FINAL REPORT

3rd Mini Children and Family Service's Review

Western Service Area

July 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 3rd Mini-CFSR was conducted from July 20 to 22, 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review was July 1, 2009 to July 1, 2010. The findings were derived from file reviews of 14 cases (8 foster care and 6 in home services) which were randomly selected from all child welfare cases which were open at some time during the period under review. The reviews also included interviews with parents, children, foster parents, CFS specialists, and other service providers to assess items 17-20 within the review tool.

In the Western Service Area, 3 of the 14 cases reviewed were brought to the attention of DHHS for juvenile justice services and 2 of the cases were non court involved. Cases reviewed were from the following local offices: Gering, Lexington, 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- DHHS, Lori Posvar- DHHS and Nancy Oates- Boys & Girls Home.

Background Information

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

With regards to outcomes, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement (ANI) is assigned to each of the 23 items incorporated in the seven outcomes depending on the percentage of cases that receive a Strength rating in the onsite case review. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed are rated as Strength. Performance ratings for each of the seven outcomes are based on item ratings for each case. A service area may be rated as having "substantially achieved," "partially achieved," or "not achieved" the outcome. The determination of whether a service area is in substantial conformity with a particular outcome is based on the percentage of cases that were determined to have substantially achieved that outcome. In order for a service area to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. The standard for substantial conformity is based on the standard set for

the Federal CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our country's most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be acceptable. The focus of the CFSR process is on continuous quality improvement; standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to the goal of achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being.

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

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes

The Western Service Area achieved substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1 during the 3rd Mini-CFSR. The achievement for this outcome is based on the 100% strength rating for Item 1- timeliness of initiating investigations and the 100% strength rating for Item 2- repeat maltreatment. The Western Service Area also achieved overall ratings of Strength for the individual indicators pertaining to the following items: Item 3-services to families, Item 8- reunification, guardianship, etc., Item 10- other planned living arrangement, Item 11- proximity of foster care placement and Item 14- preserving connections.

The Mini-CFSR also identified key areas of concern with regard to achieving outcomes for children and families. Concerns were identified with regard to Safety Outcome 2- children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate, which was substantially achieved in only 43% of the cases reviewed. Within this outcome, Item 4- risk assessment and safety management, was rated a Strength in 43% of the cases reviewed.

Concerns were also identified with regard to Permanency Outcome 2- the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children, which was substantially achieved in only 38% of the cases reviewed. Within Permanency Outcome 2, the Western Service Area's lowest rating was for Item 13- visiting with parents and siblings.

Additionally, concerns were identified with regard to Well-Being Outcome 1- families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs, which was substantially achieved in only 36% of the cases reviewed. The lowest ratings within this outcome were for Item 18- child and family involvement in case planning, which was rated as a Strength in 29% of the cases reviewed and for Item 20- caseworker visits with parent(s), which was rated as a Strength in 29% 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:	5	100%
Partially Achieved:	0	0%
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 DHHS. Priority 2 designated reports are to have face to face contact with the alleged victim by Protection and Safety within 0 to 5 days from the time the intake is received and Priority 3 has a response time of 0-10 days. Data is generated monthly to ensure compliance with the response times.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 5 of the 14 cases. The item was rated a strength in 5 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care & 3 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 2 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 in home cases) – In both of these cases there were no instances of repeat maltreatment occurring within six months.

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 in these cases found during the Period Under Review (July 1, 2009 to July 1, 2010).

