

FINAL REPORT

Children and Family Service Review

Southeast Service Area

1st Mini CFSR Review
(JANUARY 2010)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report: Children and Family Services Review
(Southeast Service Area – February 1st-3rd 2010)

This document presents findings from the 1st mini Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the Southeast 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 Southeast Service area mini CFSR review was conducted on February 1st to February 3rd 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 14 cases (8 foster care and 6 in home cases) 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, CFS specialists, and other service providers to assess items 17-20 within the review tool.

Five of the 14 cases were brought to the attention of DHHS for juvenile justice services and four of the cases were non court involved. The cases were from the following Southeast Service Area offices: Lincoln, York, Seward, Crete and Plattsmouth.

The review was completed by 5 teams of two reviewers made up of both staff from DHHS and Out of Home Reform providers (KVC, Cedars & Visinet). 100% of the cases were reviewed by the following second level reviewers: Micaela Swigle, Kathy Anstine and Sheila Kadoi.

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 Southeast 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), services to family to protect child(ren) in the home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care (item 3), foster care reentry (item 5), other planned living arrangement (item 10), placing children in close proximity to their parents (item 11), and addressing mental/behavioral health needs of the child(ren) (item 23).

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 only 33 percent of the cases reviewed. The lowest rating within this outcome was for item 1 (timeliness of investigations), which was rated as a Strength in 33 percent of the cases reviewed.

Concerns were also identified with regards to Permanency Outcome 1, (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) which was substantially achieved in only 13 percent of the cases reviewed. Within Permanency Outcome 1, Southeast Service area's lowest ratings were for item 9 (adoptions), which was rated as a Strength in 33 percent of the cases reviewed; and for item 7 (permanency goal for child), which was rated as a Strength in 38 percent of the cases 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 29% percent of the cases reviewed. The lowest ratings were for item 20 (caseworker visits with parent(s)), which was rated as a Strength in only 14 percent of the cases reviewed; item 19 (caseworker visits with child), which was rated as a Strength in 43 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:	2	33%
Partially Achieved:	3	50%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	17%
Not Applicable:	8	57%

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 HHS. 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 6 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 2 (33%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (67%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases) – In both cases, the investigation was initiated in a timely manner and contacts with the children were made in a timely manner according to state policy.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care & 3 in home cases) – In all 4 cases, contacts with the child(ren) were not made in a timely manner according to state policy and case file documentation did not indicate circumstances that justified the delay.

Reviewer Comments:

☞ *Need to document reasons why contacts with the child(ren) was/were not completed in a timely manner according to state policy.*

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: The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 3 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 3(100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 in home cases) – While there was at least one substantiated maltreatment report involving a child in the family during the period under review in these 3 cases, there were no additional substantiated reports within a 6 month period before or after that particular maltreatment report.

Reviewer Comments:

☞ Documentation in the file included information regarding the circumstances and findings for any maltreatment reports received within a 6 month period before and after the particular substantiated maltreatment report that was received during the period under review.

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

Status of Safety Outcome S2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	9	64%
Partially Achieved:	4	29%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	7%
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 7 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 7(100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 in home cases) – In home safety and other services were provided in order to protect the children and prevent their entry into foster care.
- (2 out of home cases) –In home safety and other services were provided after the children were reunified with the parent(s).

Reviewer Comments:

☞ None of the children who were currently living in the home were removed from their home during the period under review.

There was evidence to support that in home safety services (random drop ins etc.) and other services to enhance parent protective capacities were provided for those children who were reunified with their parents during the period under review.

Item 4: Risk assessment and safety management

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 9(64%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 5 (36%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - In two of the cases, the files contained enough information to support ongoing risk and safety assessments for the target child while placed in a treatment facility and during visits with their parents. There were no apparent risk and safety issues for the other child(ren) that remained in the home in these 2 cases.
 - In three of the cases, the files contained enough information to support ongoing risk and safety assessment for the target child while in foster care and during visits with their parent(s). There were no other children remaining in the home in these 3 cases.
- (4 in home cases) – In all four cases, the file contained enough information to support ongoing risk and safety assessment for the child(ren) while placed in the care of their parents. Documentation indicated that risk and safety assessments were formally and/or informally completed and safety plans were adjusted as safety threats increased or decreased.

