

FINAL REPORT

**2nd Mini Children and Family Service
Review**

Western Service Area

April 20, 21, and 22, 2010

Executive Summary

Children and Family Services Review

Western Service Area

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

The Western Service Area's 2nd Mini-CFSR was conducted from April 20 to 22, 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review was April 1, 2009 to April 5, 2010. The findings were derived from file reviews of 14 cases (8 foster care and 6 in home services) which were randomly selected from all child welfare cases which were open at some time during the period under review. The reviews also included interviews with parents, children, foster parents, CFS specialists, and other service providers to assess items 17-20 within the review tool.

In the Western Service Area, 3 of the 14 cases reviewed were brought to the attention of DHHS for juvenile justice services and 4 of the cases were non court involved. Cases reviewed were from the following local offices: Gering, Lexington, McCook, North Platte, Ogallala and Sidney.

The review was completed by five teams of two reviewers made up of one staff person from DHHS and one staff person from an out of home reform contractor (Boys & Girls Home, Voices for Families, and Speak Out). A second level review of 100% of the cases was completed by Terri Farrell and Lori Posvar.

Background Information

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

With regards to outcomes, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement (ANI) is assigned to each of the 23 items incorporated in the seven outcomes depending on the percentage of cases that receive a Strength rating in the onsite case review. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed are rated as Strength. Performance ratings for each of the seven outcomes are based on item ratings for each case. A service area may be rated as having "substantially achieved," "partially achieved," or "not achieved" the outcome. The determination of whether a service area is in substantial conformity with a particular outcome is based on the percentage of cases that were determined to have substantially achieved that outcome. In order for a service area to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. The standard for substantial conformity is based on the standard set for 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 2nd Mini-CFSR identified several areas of high performance in the Western Service Area with regard to achieving desired outcomes for children. Although the service area did not achieve substantial conformity with any of the seven CFSR outcomes, the service area did achieve overall ratings of Strength for the individual indicators pertaining to the following items: timeliness of initiating investigations (item 1), services to protect child(ren) in the home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care (item 3), foster care re-entries (item 5), stability of foster care placement (item 6), adoption (item 9), proximity of foster care placement (item 11), placement with siblings (item 12) and addressing mental/behavioral health of the child (item 23).

The Mini-CFSR also identified key areas of concern with regard to achieving outcomes for children and families. Concern was identified with regard to Well-Being Outcome 1 (families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs), which was substantially achieved in only 50% of the cases reviewed. The lowest rating within this outcome was for item 20 (caseworker visits with parent(s), which was rated as a Strength in 38% 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:	4	80%
Partially Achieved:	1	20%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0%
Not Applicable:	9	64%

Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment

In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with child welfare agency policy. A new intake tool was implemented in 2003 which is based upon a priority response model with Priority 1 calling for a response by the worker within 24 hours of the time that the report is received by 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 5 of the 14 cases. The item was rated a strength in 5 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 foster care & 4 in home cases) – In all 5 cases, the investigations of child maltreatment were initiated and face to face contact with the child victim was made in a timely manner according to the priority assigned to the allegation.

Reviewer Comments:

- The overall rating for this item indicates that the Western Service Area continues to consistently meet the time frames for initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment. Contact with children who are the subject of child maltreatment reports is occurring in accordance with the timeframes for the priority assigned to the allegations.

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 2 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 1 (50%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 in home case) – In this case there were no instances of repeat maltreatment occurring within six months.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 in home case) – In this case there were two maltreatment reports during the period under review and within 6 months of one another. It is noted that both instances involved similar circumstances of maltreatment and that in this case there is an extensive history of allegations going back 11 years.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ It is noted that a majority of the cases reviewed (12 of 14) were not applicable to this item as there were no maltreatment reports during the Period Under Review (April 1, 2009 to April 5, 2010).
- ☑ The review identified that improvement in this area may be gained through consistently identifying and providing appropriate services to families in a timely manner.

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	71%
Partially Achieved:	2	14%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	14%
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:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In both of these cases, a variety of services, as well as regular visitation by the CFSS, were in place and continued after reunification was achieved.
 - In one case it was noted that conditions for return were documented in the case file.

- (5 in home cases)
 - In all five of these cases, a variety of formal supports were provided to protect the children and prevent entry into foster care.
 - In three of the cases, reviewers noted that the agency worked with the family to create a safety plan involving both formal and informal supports to protect the children and prevent entry into foster care.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Reviewers identified that there are a wide variety of services being provided to families to protect children and prevent entry or re-entry into foster care including family support, residential safety, individual and family therapy, drug screening, school intervention services, tracker services, and medication management.