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

Status of Safety Outcome S2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	6	43%
Partially Achieved:	4	29%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	4	29%
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 10 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 10 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
  - In three of these cases, a variety of services were provided in order to successfully prevent re-entry into foster care.
  - In one case it was noted that while the child did re-enter into foster care due to his own behaviors, the agency did make efforts to prevent re-entry into foster care through services provided.
- (6 in home cases)
  - In all six of these cases, a variety of formal supports including family support, individual therapy, family therapy, and drug screening were provided to protect the children and prevent entry into foster care.
  - In two of the cases, reviewers specifically noted that the agency worked with the family to create a safety plan involving services aimed at protecting the children and preventing entry into foster care.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Reviewers identified that a wide variety of services are being provided to families to protect children and prevent entry or re-entry into foster care. These services include family support, supervised visitation, contacts by the CFSS and / or Service Coordinator, individual and family therapy, and drug screening.

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 6 (43%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 8 (57%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

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

Areas needing improvement:

- (5 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 case reviewed it was noted that there were no ongoing safety assessments completed during the period under review.
  - In two cases it was noted that there was no safety plan or that the safety plan was not updated as needed.
  - In one case it was determined by the reviewers that there was potential risk to siblings remaining in the home during visits with the target child. The potential risks were not addressed and no safety plan relating to visitation could be found.
- (3 in home cases)
  - In one case it was noted that the agency failed to complete a safety plan during the period under review and that the safety plan that had been written prior to the period under review had not been adjusted in accordance with changes in case circumstances.
  - In one case, no evidence of ongoing safety assessments could be found.
  - In another case, no documentation could be found to show that the safety plan was updated as the safety threat was eliminated and as services to the family were reduced.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ The reviewers identified that in the majority of cases, initial assessments are being conducted and documented; however, ongoing safety assessments are not being completed using the Nebraska Safety Intervention System (Safety Model).

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

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

II. PERMANENCY

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

Status of Permanency Outcome P1

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

Item 5: Foster care re-entries
Reviewers rated this assessment a Strength if during the period under review a child did not have an entry into care within a 12-month period from being discharged from another entry into foster care. Reviewers also rated this item as a Strength if a re-entry was an isolated incident during which the agency did what was reasonable to manage the risk following reunification but the child re-entered care for another reason (for example, the death of a parent). Reviewers rated this item as an Area Needing Improvement if re-entries occurring within a 12-month period were due to the same general reasons or same perpetrators. Reviewers rated this item as Not Applicable if : (1) the child entered foster care before, and remained in foster care during, the period under review; or (2) the child entered foster care before, and exited foster care during, the period under review and there was not another entry into foster care during the period under review.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 5 was applicable for 3 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 3 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In one case there were no re-entries into foster care.
  - In two of the cases, while re-entry into foster care did occur, this item was rated a strength because re-entry was determined to have occurred due to the behaviors of the child, despite the efforts made. In one case it was found that concerted efforts to prevent re-entry were made through providing individual and family counseling and in the other case efforts to prevent re-entry were made by providing drug screening, tracker, and electronic monitoring services.

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

Item 6: <u>Stability of foster care placement</u>
In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement changes during the period under review, and if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs.

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

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases)
  - In two of the cases reviewed, a strength was noted as the target child was placed in an appropriate and stable relative foster home.
  - In two 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 a level of care.

Areas needing improvement

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

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Appropriate relative foster placements contributed for stability in some cases.
☑ Reviewers also identified that some of the cases where multiple placements were experienced, placement changes were made based on the child's needed level of care.

Item 7: <u>Permanency goal for child</u>
In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether DHHS had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner, including filing for termination of parental rights when relevant. Reviewers examined the appropriateness of a goal that ultimately rules out adoption, guardianship, or return to family. Reviewers assessed whether the child's best interests were thoroughly considered by DHHS in setting a goal of other planned living arrangement, and that such a decision is /was continually reviewed for ongoing appropriateness. Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that DHHS had established an appropriate permanency goal in a timely manner. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when goals of reunification were not changed in a timely manner when it was apparent that reunification was unlikely to happen, termination of parental rights was not filed when the child had been foster care for 15 of the past 22 months and no compelling reasons were noted in the file, or the goal established for the child was not appropriate. Cases were identified as Not Applicable if the child was not in foster care.