Areas needing improvement:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In two of the cases, a safety assessment was not completed before the child(ren) was/were reunified with their parent(s).
 - In one case, the file contained very little information regarding contact with the foster parents and the child while placed with those foster parents. There were only 3 documented contacts with the child and the foster parents during the entire review period.
- (2 in home cases) - In both in home cases, the reviewers were unable to find any additional formal or informal ongoing safety assessments beyond the initial assessment that led to the case opening.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ Workers need to utilize the Nebraska Safety Intervention System (Safety Model) to assess risk and improve safety interventions with children and families.
- ☞ Workers need to continually assess risk and safety during face to face contacts with the child(ren), parent(s) and foster parents. Assessment of risk and safety should be very well documented in the narratives provided for required contacts with the child, parents and foster parents.

II. PERMANENCY

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

Status of Permanency Outcome P1

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	1	12.5%
Partially Achieved:	6	75%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	12.5%
Not Applicable:	6	43%

Item 5: Foster care re-entries

Reviewers rated this assessment 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.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 5 was not applicable for all 14 cases. Reviewers rated this item as Not Applicable due to the following reasons: (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.

Item 6: Stability of foster care placement

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 7 (88.5%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (12.5%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (7 foster care cases)
 - In four of the cases, the file indicated that the child remained in the same foster care placement which was meeting their needs until they were successfully reunited with their parent(s).
 - In two of the cases, the file indicated that the child remained in the same foster care placement which was meeting their needs until they were officially adopted by the same foster parents.
 - In one of the cases, even though the child experienced more than one placement change, these placement changes were necessary in order to provide for the child's treatment needs.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care case) – In this one case, the youth was moved to a different foster home when the current foster parents decided that they no longer wanted to be foster parents. There was some indication in the file that these foster parents may have believed that the agency did not fully disclose the youth's behavioral issues prior to placing the youth in their care.

Reviewer Comments:

☞ Workers need to document reasons for any placement changes. Documentation should include whether or not the placement change was in the best interest of the child and address if the placement change was necessary to achieve the child's permanency goals and/or meet the child's specific needs.

Item 7: Permanency goal for child

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 3 (37.5%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 5 (62.5%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases) – In these three cases, the permanency goal for the child was reunification and was established in a timely manner.
 - In two of the cases, the child was reunited with their parent(s) during the period under review and documentation showed that the permanency goal was effectively changed from reunification to family preservation.

- The third case involved a child who had been in out of home care for longer than 12 months and had a concurrent goal of adoption. Documentation in this case indicated that reunification remained the primary goal due to progress being made in addressing the child's treatment needs and the likelihood that the child will be successfully reunited with the parents in the near future.

Areas needing improvement:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - In one of the cases, the permanency goal for the child had been reunification and guardianship for over 24 months. The primary had been reunification with a concurrent goal of guardianship some of the time and guardianship as the primary goal with reunification as the concurrent goal part of the time. Both permanency goals were not established within 60 days of the child's entry into foster care.
 - In two of the cases, initial goal of reunification was not established within 60 days of the child's entry into foster care. Furthermore, in both cases the child returned home during the period under review, however, the case plan was not appropriately changed from reunification to family preservation.
 - In one of the cases the primary goal of reunification was established in a timely manner, however, the goal of reunification is no longer the goal that is appropriately meeting the child's needs and case circumstances. The primary goal remained reunification even after both parents had relinquished their parental rights.
 - In one of the cases, although the permanency plan of adoption was the appropriate plan for the child's needs and case circumstances, the goal of adoption was not established in a timely manner. Case circumstances indicated that TPR (Termination of Parental Rights) was not submitted until the child had been in out of home care for 26 months and there were no exceptions or compelling reasons not to file TRP documented in the file.

