

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report: Florida Child and Family Services Review
January 2009

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Florida. The CFSR is the Federal Government's program for assessing the performance of State child welfare agencies with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. It is authorized by the Social Security Amendments of 1994 requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promulgate regulations for reviews of State child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau (CB) of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within HHS.

The Florida CFSR was conducted the week of January 7-11, 2008. The period under review for the case reviews was from October 1, 2006, to January 11, 2008. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCF)
- The State Data Profile prepared by CB, which provides State child welfare data for fiscal year (FY) 2004, FY 2005, and the CFSR 12-month target period ending March 31, 2006
- Reviews of 65 cases (41 foster care cases and 24 in-home services cases) at 3 sites throughout the State: 17 cases in Alachua County, 31 cases in Miami-Dade County, and 17 cases in Seminole County¹
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys

Background Information

The CFSR assesses State performance on 23 items relevant to 7 outcomes and 22 items pertaining to 7 systemic factors. In the Systemic Factors Section B of the report, each item incorporated in each systemic factor is rated as either a Strength or an Area

¹ The CFSR usually includes 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home services cases. However, during the Onsite Review, it was discovered that one of the in-home services cases involved a child who was in foster care. Therefore, the case was designated as a foster care case and removed.

Needing Improvement (ANI) based on whether State performance on the item meets Federal policy requirements. Information relevant to each item comes from the Statewide Assessment and the stakeholder interviews conducted during the week of the onsite CFSR. The overall rating for the systemic factors is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor. For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” with that factor (i.e., a score of 3 or 4) or “not in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 1 or 2).

Items relevant to the seven outcomes are discussed in Outcomes Section A of the report. An overall rating of Strength or ANI is assigned to each of the 23 items, depending on the percentage of cases that receive a Strength rating in the case reviews. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed are rated as a Strength. Performance ratings for each of the seven outcomes are based on item ratings for each case. A State may be rated as having Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, or Not Achieved the outcome. The determination of whether a State is in substantial conformity with a particular outcome is based on the percentage of cases that were determined to have substantially achieved the outcome. Specifically, for a State to be in substantial conformity with an outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome.

A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome or systemic factor must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of concern associated with that outcome or systemic factor.

ACF has set very high standards of performance for the CFSR Review. 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; high standards are set to ensure ongoing attention to the goal of achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being.

It should be noted, however, that States are not required to attain the 95 percent standard established for the CFSR Onsite Review at the end of their PIP implementation. CB recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often are time-consuming to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with CB to establish a specified amount of improvement or implement specified activities for their PIP. That is, for each outcome or item that is an ANI, each State (working in conjunction with CB) specifies how much improvement the State will demonstrate and/or the activities that it will implement to address the ANIs and determines the procedures for demonstrating the achievement of these goals. Both the improvements specified and the procedures for demonstrating improvement vary across States. Therefore, a State can meet the requirements of its PIP and still not perform at the 95 percent (for outcomes) or 90 percent (for items) level as required by the CFSR.

The second round of the CFSR assesses a State's current level of functioning with regard to achieving desired child and family outcomes by once more applying high standards and a consistent, comprehensive, case-review methodology. This is intended to serve as a basis for continued planning in areas in which the State still needs to improve. The goal is to ensure that program improvement is an ongoing process and does not end with the closing of the PIP.

Because many changes have been made in the onsite CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State's performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the first round, particularly with regard to comparisons of percentages. Key changes in the CFSR process that make it difficult to compare performances across reviews are the following:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases (please see footnote ¹ above)
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items
- Changes in criteria for specific items to increase consistency and to ensure assessment of critical areas, such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents

The Florida Child Welfare System

There is a unique feature of the Florida child welfare system that is useful to understand in reviewing the CFSR Final Report. Many of the child welfare services in Florida are provided by private agencies as directed by the 1996 Legislature. At that time, the State began outsourcing the provision of foster care and related services statewide in an effort to encourage communities and stakeholders to become partners in the safety, permanency, and well-being of Florida's children. The lead agencies are a single agency with which the DCF contracts for the provision of services in a specific geographic area, and they oversee the provision of services in a community, county, or Judicial Circuit. Statute requires that lead agencies directly provide no more than 35 percent of all child protective services. Therefore, lead agencies subcontract with other agencies to provide specific services. With the transition of Dade/Monroe Counties' child welfare services to the community-based care (CBC) lead agency, Our Kids, Inc., on July 1, 2005, privatization of child welfare services was completed statewide. There are 20 lead agencies with 21 contracts in Florida's 67 counties. . The DCF operates within six regions: Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southeast, Southern, and Suncoast.

Service delivery mechanisms vary among programs, based upon customer needs, and range from services administered directly by DCF staff to services procured through local community-based services providers. Florida's CBC system delivers a comprehensive array of foster care and related services to children and families through a contract service task list of performance measures and goals aligned with Federal measures for child welfare. It should be noted that the CFSR process is designed to assess State child welfare systems, including contracted service providers when they are delegated to have full case management responsibilities. Therefore, it

should be understood that for the cases in which the CBC agencies have full case management responsibilities, the CFSR process assesses those cases based on the actions and case practices of the CBC agencies. When reference is made to caseworkers who are providing foster care or in-home or adoption-related services, these caseworkers are employees of the CBC agencies. Throughout this CFSR Final Report, the contract agencies are referred to as CBC agencies.

General Information Regarding Tables

The specific findings with regard to the State's performance on the safety and permanency outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in table 2. Table 3 presents the State's performance with regard to the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. The Final Report includes a table of key characteristics of the 65 cases reviewed during the CFSR.

In the following section, key findings are summarized for each outcome and systemic factor. Information also is provided about the State's performance on each outcome and systemic factor during the 2001 CFSR.

I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity for any of the safety, permanency, or well-being outcomes. However, the 2008 CFSR identified three items demonstrating high performance in Florida with regard to achieving outcomes for children. The State achieved overall ratings of Strength for the individual indicators pertaining to timeliness of investigations (item 1), foster care re-entry (item 5), and placing children in close proximity to their parents (item 11). Florida achieved a Strength rating of 90 percent or higher in all of these items. In particular, the State achieved 90 percent for item 1, 100 percent for item 5, and 93 percent for item 11.

The State met two of the national standards for the four data composites pertaining to permanency. These include the timeliness of adoptions (Permanency Composite 2) and achieving permanency for children in foster care for long periods of time (Permanency Composite 3). Although the State did not achieve substantial conformity for any of the safety, permanency, or well-being outcomes, 82.5 percent of the cases rated for Well-being Outcome 2 (Children receive services to meet their educational needs) were rated as Substantially Achieved. The generally high level of performance on this outcome may be attributed to Florida's partnership with the Department of Education and the establishment of well-defined policies regarding educational assessment and services.

The 2008 CFSR identified several concerns with regard to achieving outcomes for children and families. The State did not meet the two national standards for the safety-related data indicators—one pertaining to recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period and one

pertaining to maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff members. Florida did not meet the remaining two national standards for the permanency data composites. These include the timeliness and permanency of reunification (Permanency Composite 1) and placement stability (Permanency Composite 4).

In addition, there are three outcomes that are indicative of more concerning performance. Performance in these three outcomes was significantly impacted by the number of individual cases that were rated as ANIs:

- Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) was substantially achieved in only 34.1 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Permanency Outcome 2 (Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved) was substantially achieved in 47.5 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs) was substantially achieved in 24.6 percent of the cases.

For Permanency Outcome 1, only 59 percent of cases were rated as a Strength for item 6 (stability of foster care placements), 59 percent of cases were rated as a Strength for item 7 (permanency goal for child), 44 percent of cases were rated as a Strength for item 9 (adoption), and 64 percent of cases were rated as a Strength for item 10 (other permanent planned living arrangement [OPPLA]). Children were in multiple placement settings during the period under review, and at least one placement change was not planned by the agency to further attainment of the child's permanency goal. Case reviews indicated that children's permanency goals were not established in a timely manner. In some instances, the goal of reunification, guardianship, or permanency planning with relatives was not consistently achieved in a timely manner, and the agency was not consistently making efforts to achieve the goal. There was a lack of diligent efforts to find adoptive homes for children. In cases with the goal of OPPLA, there were placements at the time of the Onsite Review that were unstable, and the agency was not providing the child with sufficient services to stabilize the placement. There also was a lack of services to assist in the transition to independent living (IL).

For Permanency Outcome 2, only 53 percent of the cases were rated as a Strength for item 13 (visiting with parents and siblings in foster care), 61 percent were rated as a Strength for item 15 (relative placement), and 28 percent were rated as a Strength for item 16 (relationship of child in care with parents). The agency was not consistent in placing children with siblings, and separation was not deemed to be in the best interests of the siblings. Reviewers found that visitation often was sporadic, not documented in the case file, and not attempted with incarcerated parents. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that reunification was delayed due to lack of consistent parent/child visitation in 2007. The case review findings and the stakeholder interviews indicated that the State did not make diligent efforts to search for known maternal and paternal relatives during the period under review. The agency was not consistent in visiting with parents and siblings in foster care. The case review findings suggest that lower levels of performance on

these items for Permanency Outcome 2 may have contributed in large part to the lack of engagement of parents by staff, which is a recurring issue throughout the Florida CFSR.

For Well-Being Outcome 1, only 29 percent of the cases were rated as a Strength for item 17 (needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents), 35 percent of the cases were rated a Strength for item 18 (child/family involvement with case planning), and 31 percent of the cases were rated as a Strength for item 20 (worker visits with parents). There continues to be a lack of consistency in assessing and meeting the service needs of parents (particularly fathers) and children. In the cases reviewed, the agency more consistently assessed and addressed the needs of mothers and children and less effectively assessed and met the service needs of fathers. Efforts to locate and/or engage fathers at the outset have improved, but overall efforts remain inconsistent (item 17). There also continue to be inconsistencies in adequately involving families (particularly fathers) in case planning. There were inconsistencies in caseworker visits with children in foster care cases and caseworker visits with children in the in-home cases. The 2008 CFSR specifically differentiated between mothers and fathers in evaluating the frequency and quality of caseworker visits. In general, there were insufficient caseworker visits and challenges associated with the quality of visits with both parents. However, these findings were more pronounced for fathers, as evidenced by inconsistent concerted efforts to visit or engage fathers in either case planning or services. In addition, there were instances when visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency, but the quality was lacking.

Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two indicators. One pertains to the timeliness of initiating a response to a child maltreatment report (item 1), and the other relates to the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment (item 2).

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 70 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance varied across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 63 percent of Alachua County cases, 77 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 67 percent of Seminole County cases.

Florida did not meet the national standards for the two data indicators relevant for Safety Outcome 1. These indicators pertain to the absence of maltreatment recurrence and absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1 in its Round 1 CFSR. Both items addressed in Safety Outcome 1 were rated as ANIs in the first review, and the following concerns were noted in the 2001 CFSR:

- Interviews with some of the stakeholders suggested that, in some instances, failure to respond in a timely manner to investigations of reports of child maltreatment was due to excessive worker caseloads and a high level of worker turnover. Stakeholders cited

instances in which worker vacancies resulted in remaining workers having excessively high caseloads, which created a backlog for the completion of investigations.

- There were indications that the initial investigations of child maltreatment reports did not address the potentially causal issues.
- Interviews with most of the stakeholders revealed that family assessments being conducted by child welfare agency workers were not sufficiently thorough in detecting problems such as domestic violence and substance abuse at an early stage.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- The State implemented statewide initiatives to stabilize the workforce and eliminate the backlog of child maltreatment reports.
- DCF provided training in the areas of clinical supervision, family engagement and investigations, family assessments and the matching of services, and the High Risk Protocol.
- DCF issued administrative rules regarding the elimination of inappropriate and invalid reports of child maltreatment and the identification and documentation of parental substance abuse and domestic violence.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

During the 2008 review, DCF was found to be effective in timely initiation of investigations of child maltreatment reports. However, DCF was not found to be effective in preventing the recurrence of maltreatment. During the Onsite Review, concern was expressed by stakeholders regarding the high turnover of staff. Stakeholders also expressed concern that staff are not adequately assessing and addressing family issues, which has an impact on the capacity to ensure child safety. Both of these concerns were present in the 2001 CFSR.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two indicators. One indicator (item 3) addresses the issue of child welfare agency efforts to prevent children's removal from their homes by providing services to the families that ensure children's safety while they remain in their homes. The other indicator (item 4) pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children.

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 61.5 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 65 percent of Alachua County cases, 58 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 65 percent of Seminole County cases.

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 2 in its Round 1 CFSR. Both items addressed in Safety Outcome 2 were rated as ANIs in the first review. Services to families to protect children in the home and prevent removal (item 3) were found to be a Strength. However, in 2001, risk of harm (item 4) was rated as an ANI. The following concerns were identified in the 2001 CFSR:

- There was a lack of ongoing assessment of risk factors, which was attributed to lack of worker contacts and visits with the family.
- Stakeholders raised concern about workers not re-assessing risk of harm to children over time, particularly those children remaining in their homes or placed with relatives.
- In some cases, workers did not conduct an adequate risk assessment or provide adequate monitoring to determine parental compliance with service requirements.
- Stakeholder interviews revealed a lack of consistency in visits by agency caseworkers in situations where monitoring of the family's situation regarding the safety of a children is required.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- DCF provided training regarding assessments and the matching of services.
- DCF issued administrative rules regarding the frequency and quality of monthly visits by the caseworker and the child, parents, caregivers, and foster parents.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

During the 2008 CFSR, both items incorporated in Safety Outcome 2 were rated as ANIs. In the 2001 CFSR, services to the family to protect children in the home and prevent removal (item 3) was rated as a Strength; however, in the 2008 CFSR, there were instances when no services were provided and the children remained at risk in the home, and stakeholders reported a general lack of services and resources for families. Similar to the 2001 CFSR, the 2008 CFSR found that some children were unsafe or at risk of harm in their homes either because (1) no services were provided to address safety issues or (2) the services provided were insufficient to ensure the children's safety. In addition, the following instances were noted:

- The safety plan was not established or was not sufficient to address the risk.
- There was insufficient ongoing risk assessment in the foster home or non-foster care placement setting.
- There were cases that were closed prematurely before safety issues were fully addressed, leaving children at risk of harm.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations

There are six indicators incorporated in the assessment of Permanency Outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all children. The indicators pertain to the child welfare agency's efforts to prevent foster care re-entry (item 5), ensure placement stability

for children in foster care (item 6), and establish appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining indicators focus on the child welfare agency's efforts to achieve permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9) or to ensure that children who have OPPLA as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual IL (item 10).

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 34.1 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that, for the CFSR 12-month target period, the State did not meet the national standards for Permanency Composite 1 (Timeliness and permanency of reunification) and Permanency Composite 4 (Placement stability).

Although Florida's performance on this outcome was low in all sites, one site's performance was twice as strong as the next closest. The outcome was found to be substantially achieved in 60 percent of Seminole County cases, 25 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 27 percent of Alachua County cases.

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 in its 2001 CFSR. The following concerns were identified in the 2001 CFSR:

- There was a lack of sufficient placement facilities for youth, which contributed to placement instability.
- There were difficulties encountered by the caseworkers in finding adequate placements and services for adolescents.
- Case plans identified several goals for a child without documenting the primary goal.
- There were goals that were not established in a timely fashion and in some situations were not appropriate, or all the parties were not aware of the goals.
- There was a lack of mental health services for children that was a barrier to reunification.
- There was a need for more transitional services for youth with mental health problems, who could not hold a steady job.
- There was a need for IL services in the State that were easily accessible for youth.
- There was a need to coordinate the permanency goal of an OPPLA, such as emancipation, with the child involved.
- There were permanency goals of long-term foster care that had been established without reevaluation of other permanency options.

The following strategies were implemented in the Florida PIP to address these concerns:

- DCF implemented local and State Foster and Adopt Recruitment and Retention Plans.
- DCF provided training regarding the guiding principles of care and family engagement.
- DCF provided monthly training calls regarding supporting foster parents and recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive homes.

