FINAL REPORT

1st Mini Children and Family Service Review

Eastern Service Area

February 8-10, 2010

Prepared by Kathy Anstine

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report: Child and Family Services Review
Eastern Service Area- February 8th-10th 2010

This document presents the findings from the 1st mini Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the Eastern Service Area. The Nebraska CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) team has identified mini CFSR review 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. Mini CFSR reviews are scheduled to take place in each service area once every quarter in year 2010 and 2011.

The Eastern Service area mini CFSR review was conducted on February 8th to February 10th 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review was January 1st, 2009 through January 25th, 2010. The findings were derived from file reviews of 19 cases (11 foster care and 8 in home services) which were randomly selected from all open child welfare cases at some time during the period under review. The reviews also included interviews with parents, children, foster parents, and CFS specialists, to assess items 17-20 within the review tool.

In the Eastern Service Area, eight of the 19 cases were brought to the attention of DHHS for juvenile justice services; one of the cases for status offense; and the remaining ten cases were abuse/neglect cases. The cases were from the Omaha and Papillion Offices.

The review was completed by 8 teams of two reviewers made up of both staff from DHHS and Out of Home Reform providers (KVC, NFC & Visinet). 100% of the cases were reviewed by the following second level reviewers: Sheila Kadoi, Micaela Swigle, and Kathy Anstine.

Background Information

The mini CFSR is modeled after the Federal CFSR reviews 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 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 1st Mini CFSR identified several areas of high performance in the Eastern 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 repeat maltreatment (item 2), foster care reentry (item 5), placing children in close proximity to their parents (item 11), and placement with siblings (item 12).

The mini CFSR review also identified key areas of concern with regard to achieving outcomes for children and families. Concerns were identified with regard to Safety Outcome 1 (children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect), which was substantially achieved in 0 percent of the cases reviewed. The lowest rating within this outcome was for item 1 (timeliness of investigations), which was not rated as a Strength in any of the four applicable cases reviewed.

Concerns were also identified with regards to Permanency Outcome 1, (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) which was not substantially achieved in any of the cases reviewed. Within Permanency Outcome 1, the Eastern Service area's lowest ratings were for item 7 (permanency goal for child), which was rated as a Strength in 0 percent of the cases reviewed; item 10 (other planned living arrangements) which was rated as a strength in 0 percent of the cases reviewed; and item 9 (adoptions), which was rated as a Strength in 33 percent of the cases reviewed.

Concerns were also identified with regards to Permanency Outcome 2, (The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children) which was substantially achieved in only 36 percent of the cases reviewed. Within Permanency Outcome 2, the Eastern Service Area's lowest ratings were for item 15 (Relative Placement), which was rated as a Strength in 33 percent of the cases reviewed; item 14 (Preserving Connections), which was rated as a Strength in 36 percent of the cases reviewed; item 13 (Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care), which was rated as a Strength in 44 percent of the cases reviewed; and item #16 (Relationship of child in care with parents), which was rated as a Strength in 44 percent of the case reviewed. In addition, concerns also 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 10 percent of the cases reviewed. The lowest ratings were for item 17 (Needs and services to child,

parents, and foster parents), which was rated as a strength in only 21 percent of the cases reviewed; item 18 (Child and family involvement in case planning), which was rated as a strength in only 24 percent of the cases reviewed; item 20 (caseworker visits with parent(s)), which was rated as a Strength in only 33 percent of the cases reviewed; and item 19 (caseworker visits with child), which was rated as a Strength in 42 percent 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:	0	0%
Partially Achieved:	3	75%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	25%
Not Applicable:	15	79%

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*:**

- Four of the 19 cases reviewed were applicable to the item.
- All four (100%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.
- All four were foster care cases.

Strengths:

- None noted.

Area Needing Improvement:

- Two of the four cases did not meet timelines for the initial contact.
- One of the cases there was no contact at all by HHS- only police.
- One case met initial contact but did not finalize the report within the 30 day timeframe required by the state.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

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*:**

- Three of the 19 cases reviewed were applicable to the item.
- All 3 cases (100%) were rated as Strengths.
- All 3 of the cases were foster care cases.