Reviewer Comments:

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

Item 8: Reunification, Guardianship or Permanent Placement with Relatives

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 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 of the cases, the agency made concerted efforts to meet the goal of reunification, however, both parents were incarcerated and unable to continue to participate in court ordered services. Both parents relinquished their parental rights during the period under review.
 - In three of the cases, the agency made concerted efforts to meet the goal of reunification and the youth was reunited with their parent(s) during the period under review.
 - In one of the cases, efforts were made to address the child's treatment needs and even though the child has been in out of home care longer than 12 months, documentation indicates active involvement by the parents in the child's treatment and likelihood that the child will be successfully reunited with the parents.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In one of the cases, there is no evidence that the agency is addressing the concurrent goal of guardianship that has been established for the child.
 - In one of the cases, the child was in out of home care for 37 months. While the file indicates that the child's father was incarcerated for some time, reviewers were unable to find documentation of particular circumstances that would justify the delay in achieving the goal of reunification.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly explain the agency's efforts in achieving all permanency goals established for the child.*
- ☞ *If the child has been in foster care for longer than 12 months, documentation should also include information regarding barriers or particular circumstances to justify the delay in achieving the child's permanency goal.*
- ☞ *The agency should be making active efforts to achieve all permanency goals (primary and concurrent goals) established for the child..*

Item 9: Adoption

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 3 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 1 (33%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (67%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 foster care case) – Concerted efforts were made to achieve the goal of adoption and the child was adopted within 21 months from entering into foster care.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In one of the cases, there was a concurrent goal of adoption established at the same time that the primary goal of reunification was established for the child. However,

there was no evidence in the file that the concurrent goal of adoption was being addressed by the agency.

- In another case, the child has been in out of home care for well over 24 months. While the termination of mom’s parental rights is currently under appeal, the actual requests for termination of parental rights for both parents were not submitted until after the child had been in out of home care for 27 months.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly explain the agency’s efforts in achieving all permanency goals established for the child.*
- ☞ *If the child has been in foster care for longer than 12 months, documentation should also include information regarding barriers or particular circumstances to justify the delay in achieving the child’s permanency goal.*
- ☞ *If the permanency goal of adoption was not achieved in 24 months or is not likely to be achieved in 24 months of the date of the child’s most recent entry into foster care, then the documentation in the file should include particular circumstances that warrant the delay.*

Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

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 both of the applicable cases (100%).

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases) – In both of these cases, there is a concurrent goal of independent living established for the child. Documentation indicates that efforts are being made to achieve case plan goals related to independent living.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly explain the agency’s efforts in achieving all permanency goals established for the child.*
- ☞ *For children with other planned living arrangement (Independent Living) permanency goal who are expected to exit foster care to independence, the documentation in the file should address the following:*
 - *Efforts to provide the child with services to adequately prepare the child for independent living when the child leaves foster care.*
 - *Efforts to provide long term stability for the child until he or she reaches adulthood.*

Status of Permanency Outcome P2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	4	50%
Partially Achieved:	4	50%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0%
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 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 8 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
 - In two of the cases, the child was placed in the same community as their parent(s)
 - In five of the cases, the child was placed in a nearby community that was in close proximity to allow parents to visit the child on a frequent basis.
 - In one of the cases the child was placed in a different state in order to meet the child's specialized needs. Documentation indicates that the parents were involved with the child's treatment and had frequent phone contacts and several face to face contacts with the child during the PUR.

Reviewer Comments:

☞ Documentation should include information regarding location of foster care placement and its proximity to the parent(s).

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: The assessment of item 12 was applicable for 4 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 3 (75%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (25%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In two of the cases, the child was placed in the same foster placement with his/her siblings during the period under review.
 - In one of the cases, the child was placed in a different placement than her siblings during the period under review. However, it was necessary to place the child in a separate placement in order to meet their identified treatment needs.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care cases) – There was no documentation in the file to indicate that the agency tried to place all the siblings together.

Reviewer Comments:

☞ Documentation should clearly state the agency's efforts to place all siblings together.

