



December 11, 2020

ESA Full Service Case Management Contract Monitoring Summary Quarter 3, July-September 2020

Saint Francis Ministries maintains its commitment to Full Service Case Management during the 3rd Quarter of 2020 (July -September) through expanding services to children and families, community engagement, and partnering with DHHS.

It should be acknowledged that case management in the Child Welfare system is difficult and praise is due to the case managers and frontline staff at Saint Francis who do this difficult work with children and families on a daily basis. Through this difficult work, there are many challenges facing case management teams, none more so than the unprecedented challenges of working with families during the COVID 19 pandemic.

By overcoming these challenges there are both successes, and identified areas for improvement. DHHS and Saint Francis are working in partnership to recognize successes and to identify areas of improvement to provide safety and permanency for families in the Eastern Service Area.

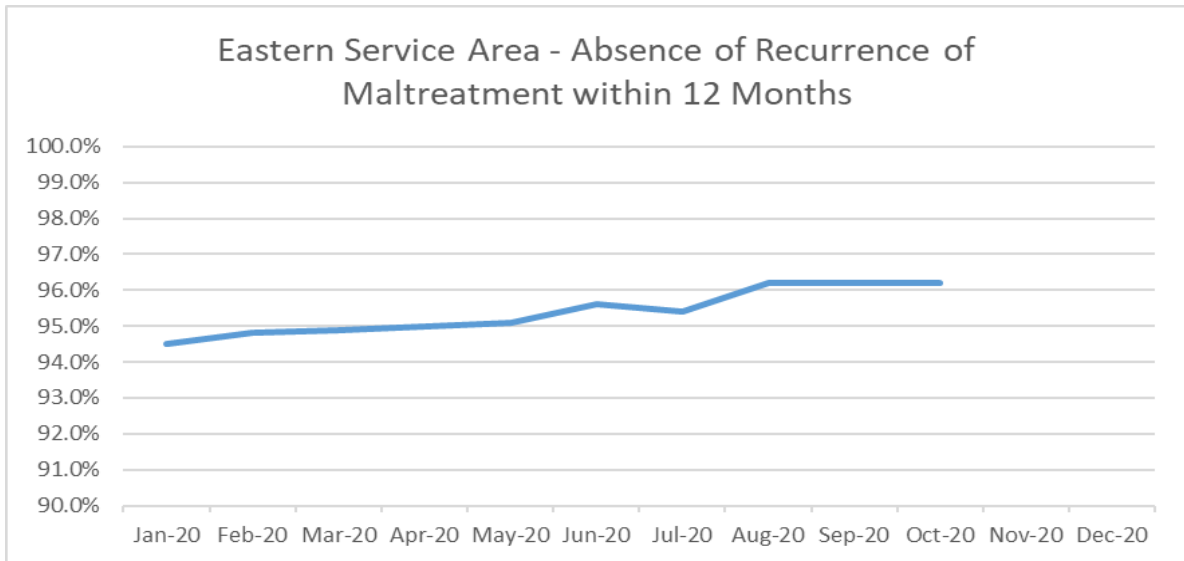
Below is a summary of Saint Francis' successes, areas of concerns, and action steps for the next quarter.

Successes:

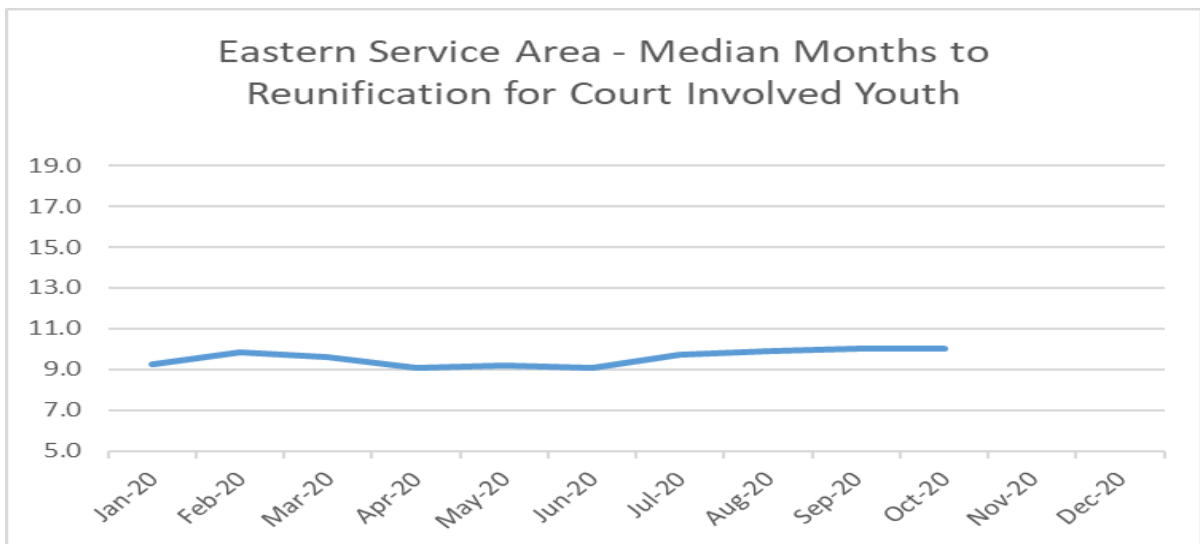
Saint Francis and DHHS ESA leadership staff met on August 25, 2020, and September 26, 2020, to review data and performance accountability. During this quarter, DHHS initial assessment team reported no issues with Saint Francis's service array capacity. DHHS and Saint Francis started a pilot project in the Saint Francis Sarpy County office that pairs DHHS investigative teams with Saint Francis' ongoing case managers. This "end-to-end" team has improved collaboration and communication on prevention services for families in the Sarpy County area. DHHS and Saint Francis will be exploring the expansion of these end-to-end teams in the Douglas County area in the next several months.

During this quarter Saint Francis was successful in meeting several performance measures.

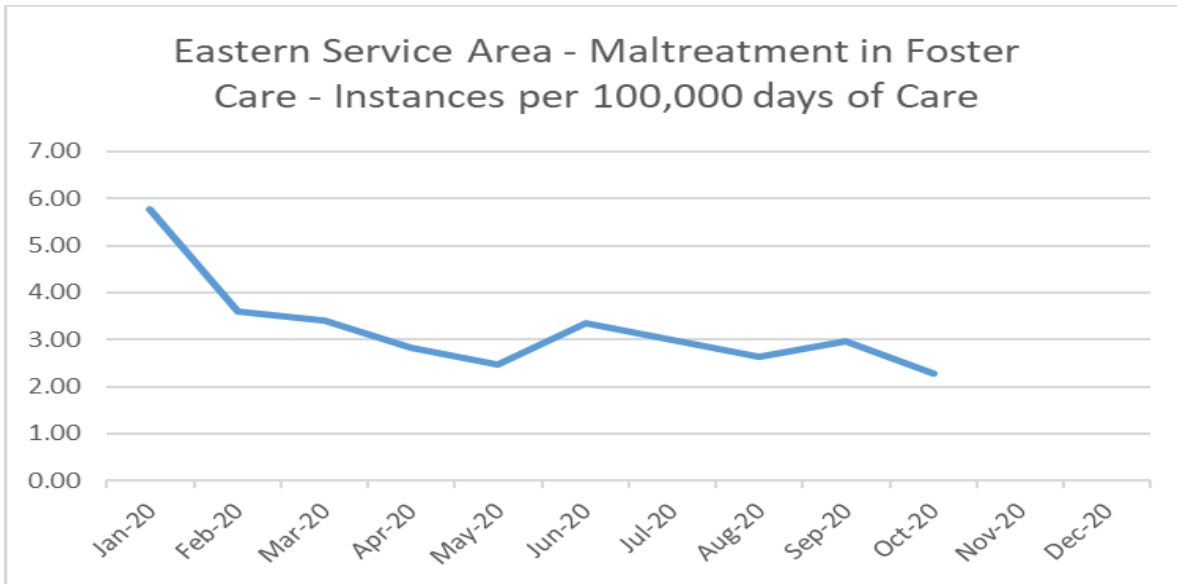
- Saint Francis continues to exceed the goal for Absence of Recurrence of Maltreatment within 12 Months (goal is to be greater than 92.1%). Saint Francis achieved minimal instances of recurrence of maltreatment 96.2% for July, 96.2% for August, and 96.2% for September, which is indicative of a 3.8% recurrence rate. Please see chart below.