- DCF addressed data issues by clarifying the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) placement criteria and using data to analyze placement trends.
- DCF issued administrative rules regarding foster parent recruitment and retention plans, placement and matching, and permanency staffing prior to the 6-month periodic review.
- DCF increased the use of the Behavior Analysis Program to support foster parents and other caregivers.
- DCF initiated a supervisory tool to focus on practice issues during the caseworkers/supervisory monthly conference.
- DCF developed a management report for tracking permanency goals.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

In the State's 2008 CFSR, all items incorporated in this outcome except for item 5 were rated as ANIs. Specific findings contributing to the outcome rating follow:

- Children were in multiple placement settings during the period under review, and at least one placement change was not planned by the agency to further the attainment of the child's permanency goal.
- Children's permanency goals were not established in a timely manner.
- The goal of reunification, guardianship, or permanency planning with relatives was not consistently achieved in a timely manner, or the agency was not consistently making efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner.
- There was a lack of diligent efforts to find adoptive homes for children.
- In the cases with the goal of OPPLA, there were placements at the time of the Onsite Review that were unstable, and the agency was not providing the child with sufficient services to stabilize the placement. There was also a lack of services to assist in the transition to IL.

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six indicators that assess the child welfare agency's performance with regard to placing children in foster care in close proximity to their parents and close relatives (item 11); placing siblings together (item 12); ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and promoting the relationship between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 47.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome was

markedly better in one site, when compared to the other two. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 70 percent of Seminole County cases, 45 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 30 percent of Alachua County cases.

Florida did achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 in its 2001 CFSR. However, the relationship of the child in care with the parents (item 16) was rated as an ANI. Key concerns identified with this item during the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- There did not appear to be any efforts to maintain the relationships between teenagers in foster care and their parents.
- When parents were in jail, efforts were not made by the worker to help children maintain relationships with the parents.

Similarly to the 2001 CFSR, item 11 (proximity of foster care placement) was rated as a Strength in the 2008 CFSR. While item 12 (placement with siblings), item 13 (visitation with parents and siblings), item 14 (preserving connections), and item 15 (relative placement) were all rated as Strengths in the 2001 CFSR, they were rated as ANIs in the 2008 CFSR. Item 16 (relationship of child in care with parents) was rated as an ANI in 2001 and in 2008. Additional findings were as follows:

- The agency was not consistent in placing children with siblings, and the separation was not deemed to be in the best interests of the siblings.
- The agency was not consistent in assuring frequent visits between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care.
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections to extended family.
- The agency did not make diligent efforts to search for known maternal and paternal relatives.
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with either parent.

Despite these concerns, the case reviews also found that children in the cases reviewed were in foster care placements that were in close proximity to parents or potential permanent caregivers, unless highly specialized placements were necessary (item 11).

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs

Well-being Outcome 1 incorporates four indicators. One pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and that the necessary services are provided to meet identified needs (item 17). A second indicator examines the child welfare agency's efforts to actively involve parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two remaining indicators examine the frequency and quality of caseworker's contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 24.6 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome

was substantially achieved in 29 percent of Alachua County cases, 16 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 35 percent of Seminole County cases.

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 in its 2001 CFSR. All items incorporated in the outcome were rated as ANIs. Key concerns were predominantly related to needs assessment, service provision, and family involvement in case planning as follows:

- Assessments of the child's and family's service needs were not completed or were inadequate.
- Services provided did not address the identified needs.
- Service needs of fathers were not addressed in case plans.
- When father's needs were assessed, they were not referred for supportive services.
- Families and teenagers were not consistently involved in case planning.
- When children were placed out of the county or State, there was no evidence of follow-up or communication regarding service provision.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- DCF trained a select group of leadership, management, and supervisory staff on analysis of management reports.
- DCF implemented strategies to address children missing from placements.
- DCF modified the visitation operating procedure to ensure that quality interactions between counselor and child, parent, and caregiver are documented with detailed information about the visit in HomeSafenet, the State's information system.
- DCF revised the operating procedure on visitation with parents and children.
- DCF began to track the number of monthly face-to-face contacts with parents.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Similar to the 2001 CFSR, in the 2008 CFSR the needs and services of children, parents, and foster parents (item 17), family involvement in case planning (item 18), caseworker visits with children (item 19), and caseworker visits with parents (item 20) remain as ANIs.

The following concerns surfaced in the case review in the 2008 CFSR:

- There continues to be a lack of consistency in assessing and meeting the service needs of parents (particularly fathers) and children. In the cases reviewed, the agency is more consistently assessing and addressing the needs of mothers and children and less effectively assessing and meeting the service needs of fathers. Efforts to locate and/or engage fathers at the outset have improved, but overall efforts remain inconsistent (item 17).

- There continue to be inconsistencies in adequately involving families (particularly fathers) in case planning (item 18).
- There are inconsistencies in caseworker visits with children in foster care cases and caseworker visits with children in the in-home cases (item 19).
- The 2008 CFSR specifically differentiated between mothers and fathers in evaluating the frequency and quality of caseworker visits. In general, there were insufficient caseworker visits and challenges associated with the quality of visits with both parents. However, these findings were more pronounced for fathers, as evidenced by inconsistent concerted efforts to visit or engage fathers in either case planning or services. In addition, there were instances when visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency but not quality (item 20).

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs

There is only one indicator for Well-Being Outcome 2. It pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to address and meet the educational needs of children in both foster care and in-home services cases (item 21).

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 82.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. There were differences in performance on this outcome across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of Seminole County cases, compared to 77 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 80 percent of Alachua County cases. There also was variation in performance based on the type of case. The outcome was substantially achieved in 85 percent of the applicable foster care cases, compared to 50 percent of the applicable in-home services cases.

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 in its 2001 CFSR. In some instances, the educational needs of children were not addressed or identified in case plans, there was no follow-up to the recommended psychosocial and educational assessments, and the educational needs of children were not appropriately matched with schools or services to meet the needs.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- DCF developed a model working agreement with the Department of Education.
- DCF revised policy and implementation instructions on family assessments, with emphasis on the ongoing educational assessments of each child as a critical component of case planning throughout the life of the case, as well as the importance of appropriate identification and matching of individualized services to meet the educational needs of each child.
- DCF surveyed the local and State Youth Advisory Board members regarding adolescent foster children's educational needs and issues.
- DCF revised the Judicial Review reporting format to include detailed information about the child's performance in school.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

The key findings of the 2008 CFSR indicate that the concerns found in the 2001 CFSR continued to be present in the 2008 CFSR. In the cases reviewed, there was a lack of assessment of educational needs when there was clear evidence that the child was experiencing school-related problems, and truancy issues were not addressed by the agency.

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

This outcome incorporates two indicators that assess the child welfare agency's efforts to meet children's physical health (item 22) and mental health (item 23) needs.

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 61.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 69 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 60 percent of Seminole county cases, compared to 50 percent of Alachua County cases. However, performance did not vary based on the type of case reviewed. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 65 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 56 percent of the applicable in-home services cases.

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 in its 2001 CFSR. Key concerns identified during the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- The agency did not consistently document contacts with health care providers, and there was no documentation in the records that children received follow-up treatments.
- The agency did not provide health screenings within the mandated timeframes.
- The agency did not consistently provide dental preventive care, and there was a lack of documentation that the child received dental care.
- In some cases, there was no indication that mental health needs assessments had been conducted.
- The agency did not provide psychological evaluation and therapy due to a lack of providers that accept Medicaid.

To address these concerns, the State developed the following strategies in its PIP:

- DCF revised the administrative rule to address the timeliness of physical and dental exams and treatment and to ensure that the child's case record and medical resource book, which is provided to caregivers, contains accurate, up-to-date information on the results of exams and any treatments provided or needed.

- DCF expanded the provision of comprehensive assessments for infants and children up to 5 years of age.
- In partnership with the Department of Health, DCF increased the capacity for the existing Sexual Abuse Treatment Programs to provide psychosexual assessments and treatment programs for sexually active and reactive children.
- In collaboration with the Department of Health, Agency for Health Care Administration, and the Florida Dental Association, DCF increased the number of dental and physical health providers that accept Medicaid.
- DCF revised the Judicial Review reporting format to include detailed information about the child's physical, dental, and mental health.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

In the 2008 CFSR, the item pertaining to meeting children's physical health needs and mental health needs continued to be rated as an ANI. Many of the key concerns from 2001 continued to be challenges in 2008. The key concerns identified in the 2008 CFSR were that dental care services were not provided in some instances, and there were no assessments of physical or dental health consistently noted in case files. Stakeholders indicated that there are not enough medical providers, including specialists and dental providers across the State who accept Medicaid. They also indicated that there are often long waiting lists for providers who take Medicaid. In several cases, mental health needs were not assessed or addressed; in other cases, mental health needs were assessed, but the children's needs were not met.

II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

With regard to systemic factors, Florida was found to be in substantial conformity with the factors of Statewide Information System, Quality Assurance (QA) System, Agency Responsiveness to the Community, and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Florida was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Case Review System, Training, and Service Array. The systemic findings contribute directly to outcome performance.

Statewide Information System

There is one indicator used to assess the State's performance with regard to the systemic factor of a Statewide Information System. The indicator examines whether the State's information system can inform users immediately about the status, demographic characteristics, location, and case goals for the placement of every child in foster care.

Florida is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The State is operating a statewide information system that can readily identify child demographic characteristics as well as the status, location, and permanency goals of children in the foster care system. In the State's first CFSR, this systemic factor was rated as a Strength. The Florida Safe Families Network provides enhanced functionality for intake, case management, and data-reporting activities, including the following:

- Individualized decision support tools for high-risk case management, institutional investigations, and special conditions reports involving child-on-child sexual activity and requests for assistance
- A single automated case record that follows a child who moves from one agency or provider to another
- Immediate access to children's service, medical, and mental health histories

The agency's concern about the current system is that historical data transferred from the Disk Operating System-based Client Information System into the legacy system are unavailable to most users because the data are not compliant with the current system. The second challenge concerns the provision of ongoing support and training as users adapt to differences in the system's navigation, data interpretation, and reporting methodology.

Case Review System

Five indicators are used to assess the State's performance with regard to the systemic factor of Case Review System. The indicators examine the development of case plans and parent involvement in that process (item 25), the consistency of 6-month case reviews (item 26) and 12-month permanency hearings (item 27), the implementation of procedures to seek termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the timeframes established in the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (item 28), and the notification and inclusion of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers in case reviews and hearings (item 29).

Florida is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Florida was not in substantial conformity with this factor during its 2001 CFSR and therefore was required to address the factor in its PIP. The following concerns relevant to the Case Review System were identified in the 2001 CFSR:

- Parents and children were not consistently involved in developing the case plan.
- There was a lack of provider coordination with regard to case planning.
- The use of the case plan as a tool to achieve outcomes with children and families was inconsistent.
- There was limited docket time and many continuances and delays in court hearings by the judge.
- All children were not routinely assigned a guardian *ad litem*.
- There were delays in filing for TPR for older children and children with special needs.
- Stakeholders reported that there were issues in identifying absent parents early in the process, which caused delays in TPR filings.
- Stakeholders reported that there was no standard procedure for notifying all parties of the hearings.

- Concerns were raised regarding foster parents not being encouraged to participate in the hearing process, and foster parents were not consistently allowed in the courtroom.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- DCF educated attorneys regarding family/child involvement in case planning.
- DCF developed a fact sheet on the court process.
- DCF developed a tracking mechanism for notices to substitute caregivers.
- DCF provided technical assistance to field staff on how to individualize case plans.
- DCF taught clinical supervision skills to 350 supervisors on engagement and assessment of families.
- DCF included family engagement, assessment, and family-centered practice in the pre-service training.
- DCF provided a Case Review Tool for supervisors to use during supervisory reviews.

The State met its target goals with regard to this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key concerns identified in the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- Stakeholder interviews and case record reviews indicated that parents are not consistently engaged in the development of their case plans.
- Stakeholder interviews and the case record reviews indicated that TPR petitions are not consistently filed in a timely manner and that compelling reasons for not filing are inconsistently documented in the case record.
- Stakeholder interviews and the Statewide Assessment noted there are inconsistencies in the manner in which caregivers are notified of reviews or hearings and afforded the opportunity to be heard.

The concerns identified in the 2008 CFSR were similar as those identified in the 2001 CFSR. In the 2008 CFSR, inconsistency of practice was found with regard to involving parents in case planning. In addition, the 2008 CFSR identified practice inconsistencies with regard to TPR filing in accordance with ASFA.

Despite these concerns, the 2008 CFSR also found the following:

- The status of children is reviewed no less frequently than at least once every 6 months, either by a court or by an administrative review. Stakeholders also report that case reviews are substantive and help move the case forward in terms of achieving case goals and objectives.
- Permanency hearings occur no later than 12 months from the date the child entered care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter. Stakeholders report these hearings are scheduled far in advance and that there are generally no extensions or delays.

Quality Assurance System

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of QA System is based on whether the State has developed standards to ensure the safety and health of children in foster care (item 30) and whether the State is operating a statewide QA system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program Strengths and ANIs (item 31).

Florida is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. During the 2001 CFSR, Florida was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor and therefore was not required to address the factor in its PIP. Key findings of the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- The State has implemented standards that are sufficient to protect the safety and health of children in care.
- The State has a functioning QA system that addresses key practice areas and provides feedback on key findings.

Stakeholders commented that there are standards in place for children birth to 5 years regarding the use of psychotropic medication. There are QA standards in place that specifically look at the health and safety of children in foster care at the case level, using the Dashboard. Stakeholders across the three sites report that there are standards in place that require staff be in the home every month to ensure the safety and well-being of children and that licensing issues are being addressed. Stakeholders also report that DCF conducts many kinds of quantitative and qualitative reviews to evaluate the quality of services, review systems, and develop plans for improving services. Stakeholders from the State describe a collaborative process between QA staff and supervisors that supports them in reviewing cases and provides them with more structure in ensuring quality improvement for direct services. Each agency has a QA system in place that includes QA consultation, multiple types of reviews, stakeholder surveys, and the development of mini-action plans based on the results of QA data.

Training

The systemic factor of Training incorporates an assessment of the State's new caseworker training program (item 32), ongoing training for child welfare agency staff (item 33), and training for foster and adoptive parents (item 34).

Florida is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2001 CFSR and therefore was not required to address the factor in its PIP.

The key concerns noted in the 2008 CFSR include the following:

- While the State provides a pre-service curriculum for the training of staff, the State identified in the Statewide Assessment that the pre-service training is not sufficient to equip newly trained staff to carry out their duties.

- There are no clearly understood minimum requirements or expectations for ongoing training, and there is no clear process to ensure that ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to enable staff to carry out their duties.
- The State identified in the Statewide Assessment that foster parents expressed a need for more training that will better equip them to provide care for children requiring behavioral interventions and that some foster parents leave pre-service training feeling misled and unequipped to address children's problems.

Service Array

The assessment of the systemic factor of Service Array addresses three questions: (1) Does the State have in place an array of services to meet the needs of children and families served by the child welfare agency (item 35)? (2) Are these services accessible to families and children throughout the State (item 36)? (3) Can services be individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and families served by the child welfare agency (item 37)?

Florida is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. Florida was found not to be in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in the 2001 CFSR. Item 35 (service array), item 36 (service accessibility), and item 37 (service individualization) were determined to be ANIs in the 2001 CFSR, and therefore Florida needed to address these items in its PIP.

Key findings from the 2001 CFSR included the following:

- Stakeholders reported that there were too few foster homes in the State, and the agency often had to place children in shelters because they had no alternative placements.
- There were long waiting lists for mental health services for children.
- There was a lack of integration/coordination between mental health and child welfare agencies, resulting in service fragmentation and problems in obtaining mental health services.
- IL program and transitional living services were needed for older youth in care and juvenile justice youth with dual adjudication.
- There was a lack of services for sexually abused children, their families, and child perpetrators of sexual abuse.
- Substance abuse treatment was difficult to access, especially residential treatment.
- There was a lack of respite services for biological parents as well as foster and adoptive parents.
- There was a need to strengthen cultural responsiveness, especially for the Creole, Hispanic, and Russian populations.
- There was a need for an increase in preventive services and adoptive services.
- There were waiting lists for specialized therapeutic foster homes.
- Transportation was a problem in accessing available services, especially in rural areas.
- There was frequent use of shelter care, which did not individualize children's needs for appropriate out-of-home care.

- Case record reviews revealed that there were instances when the same services were offered, regardless of the specific needs of children and families.
- Services were not consistently provided to children and families of Spanish and Creole background.

