was assessed while placed in out of home care and during visits with their parent(s). There were no apparent risk or safety issues for the child(ren) remaining in the home.
- (3 in home cases)
  - In all three of these cases, documentation shows ongoing risk and safety assessments were completed both formally and informally while the children were placed with their parent(s). A variety of methods were used to assess risk and safety including initial assessments using the Nebraska Safety Model, Comprehensive Family Assessments, and contacts by the CFSS and Service Coordinator with the parents and children..

Areas needing improvement:

- (4 foster care cases)
  - In two cases, it was noted that the agency did not conduct or document a safety assessment prior to reunification.
  - In two cases reviewed, it was noted that there were no ongoing safety assessments completed during the period under review.
  - In one case, no safety assessment was completed for the children remaining in the family home.
  - In four cases, it was noted that there was no safety plan or that the safety plan was not updated as needed when changes in case circumstances, including reunification, occurred.

- (3 in home cases)
  - In one case, no evidence of ongoing safety assessments could be found. In this same case, it was found that there had also been no updates made to the safety plan.
  - In two cases, an initial safety assessment was completed; however an ongoing assessment was not completed after new allegations of abuse / neglect were received.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ The Nebraska Safety Intervention System (Safety Model) should be utilized to assess risk and improve safety interventions with children and families. Reviewers found that while the Nebraska Safety Intervention System was utilized for the majority of initial assessments, it was not used as consistently for ongoing safety assessments. Reviewers relied on informal assessments documented during face to face contacts and Family Team Meetings during their review of this item.

☑ Reviewers identified that safety plans are not in place or are not updated as needed to reflect changes in the case.

☑ Risk to children remaining in the home should also be evaluated.

II. PERMANENCY

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Status of Permanency Outcome P1

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	4	50%
Partially Achieved:	4	50%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0%
Not Applicable:	6	43%

Item 5: Foster care re-entries

Reviewers rated this assessment a Strength if during the period under review a child did not have an entry into care within a 12-month period from being discharged from another entry into foster care. Reviewers also rated this item as a Strength if a re-entry was an isolated incident during which the agency did what was reasonable to manage the risk following reunification but the child re-entered care for another reason (for example, the death of a parent). Reviewers rated this item as an Area Needing Improvement if re-entries occurring within a 12-month period were due to the same general reasons or same perpetrators. Reviewers rated this item as Not Applicable if : (1) the child entered foster care before, and remained in foster care during, the period under review; or (2) the child entered foster care before, and exited foster care during, the period under review and there was not another entry into foster care during the period under review.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 5 was applicable for 2 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 2 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In both of these cases there were no re-entries into foster care.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ The reviewers identified no issues with re-entry into foster care in any applicable cases.

Item 6: <u>Stability of foster care placement</u>

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement changes during the period under review, and if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 6 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 6 (75%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (25%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases)
  - In one of the cases reviewed, a strength was noted as the target child was placed in an appropriate and stable relative foster home, and that this was the child's only placement.
  - In four cases, the target child experienced only one placement during the period under review and the placement was stable.
  - In one case, while two placements were noted, the reviewers found strengths as the placement change was made in the best interest of the child, so that the child could go from licensed foster care to a relative foster placement.

Areas needing improvement

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In these two cases, it was noted that the youth experienced multiple placements, at least one of which was an unplanned placement change.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Appropriate relative foster placements contributed to placement stability in some cases.
☑ In most cases, documentation of the reason for placement changes was found in the case file.
☑ Reviewers also identified that some of the cases where multiple placements were experienced, placement changes were made based on the child's needed level of care.

Item 7: <u>Permanency goal for child</u>

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether DHHS had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner, including filing for termination of parental rights when relevant. Reviewers examined the appropriateness of a goal that ultimately rules out adoption, guardianship, or return to family. Reviewers assessed whether the child's best interests were thoroughly considered by DHHS in setting a goal of other planned living

arrangement, and that such a decision is /was continually reviewed for ongoing appropriateness. Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that DHHS had established an appropriate permanency goal in a timely manner. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when goals of reunification were not changed in a timely manner when it was apparent that reunification was unlikely to happen, termination of parental rights was not filed when the child had been foster care for 15 of the past 22 months and no compelling reasons were noted in the file, or the goal established for the child was not appropriate. Cases were identified as Not Applicable if the child was not in foster care.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 7 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (63%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 3 (38%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
  - In all of the cases given a strength rating, permanency goals for the child were specified in the case file and established in a timely manner.