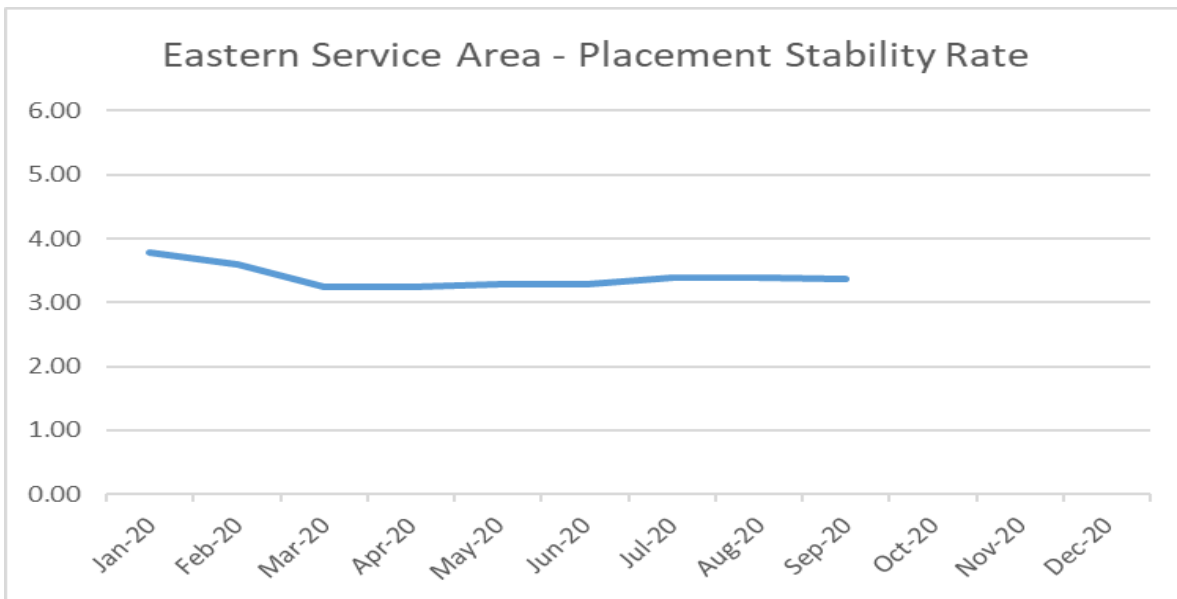
- The median months to reunification for court involved children (goal = less than 10 months) remained flat during this quarter, with a slight increase in August (10.74), but coming back down to 10 month to reunification in September. Please see chart below.