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

Strengths:

- (3 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.
  - It was also found that in all three cases, evidence of concerted efforts being made toward the achievement of the goal was documented in the case file.

Areas needing improvement

- (5 foster care cases)
  - In three cases it was noted that the permanency goals were not documented or established in a timely manner. In one case the child had been in foster care 4 months, in the second case the child had been in care for 7 months, and in the third case the child had been in foster care for 10 months before a permanency goal was established.
  - In three cases the child had been in placement more than 15 of 22 months without a filing for termination of parental rights and there was no documentation to show an exception or compelling reason for not filing termination of parental rights.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ The first permanency goal of the child should be established within 60 days from the child's entry into foster care.

☑ Case file documentation needs to include all information regarding termination of parental rights for children who have been in foster care at least 15 out of the most recent 22 months. Documentation should include evidence of a petition for termination of parental rights and / or documentation of compelling reasons for not filing for termination of parental rights.

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 8 was applicable for 6 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 6 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases)
  - In one case, after being in out of home placement for 8 months, reunification was successfully achieved.
  - In four cases, the case file shows that concerted efforts were being made to achieve the permanency goal of reunification.
  - In one case, the permanency goal of guardianship was successfully achieved.

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 2 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 1 (50%) of the applicable cases and as an area needing improvement in 1 (50%) of 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 reunification. Documentation also shows that concerted efforts were being made toward the goal of adoption.

Areas needing improvement
- (1 foster care case)
  - In this case reviewers found no efforts had been made toward the concurrent 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 2 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 2 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:
- (2 foster care cases)
  - A strength noted in one case was that concerted efforts were made to work toward the goal of independent living through the completion of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills assessment.
  - In the other case it was noted that through efforts made, the goal of independent living had been successfully achieved during the period under review.

Status of Permanency Outcome P2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	3	38%
Partially Achieved:	5	63%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0%
Not Applicable:	6	43%

Item 11: <u>Proximity of foster care placement</u>
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 available facility which could meet the child's needs. In one of these three cases it was noted that the agency assisted with travel and lodging assistance during the child's placement.

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 12 was applicable for 2 of the 14 cases. This item was rated a strength in 1 (50%) of the applicable cases and as an area needing improvement in 1 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:
- (1 foster care case)
  - In this case, the target child was placed with his siblings in the same foster care setting.

Area needing improvement
- (1 foster care case)
  - In this case it was noted that the target child was placed in a licensed foster home while their sibling was placed in a relative home. No explanation could be found in the case file as to why the siblings were not placed in the same home.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Clear documentation should be provided when there is reasoning for not placing siblings in the same foster home.

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 13 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 3 (38%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 5 (63%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In one of the cases, documentation in the visitation plan showed that the child was able to have frequent visitation with her parents and sibling while in independent living.
  - In one case, documentation in the case file showed that the agency provided travel and lodging assistance in order to ensure sufficient visitation and promote the continuity of the parent child relationship.
  - In another case, it was noted that the agency provided supervised visitation with the mother. Supervised telephone contact was also provided to promote contact with the child's father, who was incarcerated.

Area needing improvement

- (5 foster care cases)
  - In three cases there was no documentation of visits or efforts to promote visits with the fathers of the children.
  - In one case, reviewers found no visitation plan for the child's mother.
  - In three cases, there was no documentation found regarding the child's visitation with their siblings.

Reviewer Comments:

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

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

Item 14: <u>Preserving connections</u>
Reviewers determined whether DHHS had or was making diligent efforts to preserve the child's primary connection and characteristics while in foster care. Reviewers had to make a professional judgment about the child's primary connections and then explore whether those connections have been preserved through case planning and service delivery.

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

Strengths:
- (8 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 where the child was placed outside of their home community, it was noted some important connections were maintained, as the child was able to continue counseling with the same therapist.
  - In another case where the child's placement was outside of the home community it was found that connections to extended family were maintained through regular visitation with the child's grandparents.
  - In five of the cases reviewed, the reviewers noted in their comments that inquiries were made in accordance with ICWA. No tribal affiliations were found.