Areas needing improvement

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In one case, no permanency goals had been established or documented.
  - It was noted in one case that the reviewers could not determine the date the primary permanency goal had been established based on the documentation in the case file.
  - In one case, the child had been in placement 16 of 22 months without a filing for termination of parental rights and there was no documentation to show an exception or compelling reason for not filing termination of parental rights.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Permanency goals need to be identified in the case file. Documentation of permanency goals should accurately reflect goals that are being addressed for the child.
- ☑ The first permanency goal of the child should be established within 60 days from the child's entry into foster care.
- ☑ Case file documentation needs to include all information regarding termination of parental rights for children who have been in foster care at least 15 out of the most recent 22 months. Documentation should include evidence of a petition for termination of parental rights and / or documentation of compelling reasons for not filing for termination of parental rights.

Item 8: <u>Reunification, Guardianship or Permanent Placement with Relatives</u>

In assessing these cases reviewers determined whether DHHS had achieved children's goals of reunification, guardianship or placement with relatives in a timely manner. If the goals had not been achieved in a timely manner, reviewers determined whether DHHS had made diligent efforts to achieve the goals.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 8 was applicable for 3 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 2 (67%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1(33%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In one case, after being in out of home placement for 9 months, reunification was successfully achieved.
  - In one case, the case file shows that concerted efforts were being made to achieve the permanency goal of reunification.

- (1 foster care case)
  - In this case, there was no documentation of efforts being made to achieve the primary permanency goal of guardianship.

Item 9: <u>Adoption</u>

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether appropriate and timely efforts (within 24 months of the most recent entry into foster care) had been or were being made to achieve finalized adoption.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 9 was applicable for 1 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 1 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 foster care case)
  - The strength noted in this case was that the permanency goal was changed from reunification to adoption in a timely manner when it became apparent that reunification would not be possible. Efforts made toward this goal resulted in adoption being achieved within 10 months of the child entering foster care placement.

Item 10: <u>Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement</u>

Reviewers determined whether the agency had made or was making diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements (Independent Living, Self-Sufficiency or Family Preservation).

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 10 was applicable for 2 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 1 (50%) of the applicable cases and as an area needing improvement in 1 (50%) of applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 foster care case)
  - In this case, documentation in the case file showed that efforts were made for the child to achieve a permanent living arrangement with relative foster parents and to continue this arrangement until the child reached age of majority and began attending college.

Areas needing improvement

- (1 foster care case)
  - In this case, reviewers found no documentation to show that efforts had been made toward the concurrent goal of independent living.

Status of Permanency Outcome P2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	5	63%
Partially Achieved:	2	25%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	13%
Not Applicable:	6	43%

Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement

Reviewers were to determine whether the child's foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which termination of parental rights had been completed prior to the period under review, or in which contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 11 was applicable for 7 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 7 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (7 foster care cases)
  - In one of the cases, the child was placed in the same community as his parent.
  - In two cases, the child was placed within 20 miles of their parents.
  - In one case, the reviewers noted that while the child was placed over two hours away from her father's home this placement was found to be the most suitable as it was a relative placement with maternal grandparents and the father had refused to have contact with the child.
  - In three cases, while placement was not in close proximity to the child's parents and home community, documentation showed that the placement was in the closest available facility which could meet the child's needs.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ The review identified that children are commonly placed within their home community or within close proximity to their parents and home community.

☑ In the instances in which placement was not within close proximity to the child's family, it was identified that this occurred because an appropriate placement was not available in the child's home community and that the closest appropriate placement was utilized.

Item 12: <u>Placement with siblings</u>
Reviewers were to determine whether siblings were or had been placed together and if not, was separation necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 12 was applicable for 3 of the 14 cases. This item was rated a strength in all 3 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:
- (3 foster care case)
  - In all three cases, the target child was placed with their siblings in the same foster care setting.