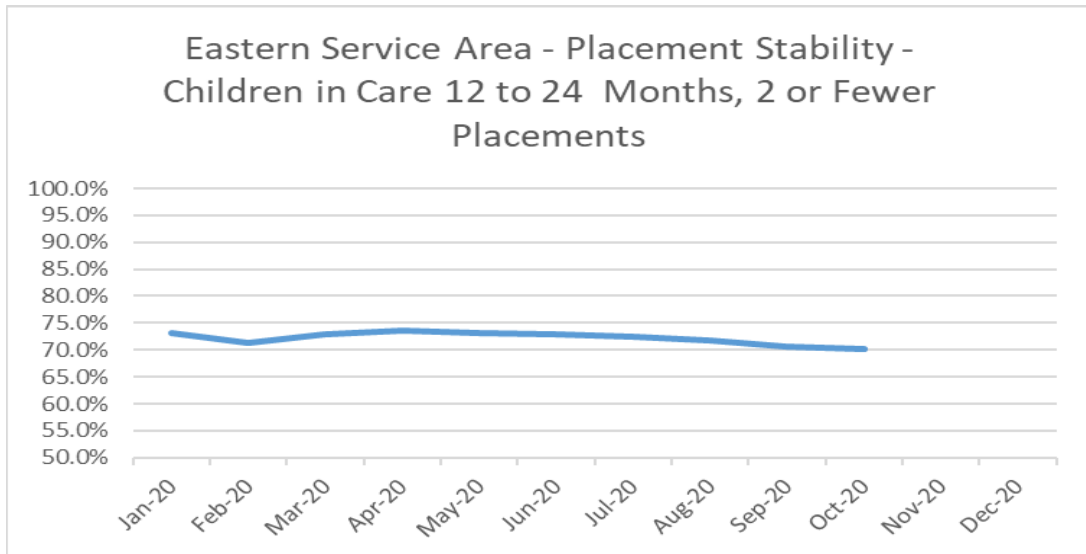
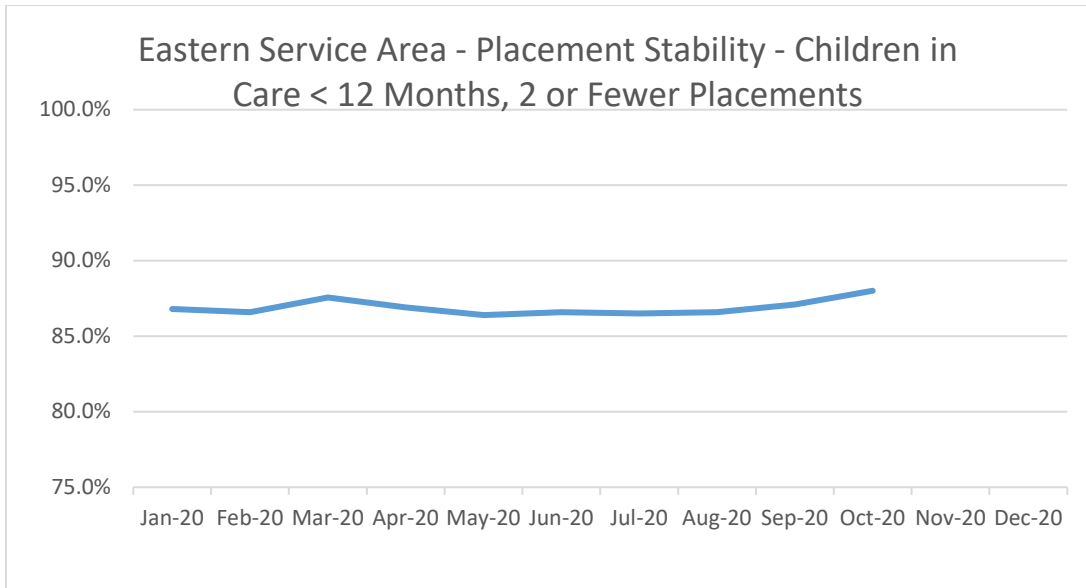
- Saint Francis continues to do well in the performance measure of incidents of maltreatment in foster care. The federal target is less than 7.00 incidents per 100,000 days of out-of-home care. Saint Francis lowered the number of incidents during this quarter: July at 2.63 incidents, August at 2.97, and September at 2.27 incidents. Please see chart below.



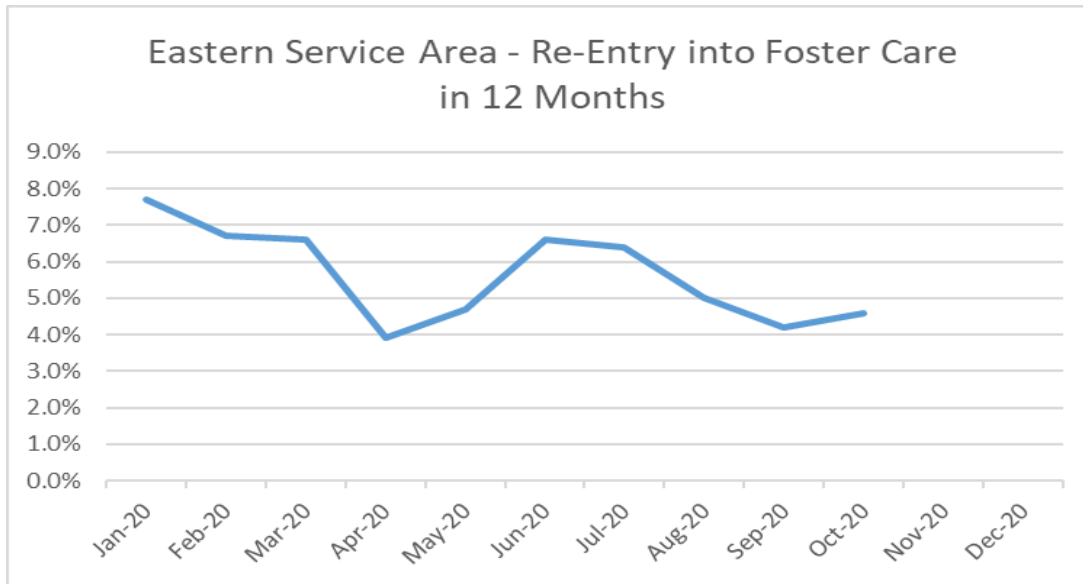
- Saint Francis consistently met the goal for placement stability this quarter (average of less than 4.12 placement changes per 1,000 days of all youth in foster care for a 12 month period). Children in the care of Saint Francis had an average of 3.38 moves for July, 3.37 moves for August, and 3.47 moves for September. Please see chart below.