Item 4: Risk of harm to child

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 10 (71%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (29%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - In all five of these cases, it was found that the safety of the target child was assessed while placed in out of home care and during visits with their parent(s). There were no apparent risk or safety issues for the child(ren) remaining in the home.
- (5 in home cases)
 - In all five of these cases, documentation shows ongoing risk and safety assessments were completed both formally and informally while the children were placed with their parent(s). A variety of methods were used to assess risk and safety including initial assessments using the Nebraska Safety Model, OJS evaluations, participation in Family Team Meetings, contact between the caseworker and the parents and children, and in home safety services.

Areas needing improvement:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In one case it was noted that the agency did not conduct or document a safety assessment prior to reunification.
 - In one out of home case, it was noted that there was not a current safety plan as the last documented plan was from June 2009.
 - Two reviews noted that there no ongoing safety assessments completed during the period under review.
- (1 in home case)
 - In this one case, while there was a safety plan in place, there were no ongoing safety assessments completed and only one contact with the agency during the period under review.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ The reviewers identified that initial assessments are being conducted and documented; however, ongoing safety assessments are not being completed using the Nebraska Safety Intervention System (Safety Model).
- ☑ When ongoing assessments were noted, reviewers noted that these were being completed informally as part of the CFSS contact with the child and parents or during Family Team Meetings.

II. PERMANENCY

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

Status of Permanency Outcome P1

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

Item 5: Foster care re-entries

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

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

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - Strengths were noted for both cases as there were no re-entries into foster care.
 - In one case, it was noted that concerted efforts to prevent re-entry were made through completing a Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Assessment, providing services through Region II and working with school intervention to manage the youth's behaviors.

Reviewer Comments:

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

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 8 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
 - In two of the cases reviewed, a strength was noted as the target child was placed in foster care in a relative home.
 - In three cases the target child experienced only one placement during the period under review and the placement was stable.
 - In four cases, while multiple placements were noted, the reviewers found strengths as the placement changes were made based on the best interests of the child to provide an increased level of care or to step down level of care as appropriate for the child.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ The reviewers noted overall stability for those children who were placed in foster care. In three cases, children were able to remain in the same foster care placement and experienced no placement changes.
- ☑ Relative foster placements contributed for stability in some cases.
- ☑ Reviewers also identified that in the cases where multiple placements were experienced, placement changes were made based on the child's needed level of care.

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 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 of the cases given a strength rating, permanency goals for the child were specified in the case file and established in a timely manner.
 - In two cases a strength noted was that the permanency goal was updated upon completion of the previous goal (reunification and guardianship).

Areas needing improvement

- (2 foster care cases)
 - It was noted in one case that the reviewers could not determine the date the primary permanency goal had been established and a concurrent goal was not established until the child had been in placement for 12 months.
 - In one case the child had been in placement 19 of 22 months without a filing for TPR and there was no documentation to show an exception or compelling reason for not filing TPR.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ The first permanency goal of the child should be established within 60 days from the child's entry into foster care.
- ☑ Case file documentation needs to include all information regarding termination of parental rights (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.

In cases applicable to this item, the following goals were identified:

Primary Permanency Goal:

- Reunification—4 cases
- Guardianship—0 cases
- Independent Living—0 cases
- Family Preservation—3 cases
- Adoption—1 case

Concurrent Goal:

- No concurrent goal—2 cases
- Reunification—0 cases
- Guardianship—1 cases
- Independent Living—4 case
- Family Preservation—1 case
- Adoption—0 case

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 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 8 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
 - In three cases, the agency made concerted efforts to meet the goal of reunification and the child was reunited with their parent(s) during the period under review.
 - In one case, the child has been in placement 6 months and efforts are being made toward the timely achievement of reunification.
 - In two cases, while the child has been out of the home for longer than 12 months, a strength was noted because the case file documents that efforts are being made toward reunification and that the extended placement was necessary given the treatment needs of 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 1 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 1 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 foster care case)
 - The strength noted in this case was that the agency established a goal of adoption concurrent with the goal of guardianship. Documentation shows that concerted efforts have been made toward the goal of adoption.

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

Strengths:

- (1 foster care case)
 - A strength noted in one case was that concerted efforts were made to work toward the goal of independent living by providing parenting classes and assisting the youth in attaining employment.