The State developed PIP strategies, including the following:

- DCF implemented Foster Home Recruitment and Retention Plans in all districts.
- DCF increased placement resources for children with mental health needs or behavioral health needs.
- DCF completed a comprehensive assessment for children in out-of-home care.
- In partnership with other agencies, DCF increased the available and accessible services targeted for issues related to mental health, sexual abuse, and domestic violence.
- DCF provided consistent post-adoption services

The State met its target goals with regard to this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key findings of the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- There are identified gaps in the service array for families and children, particularly housing, quality mental health services, dental services, and transportation.
- Services are not accessible to families and children in all areas of the State, particularly in rural areas. Barriers to accessing services noted by stakeholders include issues with Medicaid eligibility and waiting lists for services.
- The State is not consistent in individualizing services to meet the unique needs of children and families. Stakeholders indicate that individualization of services is not a consistent practice across the State, and the categorical array of services contributes to this inconsistent practice.

Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community incorporates an assessment of the State's consultation with external stakeholders in developing the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) (items 38 and 39) and the extent to which the State coordinates child welfare services with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally-assisted programs serving the same population (item 40).

Florida is in substantial conformity with the factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The State also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2001 CFSR. The general finding in the 2008 CFSR was that the State engages in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders across the State, although there continues to be a need to strengthen consultation and collaboration

with the Tribes. Stakeholders from the State commenting during the onsite CFSR reported consultation with stakeholders as a strength of the system. They described a coalition involving 22 agencies that looks at the new Federal performance measures, reviews the QA system, gives input into State planning, and makes policy. Several stakeholders from the three counties expressed the opinion that there is a high level of collaboration and engagement with lead agencies. The CFSR also found that DCF collects information for the Annual Progress and Services Report from the 19 child welfare contracted lead agencies, the Office of Court Improvement, and the Dependency Court System (item 39). The CFSR also found that there is coordination with other Federal or Federally-assisted programs serving the same population (item 40).

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

The assessment of this systemic factor focuses on the State's standards for foster homes and child care institutions (items 41 and 42), the State's compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks for foster and adoptive parents (item 43), the State's efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of foster children (item 44), and the State's activities with regard to using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements for waiting children (item 45).

Florida is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. During the 2001 CFSR, Florida was in substantial conformity with this factor.

The 2008 CFSR found the following:

- The Agency implements effective licensing standards for both foster family homes and child care institutions that ensure the health and safety of children in foster care. Stakeholders indicate that foster parents are re-licensed annually and that they complete re-licensure on time.
- All licensed homes are licensed on the same standards, including foster homes, adoptive homes, and relative foster homes, and all licensing requirements must be met prior to the issue of the license.
- Licensing and adoptive home studies require that background checks, including national and local criminal and abuse history checks, be completed on all household members before an applicant is licensed as an out-of-home caregiver and before any child is placed in the home.

Table 1. Florida CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings			Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved*	Met National Standards?	Rating**	Percent Strength
Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	70.0			
Item 1: Timeliness of investigations				Strength	90
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment				ANI	64
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	61.5			
Item 3: Services to prevent removal				ANI	74
Item 4: Risk of harm				ANI	65
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	34.1			
Item 5: Foster care re-entry				Strength	100
Item 6: Stability of foster care placements				ANI	59
Item 7: Permanency goal for child				ANI	59
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, and placement with relatives				ANI	70
Item 9: Adoption				ANI	44
Item 10: Other planned living arrangement				ANI	64
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	47.5			
Item 11: Proximity of placement				Strength	93
Item 12: Placement with siblings				ANI	87
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	53
Item 14: Preserving connections				ANI	77
Item 15: Relative placement				ANI	61
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	28

*95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

**Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI). For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases must be rated as a Strength.

Table 2. Florida CFSR Ratings for Child and Family Well-Being Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings		Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved	Rating**	Percent Strength
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children’s needs	No	24.6		
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents			ANI	29
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning			ANI	35
Item 19: Worker visits with child			ANI	80
Item 20: Worker visits with parents			ANI	31
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive services to meet their educational needs	No	82.5		
Item 21: Educational needs of child			ANI	83
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	No	61.4		
Item 22: Physical health of child			ANI	79
Item 23: Mental health of child			ANI	67

*95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

**Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI). For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases reviewed for the item (with the exception of item 21) must be rated as a Strength. Because item 21 is the only item for Well-being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95 percent Strength rating applies.

Table 3. Florida CFSR Ratings for Systemic Factors and Items

Systemic Factors and Items	In Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Statewide Information System	Yes	4	
Item 24: State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care			Strength
Case Review System	No	2	
Item 25: Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child’s parents that includes the required provisions			ANI
Item 26: Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review			Strength
Item 27: Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter			Strength
Item 28: Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act			ANI
Item 29: Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child			ANI
Quality Assurance System	Yes	4	
Item 30: The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children			Strength
Item 31: The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented			Strength
Training	No	2	
Item 32: The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services			ANI

Systemic Factors and Items	In Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Item 33: The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP			ANI
Item 34: The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children			ANI
Service Array	No	2	
Item 35: The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency			ANI
Item 36: The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP			ANI
Item 37: The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency			ANI
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Yes	4	
Item 38: In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, services providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP			Strength
Item 39: The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP			Strength
Item 40: The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally-assisted programs serving the same population			Strength
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	Yes	4	
Item 41: The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards			Strength
Item 42: The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds			Strength

Systemic Factors and Items	In Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Item 43: The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children			Strength
Item 44: The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom adoptive homes are needed			Strength
Item 45: The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children			Strength

*Scores range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 means that the factor is not in substantial conformity. A score of 3 or 4 means that the factor is in substantial conformity.

**Items may be rated as a Strength or as an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).

Final Report
Florida Child and Family Services Review
January 2009

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Florida. The CFSR is the Federal Government's program for assessing the performance of State child welfare agencies with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. It is authorized by the Social Security Amendments of 1994 requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promulgate regulations for reviews of State child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau (CB) of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within HHS.

The Florida CFSR was conducted the week of January 7, 2008. The period under review for the case reviews was from October 1, 2006, to January 11, 2008. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCF)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB, which provides State child welfare data for fiscal year (FY) 2005, FY 2006, and the CFSR 12-month target period ending July 20, 2007
- Reviews of 65 cases at 3 sites throughout the State: 31 cases in Miami-Dade County, 17 cases in Alachua County, and 17 cases in Seminole County
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys

Information from each resource is presented for all of the items reviewed.

All 65 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review. The key characteristics of the 65 cases reviewed are presented in the table on page 4.

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of the State's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State's first CFSR review, the State's status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Differences in findings across the sites included in the Onsite Review are described when noteworthy. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate.

The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

The Florida Child Welfare System

There is a unique feature of the Florida child welfare system that is useful to understand in reviewing the CFSR Final Report. Many of the child welfare services in Florida are provided by private agencies as directed by the 1996 Legislature. At that time, the State began outsourcing the provision of foster care and related services statewide in an effort to encourage communities and stakeholders to become partners in the safety, permanency and well-being of Florida's children. The lead agencies are a single agency with which the DCF contracts for the provision of services in a specific geographic area, and they oversee the provision of services in a community, county, or Judicial Circuit. Statute requires that lead agencies directly provide no more than 35 percent of all child protective services. Therefore, lead agencies subcontract with other agencies to provide specific services. With the transition of Dade/Monroe Counties' child welfare services to the community-based care (CBC) lead agency, Our Kids, Inc., on July 1, 2005, privatization of child welfare services was completed statewide. There are 20 lead agencies with 21 contracts in Florida's 67 counties. The DCF operates within six regions: Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southeast, Southern, and Suncoast.

Service delivery mechanisms vary between programs based upon customer needs and range from services administered directly by DCF staff to services procured through local community-based services providers. Florida's CBC system delivers a comprehensive array of foster care and related services to children and families through a contract service task list of performance measures and goals aligned with Federal measures for child welfare. It should be noted that the CFSR process is designed to assess State child welfare systems, including contracted service providers when they are delegated to have full case management responsibilities. Therefore, it should be understood that for the cases in which the CBC agencies have full case management responsibilities, the CFSR process assesses those cases based on the actions and case practices of the CBC agencies. When reference is made to caseworkers who are providing foster care, in-home, or adoption-related services, these caseworkers are employees of the CBC agencies. Throughout this CFSR Final Report, the contract agencies are referred to as CBC agencies.

Key Florida Case Characteristics

Case Characteristics	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Cases
	N=41	N=24
When case was opened/child entered foster care		
Open prior to the period under review	30 (73%)	
Open during the period under review	11 (27%)	
Child entered foster care during the period under review	11	*
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than age 10	16 (39 %)	*
At least 10 but younger than 13	9 (22 %)	*
At least 13 but younger than 16	9 (22 %)	*
16 and older	7 (17 %)	*
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American (Non-Hispanic)	19 (43.9%)	*
White (Non-Hispanic)	10 (24.4 %)	*
Hispanic (of all races)	11 (26.8 %)	*
Two or more races	1 (4.9%)	*
American Indian	0	*
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	*
Unknown	0	*
Primary reason for opening case		
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	5 (12 %)	0
Physical abuse	3 (7 %)	3 (13 %)
Sexual abuse	2 (5 %)	2 (8 %)
Medical neglect	2 (5 %)	1 (4 %)
Substance abuse by parent	12 (29 %)	5 (21 %)
Domestic violence in child's home	5 (12 %)	10 (42 %)
Emotional maltreatment	0	0
Abandonment	6 (15 %)	0
Mental/physical health of parent	2 (5 %)	0
Mental/physical health of child	1 (2 %)	0
Child's behavior	3 (7 %)	0

Case Characteristics	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Cases
	N=41	N=24
Substance abuse by child	0	1 (4%)
Other	0	2 (8 %)

*Information on these characteristics for in-home services cases is not provided because all children in the family are considered in these cases.

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

In the following sections, for each outcome assessed, there is information pertaining to how the State performed on that outcome in the first round. If the outcome was not substantially achieved during the first round of the CFSR, there is a discussion of the key concerns identified at that time and the strategies implemented in the State's program improvement plan (PIP) to address those concerns. This discussion also focuses on whether the key concerns that emerged in the first CFSR continued to be present in the second review, or whether those concerns were resolved, but other concerns emerged.

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	5	10	6	21	70.0
Partially Achieved	2	2	3	7	23.3
Not Achieved or Addressed	1	1	0	2	6.7
Total Applicable Cases	8	13	9	30	
Not Applicable Cases	9	18	8	35	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards					
	National Standard (%)		State's Percentage		Meets Standard
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6		89.7		No
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68		99.43		No

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Status of Safety Outcome 1

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 70 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. There was some variation in performance on this outcome across counties. In 63 percent of Alachua County cases children were found to be protected from abuse and neglect, compared with 77 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 67 percent of Seminole County cases. In addition, Florida did not meet the national standard for the measure assessing the absence of maltreatment recurrence or the national standard for the measure assessing absence of maltreatment of children in foster care.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

Florida was determined to not be in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1 during the 2001 CFSR, and the State did not meet both National Standards. A key concern found in the 2001 CFSR was that the initiation of the investigation did not occur in accordance with State timeframes and that the area of repeat maltreatment was rated as needing improvement because the State did not meet the National Standard of 6.1%.

The State was required to address this outcome in its PIP. To address noted concerns, the State developed PIP strategies, including the following:

- The State implemented initiatives to stabilize the workforce and eliminate the backlog of reports of child maltreatment.
- DCF provided training in the areas of clinical supervision, family engagement and investigations, family assessments and the matching of services, and the High Risk Protocol.
- Administrative rules were issued regarding the elimination of inappropriate and invalid reports of child maltreatment and the identification and documentation of parental substance abuse and domestic violence.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

During the 2008 review, DCF was found to be effective in initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports in a timely manner, but not in preventing the recurrence of maltreatment. As with the 2001 CFSR, cases that were found to have repeat maltreatment were primarily cases where domestic violence and substance abuse were present. The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 1 are presented below.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 30 (46 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable if there were no child maltreatment reports during the period under review. 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 the State child welfare agency policy requirements.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Florida Abuse Hotline (FAH) serves as the single entry point to child welfare services in Florida. All child abuse and neglect allegations are received from the centralized FAH located in Tallahassee, which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Upon receiving and accepting a report for an allegation of abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment, hotline counselors generate a report in the statewide automated child welfare information system, which is then forwarded to the FAH Crime Intelligence Unit within 28 minutes. The counselors also complete Florida Crime Information Center, National Crime Information Center, Juvenile Justice Information System, Department of Corrections, Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and FDLE Sexual Predators checks and forward the abuse/neglect report to the county in which the child is physically located or, if the child is out of State, is anticipated to return to in Florida.

Local report assignment procedures, including creation of case files, vary from area to area. Upon receiving a report from the hotline, the child protective investigator (CPI) supervisor has the authority to downgrade (or upgrade) a report's response priority, as assigned by the hotline. There are two timeframes used for commencing or responding to an investigation: (1) immediate (within 2 hours) and (2) within 24 hours. *Commencement* means the first attempt to complete an onsite visit in order to make a face-to-face contact with the child victim of the report. The purpose of the onsite visit is to address the maltreatment allegations and assess for and ensure the child's safety.

The results of the assessment of this item are presented in the table below.

Item 1	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	7	12	8	27	90
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	1	3	10
Total Applicable Cases	8	13	9	30	
Not Applicable	9	18	8	35	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item did not vary substantially across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 88 percent of Alachua County cases, 92 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 89 percent of Seminole County cases. There were no substantive differences in performance on this item based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of the foster care cases and 91 percent of the in-home services cases.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was established with the children in the family within the timeframes required by State policy or law. It was rated as an Area Needing Improvement (ANI) in three cases when face-to-face contacts were not established within the State required 24 hours.

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 90 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with the required timeframes. This percent meets the 90 percent required for an overall item rating of Strength. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

The Statewide Assessment reports that the median time to commence an investigation in the past 3 years, including the 12-month period ending March 31, 2007, is less than 24 hours. Based on Florida's Performance Measure Dashboard, Florida is currently meeting its statewide target, 99.9 percent, of responding to cases within 24 hours. HomeSafenet management reports from 2003 to 2006 show the number of counties meeting the 24-hour response timeframe target has continually increased from 3 counties in 2003 to 18 counties in 2006.

Data show an increase in the number of alleged victims being seen within 24 hours. The DCF's Performance Dashboard indicates Florida surpassed the State's 85 percent target in 2006–2007, reaching 87.68 percent.

Some additional strengths outlined in the Statewide Assessment include the following:

- FAH counselors assist CPIs to respond more quickly, efficiently, and safely by asking reporters where the child will actually be during the next 24 hours and if there are any potential dangers to the CPI.
- The rollout of Florida's automated child welfare information system (HomeSafenet) in 2003 allowed for improved reporting capabilities. Management reports are easily accessible to CPIs and supervisors, allowing closer monitoring of performance on objective measures.

Barriers to timely investigations outlined in the Statewide Assessment include the following:

- Broadening the acceptance criteria greatly increased the number of calls accepted for investigation by the FAH.
- Staff turnover and high caseloads continue to impact Florida's child protection system's quality of investigative response.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that focus groups used by the University of South Florida as part of the evaluation of the title IV-E Foster Care Waiver report that "...inadequate screening by the abuse hotline, and unnecessary reports made by mandated reporters add to the workload of CPIs, while taking away resources for families that are at risk. CPIs reported that these types of investigations sometimes make up a large part of their caseloads."

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency conducts timely investigations. Stakeholders indicated the development of a memorandum of understanding with law enforcement has enhanced collaboration and timeliness. In most counties, DCF conducts investigations and, if services are warranted, the case is transferred to a CBC. However, in Seminole County and several other counties in the State, the sheriff's office hires staff who conduct investigations. Seminole County stakeholders report that the sheriff's department has done a good job hiring and training staff. Stakeholders also indicate that the hotline has helped improve performance on commencement of investigations. In addition, operating procedures and an allegation matrix were reported to help guide staff decisions. In Miami-Dade County, stakeholders report that DCF conducts all investigations and that the cases are then transferred to Our Kids for services.

Concerns were expressed by State-level stakeholders regarding the qualifications of the staff hired to conduct investigations and investigations not getting to the underlying issues that result in maltreatment. Miami-Dade County stakeholders report issues that can impact the agency's ability to initiate timely investigations, such as delays in receiving reports from Central Intake, incomplete information in reports, and inconsistent use of the allegation matrix. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also described the necessity of creating a temporary backlog unit made up of reassigned staff from the regular Protective Investigator (PI) unit due to high caseloads, vacancies, and inadequately screened reports. Some stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicated that incomplete screening reports are sometimes received from the FAH.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 22 (34 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review. For all applicable cases, reviewers were to determine whether there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report involving similar circumstances had occurred within a 6-month period before or after that identified report. Information regarding the ratings is provided below.