- Saint Francis met the placement stability goal for the percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months with fewer than two placement changes by achieving 86.6% for July, 87.1% for August, and 88% for September (goal is to be greater than 86%). Saint Francis also met the goal for placement stability for children in foster care 12-24 months with fewer than two placement changes achieving 71.7% for July, 70.7% for August, and 70.2% for September (goal is to be greater than 65.4%). Please see charts below.



- Saint Francis continues to meet the goal of reducing the percentage of children who re-enter foster care within 12 Months of Discharge (goal is <8.3%). Saint Francis reported 5.0% of children re-entering foster care for July, 4.2% for August, and 4.6% for September. Please see chart below.



Issues that Need Attention and Next Steps:

1. According to DHHS Continuous Quality Improvement data for this quarter: 46% of Saint Francis case managers met the state required caseload ratio for July, 47% for August, and 45% for September.

Next Steps:

- a. DHHS requested a Hiring Plan from Saint Francis due to concerns regarding Saint Francis staff turnover and ability to meet case load ratios as defined by statute. The Hiring Plan was received by DHHS on September 15, 2020 which outlines strategies to meet case load standards and maintain a stable workforce for the Eastern Service Area. The following initiatives were outlined in the Plan:
 - Saint Francis is planning to hire a Recruitment Specialist to focus on recruiting new employees with an emphasis on case managers. The goal is to have the Recruitment Specialist by November 15, 2020. This goal has been completed.
 - Saint Francis has created a specialized Case Management Adoption team to increase efficiency in closing cases and improve compliance with the DHHS caseload measure. The goal was to have this adoption team in place by October 15, 2020 was completed.
 - Saint Francis is researching CCFL curriculum to ensure Supervisors are prepared to address gaps and are knowledgeable of the training specifics received by new staff. The goal to identify training gaps by October 15, 2020, was completed and the process of improvement for teaching and learning will be ongoing.
 - Saint Francis Ministries is engaging in internal conversations about a potential mentor program restructure to promote retention of case managers. The goal date for completion was October 31, 2020, and it was completed.
 - Saint Francis Ministries is realigning caseloads to more closely adhere to the caseload measure as articulated by DHHS. The original goal date for this strategy was October 15, 2020, but was extended to January 2021 due to the discussions that need to occur through family team meetings to ensure smooth transition.

- Saint Francis Ministries continued to offer a hiring bonus to employees who refer new case managers.
 - Saint Francis recruitment efforts include: strengthening relationships with area universities, attending career fairs, starting a Social Work intern program, exploring partnerships with additional employment platforms for recruitment, and engaging staff in employee satisfaction surveys. This is an on-going strategy.
- b. Additionally, in order to maintain a strong workforce, Saint Francis initiated a new survey called “Candidate Experience Survey” which allows Saint Francis an opportunity to assess new employees experience from the interview process to their first week of being employed. Saint Francis will adjust their onboarding process as necessary based on survey feedback to ensure new employees have a positive experience from the beginning.
2. The Recruitment and Retention Report for July-Sept 2020 indicates Saint Francis had 294 relative/kinship homes at the beginning of the reporting period with 45 losses, 103 gains, and 352 homes at the end of the reporting period. Of the 45 losses: one was an agency decision, seven were noted as foster parent decision, 24 were due to permanency (adoption, reunification), one home transferred, and 12 were placement disruptions¹. Saint Francis reported having two Agency Supported licensed homes at the beginning of the reporting period with no losses or gains during the quarter. Saint Francis also reported having 4 relative/kinship licensed homes at the beginning of the reporting period with 1 loss, 0 gains, and 3 homes at the end of the reporting period.