Area needing improvement

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In one case it was noted that efforts being made toward independent living stopped when the child's placement changed from group home to shelter.
 - In another case, the concurrent goal of independent living was not established until the child had been in foster care for 12 months, and while the goal is documented in the case file, there was no documentation of efforts being made toward this goal.

Status of Permanency Outcome P2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	6	75%
Partially Achieved:	2	25%
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 five of the cases, the child was placed in the same community as their parent(s).
 - In three cases, while placement was not in close proximity to the child's parents and home community, documentation showed that the placement was in the closest facility available to meet the child's needs. In one of these three cases it was noted that the agency assisted in facilitating contact by providing assistance with gasoline and lodging.

Reviewer Comments:

- The review identified that children are commonly placed within their home community or within close proximity to their parents and home community.
- In the instances in which placement was not within close proximity to the child's family, it was identified that this occurred because an appropriate placement was not available in the child's home community and that the closest appropriate placement was utilized.

Item 12: 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 1 of the 14 cases. This item was rated a strength in 1 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 foster care cases)
 - In the one case applicable to this item, the target child and their sibling(s) were placed in the same foster care home.

Reviewer Comments:

- The review identified successful effort made to place siblings together in foster care.

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

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In all four cases a strength was noted based on documentation that showed visits were of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity of parent child relationships.
 - In two of the four cases rated as a strength, reviewers identified documentation that the agency provided supportive services including transportation, gas vouchers, lodging, and supervised visitation as part of concerted efforts to ensure sufficient frequency of visits and promote the continuity of the parent child relationship.

Area needing improvement

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In one case it was noted that due to the location of visits, face to face contact was not frequent and there was no documentation in the case file showing that alternative visitation, such as phone contact, occurred or was encouraged.
 - In one case reviewers found that concerted efforts were not made to allow contact either in person or through phone calls to maintain a relationship between the child and the child's father.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Reviewers noted written visitation plans were present in several cases.
- ☑ It was identified that documentation of efforts, such as supports offered to facilitate visitation or alternatives to face to face visitation, could be improved in some cases.
- ☑ It was also noted that efforts need to be made to include both parents in visitation and to assure that non-custodial parents are not overlooked.

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 (25%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases)
 - In five of the cases, the child was placed in their home community and was able to preserve connections to extended family, friends, and school.
 - In one case, reviewers noted that efforts were made to preserve connections by creating a genogram and peer list to identify existing connections.
 - In five of the six cases the reviewers made note that the case file contained documentation to show that the agency had explored ICWA and had found no tribal affiliations.

Area needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In one case the reviewers noted that there were no documented efforts to preserve connections during the time that the child was placed out of state.
 - In another case, reviewers found no documentation of outside resources or important connections.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ In the majority of cases, children were able to be placed in a setting that allowed them to remain in the same school, continue activities in their community and maintain a connection to their family.
- ☑ Documentation needs to clearly identify the child's important connections and efforts made by the department to preserve those connections.
- ☑ In most cases documentation was found to show that caseworkers are gathering information with regard to ICWA.

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 3 of the 14 cases. This item was rates as a strength in all 3 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In two cases it was noted that relatives were identified and stable placement with relatives was secured.
 - In one case, although a relative placement could not be secured, documentation showed that both maternal and paternal relatives were identified and efforts were made toward placement with relatives.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Reviewers found that relatives were fully identified and explored as potential foster placements in all applicable cases and relative placements were secured in 2 of the 3 applicable cases.

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 5 (63%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 3 (38%) of the applicable cases.

Strength:

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

Area needing improvement

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In all three of these cases, the reviewers noted that there was no indication in the case files that concerted efforts were made to encourage and promote a positive and nurturing relationship between the child and his/her parent(s).

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Reviewers noted a lack of documentation in the case files to show that efforts were made to encourage and nurture the relationship between the child and parents beyond regular visitation.
- ☑ Reviewers also noted that non-custodial parents had been overlooked in this area.

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:	7	50%
Partially Achieved:	5	36%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	14%
Not Applicable:	0	0%

Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

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

Review Findings: The assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 7 (50%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 7 (50%) of the applicable cases. The overall rating for item 17 is based on the combination of the following three sub-items:

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

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
 - In these eight cases, the needs of the children were assessed in a variety of ways including CFSS visits with the child, Family Team Meetings, OJS evaluation, and psychological evaluation
 - In these eight cases, the needs of the children were met through clothing vouchers, assistance with transportation, supervised visitation, out of home placement, medication management, individual and family therapy, electronic monitoring, family support, and school intervention services. Reviewers found no unmet needs for the children in these cases.