Item 2	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	2	7	5	14	64
Area Needing Improvement	3	3	2	8	36
Total Applicable Cases	5	10	7	22	
Not Applicable	12	21	10	43	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Item 2 was rated as a Strength when there was no indication of two or more substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports on the family within a 6-month period. There was variation in performance on this item across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 70 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 71 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 40 percent of Alachua County cases. Performance on this item did not vary based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 63 percent of the foster care cases, compared with 67 percent of the in-home services cases. In 16 cases there were 7 or more reports during the life of the case. Of the eight cases that were rated ANI, six involved domestic violence and substance abuse, one case involved sexual abuse in the foster home, and for one case neglect and lack of supervision were reasons for agency involvement.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 64 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that there was no recurrence of maltreatment. In addition, the State did not meet the national standard for the absence of maltreatment recurrence. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Florida CFSR Data Profile of July 20, 2007, shows Florida did not meet the national standard for absence of maltreatment recurrence. The national standard is 94.6 percent. The State data for absence of maltreatment was 88.7 percent in FY 2005 and 89.7 percent in the 12-month period ending March 31, 2007.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the internal Florida Child and Family Services Reviews conducted between 2005 and 2007 showed absence of recurrence as an ANI. The child protection investigative quality assurance (QA) reviews conducted in 2006 and 2007 identified areas for improvement based on review elements, such as (1) ensuring cases meeting statutory requirements are referred to the Child Protection Team (CPT), (2) supervisory directives are followed, and (3) services are in the home prior to case closure, each of which may impact statewide performance on recurrence of maltreatment.

The Florida Statewide Assessment attributes challenges to staff turnover and timeframe requirements, which impact overall performance on front-end decision making. During cycles of high turnover, caseloads increase causing the quality of CPI's decision-making to decline in an effort to meet statutory timeframes for specific investigative activities, including case closure. QA reviews report cases being closed prior to completing proper assessments and safety plans, supervisory directives being completed, or ensuring initiation of services.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from the State commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that if there are multiple calls on a family it requires that a supplemental report be completed. They also indicated that the State has made efforts to address staff turnover and hire qualified hotline staff.

Stakeholders cited several concerns regarding repeat maltreatment, including staff being incident focused and, therefore, missing critical issues that lead to maltreatment reports and a lack of services in the community. Various stakeholders attributed repeat maltreatment to the complex nature of a family's needs and the difficulty in addressing these needs. Some stakeholders indicated that repeat maltreatment has increased with privatization. External stakeholders stated they are not aware of an analysis of the data that is available from the State, and they indicated that such a data analysis may help with prevention of repeat maltreatment.

Safety Outcome 2

Safety Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	11	18	11	40	61.5
Partially Achieved	2	9	0	11	16.9
Not Achieved or Addressed	4	4	6	14	21.5
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Status of Safety Outcome 2

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 61.5 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance on this item did not vary across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 65 percent of Alachua County Cases, 58 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 65 percent of Seminole County cases.

Key Concerns of the 2001 CFSR

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 in its Round 1 CFSR. Services to families to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal (item 3) were found to be a Strength. However, in 2001, risk of harm (item 4) was rated as an ANI. The following concerns were identified in the 2001 CFSR:

- There was a lack of ongoing assessment of risk factors, which was attributed to the lack of caseworker contacts and visits with the family.
- Stakeholders interviewed raised concern about caseworkers not re-assessing risk of harm to children over time, particularly those children remaining in their homes or placed with relatives.
- In some cases, workers did not conduct an adequate risk assessment or provide adequate monitoring to determine parental compliance with service requirements.
- Stakeholder interviews revealed lack of consistency in visits by agency caseworkers in situations where monitoring of the family's situation regarding the safety of a child was required.

To address these concerns, the State developed PIP strategies, including the following:

- DCF provided training regarding assessments and the matching of services.
- The State issued administrative rules regarding the frequency and quality of monthly visits by caseworker and the child, parents, caregivers, and foster parents.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

In the 2008 CFSR, both items incorporated in Safety Outcome 2 are rated as ANIs. In the 2001 CFSR, services to the family to protect child(ren) in the home and prevent removal (item 3) was rated as a Strength; however, in the 2008 CFSR, there were instances when no services were provided and the children remained at risk in the home, and stakeholders reported a general lack of services and resources for families. Similar to the 2001 CFSR, the 2008 CFSR found that some children were unsafe or at risk of harm in their homes either because no services were provided to address safety issues or the services provided were insufficient to ensure the children’s safety. In addition, it was found that there were instances when a safety plan was not established or was not sufficient to address the risk, there was insufficient ongoing risk assessment in the foster home or non-foster care placement settings, and there were cases that were closed prematurely before safety issues were fully addressed, leaving children at risk of harm.

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 2 are presented below.

Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 39 (60 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded from this assessment if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and there were no other children in the home or if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or identified risk of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent placement of children in foster care while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 3	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	6	15	8	29	74
Area Needing Improvement	2	4	4	10	26
Total Applicable Cases	8	19	12	39	
Not Applicable	9	12	5	26	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

The item was rated as a Strength in 75 percent of Alachua County cases, 79 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 67 percent of Seminole County cases. There were no substantive differences in performance on this item based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 75 percent of the foster care cases and 74 percent of the in-home services cases.

Item 3 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Services were provided to the parents and child to prevent removal (17 cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home to ensure the child's safety (nine cases).
- Services were provided after the child was reunified with his/her parents to prevent re-entry (two cases).
- Appropriate services were provided to ensure the child remains safe while in foster care (one case).

Case review information indicates that a broad range of services was offered or provided to families. These included services provided by CBC staff and also referrals for the following: day care, parenting skills training, family counseling, psychological evaluations, funds for utilities, anger management classes, substance abuse assessment and treatment, domestic violence services, housing assistance, baby supplies, educational advocacy, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Medicaid, and food stamps. In addition, there are two in-home service programs that offer intensive in-home family services.

Item 3 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- No services were provided and the children remained at risk in the home (five cases).
- Some services were provided but they did not adequately address the safety issues in the family and children remained at risk in the home (three cases).
- No services were provided leaving the children at risk in a relative placement (one case).
- No services were provided after reunification to ensure the child's ongoing safety and prevent re-entry (one case).
- The child was placed in foster care without efforts to provide services (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 74 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, each child under court-ordered supervision must have a case plan that includes services addressing the contributing factors and underlying conditions that lead to maltreatment to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of each child. Post-placement supervision is required to continue for at least 6 months following reunification. The child's best interest, safety considerations, and adjustment are evaluated prior to recommending reunification and throughout the post-placement supervision period. The case plan, at a minimum, includes family strengths assessment, services and activities to remedy any remaining problems, routine health care, child care or early education programs, and a caseworker visits schedule.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the QA reviews conducted from 2004 through 2007 show item 3 remains an ANI, with the State performing from 50 percent to 100 percent. According to the State's child welfare information system, the rate of abuse during services for children in-home and out-of-home increased from 2004–05 to 2005–06.

According to the Statewide Assessment, by 2006, most areas in Florida used intensive in-home and diversion services in efforts to keep children and families together. Although intensive in-home and diversion service provider names and services vary to meet the needs of each individual community, there are common characteristics of programs throughout the State that help protect children in the home and prevent removal, which include:

- After-hours or 24 hours/7 days a week availability of staff
- Acceptance of cases from CPIs that do not require ongoing case management services (some programs accept community referrals)
- Continuum of services or wraparound services based on individual need
- Access to "flex funds," which are funds available to prevent removal and support children remaining in the home

However, according to the Statewide Assessment, in the 2007 self-assessment survey, stakeholders reported frustration due to the lack of services and resources for families, the lack of resources for CPIs and case managers to effectively meet their responsibilities, and the limited foster homes available for children who require out-of-home placement.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Several stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that with the inception of the Children’s Cabinet, the State is looking more closely at what efforts can be made to better address the needs of the children in Florida. A strength noted by stakeholders from the State is the use of title IV-E waiver funding that allows CBCs to provide services to allow children to remain in their own home and prevent removal. Crisis response teams were cited as a resource used to keep children in their home. Stakeholders noted that mental health professionals are referring children for services when their parents have serious mental health issues. In Alachua County, stakeholders commented that when the permanency goal was permanent placement with relatives, appropriate services were provided to prevent children from re-entering care. In Seminole County, several stakeholders reported that prevention services such as Family Connections and the Care Program are available to prevent removal and provide in-home services. However, some stakeholders report these programs have reached capacity and have waiting lists.

Several stakeholders in Miami-Dade County reported that there is a lack of prevention services and adequate services to keep children safe in their home and to prevent the removal of children. According to stakeholders, a referral must be made to Our Kids through the CPI unit in order for a family to be referred to a specific private agency for Intensive Crisis Intervention Services. However, in order to be eligible for services, the family must meet designated criteria to receive services. Stakeholders reported it is difficult to assist families who do not meet the criteria because there are no longer flex funds for concrete services for families not served by private agencies.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 65 cases. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 4	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	12	19	11	42	65
Area Needing Improvement	5	12	6	23	35
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

As shown in the table, performance on this item varied little across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 71 percent of Alachua County cases, 61 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 65 percent of Seminole County cases. There were some differences in performance on this item based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 68 percent of the foster care cases and 58 percent of the in-home services cases.

Item 4 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by the agency through (1) conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children's home or in the children's foster home and (2) addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment.

Item 4 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from the home either prior to or during the period under review and providing services to the parents to reduce risk of harm (23 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by removing the children from the home either prior to or during the period under review and seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) (five cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remain in the home (17 cases).

Item 4 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was inadequate initial and ongoing safety and risk assessment (four cases).
- There was inadequate ongoing safety and risk assessment (six cases).
- There was adequate initial and ongoing safety and risk assessment; however, there was no plan or services in place to address identified concerns (three cases).
- There was adequate safety and risk assessment for the identified child victim; however, there was no assessment completed for siblings remaining in the home (one case).
- There were safety and risk concerns in the foster care placement (three cases).
- There was inadequate initial and ongoing assessment and lack of a care plan related to the child's high risk behaviors (three cases).
- Court ordered case closure led to reunification without adequate parental safety and risk assessment (one case).
- There was inadequate risk assessment of the parent prior to the agency decision to effect reunification (one case).
- The unsupervised visitation plan with the father was inappropriate with respect to assessed safety and risk (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had appropriately addressed the risk of harm to the children in 65 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for an overall rating of Strength. This item was rated an ANI in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the internal Florida CFSRs conducted in 2006 and 2007 rated this item as a Strength in 92 percent of cases reviewed. The Statewide Assessment notes that the increase in performance appears to be the result of better ongoing assessment throughout the life of the case. However, there continue to be concerns about whether or not the appropriate assessments are completed prior to reunification.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in July 2007 the grouping of risk and safety factors was modified to align with the safety constructs adopted by the DCF's Alternative Response System workgroup. The new child welfare information system tool breaks down the constructs into signs of present danger, child vulnerability, and parental protective capacities. The tool helps CPIs to much more effectively address interaction of these constructs leading to a safety determination and development of a safety plan. QA reviews of investigations in 2006 showed compliance in the development of appropriate safety plans in a median of 92 percent and an 88 percent median of the same criterion in the 2007 review.

However, the Multiple Report Study, completed by the Department in 2007, identified the same areas of concern as the 2006 and 2007 child protective investigation reviews including:

- Familial situations are not always adequately assessed during the investigative process.
- Safety plans are not always used appropriately.
- Cases are not always referred to the CPT in accordance with Florida law.
- Supervisory directives are not always being followed prior to case closure.
- Second Party Reviewer directives are not always being completed prior to case closure.
- There is not a statewide model of practice for assessing ongoing risk and safety.
- Interpretation of the State statute and codes vary from agency to agency, making it difficult to assess overall statewide performance.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item described the automated Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) Child Safety Assessment Tool, which is used by all agencies, as part of the mandated ongoing safety and risk assessments. Stakeholders indicated that it is required that the tool be completed monthly during case manager visits and signed by children and foster parents to indicate that issues were addressed. Stakeholders reported that the tool is useful because it prompts reflections on all aspects of the investigation. Stakeholders

from the State indicated the agency is very timely in ensuring that the child has an assessment when sexual abuse is suspected. The CPT is available to assess cases with serious maltreatment and offer case planning guidance. The team includes pediatricians with expertise in child abuse and neglect. In addition, stakeholders reported that work groups have assessed research on evidence-based practice and ensured common understanding about immediate safety and long-term risk. Stakeholders in Alachua County report that DCF is consistent about removing children from the home in cases of sexual abuse. The CPT has several doctors trained in sexual abuse and Child Advocacy Center staff is trained to do forensic interviews. In Miami-Dade County, stakeholders described that when a private agency receives the case from the PI, they conduct another home study and assess for safety and risk in the foster home or relative home. In Seminole County, stakeholders also reported that voluntary services are provided frequently and families sign a written contract with the agency.

Some stakeholders in Miami-Dade County expressed concern that adequate and appropriate intervention is compromised due to the number of vacant CPI positions, resulting in large caseloads for caseworkers in protective investigative work. Stakeholders from the State indicate that while workforce development is an issue that the Florida Coalition for Children is addressing, recruitment and retention of staff continue to be important issues in ensuring risk assessment and safety for children. In addition stakeholders indicated that more voluntary services are needed and that funding is limited for these services. Stakeholders from the State also reported that there are families with numerous safety plans in place, but investigators do not consistently open these cases for services.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	3	5	6	14	34.1
Partially Achieved	7	13	3	23	56.1
Not Achieved or Addressed	1	2	1	4	9.8
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0	
Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards					
	National Standard (Scaled Score)		State's Composite Score		Meets Standard (Yes/No)
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	122.6 +		111.7		No
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	106.4 +		124.2		Yes
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods	121.7 +		125.7		Yes
Composite 4: Placement stability	101.5 +		88.1		No

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 34.1 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for the CFSR 12-month target period, the State did not meet the national standards for Permanency Composite 1, timeliness and permanency of reunification, and Permanency Composite 4, placement stability.

The State did meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 2, timeliness of adoptions, and Permanency Composite 3, permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. Performance on the individual measures included in all composites is presented in the discussion of the items related to each measure.

Although Florida's performance on this outcome was low in all sites, there was variation across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 60 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 27 percent of Alachua County cases and 25 percent of Miami-Dade County cases.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 in its 2001 CFSR. In the 2001 CFSR, item 5, pertaining to foster care re-entry, and item 9, pertaining to adoption, were rated as Strengths. All other items incorporated in the outcome were rated as ANI. The key concerns identified in the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- There was a lack of sufficient placement facilities for youth, which contributed to placement instability.
- There were difficulties in finding adequate placements and services for adolescents.
- Case plans identified several goals for the child without documenting the primary goal.
- There were goals that were not established in a timely fashion, and in some situations not appropriate, or all the parties were not aware of the goals.
- The lack of mental health services for children was a barrier to reunification.
- There was a need for more transitional services for youths with mental health problems.
- There was a need for independent living (IL) services in the State that can be easily accessible for youth.
- There was a need to coordinate the permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA), such as emancipation, with the child.
- There were permanency goals of long-term foster care that had been established without reevaluation of other permanency options.

To address these concerns, the State implemented PIP strategies, including the following:

- Implemented local and State Foster and Adopt Recruitment and Retention Plans
- Provided training regarding the guiding principles of care and family engagement
- Provided monthly training calls regarding supporting foster parents and recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive homes
- Addressed data issues by clarifying the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) placement criteria and using data to analyze placement trends
- Issued administrative rules regarding Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Plans, placement and matching, and permanency staffing prior to the 6-month periodic review

- Increased the Behavior Analysis Program to support foster parents and other caregivers
- Initiated a supervisory tool to focus on practice issues during the caseworkers/supervisory monthly conference
- Conducted interviews with youth exiting out-of-home care
- Issued guidelines for long-term licensed custody
- Developed a management report for tracking permanency goals

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

Similar to the 2001 CFSR, foster care re-entries (item 5) was rated as a Strength and stability of foster care placements (item 6) was rated as an ANI. However, permanency goal for the child (item 7), reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives (item 8), adoption (item 9), and permanency goal of OPPLA (item 10) are areas needing improvement as noted by the 2008 CFSR.