Reviewer Comments:
☑ The review identified successful efforts were made to place siblings together in the same foster care setting.

Item 13: <u>Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care</u>
In assessing this item reviewers determined whether DHHS had or was making diligent efforts to facilitate visitations between children in foster care and their parents and siblings. Reviewers also determined whether these visits typically occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the children and families. Non applicable cases were those where the child had no siblings in foster care, if the parents could not be located, and/or if visitation with the parents was considered not in the best interests of the child. Reviewers rated this item for the period under review based on the individual needs of the child and family, rather than on the DHHS policy regarding visitation. The DHHS visitation guidebook recommends a minimum of one visit every two weeks between child and parent unless it would not be in the child's best interest because the parent is the perpetrator of sever physical abuse or sexual abuse. DHHS Policy requires that siblings placed separately must have a minimum of one visit per month. Other forms of communication including phone calls and letters are strongly encouraged.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 13 was applicable for 7 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (71%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (29%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:
- (5 foster care cases)
  - In one case, documentation in the case file showed that the agency provided travel assistance in order to ensure sufficient visitation and promote the continuity of the parent-child relationship.
  - In another case, documentation shows sufficient visitation with parents and siblings through home visits every other weekend and regular telephone contact.
  - In one case, documentation shows that frequent visitation occurred between the child and his mother. Documentation also shows efforts to involve the father in visitation with the child; however the father refused to be involved despite agency efforts.

- One case shows that supervised visitation was provided to promote visits between the children and parents.
- In one case, while visitation between the children and their parents was not frequent or consistent, due to the actions and behaviors of the parents; documentation in the file does show that the agency made efforts to promote visitation.

Area needing improvement

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In one case, there was no documentation of visits or efforts to promote visits with the father of the child. In this case, the father was the absent parent at the time of the child's removal.
  - In one case, there was no documentation of visits or efforts to promote visits between the child and her mother. In this case, the mother was the absent parent at the time of the child's removal.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ The information gained from this review indicates that when the child's parents are separated and the plan is to reunify with one parent, the trend is to work more closely with that parent and efforts to promote visitation are not as strong toward the other parent. Visitation efforts should be made for both parents.

☑ Visitation with the child and his/her parents (mother and /or father when applicable) and the child and his or her siblings should be clearly documented in the case file showing frequency and quality of visits.

Item 14: <u>Preserving connections</u>

Reviewers determined whether DHHS had or was making diligent efforts to preserve the child's primary connection and characteristics while in foster care. Reviewers had to make a professional judgment about the child's primary connections and then explore whether those connections have been preserved through case planning and service delivery.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 14 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (63%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 3 (38%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
  - In one case, the child was placed in their home community and was able to maintain connections with extended family members as relatives were identified to provide foster care and child care.
  - In one case where the child was placed outside of their home community, it was noted some important connections to extended family were maintained as the child was placed with her maternal grandparents.
  - In another case where the child's placement was outside of the home community it was found that connections were still able to be maintained through regular home visits every other weekend and through use of a Facebook account.

- In another case, the child was able to maintain contact with his adult sibling and a friend of the family whom the child identifies as his father figure.
- In one of the cases reviewed, the children are of Native American decent and the case file shows that notification was made to the appropriate tribe in accordance with ICWA.

Area needing improvement

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In all three cases, there was no documentation of efforts being made to preserve connections for the child while in foster care.
  - In one of these cases, there was no documentation to show whether inquiries were made to determine if the child had Native American ties.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Documentation needs to identify the child's important connections and efforts made by the department to preserve those connections.

☑ Documentation should include information to support that sufficient inquiry was conducted with both mother and father and relatives to determine whether or not the child may be a member of or eligible for membership in a Native American tribe.