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.
- ☑ In most cases documentation was found to show that caseworkers are gathering information with regard to ICWA.

Item 15: <u>Relative placement</u>
Reviewers had to focus on the title IV-E provision that requires States to consider giving preference to placing the child with relatives, and determine whether the State considered such a placement and how (for example, seeking out and evaluating the child's relatives). Relatives include non-custodial parents, such as fathers not in the home, if applicable to the case. Reviewers had to determine the extent to which the agency identified relatives who had some reasonable degree of relationship with the child and with whom the child might reside. There did not need to be in the case record a formal evaluation of relatives with whom the child might reside, but for reviewers to have answered "yes" evidence must exist, through either the case documentation or the case interviews, that relatives were evaluated and considered. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if (1) the agency assessed the child's needs and determined that he/she required special services *and* (2) the agency assessed potential relative placements and determined that the relative placements did not have the capacity to meet the child's needs. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength unless no efforts were made to locate or identify relatives for placement, or placement with a family known to the child. Reviewers rated this item as not applicable if (1) the agency determined upon the child's initial entry into care that his/her needs required residential treatment services and a

relative placement would be inappropriate, or (2) if relatives were unable to be identified despite the agency's diligent efforts to do so, or in situations such as abandonment in which the identity of the parents and relatives remains unknown despite efforts to identify them. Reviewers were to check not applicable if the child was placed with relatives.

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 15 was applicable for 4 of the 14 cases. This item was rates as a strength in 2 (50%) of the applicable cases and as an area needing improvement in 2 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In one case it was noted that both maternal and paternal relatives were identified and placement with paternal relatives was secured.
  - In another case, a stable placement with the child's grandparents was achieved.

Area needing improvement

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In one case it was found that no paternal relatives were identified. It was also found in this case that while the sibling of the target child was placed with a maternal relative, the target child was not. No information could be found in the case file as to whether or not a placement with these maternal relatives or other relatives was pursued for the target child.
  - In another case it was noted that there was no indication that placement with relatives was pursued. It is noted that in this case the child was already in a successful independent living setting at the start of the period under review.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Both maternal and paternal relatives should be identified.
☑ Efforts to identify and pursue appropriate relative placements should be clearly identified in the case file.

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 16 was applicable for 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.

Strength:

- (4 foster care)
  - In all four 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

- (4 foster care cases)
  - In three of these cases, there was documentation showing that efforts were made to support and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child and their mother; however, there was no documentation to show that efforts had been made toward the child's father.
  - In one case, there was documentation showing that efforts were made to support and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child and his father; however there was no documentation showing that efforts had been made towards the child's mother.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Reviewers noted that efforts were not made toward both of the child's parents.

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

III. WELL-BEING

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

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB1

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	5	36%
Partially Achieved:	8	57%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	7%
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: <u>Needs Assessment and Services to Children:</u> The assessment of item 17a 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:

- (7 foster care cases)
  - In these seven cases, the needs of the children were assessed in a variety of ways including initial assessments, caseworker visits with the child, Family Team Meetings, OJS evaluation, Sex Offender Specific Risk Assessment, Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Assessment, and Youth Level of Service / Case Management Inventory.
  - In these seven cases, the needs of the children were met through assistance with transportation, supervised visitation, out of home placement, residential treatment, individual therapy, and family therapy. Reviewers found no unmet needs for the children in these cases.
- (4 in home cases)
  - In these four cases, the needs of the children were assessed both formally and informally through the initial safety assessment, Comprehensive Family Assessment, contacts between the family and the Child and Family Service Specialist and Service Coordinator and during Family Team Meetings.
  - In these four cases, identified needs of the children were met through assistance with family support services, and transportation. Reviewers found no unmet needs for the children in these cases.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 in home cases)
  - In one case, reviewers found that the needs of the child were not assessed. The reviewers also identified based on the case file and interviews that the unidentified and unmet needs included family support and mentoring.
  - In another case, reviewers found that an initial assessment was completed prior to the period under review; however there was no indication that ongoing assessments were completed. It was also noted that some of the needs were not met as services relating to the child's needs, counseling and drug screening, were only provided once.
- (1 out of home case)
  - In this case, reviewers found no documentation to show that the needs of the child were assessed.