Key findings of the 2008 CFSR case reviews were the following:

- Children were in multiple placement settings during the period under review, and at least one placement change was not planned by the agency to further attain the child's permanency goal (six cases).
- Children's permanency goals were not established in a timely manner (10 cases).
- The goal of reunification, guardianship, or permanency planning with relatives was not consistently achieved in a timely manner or the agency was not consistently making efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner (six cases).
- There was a lack of diligent efforts to find an adoptive home for children (five cases).
- In the cases with the goal of OPPLA, there were placements at the time of the Onsite Review that were unstable and the agency was not providing the child with sufficient services to stabilize the placement. There also was a lack of services to assist in the transition to independent living (five cases).

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 are presented below.

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 11 (27 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not enter foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 5	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	1	6	4	11	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	6	4	11	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	14	6	30	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

State performance on the individual measure of foster care re-entry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was as follows: 13 percent of the children exiting foster care to reunification in the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period re-entered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage is more than the national 25th percentile for this measure of 9.9 percent. Because lower percentages are associated with higher levels of performance for this measure, Florida's performance on the measure was not in the top 25 percent of the nation.

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 11 cases in which the child's entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode.

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the cases reviewed, which exceeds the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida's CFSR Data Profile of July 20, 2007 (Composite 1, Component B: Measure C1-4), reports that Florida is not meeting the national standard of 9.9 percent for re-entries to foster care. The data reveal an upward trend in children re-entering foster care within 12 months of the prior foster care episode since 2005. The results from the internal Florida CFSRs rate item 5 as substantially achieved in 100 percent of the cases in 2006 and 2007.

The Statewide Assessment reports that principles of family team conferencing (FTC) or other family-inclusive case planning models are utilized to assist with reunification; the child's best interests and safety are thoroughly assessed with ongoing monitoring throughout the post-placement period. An updated case plan for post-placement supervision is filed with the court and all parties at least 72 hours prior to the court hearing recommending reunification.

A challenge described in the Statewide Assessment is that Florida's CBC lead agencies vary in practices and strategies to reduce re-entry. In addition, the CBC agencies contract with a variety of community agencies for services to supplement case management services. The Statewide Assessment also noted that another barrier is service availability across counties and a lack of services available to families once children are reunified. In addition, substance abuse by parents also was reported to prevent reunification.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the title IV-E waiver provides options that help keep children from re-entering foster care. In addition, stakeholders from the State indicated that CBC agencies have flexibility in providing services that prevent re-entry. Stakeholders from Miami-Dade County report that CBC agencies create a reunification package that consists of a multilayered agency review of post-reunification services, with an agreement and subsequent signoff procedure. Stakeholders in Seminole and Miami-Dade Counties reported that reunification is a gradual process. Staff continue to visit the home to ensure stability, cases remain open for 6 months post-reunification, and the same level of services are provided to families.

However, some stakeholders from Miami-Dade and Seminole Counties reported there is repeat maltreatment and re-entry due to chronic neglect patterns and domestic violence issues that do not get addressed. Stakeholders indicated that failure to address underlying issues in families may cause children to re-enter foster care.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 41 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings 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. Reviewers also assessed the stability of the child’s current placement setting. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 6	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	4	14	6	24	59
Area Needing Improvement	7	6	4	17	41
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. Cases were rated as a Strength in 70 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 60 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 36 percent of Alachua County cases.

Florida’s performance during the 12-month CFSR target period on the individual measures included in Composite 4: Placement stability is presented below.

- 80.9 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This does not exceed the national 75th percentile for this measure of 86.0 percent.
- 58.9 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This does not exceed the national 75th percentile for this measure of 65.4 percent.
- 27.5 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This does not exceed the national 75th percentile for this measure of 41.8 percent.

These data indicate that Florida did not perform in the top 25 percent of States on any of the three national measures of placement stability.

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child did not experience a placement change during the period under review, and either the current placement was stable or the child was discharged from foster care during the period under review (21 cases).

- The placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest and were intended either to further achieve the child's permanency goal or to provide specialized services to the child (three cases).

Item 6 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The child was in multiple placement settings during the period under review, and at least one placement change was not planned by the agency to further attain the child's permanency goal (six cases).
- The placement did not meet the needs of the child (seven cases).
- The child's current placement setting (at the time of the onsite CFSR) was not stable (two cases).
- The placement discontinued provision of foster care and the child had to be moved (one case).
- The child was moved due to abuse in the foster home (one case).

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 18 cases experienced only 1 placement during the period under review.
- Children in eight cases experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Children in 15 cases experienced 3 or more placements during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 59 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability or that changes in placements were in the best interest of the child. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 was rated as an ANI in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the most appropriate available placement is chosen after analyzing the child's age; sex; sibling status; special physical, educational, emotional, and developmental needs; alleged type of abuse, neglect, or abandonment; community ties; school placement; and proximity to the parent.

The Statewide Assessment reports that Florida's placement stability performance has declined throughout the PIP implementation period. According to Florida's CFSR Data Profile, July 20, 2007, (Permanency Composite 4: Placement stability), the national standard for permanency is 101.5, and Florida's score is 88.1, meaning Florida did not meet the standard for this composite. Although the DCF has focused on Florida's placement instability issue, performance continues to decline. The declining performance in placement stability is associated with a lack of placements that effectively match the needs of the children in care, resulting in short-term and poorly matched placements. Technical assistance from the National Resource Centers (NRCs) has assisted the Department with instruction to case managers regarding data-driven performance management, rather than by anecdotal information. Placement

instability is reflective of many systemic and casework practice issues, but it is exacerbated by the lack of sufficient foster homes to provide for the type of children served through the State child welfare system.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following efforts to improve stability in foster care placements:

- In March 2005, lead agencies were instructed to develop an internal process plan to analyze placement data and identify trends affecting placement stability. Florida's new child welfare automated data system, FSFN, is programmed to ensure that placement data (placement changes, discharge reasons) are in keeping with AFCARS guidelines.
- The Behavioral Analysis Services Program has provided behavioral services to assist in preventing placement disruptions to include classroom trainings in behavior analysis, child behavior assessments, and other consultative services to foster caregivers, parents, children, DCF, and CBC staff.
- In 2005 and 2006, the Department started a Performance and Resource Teams (PaRTs) process to review and direct statewide performance improvements on Florida's Strategic Plan measures, one of which was placement stability. The Office of Family Safety (OFS) provided placement stability data to all areas in order to assist with the local analysis of placement stability.
- In 2005, the State requested assistance on placement stability from the NRCs, including **AdoptUSKids** and the NRCs for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, Child Welfare Data and Technology, and Organizational Improvement. In partnership with the NRCs, DCF, and Families First, a pilot project on placement stability was designed and implemented.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed varying opinions regarding placement stability. Stakeholders from the State reported that placement stability is a focus for leaders from DCF, CBC agencies, and judges. They also noted that the NRCs have supported the State in evaluating placement stability and developing statewide initiatives. Stakeholders from the State and Alachua County attribute placement stability to the fact that a majority of the children are placed in relative care. In Alachua County, stakeholders also report that the partnership has a crisis team to prevent placement and hold monthly meetings with juvenile justice to focus on the stability of children's placements. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County report having good placement stability, which they attributed to strong community support from the United Way and the Early Learning Coalition and having access to resources for therapeutic services and behavior specialists. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also indicated that private agencies do a lot of "prevention" work and "hand holding" to support foster parents; they assess needs and are available to foster parents when they need help, they offer respite care for foster parents, and they have a foster parent liaison. They indicated that pre-placement visits between foster parents and children and foster parents engaging biological families has helped placement stability. Stakeholders in Seminole County report that placement moves occur rarely and that they have a good pool of foster parents.

However, some stakeholders from the State and Alachua County indicated that appropriate matching of children and foster parents does not occur initially and this impacts the stability of foster care placements for children. They also reported that children are moved

due to lack of resources and not enough foster families. Stakeholders from Alachua County reported that staff turnover creates a backlog of cases, which impacts placement stability, but the stakeholders did not provide further information describing the impacts caused by the backlog of cases. The stakeholders from Alachua County also indicated that the mental health needs of the child affect placement stability. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County noted that case managers do not make concerted attempts to engage foster parents and they do not access necessary services to stabilize placements. Stakeholders in Seminole County noted that children’s behaviors and delinquency issues result in multiple placements.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 41 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established a permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and whether the most current permanency goal was appropriate. The results of this assessment are shown below.

Item 7	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	6	11	7	24	59
Area Needing Improvement	5	9	3	17	41
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 70 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 55 percent of Alachua County cases and 55 percent of Miami-Dade County cases.

Florida did meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. Performance on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:

- 33.3 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the 12-month CFSR target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (i.e., adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage exceeds the national median of 25.0 percent for this measure.

- 90.9 percent of the children exiting foster care in 2005, who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit, were discharged to a permanent home. This percentage is less than the national median of 96.8 percent for this measure.
- 43.5 percent of the children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month target period with a discharge reason of emancipation had been in foster care for 3 years or longer at the time of discharge. This percentage is lower than the national median of 47.8 percent. For this measure, lower scores indicate more positive performance.

Item 7 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner (24 cases). The case was rated as an ANI in 17 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child's current permanency goal was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (six cases).
- The child's permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (10 cases).
- The child's permanency goal was neither timely nor appropriate (one case).
- The goal in the case plan has not been revised as needed (one case).
- The goal of reunification was maintained for too long a period of time (three cases).

The following case goals were identified for the 41 foster care cases:

- Twelve children had a goal of adoption.
- Eight children had a goal of OPPLA.
- Eight children had a goal of reunification with parents.
- Four children had a goal of guardianship.
- Four children had concurrent goals of adoption and reunification with parents.
- One child had concurrent goals of OPPLA and adoption.
- One child had concurrent goals of OPPLA and guardianship.
- One child had concurrent goals of guardianship and reunification with parents.
- One child had concurrent goals of adoption and guardianship.
- One child had concurrent goals of reunification with parents and OPPLA.

Case review findings pertaining to TPR were as follows:

- At the time of the Onsite Review, 23 of the 41 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.
- TPR had been filed in a timely manner in 13 of the 23 cases applicable for TPR.
- Compelling reasons for not filing were noted in 5 of the 10 cases in which TPR had not been filed timely.

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 59 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2001 CFSR. In addition, item 28 in the case review, which examines the process of TPR, was also assigned a rating of ANI.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida statute was rewritten regarding permanency goals on July 1, 2006. The permanency goal is the primary factor used in development of the case plan. The Statewide Assessment indicates that when determining the best permanency goals for the child, the case managers must consider (1) the safety and risk of maltreatment, (2) the quality of the attachment between the child and the caregiver and the child and other family members, (3) the matching of the child with the caregiver best able to provide for the child's needs on a long-term basis, (4) the child's preference, and (5) the placement of the child in the most family-like and least restrictive setting.

The data indicate that reunification continues to be the primary goal for the majority of children in care, although it has fallen 2.7 percent from FY 2006. The goal of living with other relatives showed a slight decrease (1.4 percent) from FY 2006, but had a more significant decline (2.7 percent) from FY 2005. The permanency goal of guardianship increased significantly overall by 3.5 percent since 2005. Both the decline in the children with a goal of living with other relatives and the increase in guardianship are due to the 2006 statutory change concerning permanency. While the permanency goals of long-term foster care and emancipation have remained fairly constant, the adoption goal increased significantly since FY 2006. Thus, the increase in the guardianship and adoption goals indicate in those cases where reunification is not possible or appropriate, these two goals are being pursued more often than in previous years.

In the August 2007 Statewide Assessment, many case managers surveyed expressed the belief that large caseloads have a negative effect on permanency. Newly trained child welfare case managers are assigned large caseloads without the benefit of field supervision, shadowing, or mentors to provide practical application of their pre-service trainings. Responses also reflected that case plans and service recommendations were too often generic and not individualized to the family's specific needs. Responses noted that case review hearings and the establishment of permanency goals are timely.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item from the State during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that Florida is making some very strong efforts with relatives, and if these placements do not work out or are not working, they then make the move toward adoption planning and filing of TPR, which is done in a very timely manner. Stakeholders from Alachua County reported that concurrent

planning is occurring. They report that all permanency options are explored and that OPPLA is used where appropriate, usually as a last resort where nothing else is appropriate. In addition, stakeholders from Alachua County reported that because the court reviews cases every 5 months, reunification is no longer delayed due to parents' actions or nonactions. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County reported that case managers are doing concurrent planning, and they are doing a good job of preparing children for different permanency paths. They also noted that there is attention to the appropriateness of the goal, and they move on to a new goal when indicated for a case. Stakeholders in Seminole County indicated that there are better guardianship options, concurrent planning is occurring, and there is greater focus on relatives.

However, some stakeholders from Alachua County indicated that the concurrent goal is not consistently addressed by caseworkers and that the adoption goal is often not begun until after the TPR trial. In Miami-Dade County, stakeholders indicated that although case plans are required to be reviewed every 6 months, they may not be reviewed until 12 months and that although concurrent case plans may be developed, both are not pursued at the same time. Additional concerns noted by Miami-Dade County stakeholders include:

- OPPLA goal may be set for youth as young as 13 without a more permanent option being explored.
- The agencies are not making good assessments, which contribute to poor outcomes in permanency and stability.
- Relatives are not given sufficient information needed to make decisions to move toward permanency.

Item 8. Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 20 (49 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the permanency goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals.

The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 8	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	3	7	4	14	70
Area Needing Improvement	3	2	1	6	30
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	9	5	20	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	11	5	21	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Florida did not meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification. Performance on the individual measures included in this composite in the 12-month CFSR target period was as follows:

- 66.5 percent of the reunifications occurred in less than 12 months of the child’s entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 69.9 percent for this measure.
- The median length of stay in Florida foster care for children discharged to reunification was 9.1 months. This length of stay exceeds the national median of 6.5 months for the data set used to establish the national standards for composite 1. For this measure, a lower number of months means higher performance.
- 44.4 percent of children entering foster care in the last 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage is greater than the national median of 39.4 percent, but lower than the national 75th percentile of 48.4 percent.

These data indicate that, although Florida’s performance with regard to timeliness of reunification is strongest for children recently entering foster care (measure 3), for the most part timeliness of reunification is a challenge for the State. However, because Florida’s performance on the fourth measure included in this composite, which pertains to foster care re-entry, was in the top 25 percent of the nation, this contributed to the State meeting the national standard for the overall permanency composite. The State’s performance with regard to foster care re-entry is discussed under item 5.

Item 8 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency was making concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner in 14 cases. Item 8 was rated as an ANI in six cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. There were no clear trends in these cases regarding reasons for delays in achieving this goal in a timely manner. Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 78 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 80 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 50 percent of Alachua County cases.

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 70 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, an analysis for the PaRTs of children reunified within the 12-month period between July 2005 and September 2006 found that children whose goal at discharge was reunification with parent/relative were reunified the quickest. FTC is used by many lead agencies and is attributed to engaging families to identify services to address the needs of the family and enable the child to safely remain in the home or reunify quickly.

The Statewide Assessment reports from the June 2006 Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) Report that the percentage of children reunified with their families within 12 months has improved. However, the study also found that for this same period of time, more children are experiencing re-entry into the child welfare system. The June 2006 *OPPAGA Report* stated that “some lead agency and Department staff attribute the high percentage of children who are re-abused and must return to foster care to reuniting children with their families too quickly.” Parents required to complete substance abuse programs may not be able to complete these programs within the time period (12 months and less) required by the case plan and courts. In addition, other factors that must follow rehabilitation, such as reestablishing housing and employment, may still need to be completed before the home is safe for the return of the children. The study also found a “positive correlation” of children re-entering foster care within 12 months of reunification with the agency caseload size and also case manager vacancy rate.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from Miami-Dade County commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that there has been a dramatic change in the length of stay for children in foster care since 2005, with a greater likelihood that permanency will be achieved within 12 months. They also indicated that private agencies focus on “insight” and “empowerment” of families and that attention to permanency is important in the division because of the attention by the court to permanency issues for the child.

Stakeholders from Alachua County and Miami-Dade County reported that reunification can be delayed when parents do not comply with the service plan. Domestic violence and lack of housing also were cited as barriers to reunification by stakeholders in Seminole County.

Item 9. Adoption

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 9 was applicable for 18 (44 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. The results are shown in the table below.