Strengths

- *In all three cases there was only the one intake and there were no others 6 months prior or after the initial intake.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *None noted.*

Reviewer Comments S1:

- *Workers need to document why face to face contacts were not done in a timely manner on cases where there was a delay.*
- *One case did not interview "all" children in the home.*

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

Status of Safety Outcome S2

	Total Number	**Total Percentage**
Substantially Achieved:	10	53%
Partially Achieved:	3	16%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	6	31%
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. Four of the 14 cases were excluded from the assessment because there were no substantiated/inconclusive/petition to be filed maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to children in the home during the period under review, or because the target child entered foster care prior to the period

under review and there were no other children in the home who were at risk of maltreatment.

Review Findings:

- Seven of the 19 cases reviewed were applicable to the item.
- Six (86%) of the 7 cases were rated as a Strength.
  - Three of the six were foster care cases and three were in home cases.
- One (14%) of the 7 cases was rated as an Area Needing Improvement.
  - This was an in home case.

Strength:

- *Attempts were made to prevent removal by using in home services in the cases where the child was eventually removed.*
- *In home safety plan was put in to place with informal supports to help monitor.*
- *Services were in place to maintain children in the home.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *There was a lack of addressing the needs of all children in the home, particularly on OJS cases.*
- *Family information on the YLS is not being collected.*
- *Documentation of the discussion of safety during informal assessments is lacking.*

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

The assessment of Item 4 required reviewers to determine whether HHSS 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*:**

- All of the 19 cases were applicable to the item.
- 10 (53%) of the 19 cases were rated as a Strength.
  7 of these were foster care cases and three were in home cases.
- 9 (47%) of the 19 cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.
- Four of these were foster care cases and 5 were in home cases.
- Four of these cases were OJS cases.

Strengths:

- *Adequate safety plans in place.*
- *YLS's were thoroughly completed.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *There was a lack of on going assessments involving ALL children in the family. Those that did exist were only focused on the target child, particularly on OJS cases.*
- *Lack of documentation that there were formal or informal assessments completed during the period under review as all visits were prior to that time.*
- *There were contacts with the worker however nothing was formally done by the worker to assess safety or risk.*

Reviewer Comments S2:

- *Reviewers found that risk was assessed by case managers during face to face contacts, during family team meetings, while completing YLS, and through updating safety plans.*
- *In cases where reviewers found this to be an area needing improvement examples were: father drinking heavily, but no assessment if this was putting the child at risk; in home safety plan that is not completed or signed and the child was in the home; and child was placed at home and an evaluation stated there was drug use by Mom and child together in the past and this was not assessed or addressed in the file.*
- *Safety assessments were not updated on an ongoing basis or prior to case closure.*

II. PERMANENCY

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

Status of Permanency Outcome P1

	Total Number	**Total Percentage**
Substantially Achieved:	0	0%
Partially Achieved:	8	73%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	27%
Not Applicable:	8	42%

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 r-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:

- Two of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- Two (100%) of the 2 cases were rated as a Strength.

Strengths:

- *In both cases the children were in foster care but were not re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *None noted.*

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*:**

- Eleven of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- Eight (73%) of the 11 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Three (27%) of the 11 cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- *Five of the cases that were strengths, the children were able to remain in the same out of home placement the entire period under review.*
- *In another case a youth was transitioned from a group home out of the area to the Omaha area and then home.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Two cases had six and eight placements over the one year period under review.*
- *One case lacked documentation as to why the child moved from one agency foster home to another home within the same agency, and if this was in the child's best interest.*

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

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether HHSS 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 HHSS 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 HHSS 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*:**

- Eleven of the 11 cases reviewed were applicable to the item.
- Zero (0%) of the 11 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Eleven (100%) of the 11 cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.
- In cases applicable to this item, the ESA had the following:

Primary Permanency Goal:

- Reunification/Guardianship—8 cases
- Family Preservation—1 case
- Adoption— 2 cases

Concurrent Goal:

- No concurrent goal— 3 cases
- Reunification/Guardianship— 1 case
- Independent Living— 3cases
- Adoption— 4 cases

Strengths:

- *None noted.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Permanency goals are not established within the 60 day timeframe set by DHHS.*
- *Plans that are set are not changed when the situations for the family changes i.e. permanency goal is family preservation and the child is in out of home care and vice versa, goal is reunification and the child is at home.*
- *On one case reviewers were unable to determine if a permanency goal had been established within 41 months; others that were not timely were established between 21/2 months and 7 months.*

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

In assessing these cases reviewers determined whether HHSS 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 HHSS had made diligent efforts to achieve the goals.