Item 17b: <u>Needs Assessment and Services to Parents:</u> The assessment of item 17b 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:

- (3 foster care cases)
  - In these three cases, the needs of the parents were assessed on an ongoing basis using both formal and informal means including initial assessment and regular monthly contact with the caseworker.
  - In these three cases, identified needs were met through supervised visitation and assistance with transportation and lodging to facilitate visitation.
- (4 in home cases)
  - In these four cases, the needs of the parents were assessed through the following services: comprehensive family assessment and during monthly contacts between the caseworker, service coordinator, and the parents.
  - In these three cases, identified needs were met through the following services: family supportive services, individual and family therapy, drug screening, and supervised visitation.

Areas needing improvement:

- (5 foster care cases)
  - In two cases there was no indication that the needs of the parents were assessed.
  - In two cases, the needs of the mother were assessed and services provided to meet all needs; however there was no documentation of efforts made to assess the needs of the father or to provide services to meet his needs.
  - In one case, the needs of the father were assessed and services provided to meet all needs; however there was no documentation of efforts made to assess the needs of the mother or to provide services to meet her needs.
- (2 in home cases)
  - In one case, there was no indication that efforts were made to assess the needs of either of the parents.
  - In another case, while it was noted that the agency assessed the needs of the mother and mother's live in boyfriend, the agency did not make efforts to assess the needs of the child's father.

Item 17c: <u>Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents:</u> The assessment of item 17c was applicable for 2 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 2 (100%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In one case, it was noted that the needs of the foster parents were assessed through monthly contact with the worker and through their involvement in the family team meetings and it was identified that the foster parents had no needs to address.
  - In another case, it was noted that the needs of the foster parents were assessed. The needs of the foster parents were addressed through respite and child care services and through guardianship training.

Reviewer Comments:

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

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

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

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

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 18 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (29%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 10 (71%) of the applicable cases.

Strength

- (2 foster care cases)
  - The reviewers noted that in both of these 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.
- (2 in home cases)
  - In both 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 through family team meetings and contacts with the parents and the child.

Areas needing improvement

- (6 foster care cases)
  - In four cases, the reviewers found that one or both of the parents were not involved in the case planning process and there was nothing to show that concerted efforts had been made to involve the parents in this process.
  - In one case, the reviewers found that while the parents had been involved in case planning initially, this was prior to the period under review and there was no indication that they were involved in case planning during the period under review.
  - In one of the cases it is noted that the 12 year old target child did not have input into the case plan and was not involved in family team meetings where case planning was discussed with the parents.
- (4 in home cases)
  - In one of the cases reviewers found that the parents and children were not involved in the case planning process, noting that there was very limited contact over the life of the case between the CFSS and the child and parents.
  - In another case, reviewers found no indication of efforts to involve the father in the development or evaluation of case plan goals.
  - In one case, reviewers found that while the mother and father were involved in the case planning process, none of the children were included in the case planning process even though the children were school aged.
  - In another case it was noted that the case plan had not been updated to include the target child and that the case plan only contained one goal for the mother. It was also noted in this case that the family identified that neither the child nor the parent had been involved in case planning.