Item 15: Relative placement

Reviewers had to focus on the title IV-E provision that requires States to consider giving preference to placing the child with relatives, and determine whether the State considered such a placement and how (for example, seeking out and evaluating the child's relatives). Relatives include non-custodial parents, such as fathers not in the home, if applicable to the case. Reviewers had to determine the extent to which the agency identified relatives who had some reasonable degree of relationship with the child and with whom the child might reside. There did not need to be in the case record a formal evaluation of relatives with whom the child might reside, but for reviewers to have answered "yes" evidence must exist, through either the case documentation or the case interviews, that relatives were evaluated and considered. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if (1) the agency assessed the child's needs and determined that he/she required special services *and* (2) the agency assessed potential relative placements and determined that the relative placements did not have the capacity to meet the child's needs. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength unless no efforts were made to locate or identify relatives for placement, or placement with a family known to the child. Reviewers rated this item as not applicable if (1) the agency determined upon the child's initial entry into care that his/her needs required residential treatment services and a relative placement would be inappropriate, or (2) if relatives were unable to be identified despite the agency's diligent efforts to do so, or in situations such as abandonment in which the identity of the parents and relatives remains unknown despite efforts to identify them. Reviewers were to check not applicable if the child was placed with relatives.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 15 was applicable for 4 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 3 (75%) of the applicable cases and as an area needing improvement in 1 (25%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In two of the cases the children were placed with their maternal grandparents
  - In another case, a stable placement with the child's maternal aunt was achieved.

Area needing improvement

- (1 foster care case)
  - In one case, it was noted that there were no documented efforts to identify either maternal or paternal family members.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Both maternal and paternal relatives should be identified.

☑ Efforts to identify and pursue appropriate relative placements should be clearly documented in the case file.

Item 16: <u>Relationship of child in care with parents</u>

In assessing this item, reviewers determined if there was evidence of a strong, emotionally supportive relationship between the child in foster care and the child's parents during the period under review. Reviewers assigned a rating of Strength for this item when there was evidence of regular visitation between parent and child. Reviewers assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when they determined the agency had not made diligent efforts to support the child's relationship with the father or mother. A case was considered not applicable if a relationship with the child's parents was contrary to the child's safety or best interest during the period under review.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 16 was applicable for 7 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (71%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (29%) of the applicable cases.

Strength:

- (5 foster care)
  - In all five of these cases, documentation showed that the agency had made efforts to support and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the target child and their parents.

Area needing improvement

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In one case, there was documentation showing that efforts were made to support and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child and their mother; however, there was no documentation to show that efforts had been made toward the child's father, who was an absent parent at the time of the child's removal.
  - In another case, there was documentation showing that efforts were made to support and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child and her father; however there was no documentation showing that efforts had been made towards the child's mother, who was an absent parent at the time of the child's removal.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Documentation should include the agency's efforts to provide opportunities or to support additional activities to promote, strengthen, or maintain parent-child relationships.

☑ The information indicates a trend in which the agency makes stronger efforts toward the relationship of the child and the parent with whom the agency intends to reunify the child with and make insufficient efforts toward the other parent.

III. WELL-BEING

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB1

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	3	21%
Partially Achieved:	9	64%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	14%
Not Applicable:	0	0%

Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents
In assessing item 17, reviewers were to determine whether DHHS adequately assessed the needs of children, parents and foster parents AND provided the services to meet those needs. Reviewers rated item 17 as a strength if (1) a needs assessment was conducted for the child(ren), parents, and foster parents, and (2) appropriate services were provided in relation to the identified needs of the target child in foster care cases, or for all children in in-home cases. Education and physical or mental health services to the target child were not rated for this item (these are rated in items 21, 22, and 23). Reviewers had to document whether these services were provided to parents.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (36%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 9 (64%) of the applicable cases. The overall rating for item 17 is based on the combination of the following three sub-items:

Item 17a: Needs Assessment and Services to Children: The assessment of item 17a was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 13 (93%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (7%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
  - In these seven cases, the needs of the children were assessed in a variety of ways including initial assessments, caseworker visits with the child, Family Team Meetings, OJS evaluation, psychological evaluation, Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Assessment, and Youth Level of Service / Case Management Inventory.

- In these seven cases, the needs of the children were met through assistance with transportation, out of home placement, residential treatment, family support services, independent living skills, individual therapy and family therapy. Reviewers found no unmet needs for the children in these cases.