***Review Findings*:**

- Ten of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- Five (50%) of the 10 cases were rated as a Strength.
- Five (50%) of the 10 cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- In one case a guardianship was established within 14 months and the child was placed with someone known to him.
- Four cases showed that the needed services and supports were implemented but the permanency goal was not achieved because of either the behavior of the child or noncompliance of the parent.

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Termination of parental did not occur for one child for 4 years after entry into care on the Mother and 5 years after entry into care on the father.*

- *Childs behaviors are a barrier to meeting the permanency goal, but services were not provided to the parent in one case to assist in achieving the goal.*
- *In one case children are in care 36 months, Mother relinquishes her rights and is now trying to adopt children back.*

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*:**
- Six of the 11 cases reviewed were applicable to the item.
- Two (33%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Four (67%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:
- *In both cases adoption was achieved in a timely manner.*

Area Needing Improvement:
- *In all four cases the goal of adoption is not being actively worked on as evidenced by- one case the child is in a shelter placement; one case there have been minimal efforts to locate an adoptive family; and another the child is in a stable foster home but it is unclear if they are willing to adopt.*

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*:**
- Two of the 11 cases were applicable.
- Two (100%) of the 2 cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:
- *None noted.*

Area Needing Improvement:
- *In both applicable cases independent living is the plan for the youth but strategies to meet this outcome are not in place.*

Reviewer Comments P1-
- *Permanency goals need to be established in a timely manner.*
- *Concurrent goals are established but not actively worked on.*
- *Goals are not always appropriate i.e. child is in out of home care for several months and the permanency goal set is family preservation. Goals need to be updated regularly.*
- *Strategies set in place are not appropriate to achieve the outcome, especially with Independent Living outcomes.*
- *Adoption is not achieved in a timely manner.*
- *Children had stable placements except for two cases that were OJS cases where the youths' behaviors required placement changes to a higher level of care.*

Status of Permanency Outcome P2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	4	36%
Partially Achieved:	6	55%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	9%
Not Applicable:	8	42%

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*:**
- Nine of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- Nine of the 11 cases were rated as strength.

Strengths:
- *In six of the nine cases, youth were in the same community as their parents. All three cases that were not in the same community were due to the level of care needed for those youth and visitation continued with the family on a regular basis.*

Area Needing Improvement:
- *None noted.*

Item 12. Placement with siblings
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*:**
- Three of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- All three of the cases were rated as Strengths.

Strengths:
- *All attempts are made to keep youth placed together.*
- *Sibling strip of four were able to be placed together.*
- *In the one case where siblings were not currently together, they had all started out at the same home and one had to be moved to meet her own behavioral needs.*
- *One case had a youth that was placed with relatives here, but reviewers felt that the worker should have checked with adoptive parents of siblings that had previously been adopted in another state and there was no effort made to find that adoptive family to see if they would be interested in this child.*

Item 13. <u>Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care</u>

In assessing this item reviewers determined whether HHSS 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 HHSS policy regarding visitation. The HHSS 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. HHSS 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*:**

- Nine of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- Four (44%) of the 9 cases were rated as a strength.
- Five (56%) of the 9 cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- *In 3 cases visits between children and parents were arranged to occur at least weekly.*
- *In one case diligent efforts were made to locate the parents so contact could take place.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Overall, more detailed documentation is needed for visitation.*
- *In 3 cases there was no documentation of efforts to provide visits with fathers.*
- *In 2 cases there was no documentation of efforts to provide visits with siblings.*
- *In 4 cases there was a lack of sufficient documentation on the frequency and quality of the visits that were occurring.*
- *When kids are in out of home care and the plan is to reunify with one parent, there does not appear to be enough effort made to connect with the siblings that reside with the other parent.*

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

Reviewers determined whether HHSS 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*:**

- All of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- Four (36%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Seven (64%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- *Visitation with grandparents was arranged.*
- *Connections to community activities were strongly maintained.*
- *Child was able to remain in Boy Scouts and Choir prior to the RTC placement and had been in relative care so was able to participate in all family functions.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Workers need to look into placing adoptive children with siblings that have previously been adopted.*
- *Documentation is needed in the file to determine what discussions took place with the parents regarding possible affiliation with a Native American Tribe.*
- *File lacked documentation that there were efforts made to keep connections with the child's community.*
- *In one case there was a lack of documentation that efforts were made to place the child according to ICWA procedures, even though it was clear that the child was enrolled in the tribe, and the worker had given notice to the tribe.*