☞ Documentation should clearly address the circumstances or reasons for not placing all siblings together.

Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

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 severe 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 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (50%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases) – In all four cases, the documentation indicated that the frequency and quality of the visits were sufficient to promote continuity of parent child relationships. In these instances, the child was either placed together with their siblings or did not have any other siblings in foster care.

Areas needing improvement:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In three of the cases, documentation indicated that visitation between the target child and his/her siblings were not sufficient to promote continuity of their relationships. In one of these cases the target child had no contact with any of her siblings during the period under review.
 - In one other case, while there was indication that visits between the child and his mother were taking place, there was no documentation regarding the length of the visitation or the quality of the visitations between the child and his mother. There was also no documentation of contacts between the child and his father during the period under review.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly explain the frequency of visits between the child and his/her parents (mother and/or father when applicable) and the child and his or her siblings if the child has a sibling who is also in foster care but is in a different placement.*
- ☞ *Documentation should include information regarding the quality of the visit between the child and his/her parents (mother and/or father when applicable). Documentation should address how the quality of the visit was sufficient to promote continuity of the relationship between the child and his/her parent(s) and/or between the child and his/her sibling(s).*

Item 14: Preserving connections

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 6 (75%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (75%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases) – In all six cases, the files contained documentation of efforts made by the department to maintain the child’s connections to his community, faith, extended family, friends, tribe and any other connections important to the child.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases) - In both cases, the reviewers were unable to locate any documentation regarding efforts to preserve the target child’s important connections.

* In six of the cases (75%), reviewers indicated that the files did not contain enough information to support that sufficient inquiry was conducted with parents, child, and other interested party to determine whether the child may be a member of or eligible for membership in an Indian tribe. *Note: Although this question is asked within the review tool, its purpose is for data collection only and does not affect the rating for this item.*

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation needs to clearly 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 an Indian 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 5 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 3 (60%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (40%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In one of the cases, the file indicated that relatives were identified and the child was placed with a relative.
 - In two of the cases, the files indicated that both paternal and maternal relatives were identified but were determined to be inappropriate placement options for the child.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In one of the cases, there was documentation to support that both maternal and paternal relatives were identified, however, there was no documentation in the file to explain why the child was not placed with relatives.
 - In one of the cases, there was no documentation to support the agency's efforts to locate the child's father or identify any paternal relatives. Documentation indicated that maternal relatives were identified but were determined to be inappropriate placement options for the child.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly indicate the agency's efforts to identify, locate and evaluate maternal and/or paternal relatives as potential placements for the child.*
- ☞ *If the child is not placed with relatives, then documentation should include the reason for not placing the child with relatives (i.e. relatives were unwilling to provide placement, relatives were ruled out or determined to be inappropriate placement options for the child etc.)*

Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents

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 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 all six cases, documentation supports that efforts were made to support and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and their mother and/or father.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In one of the cases, there was no documentation regarding any attempts of creating a relationship between the child and their mother other than supervised visits that took place once a week.

- In the other case, there was no documentation regarding any attempts of creating a relationship between the child and their father. Documentation indicates that the father's whereabouts were unknown, however, documentation was not clear and it is unknown if ongoing efforts were made to locate the father.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ Documentation should clearly indicate the agency's efforts to provide opportunities or additional activities to help support, strengthen, or maintain parent-child relationships. Documentation should address each parent's (mother and/or father as applicable) relationship with the child.
- ☞ The additional activities referenced under this item are those other than planned visitation between parent and child and would include the following:
 - Parent participation in the child's school activities, attendance at doctor's appointments, engagement in after school or extracurricular activities.
 - Agencies efforts to arrange for or provide transportation for the parent to attend such activities mentioned above.
 - Opportunities for therapeutic situations to strengthen parent child relationships.
 - Encourage foster parents to provide mentoring or serve as role model to parents.