Next Steps:

- a. Saint Francis is working to increase the number of licensed foster homes in the Eastern Service Area with contracted vendors.
 - b. Saint Francis and DHHS are exploring options to increase the amount of licensed relative and kinship foster homes in order to maximize Title IV-E funding. DHHS is meeting internally to develop a process for Saint Francis to provisionally license relative and kinship foster homes. DHHS held the initial meeting with Saint Francis on 10/19/20 to develop a process to increase licensing of relative and kinship home.
 - c. Saint Francis continues to utilize triage homes while more extensive searches can be made for placement. In addition, Saint Francis has an Xtreme Recruiting and Family Finding program within its service array which are used to find placement. DHHS is scheduling time with Saint Francis Placement team to provide more information on the utilization of Xtreme Recruiting and Family finding for DHHS investigative teams.
 - d. Saint Francis and DHHS are looking nationwide to explore best practice modalities to license relative and kinship homes.
3. During the quarterly Personnel File Review (PFR), it was discovered that Saint Francis was not checking all names or aliases when completing background checks for recently hired employees who are expected to have contact with children and families. In several instances, for recently hired employees who lived out of the state of Nebraska within the past 5 years, the out-of-state background checks were not completed.

Next Steps:

- a. The DHHS Contract Monitor reviewed 25 personnel files for this quarter’s PFR on September 29, 2020. After review of the 25 files, 8 Saint Francis employee were directed to not have unsupervised client contact due to not having documentation of the required background

¹ These numbers reflect only the relative and kinship homes supported by Saint Francis and not the contracted vendors within the Eastern Service Area.

checks. A Corrective Action Plan was requested from Saint Francis on October 3, 2020, to address the background check issues. Furthermore, DHHS reviewed files for any Saint Francis personnel who were hired after April 1, 2020 to ensure background checks had been completed. The DHHS Contract Monitor started a review of 49 additional personnel files on October 3, 2020. As a result of this expanded review, an additional 27 staff were deemed not permitted to have unsupervised contact with children and families on caseloads. Saint Francis HR representatives worked closely and quickly with the Contract Monitor to reconcile all background checks for these 27 employees to avoid disruption in service.

4. Saint Francis is not meeting the target for the performance measure of *Placement Stability of Children in Care 24 months or more, with Fewer than 2 Placements*. The target for this measure is 41.8% or greater while Saint Francis is at 39.6%.

Next Steps:

- a. DHHS has monthly and quarterly CQI meetings scheduled (see above) and will discuss and strategize how to improve the performance measure of *Placement Stability of Children in Care 24 months or more, with Fewer than 2 Placements*. It is anticipated that Saint Francis will be able to meet this measure in the coming months.
- b. In relation to the above about Placement Stability, it should be noted that in the federal Children and Family Service Review, Nebraska is focused on the three items the state is not passing in its Program Improvement Plan (PIP): Item 4, Stability of Foster Care Placement; Item 14, Caseworker Visits with Child, and; Item 15, Caseworker Visits with Parents. For Quarter 5 of the Program Improvement Plan (April – June 2020), Saint Francis scored 60% for Stability in Foster Care Placement, 62.9% in Caseworker Visits with Child, and 57.6% in Caseworker Visits with Parents. All three PIP items are measured through samples of cases with a Period Under Review of April 2019 through June 2020. The sample of cases will possibly include a majority of cases managed by the previous contractor. It is important to reiterate that Saint Francis is meeting or exceeding three of the four the performance measures in the contract around placement stability, as indicated in charts above. For the performance measure of Case Worker Visits with Child, DHHS CQI shows that Saint Francis met with State Wards 90% of the time or better from December 2019 through September 2020. Saint Francis does need to improve the rate of meeting with all children under their supervision. DHHS and Saint Francis will strategize through use of data to meet this measure. Saint Francis implemented a Lean Six System program in case teams to monitor progress in the Case Worker Visits with Parents measure. DHHS and Saint Francis have a call every week to discuss progress in this measure.