Item 15. <u>Relative placement</u>

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*:**

- Nine of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- Three (33%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Six (67%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- *In the three cases that were strengths, the child(ren) were placed with relatives or relatives were explored and deemed to be inappropriate.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Relative placement was not explored in six of the cases.*
- *One case had maternal relatives listed in a genogram but no discussion/documentation regarding placement with them; this same case did not explore paternal relatives for placement.*
- *In one case the father has not been identified as the mother and relatives continue to give conflicting information on who he might be.*

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*:**

- Nine of the 11 cases were applicable to the item.
- Four (44%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Five (56%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- *In one case the parent's were very involved in the child's activities such as sporting events, scouts, summer programs, etc.*
- *Efforts were made to strengthen the relationship between parents and children through family therapy, case conferences and family team meetings.*
- *One case noted a goodbye visit prior to relinquishment.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Fathers need to be included in addition to the mothers.*
- *Two cases lacked documentation that any effort was made to encourage either parent to continue a relationship other than to participate in the services we provided.*

Reviewer Comments P2:

- *Staff makes all efforts to place youth in their communities and near their families.*
- *The cases where youth were not in the same community were due to the youths' behaviors requiring a structured behavioral setting.*
- *Frequently ICWA is documented as "it does not apply" but there is no specific information about who was asked and when. Many times maternal information was gathered on ICWA but not Paternal.*
- *Good efforts keeping siblings together.*
- *Two cases indicated that there needed to be more efforts given to siblings visiting each other.*

- *Overall reviewers felt that more detailed documentation was needed for all visitations.*
- *Efforts need to focus on early relative searches and particularly on fathers and their side of the family.*
- *There was a lack of documentation showing that workers promoted the relationships of the parents and siblings other than simply providing services to the families. (i.e. attendance at school activities, medical appointments, sporting events etc.)*

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:	2	10%
Partially Achieved:	10	53%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	7	37%
Not Applicable:	0	0%

Item 17. Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents
In assessing item 17, reviewers were to determine whether HHSS 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*:**
- All of the 19 cases were applicable to the item.
- Four (21%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Fifteen (79%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.
- *3 foster care cases and 1 in home case were rated as Strengths.*
- *6 foster care cases and 7 in home cases were rated as Areas Needing Improvements.*

Strengths: Separating out Items 17A, B, and C.
- *Thirteen of the 19 cases were rated as strengths for assessing the needs and services to the children (17A). Children's needs were assessed through the Nebraska Safety Assessment Tool, family team meetings, private, face to face visits by the worker, interviews with relatives, the Youth Level of Service Inventory, and through formal evaluations. Services provided to meet those needs include Tracker, Drug Screen*

Testing, Electronic Monitoring, therapy, tutoring, service coordination, child care, foster care, and family support services.

- *Four of the 17 applicable cases were rated as strengths for assessing the needs and services to the parents (17B). When parental needs were assessed, it was at the initial assessment using the Nebraska Safety Assessment; through face to face visits; family group conferencing; and during family team meetings. Services that were provided to meet those needs include, individual and family therapy, parenting resources, and support groups.*
- *Four of the 9 applicable cases were rated as strengths for assessing the needs and services to the foster parents (17C). When foster parent needs were addressed it was done through monthly face to face meetings, telephone calls, and family team meetings. Services that were provided to meet the needs include family support, child care, clothing vouchers, and transportation.*

Area Needing Improvement: Separating out Items 17A, B, and C.

- *Six of the 19 applicable cases were rated as an area needing improvement for assessing the needs and services to children (17A).*
- *Thirteen of 17 applicable cases were rated as an area needing improvement for assessing the needs and services to the parents (17B).*
- *Five of the 9 applicable cases were rated as an area needing improvement for assessing needs and services to foster parents (17C).*
- *One case youth reported that he had no unmet needs however it was determined that he should have been referred to former ward services. This is true for the foster parent also who was unaware of a possible subsidy.*
- *One case found that the needs were assessed but were never addressed.*
- *One case noted that they were unable to obtain information through interviews due to lack of follow through from parents/foster parents.*

Reviewer Comments:

- *Reviewers found that many times services were provided but the needs were never assessed.*
- *Several cases did assess one parent's needs but not both. (This was true for both maternal and paternal sides)*

Needs assessed:	**Child**	**Parent**	**Foster Parent**
Yes:	13	4	4
No:	6	13	5
NA:	0	2	0

Services Provided	**Child**	**Parent**	**Foster Parent**
Yes:	11	6	4
No:	6	11	5
NA:	2	2	0