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:	4	29%
Partially Achieved:	7	50%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	21%
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 8 (57%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 6 (43%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - In these 5 foster care cases, there were concerted efforts to assess the needs of the target child, foster parents and parents (mother and/or father when applicable) and appropriate services were implemented to address all identified needs.
- (3 in home cases)
 - In these 3 in home cases, there were concerted efforts to assess the needs of the all children living in the home as well as the needs of the parent(s) (mother and/or father when applicable) and appropriate services were implemented to address all identified needs.

Areas needing improvement:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In two of the cases, the caseworker did not have regular contact with the child and the foster parents to assess their needs and provide services to meet those needs. In one of these cases, the foster parent(s) indicated that the caseworker did not communicate necessary information about the child's behavior and did not provide the support that they needed in order to care for the child.
 - In one of the cases, the caseworker indicated that the father's whereabouts were unknown. However, the file did not include information regarding continuous efforts to locate and assess the father's needs.
- (3 in home cases)
 - In two of the in home cases, there was no evidence of formal or informal assessment of the father's needs and no services were provided for the father. One of these cases involved two different fathers and while some efforts were made by the caseworker to assess the needs of one of the fathers, there were no contacts with the other father involved in the case. In the other case, the caseworker did not have any contacts with the father during the entire period under review, even though there is some indication that the father is currently having visits with the children.
 - In one of the in home cases, the records show no formal or informal assessment of the mother's needs beyond the information documented in the initial safety assessment. During the interview, the mother expressed her frustration in the lack of involvement by the caseworker.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should include detailed information of the agency's efforts to achieve an in depth understanding of the needs of the child and family regardless of whether needs were assessed in a formal or informal manner.*
- ☞ *It is not enough to simply note that an assessment was completed, it is important that enough information is documented regarding adequacy of the assessment.*
- ☞ *Needs should be clearly identified.*
- ☞ *Services should be clearly identified and should match identified needs.*

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

Strengths:

- (7 foster care case)
 - In all 7 cases, the reviewers determined that when developmentally appropriate, the target child was actively involved in the development and evaluation of their case plan goals. Furthermore, documentation indicated that the parents (mother and/or father when applicable) were actively involved in the development and evaluation of their child's case plan goals.
- (1 in home cases)
 - In one of the cases, the reviewers determined that both the mother and father were actively involved in the development and evaluation of their children's case plan goals. The children were too young and not developmentally appropriate to be involved in the development and evaluation of their case plan goals.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care case)
 - In the one foster care case, reviewers were unable to determine the level of child and mother's involvement in the development and evaluation of case plan goals.
- (5 in home cases)
 - In three of the in home cases, there was no evidence of the father's involvement in the development and evaluation of case plan goals.
 - In one of the cases, there was no case plan document in the file and reviewers were unable to determine the level of involvement by the children and parents in the development and evaluation of the case plan.
 - In one of the cases, file documentation and interviews with mom indicated that very few Family Team Meetings occurred and mom did not feel that she was given the opportunity to be involved in the development and evaluation of case plan goals.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation and interviews should clearly identify the extent to which the child (if developmentally appropriate) was involved in determining: (1) his or her strengths and needs, (2) the type and level of services needed, (3) and his or her goals and progress towards them.*
- ☞ *Documentation and interviewers should clearly identify the extent to which the parents (mother and/or father) whenever appropriate/applicable were involved in (1) identifying strengths and needs, (2) identifying services and service providers, (3) establishing case plan goals, (4) evaluating progress toward goals, and (5) discussing the case plan in case planning meetings.*

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: The assessment of item 19 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.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - In the five foster care cases, the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworker and the target child were sufficient to ensure safety, permanency and well-being of the child and achieve case plan goals.
- (1 in home case)
 - In the one in home case, the worker had face to face contacts with ALL the children living in the home and the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworker and each child were sufficient to ensure safety, permanency and well-being of the children and achieve case plan goals.