- (5 in home cases)
  - In these five cases, the needs of the children were assessed both formally and informally through the initial safety assessment, psychological evaluation, during Family Team Meetings, and during worker contacts with the child, family, and safety plan participants.
  - In these five cases, identified needs of the children were met through assistance with family support services, drop in visits, tracker services, and child care. Reviewers found no unmet needs for the children in these cases.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 in home case)
  - In this one case, reviewers found that the needs of the child were not assessed. The reviewers also noted that since the needs were not assessed, no services were provided and they could not determine whether there were any unmet needs.

Item 17b: <u>Needs Assessment and Services to Parents:</u> The assessment of item 17b was applicable for 13 of the 14 cases reviewed. This item was rated as a strength in 3 (23%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 10 (77%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In these three cases, the needs of the parents were assessed on an ongoing basis using both formal and informal means including initial assessment, OJS evaluation, Family Team Meetings and regular monthly contact with the caseworker.
  - In these three cases, identified needs were met through family therapy, family support services, drug and alcohol testing and treatment, and assistance with transportation and lodging to facilitate visitation.

Areas needing improvement:

- (4 foster care cases)
  - In one case, there was no indication that the needs of either of the parents were assessed or met.
  - In two cases where the father was an absent parent, the needs of the mother were assessed and services provided to meet all needs; however there was no documentation of efforts made to assess the needs of the father or to provide services to meet his needs.
  - In one case where both parents resided in the family home, the needs of the mother were assessed and services were provided as needed; however there was no indication of efforts to assess or meet the needs of the father.

- (6 in home cases)
  - In two cases, it was found that efforts were not made to assess the needs of either of the parents.
  - In three cases, where the mother was in the home but the father was absent, the agency assessed the needs of the mother, but did not make efforts to assess the needs of the father.
  - In one case, where both parents resided in the family home, the needs of the mother were assessed and met, while the needs of the father were not assessed.

Item 17c: <u>Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents:</u> The assessment of item 17c was applicable for 4 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
  - In all four cases it was noted that the needs of the foster parents were assessed normally through involvement in Family Team Meetings and worker visits with the foster parents, and all needs were found to have been met.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Reviewers identified that in the majority of the cases the agency performed well in terms of assessing and meeting the needs of the child.

☑ In terms of the parents, reviewers noted that in some cases the needs of one parent were identified and addressed while the other parent's needs were not. Most often, when the parents of the child were separated, the needs of the parent with whom the agency was working toward reunification were assessed and met while the needs of the other parent were not assessed or met.

☑ The needs of foster parents were addressed in all applicable cases.

☑ Caseworker contacts and Family Team Meetings were the most frequently noted methods of assessing needs for children, parents and foster parents.

Item 18: <u>Child and family involvement in case planning</u>

In assessing this item reviewers were to determine whether the agency actively involved the parent(s), guardian, child(ren) and other people identified by the family in the case planning activities relevant to the current case plan. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent (guardian) and the child (older than 8 and not incapacitated) had actively participated in identifying the services and goals for the case plan.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 18 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 6 (43%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 8 (57%) of the applicable cases.

Strength

- (5 foster care cases)
  - In four of the cases, the reviewers noted that the case worker made active efforts to involve or encourage the child (if age appropriate) and both parents to be involved in the case.
  - In one case where parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review, it was noted that the caseworker involved the child in case planning decisions during private face to face visits with the child.
- (1 in home case)
  - In this case, both parents were involved in the case planning process through family team meetings and caseworker contacts with the parents.

Areas needing improvement

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In two cases, the reviewers found that one or both of the parents were not involved in the case planning process and there was nothing to show that concerted efforts had been made to involve the parents in this process.
  - In one case, it was noted that while both parents were present at Family Team Meetings, there was no documentation to show that the parents were involved in case planning activities. It was also noted in this case that the child felt that her input at family team meetings was ignored.
- (5 in home cases)
  - In three cases, reviewers found that while the mother was involved in case planning, there was no indication of efforts to involve the father, who was the absent parent, in the development or evaluation of case plan goals.
  - In one case, while the father was involved in case planning, there was no indication that efforts had been made to involve the mother, who is the absent parent, in case planning activities.
  - In one case, reviewers found no evidence that either parent was involved in case planning. In this case, the mother felt excluded from decision making and the process of developing the case plan.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Reviewers noted that in several cases, only one of the parents was involved in the case planning process and that no documented efforts could be found to involve the other parent.