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

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*:**

- Seventeen of the 19 cases were applicable to the item.
- Four (24%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Thirteen (76%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- *(3 foster care/ 1 in home) In two of the four cases that were strengths, the youth were too young to participate. All 4 cases the parents were highly involved, stating they felt their opinions were heard and respected; the case plan was reviewed monthly, and they were able to voice their needs during family team meetings.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *(6 foster care/ 7 in home) Seven cases indicated that neither the child nor the parent was actively involved in case planning. Six cases indicated that either the child or the parent* ***was not*** *actively involved in case planning.*

- *It was consistent that the case plan was not "developed" with the help of the child and family, but rather created by the worker and presented to them. This was stated by workers during interviews on more than one case.*

Item 19. Worker visits with child

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*:**

- All of the 19 cases were applicable to the item.
- Eight (42%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Eleven (58%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- *All eight cases that were considered strengths had workers that visited the children in the home at least once a month and sometimes more. Those cases also showed documentation that the visits were private and were of quality by discussing such things as conditions of liberty, school, services, goals, outcomes, behaviors, relationships and medical information.*
- *Three cases missed one or two visits over the year period (we have since learned from the federal reviewers that we could have counted these cases as strengths by using the pattern of visitation if there was documentation that it could not be re-scheduled).*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Cases that were found to need improvement were those cases where visits were less than once a month with the breakout as follows:*

-3 cases had monthly visits with the identified child but no contact with the other children in the home.
-2 cases had visits with the child every other month.
-1 case had visits less than every other month.

- *Workers need to do a better job of documenting the visits that occur and what is discussed at those visits.*

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 when the permanency objective was something other than reunification or family preservation.

***Review Findings*:**

- Eighteen of the 19 cases were applicable to the item.
- Six (33%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Twelve (67%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:

- *In the six cases that were identified as strengths, both parents were visited at least monthly and sometimes more- those parents felt like their input was heard and they were treated respectfully.*
- *Visits focused on case specifics and assessing parental needs.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Eight of the cases that were areas needing improvement showed that there was monthly contact by the worker with one parent but not with both parents.*
- *Documentation needs to be more specific.*
- *One case had only two visits with the parent and both of those occurred at the court hearing and were not indicative of any real substance.*
- *One case had only one visit with the Mother. Interview with the CFSS indicated that Mother was uncooperative; however, this was not in the file documentation.*

Reviewer Comments WB1:

- *Many of the cases that were areas needing improvements were because ALL children in the home were not assessed – only the target child.*
- *Workers need to improve on documentation as the information supporting that parents and children are involved in case planning came from interviews.*
- *There was a lack of documentation in the file but interviews indicated that contacts were happening monthly.*
- *Cases that did not meet monthly contact expectations were generally lacking in documentation; some cases it was difficult to tell which parent was in attendance, what was discussed, and what was accomplished at the visit.*
- *Documentation needs to be specific regarding the assessment of needs and services. In most of the cases reviewers were only able to tell that assessment had been done after telephone interviews were completed. The information was not able to be located in the file.*

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	10	71%
Partially Achieved:	1	7%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	21%
Not Applicable:	5	26%

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*:**
- Fourteen of the 19 cases were applicable to the item.
- Ten (71%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Four (29%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:
- *Six of the ten cases rated as a strength contained formal assessments of the youths' education needs and services to address those needs.*
- *Four of the ten cases rated as a strength contained informal assessments of the youths' educational needs and had documentation of how those needs were being addressed.*

Area Needing Improvement:
- *Two of the four cases rated as area needing improvement were missing the formal assessments in the file that the documentation stated had been done.*
- *One of the four cases rated as area needing improvement assessed the needs of the target child but not all the children in the home.*
- *One of the four cases rated as an area needing improvement had a recommendation for follow up services however there was no documentation that it occurred.*

Reviewer Comments WB2:
- *Needs were identified in most cases and educational records were located in the case file.*

- *In some cases services were not put into place to meet those needs. Example- IEP is in the file with recommendations but no follow up on the recommendations.*

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:	12	63%
Partially Achieved:	2	11%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	5	26%
Not Applicable:	0	0%

Item 22. Physical health of the child
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*:**
- Fourteen of the 19 cases were applicable to the item.
- Nine (64%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Five (36%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Strengths:
- *Nine of the cases rated as a strength showed documentation of health, dental and vision related exams and services provided to meet any needs identified. Services provided include medications for allergies, dental work, and immunizations.*

Area Needing Improvement:
- *All five cases that were rated as an area needing improvement were due to a lack of documentation of assessments having occurred, in addition to a lack of specific information documented to state what results of any appointments were and if any needed follow up was done.*

Item 23. <u>Mental health of the child</u>

Reviewers were to determine if the child is/was in foster care, was an initial formal mental health screening or assessment provided upon the most recent entry into foster care (or within the timeframe specified in the State's guidelines, if applicable). Reviewers checked not applicable if the child was not in foster care or if the State has no guidelines and there were no indications that a screening or assessment was needed. 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.