Areas needing improvement:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In all three cases, the frequency of visits between the caseworker and the target child were less than once a month. In two of these cases, the reviewers were unable to determine the quality of visits due to lack of information in the file and during the interviews.
- (5 in home cases)
 - In two of the cases, contacts between the case worker and the children were minimal. In one of these cases, there were two children in the home, however, there was no documentation of visits with one of the children and when contacts were made with the other child, the contacts were never in the family home. The other case involved five children and reviewers were unable to determine if contacts were made with ALL of the children in the home.
 - In three of the cases, the reviewers determined that the frequency of the visits with the child(ren) were less than once a month. Furthermore, due to lack of information in the file and during the interviews, the reviewers were unable to determine if the quality of the visits with the child(ren) were sufficient to ensure safety, permanency, well-being and achieve case plan goals.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly address the frequency of worker's visits with the child. If the face to face contact between the worker and the child was less than once a month, the documentation should include reasons why the face to face contact between the worker and child did not occur.*
- ☞ *Documentation should include enough information to determine that the quality of the visit between the worker and the child were sufficient to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case plan goals. It is important to document length of visit, location of visit and items that were discussed during the visits.*

Item 20: Worker visits with parents

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: The assessment of item 20 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 2 (14%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 12 (86%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases) - In both cases, there was evidence that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the parents (mother and/or father when applicable) were sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case plan goals.

Areas needing improvement:

- (6 foster cases)
 - In four of the cases, documentation in the file and interviews with the parent(s) indicated that the frequency of visits were less than once a month and the quality of visits were not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case goals.
 - In two of the cases, the documentation in the file and interviews with the parents indicated that the frequency of the visits met sufficient requirements, however, the quality of the visits were not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case plan goals.
- (6 in home cases)
 - In five of the cases, documentation in the file indicated that the frequency of visits with the child's father was less than once a month and the quality of visits were not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case plan goals.
 - In five of the cases, documentation in the file indicated that the frequency of visits with the child's mother was less than once a month and the quality of visits were not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case plan goals.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly address the frequency of worker's visits with the parents (mother and/or father when applicable). If the face to face contact between the worker and the parent was less than once a month, then documentation should include reasons why the face to face contact between the worker and parent did not occur.*
 - *If the reason for lack of contact with the parent is due to the parent's whereabouts being unknown, the file needs to include enough information regarding the departments efforts to locate and involve the parent.*
- ☞ *Documentation should include enough information to determine that the quality of the visit between the worker and the parent were sufficient to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case plan goals. It is important to document length of visit, location of visit and items that were discussed during the visits.*

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	8	89%
Partially Achieved:	0	0%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	11%
Not Applicable:	5	36%

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 9 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 8 (89%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (11%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care and 2 in home cases) - In all six cases, there was evidence that the child(ren)'s current educational needs were assessed and services were provided to meet all identified educational needs.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care case)- In this one case, there was no evidence that the child's current educational needs were assessed even though there is some evidence that the child is struggling in school and failing some of his classes.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ Documentation should clearly address the agency's efforts to assess the child's educational needs.
- ☞ Documentation should clearly indicate the agency's efforts (services provided) to address all identified 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:	6	50%
Partially Achieved:	6	50%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0%
Not Applicable:	2	14%

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 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 10 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (40%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 6 (60%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care case and 1 in home case) – in all four cases, the documentation indicated that the agency conducted an assessment of the child(ren)'s physical and dental health needs and provided appropriate services to meet all of the child(ren)'s identified needs.

Areas needing improvement:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In three of the cases, there was no evidence of assessments of the child's physical and dental health needs during the period under review. In one of the cases, there is evidence that the child received both a physical and dental examinations during the period under review, however, there was no information to indicate if any physical or dental health care needs identified as a result of the examinations.
- (2 in home cases)
 - In these two cases, it was reasonable to expect that the agency would address the child(ren)'s physical and dental health needs, however, there was no evidence of assessment of the child(ren)'s dental health care needs.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly address the agency's efforts to assess the child's physical and dental health needs.*
- ☞ *Documentation should clearly indicate the agency's efforts to address the child's physical and dental health needs as identified in the assessment. It is not enough to simply state the date of the examinations or the type of assessments completed. Documentation should include the results of both physical and dental examinations and services that were provided to meet the needs that were identified..*