Corrective Action Plans:

1. **Case Plans Documented within 60 Days** - All children shall have a case plan on NFOCUS within 60 days of becoming a state ward or a child in a non-court involved case. Case Managers are required to create a Case Plan within 60 days of the change of legal status. On April 21, 2020, DHHS approved a Corrective Action Plan presented by Saint Francis that would improve performance in this area. Continuous Quality Improvement data for this quarter shows Saint Francis completed Case Plans within 60 days (includes Prevention Plans for Non-Court children) 77% of the time in July, 88% in Aug, and 93% in September. Below are action items implemented by Saint Francis to assist case managers in reaching the target for this performance measure:

- Saint Francis intake will send a checklist with a new referral, the Case Manager will complete the checklist within a given timeframe and turn in to supervisor by the 21/45 day depending on type.
- Program assistant will send out the invite to the Supervisor and Case Manager immediately after case assignment.
- Each month during team huddles Directors will review all performance accountability with Supervisors who will then review with both their team, and individually with each staff to discuss trends and barriers to meeting the outcomes to include timeliness of the initial case plan.

As noted above Saint Francis has continued to show improvement in this area each month. Saint Francis implemented a daily Six Sigma approach within case management teams to review priorities, performance data, and deadlines. DHHS will continue to monitor the progress made by Saint Francis and anticipates that this corrective action plan will be closed with the continued performance improvement.

- 2. Documentation of Placement within 72 Hours** - All contact information shall be up to date on NFOCUS within 72 hours of any placement change for children in out-of-home care. On April 21, 2020 DHHS approved a Corrective Action Plan presented by Saint Francis that would improve performance in this area. Continuous Quality Improvement data for this quarter shows Saint Francis documented placement in NFOCUS within 72 hours of the child's placement 71% of the time in July, 78% in August, and 80% in September. Saint Francis demonstrated progress in this area for this quarter under review and case management teams are meeting in daily huddles to monitor this metric. DHHS will continue to monitor action steps and assist Saint Francis with the goals outlined in the Corrective Action Plan.
- 3. E-Verify Form** - *The Sub-recipient is required and hereby agrees to use a federal immigration verification system to determine the work eligibility status of employees physically performing services within the State of Nebraska. A federal immigration verification system allows for the electronic verification of the work authorization program authorized by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, 8 U.S.C. 1324a, known as the E-verify Program, or an equivalent federal program designated by the United States Department of Homeland Security or other federal agency authorized to verify the work eligibility status of an employee.*

On April 21, 2020 DHHS approved a Corrective Action Plan presented by Saint Francis that would improve performance in this area. During the most recent Personnel File Review conducted on September 29, 2020, a sample of new employee files were reviewed and all these files contained the federal E-verify form. DHHS will review files of newly hired staff at the next file review to confirm that the E-verify form continues to be completed.

- 4. Background Checks for Agents, Employees, Interns, Volunteers, Second Tier Sub-recipients or Sub-Contractors** - *The Sub-recipient must complete and maintain the following initial background checks before any agents, employees, interns, volunteers, Second Tier Sub-recipients or Sub-contractors have direct unsupervised contact with any child or family, and every two years thereafter: Nebraska Sex Offender Registry, Nebraska Child and Adult Abuse and Neglect Central Registry, Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles Check, and Criminal Background check. The Sub-recipient must ensure, at a minimum, the following background checks have been completed on any agents, employees, interns, volunteers, Second Tier Sub-recipients and Sub-contractors who have been employed or resided in Nebraska for less than five (5) years: Criminal history check for each state, Sexual Offender Registry, Child and Adult Abuse and Neglect Central Registry, and State repository of driving records.*

Saint Francis submitted a draft corrective action plan on October 21, 2020. DHHS asked for revisions to this plan and once the plan is received, DHHS will monitor progress through personnel file reviews. The Contract Monitor will review files of all staff hired since September 29 to confirm that all required background checks are completed.

Conclusion

In the 3rd quarter of full service case management, Saint Francis continued to demonstrate its commitment to serve children and families in the Eastern Service Area despite the challenges caused by the current epidemic. Saint Francis has shown success in select performance measures while demonstrating steady improvement in other focused areas. Saint Francis case management teams continue to work with DHHS on meeting the needs of children and families, and thus, meeting performance measures. DHHS appreciates the efforts from Saint Francis Leadership to guide the case management teams to focus on areas that need improvement.

As in previous quarters, DHHS will continue to work with Saint Francis to create action steps for improvement through ongoing communication, guidance, and sharing of information.

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CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

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