***Review Findings*:**

- Sixteen of the 19 cases were applicable to the item.
- Eleven (69%) of the cases were rated as a Strength.
- Five (31%) of the cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:

- *Cases rated as strength had formal assessments of mental health needs completed; services provided to meet those needs; and documentation in the file to show progress. Evaluations included psychological/psychiatric evaluations; substance abuse evaluations; and mental status exams.*

Area Needing Improvement:

- *Four of the five cases rated as area needing improvement lacked documentation that there was assessment of the child/children's needs.*
- *One of the five cases rated as area needing improvement did have an assessment but did not contain documentation to show that the needs were addressed.*

Reviewer Comments WB3:

- *The cases that were rated as strengths all had clear documentation that mental health assessments were completed and services were provided to address what needs were identified in those assessments.*
- *Four cases had no documentation that an assessment of the child's mental health needs was completed, yet there were services in place.*
- *Cases identified as needing improvements lacked assessing the youth's health needs and in cases that were assessed there lacked documentation of dates of the exams and any follow-up needed or completed.*

ESA Results

Case Sample: 1st- *Mini CFSR Review – January 2010*
Type of Review: 1st *Mini CFSR* **Report Type:** *Eastern Service Area*
Number of Reviews: *19* **Review Period:** *January 1st, 2009 – January 25th, 2010*

PERFORMANCE ITEM RESULTS

Performance Item		Item Ratings (#)			Item Ratings (%)		
		S	ANI	N/A	S	ANI	N/A
Item 1:	Timeliness of initiating investigations	0	4	15	0	100	79
Item 2:	Repeat maltreatment	3	0	16	100	0	84
19Item 3:	Services to family	6	1	12	86	14	63
Item 4:	Risk assessment and safety management	10	9	0	53	47	0
Item 5:	Foster care re-entries	2	0	17	100	0	89
Item 6:	Stability of foster care placement	8	3	8	73	27	42
Item 7:	Permanency goal for child	0	11	8	0	100	42
Item 8:	Reunification, guardianship etc	5	5	9	50	50	47
Item 9:	Adoption	2	4	13	33	67	68
Item 10:	Other planned permanent living arrangement	0	2	17	0	100	89
Item 11:	Proximity of foster care placement	9	0	10	100	0	53
Item 12:	Placement with siblings	3	0	16	100	0	84
Item 13:	Visiting with parents and siblings	4	5	10	44	56	53
Item 14:	Preserving connections	4	7	8	36	64	42
Item 15:	Relative placement	3	6	10	33	67	53
Item 16:	Relationship of child in care with parents	4	5	10	44	56	53
Item 17:	Needs and services	4	15	0	21	79	0
Item 18:	Child and family involvement in case planning	4	13	2	24	76	11
Item 19:	Caseworker visits with child	8	11	0	42	58	0
Item 20:	Caseworker visits with parent(s)	6	12	1	33	67	5
Item 21:	Educational needs of the child	10	4	5	71	29	26
Item 22:	Physical health of the child	9	5	5	64	36	26
Item 23:	Mental/behavioral health of the child	11	5	3	69	31	16

OUTCOME RESULTS

	COUNTS (#)				PERCENTAGES (%)			
Performance Outcome	*SA*	*PA*	*NA*	*N/A*	*SA*	*PA*	*NA*	*N/A*
Safety 1 (Items 1-2)	0	3	1	15	0	75	25	79
Safety 2 (Items 3-4)	10	3	6	0	53	16	31	0
Permanency 1 (Items 5-10)	0	8	3	8	0	73	27	42
Permanency 2 (Items 11-16)	4	6	1	8	36	55	9	42
Wellbeing 1 (Items 17-20)	2	10	7	0	10	53	37	0
Wellbeing 2 (Item 21)	10	1	3	5	71	7	21	26
Wellbeing 3 (Items 22-23)	12	2	5	0	63	11	26	0

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