Reviewer Comments:

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

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

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 19 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 10 (71%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (29%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (7 foster care cases)
  - In all seven of these cases, private 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.
- (3 in home cases)
  - In all three of these cases, the caseworker had private face to face contacts with the children at least once per month and the visits were found to meet quality as they involved issues of safety, permanency and well-being.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care case)
  - In this case, while visits were of sufficient frequency, it was determined that the visits were not of sufficient quality.
- (3 in home cases)
  - In two of the cases it was noted that visits with the child were not of sufficient frequency as they occurred less than once per month. It was also noted in these two cases that the visits that did occur were not sufficient in quality.
  - In one case it was noted that while the frequency of visits were sufficient, the visits were not of sufficient quality.

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 20 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (29%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 10 (71%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In both of these cases, reviewers found that the visits with the parents were of sufficient quality; occurring at least monthly. Visits with the parents were also determined to be of sufficient quality as the caseworker and parents discussed issues pertaining to the permanency and well being of the child.
- (2 in home cases)
  - In these two cases, documentation in the case file and information gathered through interviews showed that the caseworker visits were of a sufficient frequency as they occurred at least monthly. Visits were also found to be of sufficient quality based upon the length and location of the visits as well as the issues addressed during the visits.

Areas needing improvement:

- (6 foster care cases)
  - In three of these cases it was noted that visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency and quality while visits with the father, who had been absent from the home, were either less than sufficient in frequency and quality or did not occur at all.
  - In the other three cases reviewers found frequency and quality of contacts with the father were sufficient; however contact with the mother, who had been absent from the home, did not meet expectations for sufficient frequency or quality.
- (4 in home cases)
  - In one case it was noted that the caseworker did not meet with the parents outside of family team meetings.
  - 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 sufficient visits with the non-custodial father due to the father's choice not to participate.
  - In another case it was found that there were sufficient visits with the mother, however there was no indication of efforts to have contact with the father who was absent from the home.
  - In one case, which was open for three months during the period under review, visitation between the caseworker and parents was determined to be less than monthly as there was only visit between the caseworker and the parents documented during this time.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Much of the information regarding the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworker and the parents had to be obtained through interviews as documentation in the case file alone would not have been sufficient to rate this item as a strength.

☑ In out of home cases where the parents do not reside together, the agency tends to achieve sufficient contact with the parent they are seeking to reunify the child with, while less than sufficient contact or no contact is made with the other parent.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	6	60%
Partially Achieved:	1	10%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	30%
Not Applicable:	4	29%

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

Strengths:
- (6 foster care cases)
  - In three of these cases, the case file contained documentation showing that the child's educational needs were assessed and the child was found to have no additional educational needs.
  - In three other cases documentation in the case file showed that the educational needs of the child were assessed, and that the child received appropriate services in order to meet their unique educational needs.

Areas needing improvement:
- (2 foster care cases)
  - In one case, the child's educational needs were assessed and a learning disability was identified, however there was no documentation showing how the educational needs of this child were being met.
  - In another case there was no documentation showing that the child's educational needs had been assessed or the agency was involved in addressing any educational needs that may have existed.

- (2 in home case)
  - In these two cases, reviewers found that while there were noted school related concerns, there was no documentation showing that an assessment of the child's educational needs was completed or that services were provided to meet the educational needs of the child.

Reviewer Comments:

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

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

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB3;

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	6	50%
Partially Achieved:	2	17%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	4	33%
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 6 (67%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 3 (33%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases)
  - A common strength noted in all six 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.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In one case there was no documentation to show that that the health of the child had been assessed through physical and / or dental screenings. It is noted that the case file only contains letters to medical practitioners requesting information, but no documentation of assessments or provision of care.
  - In one case, there was documentation of physical health screenings, but no documentation to show that dental health screenings were completed for this child or that dental health needs were addressed.
- (1 in home case)
  - In this case, there was no documentation of physical health or dental screenings for the target child, who presented a need for these services based on substance abuse issues.

Reviewer Comments:

☑ Documentation should show what efforts were made to assess the child's physical and dental health needs.