☑ The reviewers identified that case planning is primarily occurring during monthly contacts with the parents and child as well as during Family Team Meetings.

Item 19: <u>Worker visits with child</u>

Reviewers were to determine the typical pattern of visits between the worker and child and if these visits were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well being. Reviewers were also to determine whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and achievement of the goals.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 19 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 12 (86%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (14%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
  - In all of these cases, face to face visits between the case worker and the target child occurred at least monthly and were of sufficient quality as the caseworker addressed issues of safety, permanency and well being as well as case planning with the child.
  - In one case, a courtesy worker was utilized during some months to assure that monthly visits with the child occurred due to the long travel distance.
- (4 in home cases)
  - In all four of these cases, it was found that the caseworker had private face to face contacts with the children at least once per month and the visits were found to meet quality as they involved issues of safety, permanency and well-being.
  - In one of these cases, it is noted that the case file only contained documentation of one visit and therefore reviewers had to rely upon interviews to determine overall frequency and quality of visits.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 in home cases)
  - In one case, it was noted that visits with the child were not of sufficient frequency as they occurred less than once per month. It was also noted that the visits that did occur were not sufficient in quality due to not being private and not taking place in the child's home.
  - In one case, it was noted that caseworker visits with the child were not occurring regularly during the first part of the period under review; however it is noted that the current case worker is meeting with the children on a monthly basis.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Reviewers found a lack of documentation in the case file regarding the occurrence of visits and had to rely upon interviews to gather information to assess sufficient frequency of visits. Documentation should address the frequency of worker's visits with the child. If face to face contact between the worker and the child was less than monthly, documentation should include reasons why the contact did not occur.

☑ Reviewers also noted a lack of detail in documentation regarding quality of contacts between the caseworker and child and had to rely upon information gathered through interviews to determine if caseworker visits with the child were of sufficient quality. Documentation should include enough information to determine the quality of the visit and to show that the visit was sufficient to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency and well-being of the child and to promote achievement of case plan goals.

Item 20: <u>Worker visits with parents</u>

Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker had sufficient face to face contact with parents to encourage attainment of their children's permanency goal while ensuring safety and well being. Cases that were considered not applicable were those in which there is no plan for further involvement between the parents and the agency or the parents and the child, and the child is not in a permanent home.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 20 was applicable for 12 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (33%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 8 (67%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In all three cases, reviewers found that the visits with the parents were of sufficient quality; occurring at least monthly. Visits with the parents were also determined to be of sufficient quality as the caseworker and parents discussed issues pertaining to the permanency and well being of the child.
- (1 in home cases)
  - In this one case, documentation in the case file and information gathered through interviews showed that the caseworker visits were of a sufficient frequency as they occurred at least monthly. Visits were also found to be of sufficient quality based upon documentation regarding the condition of the home and caseworker observations of the interactions between the parents and child.

Areas needing improvement:

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In one case, visits with the parents are reported to take place monthly; however there is no documentation in the case file and no information could be provided regarding the content of the visits, therefore it could not be determined if visits were of good quality.
  - In one case, it was noted that caseworker visits with parents are not of sufficient frequency, occurring on an average of every other month for the mother and less frequently for the father.
  - In one case, reviewers found frequency and quality of contacts with the mother were sufficient; however there was no information regarding the frequency and quality of visits or efforts to make contact with the father, who is identified as being absent from the family home.
- (5 in home cases)
  - In two cases, the reviewers found that the frequency and quality of visits with both the mother and the father was insufficient.
  - In two other cases, the case file and information gathered during interviews showed that the caseworker had visits with the mother that were sufficient in frequency and quality, but that no efforts were made to have contact with the father / absent parent.