- (5 in home cases)
 - In these five cases, the needs of the children were assessed in a variety of ways including the initial safety assessment, OJS evaluation, contacts between the child and the CFSS and service coordinator and during Family Team Meetings
 - In these five cases, identified needs of the children were met through assistance with family support services, individual and family therapy, school intervention, and tracker services. Reviewers found no unmet needs for the children in these cases.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 in home case)
 - In this case, reviewers found no assessments completed for the children during the period under review and no indication of services provided to meet the needs of the children. (Note that this case was open for less than two months during the period under review.)

Item 17b: Needs Assessment and Services to Parents: The assessment of item 17b was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 7 (50%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 7 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In these four cases, the needs of the parents were assessed on an ongoing basis on an ongoing basis using both formal and informal means including regular contact with the caseworker, participation in Family Team Meetings, and drug and alcohol evaluations
 - In these four cases, identified needs were met through family support services, family therapy, drug and alcohol screening, and transportation to facilitate visitation.
- (3 in home cases)
 - In these three cases, the needs of the parents were assessed using the initial safety assessment, comprehensive family assessment, during Family Team Meetings, and during contact between the caseworker, service coordinator, and the parents.
 - In these three cases, identified needs were met through family supportive services, family therapy, and supervised visitation.

Areas needing improvement:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In one case, the needs of the parents were not assessed. During interviews the CFSS indicated that assessing parents' needs was not required in OJS cases. This information is incorrect.
 - In one case, reviewers found no documentation of assessment of the needs of the mother or services provided to meet those needs.
 - In two cases, the needs of the custodial parent were assessed and services provided to meet all needs, however no efforts were made to assess the needs of the non-custodial parent or to provide services.
- (3 in home cases)
 - In two cases, there was no indication of efforts made on the part of the agency to complete an assessment of needs or to provide services to the non-custodial parent.
 - In one case, the file contained no documentation to show that the needs of either parent were assessed or that services were provided to meet the needs of the parents. During interview it was noted that tracker services were put in place to assist the mother with supervision of the youth.

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

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In these four cases, it was identified that the needs of the foster parents were assessed on an ongoing basis through face to face contact with the caseworker, telephone contact with the caseworker, and participation in the monthly team meets.
 - In these four cases, there were no unmet needs noted. Identified needs were met through various services including assistance with transportation, assistance to purchase food, clothing, and furniture, respite care, and subsidy payments.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Reviewers identified that in the majority of the cases the agency performed well in terms of assessing and meeting the needs of the child.
- ☑ In terms of the parents, reviewers noted that in some cases the needs of one parent were identified and addressed while the other parent's needs were not. Most often it was a non-custodial parent whose needs were not assessed or met.
- ☑ Reviewers discovered that caseworkers may be misinformed that in OJS cases a needs assessment is not required for the parents. This misinformation may be contributing to low achievement on item 17b as the requirement to complete needs assessments and provide appropriate services to parents does apply to OJS cases.
- ☑ The needs of foster parents were addressed in all applicable cases.
- ☑ Caseworker contacts and Family Team Meetings were the most frequently noted methods of assessing needs for children, parents, and foster parents.

Item 18: 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 7 (50%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 7 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strength

- (4 foster care cases)
 - The reviewers noted that in all four of the cases, the case worker sought input from and actively involved the target child in the development of case plan goals. Parents (mother and/or father when applicable) were also actively involved in the development and evaluation of the case plan goals.
 - ★ In one of the above cases, it is noted that through regular phone contact with the father and the father's attorney, the caseworker was able to involve the father in the case planning process despite the fact that the father resides in Oklahoma.

- (3 in home cases)
 - In all three cases, the caseworker sought input from the family (parent(s)/guardian and child) on an ongoing basis and involved them in the case planning process.

Areas needing improvement

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In all four cases, the reviewer found that one or both of the parents were not involved in the case planning process and there was nothing to show that concerted efforts had been made to involve the parents.
- (3 in home cases)
 - In all three cases, reviewers found no indication of efforts to involve the father in the development or evaluation of case plan goals.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Reviewers noted that in several cases, the non-custodial parent was not involved in the case planning process and that no documented efforts could be found to involve this parent.
- ☑ The reviewers identified that case planning is occurring during monthly contacts with the parents and child as well as during Family Team 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 11 (79%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 3 (21%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases)
 - In all six of these cases, the visitation between the case worker and the target child occurred at least monthly and were of sufficient quality as the caseworker addressed issues of safety, permanency and well being as well as case planning with the child.
- (5 in home cases)
 - In all five of these cases, the caseworker had face to face contacts with the children at least once per month and the visits were found to meet quality as they involved issues of safety, permanency and well-being.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In one case, while the child was placed in an out of state treatment facility, visits with the child either took place over the phone or through another caseworker. It was noted that during this time there was not documentation to support that visits with the child were of sufficient quality.
 - In another case it was noted that visits are occurring on a less than once a month basis.