Item 9	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	1	6	1	8	44
Area Needing Improvement	1	7	2	10	56
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	13	3	18	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	9	7	7	23	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

The item was rated as a Strength in 50 percent of Alachua County cases, 46 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 33 percent of Seminole County cases.

Florida met the national standard for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions. Performance during the 12-month CFSR target period on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:

- 36.7 percent of the children exiting to adoption were discharged in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care. This percentage is greater than the national median of 26.8 percent for this measure.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 29.3 months. This length of stay is less than the national median of 32.4 months. (Note that a lower number of months equates to a higher level of performance.)
- 24.8 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the target period. This percentage is greater than the national median of 20.2 percent for this measure.
- 13.7 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within 6 months. This percentage is greater than the national median for this measure of 8.8 percent.

- 60.9 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percentage is greater than the national median for this measure of 45.8 percent.

These data suggest that the State performed in the upper 50 percent of the nation on all measures pertaining to timeliness of adoption. Florida exceeds the national standard for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions. The national standard is 106.4 or higher, and Florida's score is 124.2 as of the 12-month period ending March 31, 2007.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in eight cases when reviewers determined that the State had made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. Item 9 was rated as an ANI in 10 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Delays due to the agency not filing for TPR in a timely manner (one case)
- A lack of diligent efforts to find an adoptive home for the child (five cases)
- Delays due to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process with another State (one case)
- Agency staff not completing necessary paperwork (one case)
- Other legal barriers and administrative issues (two cases)

Additional findings relevant to this item were the following:

- There were 18 cases during the period under review with a goal of adoption.
- Adoption was finalized in four cases; two of these cases were finalized within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care.
- Of the remaining children, two were placed in pre-adoptive homes.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 44 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR. In addition, the State met the national standard for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Department's Performance Dashboard shows that for the percentage of adoptions finalized within 24 months of the latest removal, the statewide target is 32 percent, and the State's performance was 39.6 percent as of August 2007. The percentage of cases that met the goal of adoption also was tracked on the Dashboard, and the goal is set at 100 percent. For July 2006 to June 2007, statewide performance as reported on the Dashboard was 80.26 percent. The Statewide Assessment reports that permanency staffings for children with an adoption goal are occurring more consistently and frequently, including every 3 months in many areas.

The Statewide Assessment also reports the following efforts to improve the timeliness of adoptions:

- Several judicial circuits have initiated a plan by setting aside docket time for monthly adoption courts in order to follow progress for children whose parental rights have been terminated.
- Most areas of the State have instituted local Heart Galleries (photo presentations of children available for adoption) with community stakeholders as partners to increase child-specific recruitment efforts.
- Each CBC agency has established an adoptive parent support group.
- Background screening legislation requirements have been instituted for relative and non-relative placements at the time of the child's initial placement, and quarterly adoption staffings on children have greatly facilitated timely assessment and approval of relatives and nonrelatives for adoption.
- The Florida State Employee Adoption Benefits Program was introduced to increase adoptions.
- The Office of Adoption and Child Protection in the Executive Office of the Governor was created in June 2007 to promote adoption, support adoptive families, and prevent child abuse, neglect, and abandonment.
- Five of the CBC agencies have received grants from the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program of the Thomas Foundation for Adoption.
- Best Practice Guidelines for Adoption Assistance was created for staff requiring annual renewals of maintenance adoption subsidies to be discontinued and requiring that any reduction or termination of adoption subsidies to have the concurrence of the adoptive parents.

Despite these efforts, the Statewide Assessment notes that there is not a consistent and concerted effort by counselors to prepare older youth for adoption and to conduct child-specific and targeted recruitment efforts for older youth. High staff turnover in some areas of the State have resulted in high caseloads and new, inexperienced counselors who do not have the needed skills and knowledge to work effectively toward adoption planning for older youth. Also, there are not consistent and effective post-adoption services, especially adoption competent mental health professionals, across the State.

Another challenge noted is that field staff turnover and reorganization in the OFS has resulted in inconsistency in maintaining current information and pictures of the children available for adoption on the Florida Adoption Exchange website postings.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from Alachua County commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that expedited TPRs move quickly to adoption, and they are reviewed every 30 days. They indicated that in Alachua County they have an adoption case manager, and once adoption is filed, it is followed very closely. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County report that all private agencies have adoption staff to focus on adoption cases. As soon as a TPR petition is accepted by the court, the case is transferred to the adoption

unit, and at that time the adoption staff will talk with the placement provider about adoption. If the placement provider is not interested in adoption, the adoption staff will start “informally” recruiting while waiting for TPR. Stakeholders in Seminole County report that adoption, including adoption of teenagers, is working really well; the staff have greatly reduced the delays in adoption paperwork issues and adoption paperwork is getting done timely. Several stakeholders report that in Seminole County, staff work diligently to find adoptive families. Additionally, stakeholders report that adoption subsidies and funding for 4 years of college are available benefits to adoptive children, which support the adoption process. Adoptive placement resources described by stakeholders in Seminole County include Wednesday Child, child interest forms completed by prospective foster parents, Florida adoption exchange, and use of a national adoption website. When TPR is achieved in Seminole County, adoption may occur anywhere between 90 days and 5 months if the adoptive resource is identified.

However, stakeholders from the State reported that some parts of the State are handling TPR appeals expeditiously, as required by law, but others are not. They indicated that appeals are being heard at the appellate level, but the circuit level that handles the cases may be different across the State, which may cause delays. Though a TPR order and adoptive parents are in place, the finalizations of the adoption is not occurring in a timely manner, which may be related to the system of care model used by a local CBC agency or issues with staff turnover. Stakeholders in Alachua County indicated that the completing of the required paperwork, problems with caseworker turnover, and TPR appeals are reasons for those adoptions that are not completed in a timely manner. Some stakeholders in Miami-Dade County reported the adoption process is slowed by the amount of litigation. Seminole County stakeholders reported improvement in the timely filing of TPR petitions.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 11 (27 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to OPPLA. The results are presented in the table below.

Item 10	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	5	1	1	7	64
Area Needing Improvement	0	2	2	4	36
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	3	3	11	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	6	17	7	30	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the Alachua County cases, compared with 33 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 33 percent of Seminole County cases.

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in three cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a long-term placement for the child and to provide the necessary services to prepare the child for independent living. Item 10 was rated a Strength in four cases when it was determined the child was in a group home placement and is preparing for transition to independent living.

The item was rated as an ANI in four cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- IL and transition services were in place; however, there was not a formal, long-term agreement signed by the foster care provider (three cases).
- There was not a formal, long-term agreement signed by the foster parent and transition planning occurred very late in the placement (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 64 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. The item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OPPLA was added as a permanency option in Florida statute, with the requirement to meet certain criteria before consideration of this option. This permanency option replaced long-term foster care and independent living. In the case of a child who lacks adoptive resources and relative placement options, certain criteria must be met to ensure that a commitment to care for the child until the age of majority is established. It should be noted that the aforementioned criteria are defined

in Florida statute as: the court must find that other goals, such as adoption, are not in the best interest of the child; that DCF can document that OPPLA is more stable and secure than ordinary foster care; and that there are compelling reasons that OPPLA is the most appropriate goal. (As stated above, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was addressed in an appropriate way in 64 percent of the applicable cases during the onsite phase of the Federal CFSR.)

The Statewide Assessment reports that Independent Living Transitional Services in Florida have been strengthened and revised several times since October 2002. The Statewide Assessment also reports the following efforts to strengthen the permanency goal of OPPLA, which include:

- Youth age 16 or 17 may be eligible for placement in a Subsidized Independent Living arrangement and be provided a direct financial stipend to support the youth's IL arrangement.
- Young adults exiting foster care in Florida may now receive services until age 23 because of legislation and the introduction of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.
- The Road to Independence Program, which requires youth's full-time attendance in secondary or postsecondary education, provides a financial award to those eligible youth, ages 18 to 23, and is based on the living and educational costs of each participant.
- The Aftercare Support and Transitional Support Services provide IL skills in areas such as mentoring and tutoring, mental health services and substance abuse counseling, life skills classes (including credit management and preventive health activities), parenting classes, job and career skills training, counselor consultations, temporary financial assistance, and financial literacy skills training for those youth participating in the aftercare program.
- Youth have made the most progress in "teaching" child welfare staff and managers about the benefits of inclusion and engagement of youth. An example is the active group of youth formerly in foster care known as Youth SHINE.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicated that most agencies have IL specialists and this has helped improve IL services to youth. The specialists are very familiar with resources and network to help children connect to resources. Stakeholders in Seminole County report that OPPLA is a plan of last resort, and it is explored only when all other resources have been exhausted.

However, in Miami-Dade County although youth have access to IL skills training, the issue as reported by stakeholders is that youth do not understand what will happen when they turn 18. Stakeholders reported that assistance for youth sometimes ends when they turn 18. Stakeholders report that youth believe they will have their own apartment but have no connections to adults to call for assistance, and it is not clear that youth are prepared to live on their own. Stakeholders also reported there are a large number of children in Miami-Dade County who have been in foster care for a long period of time and finding appropriate IL services to meet the needs of these children is difficult. Stakeholders from Miami-Dade County also reported there are not clear educational plans to prepare

children for the future and there is a serious lack of transitional housing. In addition, these Stakeholders indicated that IL services are not appropriately tailored to meet the needs of children with special needs.

Permanency Outcome 2

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	3	9	7	19	47.5
Partially Achieved	6	11	3	20	50
Not Achieved	1	0	0	1	2.5
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	0	0	1	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Status of Permanency Outcome 2

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 47.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 70 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 45 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 30 percent of Alachua County cases.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

Florida did achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 in its 2001 CFSR. However, relationship of child in care with parents (item 16) was rated as an ANI. Key concerns identified with this item during the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- There did not appear to be any efforts to maintain the relationships between teenagers in foster care and their parents.
- In situations when parents are in jail, efforts were not made by the caseworker to help children maintain relationships with parents.

Key Findings From the 2008 CFSR

Similar to the 2001 CFSR, item 11 (proximity of foster care placement) was rated as a Strength in the 2008 CFSR. While item 12 (placement with siblings), item 13 (visitation with parents and siblings), item 14 (preserving connections), and item 15 (relative placement) were all rated Strengths in the 2001 CFSR, they are rated as ANI in the 2008 CFSR. Item 16 (relationship of child in care with parents) was rated as an ANI in 2001 and in 2008. Additional findings were as follows:

- The agency was not consistent in placing children with siblings and the separation was not deemed to be in the best interests of the siblings (item 12).
- The agency was not consistent in ensuring that visitation between children in foster care and parents and siblings in foster care was of sufficient frequency and/or quality (item 13).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections to extended family (item 14).
- The agency had not made diligent efforts to search for known maternal and paternal relatives (item 15).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with either parent (item 16).

Despite these concerns, the case reviews also found the following:

- Children in the cases reviewed were in foster care placements that were in close proximity to parents or potential permanent caregivers unless highly specialized placements were necessary (item 11).

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 11 was applicable for 30 (73 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which (1) TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, (2) contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest, and/or (3) parents were deceased or their whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's most current foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below:

Item 11	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	7	13	8	28	93
Area Needing Improvement	2	0	0	2	7
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	9	13	8	30	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	7	2	11	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on item 11 varied across sites. This item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the Miami-Dade County cases and 100 percent of the Seminole County cases, compared with 78 percent of the Alachua County cases.

Item 11 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child was placed in the same community or county as parents or relatives.
- The child's placement was not in the same community or county as parents or relatives, but the placement was necessary to meet the child's needs.
- The child's placement was not in the same community or county as parents or relatives, but was in close proximity to them.

Item 11 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:

- The distance between the child's family and the foster care placement was a barrier to reunification efforts and was not necessary to meet the child's needs (one case).
- There was a lack of resources in the State to meet the child's placement needs (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 93 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the Department had made diligent efforts to ensure that children were placed in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives, or that were necessary to meet special needs. This percentage exceeds the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, when making an out-of-home placement, consideration of community ties and school placement is required, and placement of the child in a setting in as close proximity as possible to the caregiver with whom reunification is planned.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the QA data from the internal Florida CFSRs available for calendar years 2004 through 2007 show performance has fluctuated from 82 percent in 2004, 96.6 percent in 2005, 100 percent in 2006, and 88.4 percent in 2007. The local QA reviews conducted between July 2006 and December 2006 show this as a strength in 87.26 percent of the cases reviewed.

While the Statewide Assessment notes that Florida’s best practice guidelines require that agencies work toward the goal of having three foster care beds available for every foster child, the lack of sufficient foster beds for children subsequently requires placement of children in other counties.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from the State commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that while DCF does a good job placing children with family members, there continues to be a lack of resources and an insufficient pool of foster parents to keep children in their own community. In Seminole County, stakeholders reported that many more children are now being placed in their own community and that judges are requiring that the child remain in the same school.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 12 was applicable for 24 (59 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not have a sibling in foster care at any time during the period under review. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether the separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 12	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	3	14	4	21	87
Area Needing Improvement	1	2	0	3	13
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	16	4	24	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	4	6	17	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was determined to be substantially achieved in 88 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 100 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 75 percent of Alachua County cases.

Item 12 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one of the following:

- The child was in a placement with all siblings (12 cases).
- The child was in a placement with some siblings and the separation from other siblings was determined to be in the best interests of one of the siblings (one case).
- The child was not placed with any siblings, but the siblings were separated due to the special needs of one or more of the siblings (one case).
- The child was not placed with siblings, but placement with the siblings was not in the best interest of the child (one case).
- The child was not placed with any siblings due to the special needs of the child (five cases).
- The child was not placed with all siblings because the size of the sibling group made it difficult to place all siblings together (one case).

Item 12 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one of the following:

- Children were not placed with siblings, and the separation was not deemed to be in the best interests of the siblings (two cases).
- There was a shortage of placement resources for sibling groups (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 87 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever possible and appropriate. This is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, children should be placed with siblings when possible, unless it is determined to be inappropriate. If children cannot be placed together, a plan must be developed for frequent visitation. The case manager ensures that separated siblings under supervision maintain in-person contact unless the visitation would compromise the safety or well-being of either child. Sibling visitation can only be limited or terminated by court order.

Florida conducted CFSRs from 2004 to 2007, with the exception of 2006. In 2004, placement with siblings was a strength in 78.7 percent of the cases reviewed, 84.6 percent in 2005, 75 percent in 2006, and 90 percent in 2007. It should be noted that the 2006 Florida CFSR was conducted in Miami-Dade County only and is not indicative of statewide performance. However, the local QA reviews conducted between July 2006 and December 2006 show statewide performance for placement with siblings at 64.53 percent. Florida's performance with this item continues to fluctuate. This is impacted by the need for additional foster homes to handle sibling groups and siblings with special needs.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following efforts to improve children being placed with siblings:

- The Florida Neighbor to Family program provides foster homes that keep siblings together.
- The Relative Caregiver Program provides a monthly cash benefit and Medicaid for each child placed with a relative. The relative has the option of applying for this Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefit at the public assistance office.
- Guardianship or placement with a fit and willing relative is a permanency option for a sibling group rather than adoption, which increases the likelihood of siblings being placed together.

However, the Statewide Assessment also indicates there is a lack of foster homes to accommodate sibling groups. This is due to the increase in special needs children, children with sexual abuse issues, and aggressive children who need to be placed by themselves in a home. Clear guidelines are needed to promote consistency in practice when the separation of siblings is required. Stakeholders agree that more efforts on an ongoing basis must be made to enable siblings are placed together.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from the State commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR report that there is an emphasis on keeping siblings together for adoption and that the courts and GALs collaborate with the agency to ensure this occurs. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicated recently that there has been improvement in placing siblings together and that attempts are consistently made to ensure that this happens. Stakeholders described a private agency that started a sibling unit in an effort to keep siblings together and to ensure monthly visitation when siblings are separated.

Stakeholders from the State noted inadequate training for foster parents about the importance of keeping children together. They also reported that there is a lack of foster homes that will accept sibling groups. Miami-Dade County stakeholders noted that although the CBC agency verbalizes the intent to place siblings together, this is not happening in practice. Stakeholders in Seminole County indicated that there are not enough foster homes that can take sibling groups.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 13 was applicable for 32 (78 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item if the child had no siblings in foster care and if one of the following conditions was met with regard to the parents: (1) TPR was established prior to the period under review, and parents were no longer involved in the child’s life (or parents were deceased), or (2) visitation with a parent was considered to not be in the best interests of the child. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine (1) whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care, and (2) whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below:

Item 13	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	3	11	3	17	53
Area Needing Improvement	7	4	4	15	47
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	15	7	32	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	5	3	9	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 73 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, compared with 30 percent of Alachua County cases and 43 percent of Seminole County cases.