- In another case it was found that there were sufficient visits with the father, however there was no indication of efforts to have contact with the mother who was absent from the home.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Much of the information regarding the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworker and the parents had to be obtained through interviews as documentation in the case file alone would not have been sufficient to rate this item as a strength.
- ☑ In out of home cases where the parents do not reside together, the agency tends to achieve sufficient contact with the parent they are seeking to reunify the child with, while less than sufficient contact or no contact is made with the other parent.
- ☑ For the majority of in-home cases, when contact with the child was sufficient, contact with the parent or parents residing in the home with the child was also sufficient, however contact was not sufficient with the absent parent.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	6	75%
Partially Achieved:	0	0%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	25%
Not Applicable:	6	43%

Item 21: Educational needs of the child

When addressing educational issues for families receiving in-home services, reviewers considered whether the educational needs are/were relevant to the reason why the agency is/was involved with the family, and whether the need to address educational issues is/was a reasonable expectation given the circumstances of the agency's involvement with the family. (If not, reviewers rated item 21 as not applicable.) Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if (1) the agency made extensive efforts to address the child's educational needs and the school system was unresponsive, especially if the problems are with a local school or jurisdiction; (2) if the child(ren)'s educational needs were assessed and addressed, including cases where the educational records were missing and the reasons why; or (3) if the agency conducted an assessment of educational issues and determined that there were no problems in that area, nor any need for educational services.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 21 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 6 (75%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (25%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
  - In two of these cases, the case file contained documentation showing that the child's educational needs were assessed and the child was found to have no additional educational needs.
  - In three other cases documentation in the case file showed that the educational needs of the child were assessed, and that the child received appropriate services in order to meet their unique educational needs.
- (1 in home case)
  - In this case, the case file contained information about the child's educational performance and needs and showed that needs were met through services including a tracker and school intervention services.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care case)
  - In this case there was no documentation showing that the child's educational needs had been assessed or that services were provided to address any educational needs that may have existed.
- (1 in home case)
  - In this case there was no documentation showing that an assessment of the child's educational needs was completed or that services were provided to meet the educational needs of the child.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Documentation should show what efforts were made to assess the child's educational needs.
☑ Documentation should detail what the child's educational needs are and what efforts the agency is making to meet these needs.

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB3;

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	7	58%
Partially Achieved:	2	17%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	25%
Not Applicable:	2	14%

Item 22: <u>Physical health of the child</u>
When addressing health issues for families receiving in-home services, reviewers considered whether the physical health needs are/were relevant to the reason why the agency is/was involved with the family and whether the need to address physical health issues is/was a reasonable expectation given the circumstances of the agency's involvement with the family. (If not, reviewers rated this item as not applicable.) For example, if a child became known to the agency and was determined to be in need of in-home services at least partly as a result of physical abuse or sexual abuse, then it is reasonable to expect the agency to provide services to ensure that the child receives the appropriate physical health services. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if the agency conducted an assessment of physical health and determined that there were no problems in that area, nor any need for physical health services.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 22 was applicable for 9 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (56%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (44%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:
- (4 foster care cases)
  - In all four of these cases the case file contained documentation that the child received periodic, age appropriate physical and dental health examinations, and that any identified health needs were met with appropriate services.
- (1 in home case)
  - In this one case, the child continued to be under the care of his primary physician to address the medical concerns that brought this child to the attention of the agency and for the completion of regular well baby checks.

Areas needing improvement:
- (4 foster care cases)
  - In one case, there is no documentation of physical or dental health assessments for the child for the life of the case.
  - In two cases, documentation in the case file indicated that no current physical and / or dental screenings had been provided.
  - In one case, there was documentation of physical health screenings, but no documentation to show that dental health screenings were completed for this child or that dental health needs were addressed.

Reviewer Comments:
- ☑ Documentation should show what efforts were made to assess the child's physical and dental health needs.
- ☑ Documentation should detail what the child's physical and dental health needs are and what efforts the agency is making to meet these needs.