☑ Documentation should detail what the child's physical and dental health needs are and what efforts the agency is making to meet these needs.

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

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

***Review Findings*:** The assessment of item 23 was applicable for 12 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 7 (58%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 5 (42%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases)
  - In all six 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.

- (1 in home case)
  - In this case there was documentation showing that the mental health needs of the child were assessed on an ongoing basis and that services were provided to meet all of the child's mental health needs.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
  - In both cases no documentation could be found to show that an assessment of the child's mental / behavioral health needs was completed.
- (3 in home cases)
  - In one case the reviewers concluded that the nature of the maltreatment experienced by the children necessitated agency involvement in providing for the child's mental health, however there was no mental health assessment completed and no services provided to address mental health issues.
  - In another case, while there was indication that the child did have mental health needs, the agency did not complete an assessment and no services were provided by the agency to meet these needs.
  - In one case it was found that a pre-treatment substance abuse and mental health evaluation had been completed; however no copy of the evaluation could be located in the file.

Reviewer Comments:

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

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

WSA Results

Case Sample: *Mini CFSR Review – JULY 2010*
Type of Review: *3rd Mini CFSR* **Report Type:** *Western Service Area*
Number of Reviews: *14* **Review Period:** *July 1st, 2009 – July 1st, 2010*

PERFORMANCE ITEM RESULTS

Performance Item		Item Ratings (#)			Item Ratings (%)		
		S	ANI	N/A	S	ANI	N/A
Item 1:	Timeliness of initiating investigations	5	0	9	100%	0%	64%
Item 2:	Repeat maltreatment	2	0	12	100%	0%	86%
Item 3:	Services to family	10	0	4	100%	0%	29%
Item 4:	Risk assessment and safety management	6	8	0	43%	57%	0%
Item 5:	Foster care re-entries	3	0	11	100%	0%	79%
Item 6:	Stability of foster care placement	6	2	6	75%	25%	43%
Item 7:	Permanency goal for child	3	5	6	38%	63%	43%
Item 8:	Reunification, guardianship etc	6	0	8	100%	0%	57%
Item 9:	Adoption	1	1	12	50%	50%	86%
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	1	1	12	50%	50%	86%
Item 13:	Visiting with parents and siblings	3	5	6	38%	63%	43%
Item 14:	Preserving connections	8	0	6	100%	0	43%
Item 15:	Relative placement	2	2	10	50%	50%	71%
Item 16:	Relationship of child in care with parents	4	4	6	50%	50%	43%
Item 17:	Needs and services	7	7	0	50%	50%	0%
Item 18:	Child and family involvement in case planning	4	10	0	29%	71%	0%
Item 19:	Caseworker visits with child	10	4	0	71%	29%	0%
Item 20:	Caseworker visits with parent(s)	4	10	0	29%	71%	0%
Item 21:	Educational needs of the child	6	4	4	60%	40%	29%
Item 22:	Physical health of the child	6	3	5	67%	33%	36%
Item 23:	Mental/behavioral health of the child	7	5	2	58%	42%	14%

OUTCOME RESULTS

	COUNTS (#)				PERCENTAGES (%)			
Performance Outcome	*SA*	*PA*	*NA*	*N/A*	*SA*	*PA*	*NA*	*N/A*
Safety 1 (Items 1-2)	5	0	0	9	100%	0%	0%	64%
Safety 2 (Items 3-4)	6	4	4	0	43%	29%	29%	0%
Permanency 1 (Items 5-10)	4	4	0	6	50%	50%	0%	43%
Permanency 2 (Items 11-16)	3	5	0	6	38%	63%	0%	43%
Wellbeing 1 (Items 17-20)	5	8	1	0	36%	57%	7%	0%
Wellbeing 2 (Item 21)	6	1	3	4	60%	10%	30%	29%
Wellbeing 3 (Items 22-23)	6	2	4	2	50%	17%	33%	14%

KEY:

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