Item 13 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visitation with parents and siblings met the needs of the children. Item 13 was rated as an ANI when concerted efforts were not made to promote visitation with the mother, father, and/or siblings.

The frequency of visitation with mothers, fathers, and siblings during the period under review is presented in the table below. For cases in which visitation was applicable, the most consistent pattern of visitation during the period under review for mothers was less than once per month, for siblings visits ranged from once per week to less than once per month, and for fathers the pattern was less than once per month to never having visits. The table below provides further information on visitation.

Item Specific Table - Item 13 Summary			
Visitation Frequency (during the period under review)	Mother	Father	Child
More than once a week	3	0	2
Once a week	5	1	3
Less than once a week, but at least twice a month	1	2	4
Less than twice a month, but at least once a month	0	1	3
Less than once a month	10	6	4
Never	6	8	0
Total	25	18	16

Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 53 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the family. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, policy requires case plans to include regular visitation at least once a week with siblings, and with their parents at least once a month, unless the court orders otherwise. When the court orders no visitation or less than weekly visitation because it is not in the best interest of the child, the court must be provided clinical documentation. Sibling visitation can only be limited or terminated by court order and reflected in the case plan. Case plans must include the parent’s visitation rights and a plan for sibling visitation.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the Florida CFSR QA reviews regarding sibling visitations from 2004 through 2007 show some improvement in this area: 64 percent in 2004, 61 percent in 2005, 63 percent in 2006, and 68 percent in 2007. The 2004 Florida CFSR reviews indicated that foster parents and caseworkers were active in facilitating parent/child visitations. The 2005 Florida CFSR findings reflected that attention to child visits with fathers positively impacted reunification. Reviewers also found that often visitation

was sporadic, not documented in the case file, and not attempted with incarcerated parents. In addition, many of the findings showed that reunification was delayed due to lack of consistent parent/child visitation in 2007.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Miami-Dade County stakeholders reported that the court recognizes the need for young children to have frequent visits with their parents and will order visitation for up to three times per week. In addition, they report that Miami-Dade County has improved ensuring that children are able to visit with their siblings. Stakeholders also indicated that caseload sizes have decreased, thereby allowing visits to be provided more often. Seminole County stakeholders indicated that visitation occurs more frequently with relative placements. Once a parent shows efforts to working the plan, the court is motioned to give unsupervised visitation or increase frequency. Stakeholders also noted that judges explain to parents that the sooner and faster they work on case plans, the sooner they can have unsupervised and overnight visits. In addition, stakeholders reported that therapeutic sibling visits are arranged when the siblings have strained relationships. Stakeholders from Seminole County also mentioned that Family Focus visits are 1 hour every 2 weeks, and they can arrange Saturday visits as needed.

However, stakeholders in Miami-Dade and Seminole Counties report that frequency of visits is a concern and that one to two visits per week or 1 hour every 2 weeks is not enough. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also reported that transportation and bus tickets are available to support sibling visitation.

Item 14. Preserving connections

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 14 was applicable for 39 (95 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child's connections to neighborhood, community, heritage, extended family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care. The results of the assessment are provided in the table below.

Item 14	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	5	16	9	30	77
Area Needing Improvement	5	3	1	9	23
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	19	10	39	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	1	0	2	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of Seminole County cases and 84 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, compared with 50 percent of Alachua County cases.

Item 14 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with extended family members (e.g., through phone contact and visits and placements with relatives) (25 cases).
- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with the child’s religious or cultural heritage (one case).
- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with the school, community, and important activities such as dance class or sports (e.g., selecting placements that do not require a change of school, jobs, sports teams) (18 cases).

Item 14 was rated as an ANI in eight cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to extended family (three cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with religious or cultural heritage (one case).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections to school or community (one case).
- The agency did not explore or preserve the child’s principle family, community, and cultural connections (four cases).

In five cases, there was no evidence that an inquiry was made with the family about whether the child had Native American ancestry to assess for possible Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) applicability.

Rating Determination

Item 14 was rated as an ANI. In 77 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections with extended family, culture, religion, community, and school. This is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in Florida’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida law and policy require staff to make every effort to identify and maintain family and cultural connections at the time children enter out-of-home care, that the child remain in his community school when appropriate, and that staff comply with ICWA and the Multiethnic Placement Act. Policy includes additional requirements for making placements that assure maintaining family, educational, and community connections and require that licensed caregivers support a child's religious and cultural practices and beliefs. The Statewide Assessment notes that the court is required to inquire about relatives at the shelter hearing and at each subsequent proceeding.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that Florida's QA reports from 2004 through 2007 show an increase in performance on this measure from 67 percent in 2004 to 84 percent in 2007. Improvement in this area is attributed to setting clear expectations for placements in close proximity to the child's community and school placement, child matching efforts regarding out-of-home placements, actively seeking relative placements, and providing ongoing training and technical assistance to case managers through pre-service and continuing education efforts.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item from the State reported that there has been a focus on preserving family connections, including staff training and the development of normalcy policies for children in care. They also reported that Florida has been proactive by hiring a liaison to address ICWA and train staff on the necessity of identifying Native American children and contacting Tribes. They have improved practice related to Tribes, and they reported having a closer relationship with the Tribes. Stakeholders also note that Florida has also been making efforts to keep children in their schools through interagency agreements, enacting laws, and creating policy, including agreements with school boards. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County reported that the agency supports visitation with extended family members to preserve important connections. They also indicated that protocols are being established to support the creation of Life Books for children in care. Stakeholders in Seminole County noted that petitions for shelter require inquiry into Native American heritage.

However, despite these efforts to promote normalcy for children, stakeholders report the following challenges:

- Staff's inability to spend time preserving connections due to their busy schedules
- Older children being unable to get drivers licenses because insurance is a problem, which would help foster connections
- The State not consistently worked with the Tribes
- Some problems with DCF accepting the services provided by the Tribes as they may not be an "approved program"
- A lack of understanding of the cultural needs for Tribal children
- A lack of foster care placements, preventing children from remaining in their school due to the location of the home

Item 15. Relative placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 15 was applicable for 36 (88 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because: (1) the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period, or (2) the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 15	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	4	11	7	22	61
Area Needing Improvement	6	7	1	14	39
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	18	8	36	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	1	2	2	5	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this measure varied somewhat across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 88 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 61 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 40 percent of Alachua County cases.

Item 15 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child was placed with relatives or close family members (14 cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives, but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives when applicable (six cases).
- The child was placed with relatives; however, the child was subsequently appropriately removed (two cases).
- Diligent efforts were made to identify relative placements, but it was therapeutically indicated for the child to be placed elsewhere (one case).

Item 15 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency had not made diligent efforts to search for known maternal and paternal relatives during the period under review (10 cases).
- The agency made diligent efforts to search for maternal relatives, but not paternal relatives (two cases).
- The agency located relatives, but did not make efforts to place with them (one case).
- The agency placed the child with relatives; however, the placement was not stable or appropriate (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 61 percent of cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida's data profile for point-in-time population shows that child welfare staff engage in ongoing efforts to place and maintain children who are in out-of-home care with relatives as a way to help minimize trauma and maximize preservation of family relationships and connections. Relative placements consistently account for well over 40 percent of the out-of-home care population. The 2006 revisions to the Florida statutes require the court to ask the parents for disclosure of relative information at the shelter and adjudicatory hearing, and the continuing duty of the parent is to disclose relative information.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following barriers to placing children with relatives:

- The cost of child care increases significantly after termination of supervision (case closure) occurs on cases where the child or children have been placed with a relative caregiver. Although the Relative Caregiver Program assistance (i.e., cash assistance and Medicaid coverage) continues, the stability of the placement is often jeopardized due to the increase in child care costs.
- Relative caregivers do not receive the same benefit of trainings and services that are received by foster parents. Although these trainings are always open to relative caregivers, these caregivers are not connected with communication about available trainings.
- Stakeholder interviews and case file examination findings show that relative caregiver application to Medicaid can be a factor in provision of behavioral and physical health services. There are times when the relative needs assistance with the application; there are other times when case managers fail to complete processes necessary to provide caregivers with necessary documentation for the applications.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that progress has been made with identifying relatives early on in the case, that a good job is being done of identifying maternal relatives, and that a better job is being

done of conducting diligent searches for fathers. Stakeholders note that child welfare in Florida has a history of using relative care. Stakeholders in Alachua County report that they are aggressive about finding family members, and they are documenting their efforts to locate relatives. Stakeholders in Seminole County report that at the shelter hearing, DCF does a good job of finding a relative placement and that they have access to resources to locate relatives, such as the checking of vital statistics in the sheriff's office. Once the background check is completed, the relative is contacted to assess their willingness, and at that point a home study is conducted. When children are adjudicated dependent, relative caregiver resources can access TANF funds. Stakeholders in Seminole County also noted that day care for relative foster parents is provided.

Stakeholders from the State noted that DCF is not good at identifying fathers, and in general, they are less inclined to look for paternal relatives. In Miami-Dade County, stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of information about the children provided to relatives and the lack of exploration by agency staff regarding their willingness to possibly act as adoptive resources if reunification efforts are unsuccessful. Stakeholders also noted that another barrier to placement with relatives is that children cannot be placed with relatives if the child comes from an undocumented family and the relatives are undocumented. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also reported that assessments of relatives are not appropriately conducted.

A key concern across the State reported by stakeholders is that non-licensed relative caregivers and non-relative caregivers do not receive any training and are not told how to access training unless they go through the licensure process. Many children in foster care reside in relative and non-relative homes. Relatives can be licensed but generally are not encouraged by the agency to pursue licensure.

Seminole County stakeholders indicated that accessing relative caregiver funds can be problematic, as funds are not dispersed until after the disposition, which can take from 3 to 9 months. These stakeholders also reported difficulty in relatives accessing Medicaid for children in their care, thus they were unable to access needed services such as child therapy.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 16 was applicable for 29 (71 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. Foster care cases were not applicable if (1) parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, (2) a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child's best interests throughout the period under review, or (3) both parents were deceased. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond

between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers through efforts other than arranging visitation. The results of this assessment are provided in the table below.

Item 16	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	1	4	3	8	28
Area Needing Improvement	7	9	5	21	72
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	8	13	8	29	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	3	7	2	12	
Total Foster Care Cases	11	20	10	41	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 38 percent of the Seminole County cases and 31 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, compared with 13 percent of Alachua County cases.

Item 16 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children. Examples of efforts to promote bonding between the child and parents included (1) providing opportunities for therapeutic situations to help the parent and child strengthen their relationship, (2) encouraging the parent's participation in school activities and extracurricular activities, (3) providing or arranging for transportation so that the parent could attend the child's medical appointments, (4) facilitating contact with incarcerated parents, and (5) encouraging foster parents to provide mentoring to parents. The table below identifies the activities as well as the number of cases relevant for each type of activity.

Efforts made to support the parent/child relationship	With Mother	With Father	Total
Encourage the parent's participation in school activities and case conferences, attendance at doctors' appointments with the child, or engagement in the child's after school or sports activities?	8	2	10
Provide or arrange for transportation or provide funds for transportation so that the parent could attend the child's special activities and doctors' appointments?	3	1	4
Provide opportunities for therapeutic situations to help the parent and child strengthen their relationship?	8	2	10
Encourage the foster parents to provide mentoring or serve as role models to the parent to assist her/him in appropriate parenting?	4	2	6
Encourage and facilitate contact with incarcerated parents (where appropriate) or with parents not living in close proximity to the child?	3	5	8

Item 16 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with the father (three cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with the mother (seven cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with either parent (11 cases).

Rating Determination

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 28 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, in addition to visitation, State policy addresses efforts to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between a child in foster care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver. Case planning training addresses promoting or maintaining the parent-child relationship. Emphasis is focused on placing children in close proximity to their parents and the importance of ongoing contact and involvement of parents in case planning. The case plan must include a description of the parent's visitation rights and obligations, frequency, duration, and results of the parent-child visitation, if any, and the agency recommendations for an expansion or restriction of future visitation. Visitation must occur in accordance with court orders. Minimally, monthly visitation between the child and parents is recommended to the court unless it is deemed not feasible or not in the best interest of the child. If monthly visitation is not recommended to the court, the court is advised of the reasons for the recommendation.

The Statewide Assessment reports that QA reports from 2004 through 2007 show Florida's performance has fluctuated: 54 percent in the 2004 Florida CFSR, 66 percent in the 2005 Florida CFSR, 63 percent in the 2006 Florida CFSR, and 61 percent in the 2007 Florida CFSR.

The Statewide Assessment also reports the following barriers to supporting the parent/child relationship:

- Counselors do not take enough time to ensure that the parents are incorporating newly learned parenting methods from their parenting classes into their interactions with the children.
- Often visits are conducted by administrative staff who are not familiar enough with the needs of the children or their parents to offer parents assistance in these areas during the visits.
- Parents are not encouraged to attend school staffings and medical appointments.
- Case manager use of resources, as well as engagement practices, are inconsistent.
- As caseloads increase due to caseworker turnover, the practice of promoting the parent-child relationship can become a low priority.
- There are not a sufficient number of foster homes to keep children in close proximity to their communities; children are being placed in other jurisdictions. Parents, then, must take time away from their jobs, often jeopardizing employment. This also means they must locate transportation to see the children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were few stakeholder comments on this item. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicate that the court strongly promotes the relationship between the child and their parents, and in Seminole County, stakeholders report that there are opportunities to help engage parents with their children, such as birthday parties and inviting parents to medical appointments.

However, some stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicate that the agency does not always recommend that birth parents get involved in activities with their children. Often they are not encouraged to attend school meetings and appointments, because parents are not allowed to have contact with foster parents.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well-Being Outcome 1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	5	5	6	16	24.6
Partially Achieved	10	20	8	38	58.5
Not Achieved or Addressed	2	6	3	11	16.9
Total Applicable Cases	17	31	17	65	
Not Applicable Cases	0	0	0	0	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 25 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 29 percent of Alachua County cases, 16 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 35 percent of Seminole County cases. Performance did not vary significantly based on the type of case. The outcome was found to be substantially achieved in 26 percent (9 cases) of the 41 foster care cases and 37 percent (7 cases) of the 24 in-home services cases.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

The State did not achieve substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 in the 2001 CFSR. Key concerns were predominantly related to needs assessment, service provision, and family involvement in case planning as follows:

- Assessments of the child’s and family’s service needs were not completed or were inadequate.
- Services provided did not address the identified needs.
- Service needs of fathers were not addressed in case plans.
- When father’s needs were assessed, they were not referred for supportive services.
- Families and teenagers were not consistently involved in case planning.

- When children were placed out of the county or State, there was no evidence of follow-up or communication regarding service provision.

To address these concerns, the State developed PIP strategies, including the following:

- A select group of leadership, management, and supervisory staff members were trained on analysis of management reports.
- Strategies were implemented to address children missing from placements. These strategies included interagency agreements with local and State law enforcement agencies related to children reported as missing and the implementation of policy and procedures to ensure that all children who absconded, or were otherwise missing from their designated placement, were reported as “missing” to the proper authorities in a timely manner and that a plan to actively attempt to locate them was formulated.
- The visitation operating procedure was modified to ensure that quality interactions between counselor and child, parent, and caregiver are documented with detailed information about the visit in HomeSafenet, the State’s information system.
- The number of monthly face-to-face contacts with parents was tracked.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

Similar to the 2001 CFSR, in the 2008 CFSR the needs and services of children, parents, and foster parents (item 17), family involvement in case planning (item 18), caseworker visits with children (item 19), and caseworker visits with parents (item 20) remain as areas needing improvement.

The following concerns surfaced in the case review in the 2008 CFSR:

- There continues to be a lack of consistency in assessing and meeting the services needs of parents (particularly fathers) and children. In the cases reviewed, the agency is more consistently assessing and addressing the needs of mothers and children and less effectively assessing and meeting the service needs of fathers. Efforts to locate and/or engage fathers at the outset have improved, but overall efforts remain inconsistent (item 17).
- There also continues to be inconsistencies in adequately involving families (particularly fathers) in case planning (item 18).
- There were inconsistencies in caseworker visits with children in foster care cases and caseworker visits with children in the in-home cases (item 19).
- The 2008 CFSR specifically differentiated between mothers and fathers in evaluating the frequency and quality of caseworker visits. In general, there were insufficient caseworker visits and challenges associated with the quality of visits with both parents. However, these findings were more pronounced for fathers, as evidenced by inconsistent efforts to visit or engage fathers in either

case planning or services. In addition, there were instances when visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency, but not quality (item 20).