Item 23: <u>Mental health of the child</u>
Reviewers were to determine whether during the period under review, the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the child(ren). Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if the agency conducted an assessment of the child's mental health and determined that there were no

problems in that area, nor any need for mental health services. If there was a need for services then they were offered.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 23 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 7 (88%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (13%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
  - In all five cases, the case file contained documentation to show that the child's mental/behavioral health needs were assessed and that efforts were made to provide appropriate services to meet each identified need.
- (2 in home case)
  - In these two cases there was documentation showing that the mental health needs of the child were assessed and that services were provided to meet all of the child's mental health needs.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 in home cases)
  - In this case, reviewers found documentation in one narrative that the child is seeing a therapist on a weekly basis, however there is no further information regarding the child's mental health needs and there is no documentation that a mental health assessment was completed for this child.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Documentation should show what efforts were made to assess the child's mental/behavior needs.

☑ Documentation should detail what the child's mental/behavioral needs are and what efforts the agency is making to meet these needs.

WSA Results

Case Sample: *Mini CFSR Review – OCTOBER 2010*
Type of Review: 4th *Mini CFSR* **Report Type:** *Western Service Area*
Number of Reviews: *14* **Review Period:** *Oct 1st, 2009 – Oct 1st, 2010*

PERFORMANCE ITEM RESULTS

Performance Item		Item Ratings (#)			Item Ratings (%)		
		S	ANI	N/A	S	ANI	N/A
Item 1:	Timeliness of initiating investigations	3	2	9	60%	40%	64%
Item 2:	Repeat maltreatment	2	1	11	67%	33%	79%
Item 3:	Services to family	8	0	6	100%	0%	43%
Item 4:	Risk assessment and safety management	7	7	0	50%	50%	0%
Item 5:	Foster care re-entries	2	0	12	100%	0%	86%
Item 6:	Stability of foster care placement	6	2	6	75%	25%	43%
Item 7:	Permanency goal for child	5	3	6	63%	38%	43%
Item 8:	Reunification, guardianship etc	2	1	11	67%	33%	79%
Item 9:	Adoption	1	0	13	100%	0%	93%
Item 10:	Other planned permanent living arrangement	1	1	12	50%	50%	86%
Item 11:	Proximity of foster care placement	7	0	7	100%	0%	50%
Item 12:	Placement with siblings	3	0	11	100%	0%	79%
Item 13:	Visiting with parents and siblings	5	2	7	71%	29%	50%
Item 14:	Preserving connections	5	3	6	63%	38%	43%
Item 15:	Relative placement	3	1	10	75%	25%	71%
Item 16:	Relationship of child in care with parents	5	2	7	71%	29%	50%
Item 17:	Needs and services	5	9	0	36%	64%	0%
Item 18:	Child and family involvement in case planning	6	8	0	43%	57%	0%
Item 19:	Caseworker visits with child	12	2	0	86%	14%	0%
Item 20:	Caseworker visits with parent(s)	4	8	2	33%	67%	14%
Item 21:	Educational needs of the child	6	2	6	75%	25%	43%
Item 22:	Physical health of the child	5	4	5	56%	44%	36%
Item 23:	Mental/behavioral health of the child	7	1	6	88%	13%	43%

OUTCOME RESULTS

	COUNTS (#)				PERCENTAGES (%)			
Performance Outcome	*SA*	*PA*	*NA*	*N/A*	*SA*	*PA*	*NA*	*N/A*
Safety 1 (Items 1-2)	3	1	1	9	60%	20%	20%	64%
Safety 2 (Items 3-4)	7	4	3	0	50%	29%	21%	0%
Permanency 1 (Items 5-10)	4	4	0	6	50%	50%	0%	43%
Permanency 2 (Items 11-16)	5	2	1	6	63%	25%	13%	43%
Wellbeing 1 (Items 17-20)	3	9	2	0	21%	64%	14%	0%
Wellbeing 2 (Item 21)	6	0	2	6	75%	0%	25%	43%
Wellbeing 3 (Items 22-23)	7	2	3	2	58%	17%	25%	14%

KEY:

N/A = Not Applicable ***PA = Partially Achieved*** ***NACH = Not Achieved***
S = Strength ***SA = Substantially Achieved*** ***ANI = Area Needing Improvement***