Item 23: Mental health of the child

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: The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 11 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 11(100%) applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (7 foster care cases) – In all seven cases, the documentation indicated that the agency conducted assessments of the child's mental/behavioral health needs and provided appropriate services to meet all of the child's identified needs.
- (4 in home cases) – In all four cases, the documentation indicated that the agency conducted assessments of the child(ren)'s mental/behavioral health care needs and provided appropriate services to meet all of the child(ren)'s identified needs.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☞ *Documentation should clearly address the agency's efforts to assess the child(ren)'s mental/behavioral health needs.*
- ☞ *Documentation should clearly identify the child's needs and indicate the agency's efforts (service provided) to address the child's mental/behavioral needs as identified in the assessment.*

Southeast Service Area (1st Mini CFSR Review) Results Table:

Review Period: January 1st, 2009 – January 25th, 2010
 Number of Reviews: 14 cases (8 Foster Care, 6 In Home)

PERFORMANCE ITEM RESULTS

Performance Item		Item Ratings (#)			Item Ratings (%)		
		S	ANI	N/A	S	ANI	N/A
Item 1:	Timeliness of initiating investigations	2	4	8	33%	67%	57%
Item 2:	Repeat maltreatment	3	0	11	100%	0%	79%
Item 3:	Services to family	7	0	7	100%	0%	50%
Item 4:	Risk assessment and safety management	9	5	0	64%	36%	0%
Item 5:	Foster care re-entries	0	0	14	NA	NA	100%
Item 6:	Stability of foster care placement	7	1	6	88.5%	12.5%	43%
Item 7:	Permanency goal for child	3	5	6	37.5%	62.5%	43%
Item 8:	Reunification, guardianship etc	5	2	7	71%	29%	50%
Item 9:	Adoption	1	2	11	33%	67%	79%
Item 10:	Other planned permanent living arrangement	2	0	12	100%	0%	86%
Item 11:	Proximity of foster care placement	8	0	6	100%	0%	43%
Item 12:	Placement with siblings	3	1	10	75%	25%	71%
Item 13:	Visiting with parents and siblings	4	4	6	50%	50%	43%
Item 14:	Preserving connections	6	2	6	75%	25%	43%
Item 15:	Relative placement	3	2	9	60%	40%	64%
Item 16:	Relationship of child in care with parents	6	2	6	75%	25%	43%
Item 17:	Needs and services	8	6	0	57%	43%	0%
Item 18:	Child and family involvement in case planning	8	6	0	57%	43%	0%
Item 19:	Caseworker visits with child	6	8	0	43%	57%	0%
Item 20:	Caseworker visits with parent(s)	2	12	0	14%	86%	0%
Item 21:	Educational needs of the child	8	1	5	89%	11%	36%
Item 22:	Physical health of the child	4	6	4	40%	60%	29%
Item 23:	Mental/behavioral health of the child	11	0	3	100%	0%	21%

OUTCOME RESULTS

*** 95 % is the target goal for each outcome.**

Performance Outcome	COUNTS (#)				PERCENTAGES (%)			
	SA	PA	NACH	N/A	SA	PA	NACH	N/A
Safety 1 (Items 1-2)	2	3	1	8	33%	50%	17%	57%
Safety 2 (Items 3-4)	9	4	1	0	64%	29%	7%	0%
Permanency 1 (Items 5-10)	1	6	1	6	12.5%	75%	12.5%	43%
Permanency 2 (Items 11-16)	4	4	0	6	50%	50%	0%	43%
Well-being 1 (Items 17-20)	4	7	3	0	29%	50%	21%	0%
Well-being 2 (Item 21)	8	0	1	5	89%	0%	11%	36%
Well-being 3 (Items 22-23)	6	6	0	2	50%	50%	0%	14%

KEY:

N/A = Not Applicable
 S = Strength

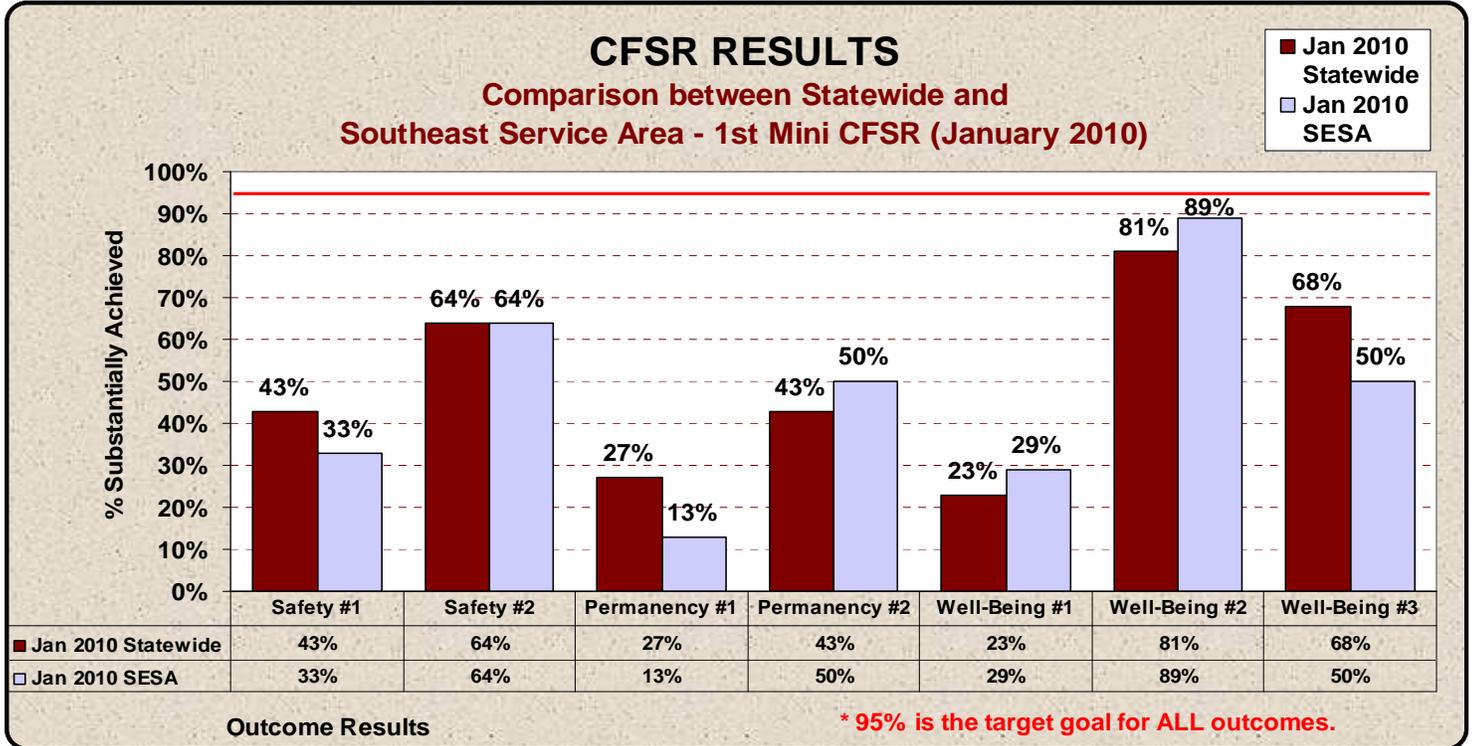
PA = Partially Achieved
 SA = Substantially Achieved

NACH = Not Achieved
 ANI = Area Needing Improvement

Comparison Charts

Southeast Service Area & Statewide Results from January 2010 CFSR Review

Number of Applicable Cases: Statewide Jan 2010 Mini CFSR= 75; SESA Jan 2010 Mini CFSR= 14



Southeast Service Area Results from January 2010 CFSR Review compared to Results from 2008 Federal CFSR Review

Number of Applicable Cases: Federal CFSR= 65; SESA Jan 2010 Mini CFSR= 14