- (1 in home cases)
 - In one case, which was open less than two months during the period under review, visitation between the caseworker and the child was determined to be less than monthly.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Reviewers found a lack of documentation in the case file regarding the occurrence of visits and had to rely upon interviews to gather information to assess sufficient frequency of visits.
- ☑ Reviewers also noted a lack of detail in documentation regarding contacts between the caseworker and child and had to rely upon information gathered through interviews to determine if caseworker visits with the child were of sufficient frequency and quality.

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 in which there is no plan for further involvement between the parents and the agency or the parents and the child, and the child is not in a permanent home.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 20 was applicable for 13 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (38%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 8 (62%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - In both of these cases, there was sufficient evidence to show that both the frequency and the quality of visits between the caseworkers and the parents were sufficient to ensure safety, permanency, and well being of the child.
 - In one of these two cases it was noted that the caseworker maintained contact with both the custodial and non-custodial parent even though the non-custodial parent lives out of state.
- (3 in home cases)
 - In two of these cases, documentation in case file and information gathered through interviews showed that the caseworker visits with parents were sufficient in both frequency and quality.
 - In one case, documentation in the case file showed that the worker made efforts towards visitation with both parents; however the non-custodial parent chose not to have any involvement with the department despite the worker’s efforts.

Areas needing improvement:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - In two of these cases it was found that adequate visits took place between the caseworker and the custodial parent, however there was no indication of efforts made by the caseworker to have adequate visits with the non-custodial parent.
 - In two cases, reviewers found no documentation in the case file regarding caseworker visits with the parent(s).
 - In one of the cases it was noted that there were no visits between the caseworker and the guardians during the time the child was in out of state placement.

- (3 in home cases)
 - In one of these cases, the case file and information gathered during interviews showed that the caseworker had visits with the mother that were sufficient in frequency and quality, but did not have any visits with the non-custodial father.
 - In one case, while information gathered through interview with the caseworker indicated that monthly visits with the mother occurred, there was no documentation in the case file regarding frequency or quality of visits with either the mother or the father.
 - In one case, which was open less than two months during the period under review, visitation between the caseworker and parents was determined to be less than monthly.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Much of the information regarding the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworker and the parents had to be obtained through interviews as documentation in the case file alone would not have been sufficient to rate this item as a strength.
- ☑ In several cases, while visitation with the custodial parent was of good frequency and quality, no efforts toward the non-custodial parent could be found.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	10	91%
Partially Achieved:	0	0%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	9%
Not Applicable:	3	21%

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 11 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 10 (91%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (9%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
 - In three of these cases it was noted that the case file contained documentation to show that the child’s educational needs were assessed and the child was found to have no additional educational needs.
 - In five of these cases documentation in the case file showed that the educational needs of the child were assessed and that appropriate services were provided to meet all identified educational needs.
- (2 in home cases)
 - In both of these cases, the case file contained documentation to show that the educational needs of the child were being assessed and that all identified educational needs were being met with appropriate services.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 in home case)
 - In this case, there was no documentation to show that any assessments of the child’s educational needs had been completed during the period under review.

Reviewer Comments:

- In the majority of the cases, reviewers found clear documentation to show that the educational needs of the child were being assessed and that a variety of services, including IEP meetings, school intervention workers, family support workers and alternative educational programs, are being utilized in order to meet identified educational needs.
- Documentation of assessment of educational needs was missing in one case.

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:	10	83%
Partially Achieved:	2	17%
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 a Strength if the agency conducted an assessment of physical health and determined that there were no problems in that area, nor any need for physical health services.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 22 was applicable for 9 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 8 (89%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (11%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (7 foster care cases)
 - A common strength noted in all seven of these was that the case file contained documentation that the child received periodic, age appropriate physical and dental health examinations, and that any identified health needs were met with appropriate services.
- (1 in home cases)
 - In this case, the case file contained documentation of current medical and dental check-ups and the examinations identified that the child had no additional physical health needs.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care cases)
- In this one case, there was no documentation to show that dental health screenings were completed for this child or that dental health needs were addressed.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ In the majority of cases reviewed, documentation showed that the physical health needs of the child were adequately addressed through periodic medical and dental exams as well as ongoing treatment to address individual medical needs that were identified.
- ☑ Documentation should include the agency's efforts to assess the child's dental health needs as well as physical health needs.

Item 23: Mental health of the child

Reviewers were to determine whether during the period under review, the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the child(ren). Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if the agency conducted an assessment of the child's mental health and determined that there were no problems in that area, nor any need for mental health services. If there was a need for services then they were offered.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 23 was applicable for 12 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 12 (100%) applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
 - In all eight cases, the case file contained documentation to show that the child's mental/behavioral health needs were assessed and appropriate services were provided to meet each identified need.
- (4 in home cases)
 - In all four cases, the documentation in the case file shows that the agency did complete assessments of the child(ren)'s mental/behavioral health care needs and provided services as needed to meet all identified needs.

Reviewer Comments:

- ☑ Overall, reviewers found adequate documentation to show that mental health assessments were completed.
- ☑ Documentation supports that efforts were made on the part of the agency to address all identified mental/behavioral health needs through the provision of appropriate services.

WSA Results

Case Sample: *Mini CFSR Review – APRIL 2010*

Type of Review: *2nd Mini CFSR*

Number of Reviews: *14*

Report Type: *Western Service Area*

Review Period: *April 1st, 2009 – April 5th, 2010*

PERFORMANCE ITEM RESULTS

Performance Item		Item Ratings (#)			Item Ratings (%)		
		S	ANI	N/A	S	ANI	N/A
Item 1:	Timeliness of initiating investigations	5	0	9	100%	0	64%
Item 2:	Repeat maltreatment	1	1	12	50%	50%	86%
Item 3:	Services to family	7	0	7	100%	0%	50%
Item 4:	Risk assessment and safety management	10	4	0	71%	29%	0%
Item 5:	Foster care re-entries	2	0	12	100%	0%	86%
Item 6:	Stability of foster care placement	8	0	6	100%	0%	43%
Item 7:	Permanency goal for child	6	2	6	75%	25%	43%
Item 8:	Reunification, guardianship etc	8	0	6	100%	0%	43%
Item 9:	Adoption	1	0	13	100%	0%	93%
Item 10:	Other planned permanent living arrangement	1	2	11	33%	67%	79%
Item 11:	Proximity of foster care placement	8	0	6	100%	0%	43%
Item 12:	Placement with siblings	1	0	13	100%	0%	93%
Item 13:	Visiting with parents and siblings	4	2	8	67%	33%	57%
Item 14:	Preserving connections	6	2	6	75%	25%	43%
Item 15:	Relative placement	3	0	11	100%	0%	79%
Item 16:	Relationship of child in care with parents	5	3	6	63%	38%	43%
Item 17:	Needs and services	7	7	0	50%	50%	0%
Item 18:	Child and family involvement in case planning	7	7	0	50%	50%	0%
Item 19:	Caseworker visits with child	11	3	0	79%	21%	0%
Item 20:	Caseworker visits with parent(s)	5	8	1	38%	62%	7%
Item 21:	Educational needs of the child	10	1	3	91%	9%	21%
Item 22:	Physical health of the child	8	1	5	89%	11%	36%
Item 23:	Mental/behavioral health of the child	12	0	2	100%	0%	14%

OUTCOME RESULTS

Performance Outcome	COUNTS (#)				PERCENTAGES (%)			
	SA	PA	NA	N/A	SA	PA	NA	N/A
Safety 1 (Items 1-2)	4	1	0	9	80%	20%	0%	64%
Safety 2 (Items 3-4)	10	2	2	0	71%	14%	14%	0%
Permanency 1 (Items 5-10)	6	2	0	6	75%	25%	0%	43%
Permanency 2 (Items 11-16)	6	2	0	6	75%	25%	0%	43%
Wellbeing 1 (Items 17-20)	7	5	2	0	50%	36%	14%	0%
Wellbeing 2 (Item 21)	10	0	1	3	91%	0%	9%	21%
Wellbeing 3 (Items 22-23)	10	2	0	2	83%	17%	0%	14%

KEY:

N/A = Not Applicable

S = Strength

PA = Partially Achieved

SA = Substantially Achieved

NACH = Not Achieved

ANI = Area Needing Improvement