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Well-Being Outcome 1 are presented and discussed below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 17 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had (1) adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents and (2) provided the services necessary to meet those needs. This item excludes the assessment of children’s (but not parents’) needs pertaining to educational, physical health, and mental health. These are addressed in later items. The case review results were the following:

Item 17	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	5	8	6	19	29
Area Needing Improvement	12	23	11	46	71
Not Applicable	0	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

The item was rated as a Strength in 26 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, 35 percent of Seminole County cases, and 29 percent of Alachua County cases. Performance did vary based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 22 percent (9 cases) of the 41 foster care cases as compared to 42 percent (10 cases) of the 24 in-home services cases.

Item 17 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met. Item 17 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined that there was either inadequate assessment of needs or inadequate services to meet identified needs.

Specific case review findings for item 17 are shown in the table below. The data indicate that, for foster care cases, the agency was more likely to assess and meet the needs of children than it was to assess and meet the needs of foster parents, mothers, or fathers. For

the in-home services cases, the agency was more likely to meet the needs of mothers and children than it was to meet the needs of fathers. The data also show that children receive the same amount of needs assessment and services in foster care as they do when receiving in-home services. However, parents receiving in-home services were more likely to have their needs assessed and met than those parents whose children are in foster care.

Target Person for Needs Assessment and Services	Foster Care			In-Home Services		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Mother's needs assessed and met?	12 (46%)	14 (54 %)	26	15 (63 %)	9 (37 %)	24
Father's needs assessed and met?	5 (24 %)	16 (76 %)	21	13 (54 %)	11 (46 %)	24
Foster parent's needs assessed and met?	17 (45 %)	21 (55 %)	38	NA	NA	
Child's needs assessed and met?	29 (71 %)	12 (29 %)	41	17 (71 %)	7 (29 %)	24

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Rating Determination

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 29 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the State had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida policy requires assessments to be completed at least every 6 months until termination of services. The needs assessments and identification of services are required for both in-home and out-of-home service cases at the initiation of the case and ongoing throughout the case.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the internal Florida CFSRs conducted between 2004 and 2007 identify this as an area in need of improvement. Performance on this item varied. In 2004, performance was a strength in 60 percent in the cases reviewed, in 2005 it was a strength in 51 percent of the cases reviewed, and in 2007 performance was a strength in 65 percent of the cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment also reports the following barriers to addressing the needs and services of children, parents, and foster parents:

- There continues to be a need to focus on ongoing family assessments.

- Documentation in case files is not sufficient to support the efforts toward service implementation, referrals for supportive services for caregivers, or follow-up information once such services are provided, including the medical needs of the child being addressed, referrals for services for children, parents, and caregivers in a timely manner, and documentation of specific observations of children in the home.
- Case managers do not always follow up on recommendations from the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment (CBHA), including updating case plans and timely completion of referrals for CBHAs.
- Funding for services for children who are not Medicaid eligible and access to services have produced barriers in timeliness of completion of the assessments.
- Limited interpreter services for clients with language barriers hinder opportunities to engage families adequately in the assessment of the risk and needs of the children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from the State report that the agency is assessing the need for IL services, and there is evidence to support this. They also indicated that the case managers from the CBC agencies call foster parents, assess their needs, and check on the status of the family. However, State-level stakeholders also reported there is a lack of individualized services for children and families and that decision-making with each child and family does not occur. Several stakeholders reported that high staff turnover is an issue, and this results in children and foster parents not having their needs met.

Strengths noted by Miami-Dade County stakeholders also include:

- The CBC agencies have developed a Blue Book—Child Resource Record for children in foster care, where personal information, including Medicaid, social security number, education, and all pertinent information, is kept.
- Child’s required level of care is based on a CBHA, which is completed within 30 days after child’s removal and placed in the child’s file.

In Alachua County, stakeholders indicated that caseworkers do not inquire about foster parents’ needs. In addition, the Alachua County stakeholders reported that children in non-licensed out-of-home care do not get behavioral assessments.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 18 was applicable for 62 (95 percent) of the 65 cases. A case was not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were not involved with the child in any way and the child was too young or had cognitive delays or other conditions that were barriers to participation in case planning. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child’s best interest. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent or child had actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. This assessment produced the following findings:

Item 18	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	4	10	8	22	35
Area Needing Improvement	12	19	9	40	65
Total Applicable Cases	16	29	17	62	
Not Applicable Cases	1	2	0	3	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 47 percent of Seminole County cases, 35 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 25 percent of Alachua County cases. Performance also varied based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 40 percent (15 cases) of the 38 applicable foster care cases, compared with 29 percent (7 cases) of the 24 in-home services cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in the case planning process. The item was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process. Specific information regarding involvement in case planning is provided in the table below. The data indicate that in the cases reviewed, mothers (48 percent) and children (44 percent) were more likely to be involved in case planning than were fathers (33 percent).

Involvement in Case Planning	Evaluation Results		No. of Applicable Cases
	Yes	No	
Mother involved in case planning?	24 (48%)	26 (52%)	50
Father involved in case planning?	14 (33%)	29 (67%)	43
Child (if age-appropriate) involved in case planning?	17 (44%)	22 (56%)	39

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Rating Determination

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 35 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in Florida’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida’s policy requires child and family involvement in the case planning process. Case plan development meetings must begin as soon as possible in order to afford the parents adequate time to complete the required tasks regarding their child’s permanency. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the case plan is to be negotiated with the child’s parents, the services caseworker and supervisor, and the Guardian *ad litem* (GAL) within 30 days of the Early Services Intervention (ESI) staffing and that FTC or other family-inclusive planning models are used in the case plan development.

The Statewide Assessment reports that QA data from the Child Welfare Integrated Quality Assurance (CWIQA) Reviews from 2003 to 2005 shows mothers and fathers actively involved in case planning activities 79 percent and 70 percent respectively. 2004 Florida CFSR data show item 18 as a strength in 52 percent of cases, and 2007 data show item 18 as a strength in 54 percent of the cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment also reports the following barriers to involving children and parents in case planning:

- There is limited training for case managers on changes on State policy and procedures and a lack of understanding of performance objectives.
- Assessment results and recommendations often are not available to case managers at the time of the case plan development.
- Language barriers and limited training on cultural diversity for case managers hinder opportunities to engage families in the case planning process and to adequately assess the risk and the needs of the children.
- Caseload size and staff turnover impact case managers’ ability to effectively involve parents and children in case planning.
- Service array has also been suggested as a barrier to case plan development.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that in the August 2007 Florida Statewide Self-Assessment, survey respondents stated that sometimes it was hard for parents to comply due to lack of services, hardships due to transportation, or time taken away from employment. Many responses stated that the case plans were “cookie-cutter” plans that were often unnecessarily cumbersome and not individualized. Furthermore, survey comments regarding children and teens not having input into case plan development outnumbered all other comments received on this question, followed by comments regarding lack of opportunity for input by the parents. GALs and foster parents also commented on their lack of opportunity to have input.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from Alachua County commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that caseworkers are accountable for how frequently they talk with parents and children. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicate that Family Drug Court uses specific family meetings in every case. They also indicated that Family Team Meetings are used by two of the case management agencies.

Stakeholders from the State indicated the need to involve fathers early on in the case planning process, and they report that the agency does not adequately engage fathers. In Alachua County, stakeholders indicated that because caseloads are high, there is not enough time to do quality visits required to involve children and parents in case planning. In addition, they indicated that because of high staff turnover, there are a number of new workers who do not have the skills to engage parents and children in case planning. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County reported that neither the attorney nor the parent has input into the date and time the case plan conference is scheduled, as it is set by the case management agency. They attributed this practice to reducing the number of parents who can be involved in case planning.

Additional comments regarding the case planning process are provided in the Systemic Factors section of this report under item 25.

Item 19. Worker visits with child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 19 was applicable for all 65 cases. In conducting the assessment of this item, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the caseworkers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child’s safety and well-being and whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. The results of the assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 19	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	15	24	13	52	80
Area Needing Improvement	2	7	4	13	20
Not applicable	0	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

The item was rated as a Strength in 88 percent of Alachua County cases, 77 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 77 percent of Seminole County cases. Performance on the item did not vary substantially based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 85 percent (35 cases) of the 41 foster care cases and 71 percent (17 cases) of the 24 in-home services cases.

Item 19 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals. Item 19 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, and the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (four cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (nine cases).

Specific information regarding the frequency of visitation is provided in the table below.

Typical frequency of caseworker visits with child (during the period under review)	Foster Care Cases (Number and Percent)	In-Home Services Cases (Number and Percent)
Visits occurred on at least a weekly basis	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Visits occurred less than weekly, but at least twice a month	7 (17%)	1 (4%)
Visits occurred less than twice a month, but at least once a month	32 (78%)	22 (92%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	1 (2%)	1 (4%)
Total cases	41	24

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Rating Determination

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 80 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and/or quality. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida's administrative rule requires face-to-face visits with the child in shelter status and in relative or non-relative placement at least every 7 days during the first 30 days of care. After the first 30 days, the service workers are to make face-to-face contact with children under supervision no less frequently than every 30 days. Visits are to be at the child's current place of residence or in an environment that is critical to the life of the child (early education or child care program, school setting, child's therapeutic setting). Once every 3 months, visits must occur in the child's home.

The Statewide Assessment reports that Florida CFSR data for 2004 through 2007 reflects yearly averages for worker visits with children: the 2004 yearly average was 79 percent, 2005 was 84 percent, 2006 was 83 percent, and 2007 was 80 percent. The difference in the Dashboard data and the CFSR data is due to the Florida CFSR's more stringent requirements to see the children in the child's home; the Dashboard requirements are for children to be seen either in the home or in an environment critical to the life of the child. For the quarter ending June 30, 2007, Dashboard data for children eligible to be seen monthly and that were seen monthly reflect a statewide compliance rate of 99.62 percent. The previous year's data for the quarter ending July 31, 2006, was 98.72 percent, which reflects an increase in performance of 0.90 percent.

The Statewide Assessment also reports the following barriers to caseworkers visiting children:

- Large caseloads and high rates of staff turnover, a factor in Round One, continue to have a significant effect on case manager ability to provide services, including visitation with children and parents.
- Stakeholders and survey responses stated that, although the children are being seen, administrative service workers are usually unaware of specific case information, thus are unable to provide caregivers and children specific information regarding the case during the visits.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item from the State indicated that caseworkers and Tribal case managers visit children in foster care at least monthly and often more frequently. They indicated that Childnet has helped coordinate visits between caseworkers and Tribal case managers. Stakeholders from the three counties reported that visits occur once a month. In Miami-Dade County, stakeholders noted that the quality of visits is excellent, noting that caseworkers discuss permanency plans and children feel like they are being

heard by their caseworkers. In Seminole County, stakeholders report that visits with children by the caseworker involve a safety assessment, inquiry into how the child is disciplined by their caretaker, and assessment of the bond between child and caretaker.

However, stakeholders from the State reported not knowing about the actual quality of the visits. This concern was echoed in Alachua County where stakeholders reported that contact occurs monthly but is only about 10 minutes and that the quality of the visits depends on the individual counselor. They also attributed this variance to the fact that caseworker turnover occurs frequently, particularly in rural areas. In Seminole County, stakeholders indicated that sometimes youth are visited in only a group session and caseworkers are inconsistent about talking with them in private. Seminole County stakeholders also reported that caseworkers are not consistently visiting each month those children in relative care.

Item 20. Worker visits with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 20 was applicable for 51 (78 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of their children. All cases that were not applicable were foster care cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker’s face-to-face contact with the children’s mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and/or ensure the children’s safety and well-being. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 20	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	4	8	4	16	31
Area Needing Improvement	10	15	10	35	69
Total Applicable Cases	14	23	14	51	
Not Applicable Cases	3	8	3	14	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

The item was rated as a Strength in 29 percent of Alachua County cases, 35 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 29 percent of Seminole County cases. There was some variation based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 26 percent (7 cases) of the 27 applicable foster care cases and 38 percent (9 cases) of the 24 in-home services cases.

Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 16 cases when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. Item 20 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There were no visits with the mother or the father (three cases).
- There was little effort made to locate or engage both parents (11 cases).
- There was minimal contact with the mother and no contact with the father. (three cases).
- Visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency and quality, but there were no visits with the father (five cases).
- The frequency of visits with both parents was sufficient, but quality of contact was insufficient with the mother and the father (one case).
- Visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency, but insufficient quality, and visits with the father were of insufficient frequency and quality (four cases).
- Visits with the mother were of insufficient frequency and quality, and there were no visits with the father (four cases).
- Although there were visits with both, there was insufficient frequency and quality with both parents (two cases).
- There were no visits with the mother, but the quality and frequency with the father was sufficient (one case).
- Visits with the father were of sufficient frequency and quality, but visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency and insufficient quality (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 31 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with parents was sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida policy requires case managers to visit the mothers and fathers of the children in care every 30 days when reunification is the goal. The contacts with parents must be purposeful and focused on the reasons for supervision and progress with tasks and services in the case plan or safety plan. The caseworker must document evidence of progress toward completion of case plan objectives, effectiveness of current services and identification of additional services needed, observations of the child's development, physical condition and interaction with the parent or caregiver and household members, and an assessment of progress in tasks and services aimed at ensuring the child's educational, emotional, developmental, physical, or mental health needs.

The Statewide Assessment reports Florida CFSR data for caseworker visits with parents for 2004 is at 49 percent, 2005 at 44 percent, 2006 at 55 percent, and 2007 at 51 percent. The upward trend is reflective of an added emphasis on regular, quality contacts with parents by the Department,, and the inclusion of this measure in the quality monitoring process.

The Statewide Assessment also reports the following barriers to workers visiting parents:

- Mother and/or father are not given the same sense of priority as seeing the child in out-of-home care.
- Stakeholder interviews indicated that fathers who are incarcerated are frequently not visited by case managers.
- The transient nature of parents can be a barrier to ensuring ongoing regular contact. Many parents have unstable housing and few resources and do not contact the case manager when they move.
- Some may not have a phone, which creates a greater barrier to maintaining communication.
- High caseloads, vacancies, and staff turnover are issues.
- Large geographical areas are also seen as barriers to ensuring that contact with parents occurs on a monthly basis.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There was no stakeholder interview information relevant to this item.

Well-Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved:	8	17	8	33	82.5
Partially Achieved	0	1	0	1	2.5
Not Achieved	2	4	0	6	15
Total Applicable Cases	10	22	8	40	
Not Applicable Cases	7	9	9	25	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Status of Well-Being Outcome 2

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 82.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. There were differences in performance on this outcome across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of the Seminole County cases compared with 80 percent of Alachua County cases and 77 percent of Miami-Dade County cases. There also was some variation in performance based on the type of case. The outcome was substantially achieved in 85 percent of the 34 applicable foster care cases compared with 50 percent of the 6 applicable in-home services cases.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 in its 2001 CFSR. In some instances, the educational needs of children were not addressed or identified in case plans, there was no follow-up to the recommended psychosocial and educational assessments, and the educational needs of children were not appropriately matched with schools or services to meet the needs.

To address these concerns, the State developed PIP strategies, including the following:

- Developed a model working agreement with the Department of Education
- Revised policy and implementation instructions on family assessments with emphasis on the ongoing educational assessments of each age-appropriate child as a critical component of case planning throughout the life of the case, as well as the importance of appropriate identification and matching of individualized services to meet the educational needs of each age-appropriate child
- Surveyed the local and State Youth Advisory Board members regarding adolescent foster children's educational needs and issues
- Revised the Judicial Review reporting format to include detailed information about the child's performance in school

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

The key findings of the 2008 CFSR indicate that the concerns found in the 2001 CFSR continued to be present in the 2008 CFSR. In the cases reviewed, there was a lack of assessment of educational needs when there was clear evidence that the child was experiencing school-related problems. In addition, truancy issues were not addressed by the agency.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 21 was applicable for 40 (62 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if any of the following applied: (1) children were not of school age, or (2) children in in-home cases did not have service needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of this assessment are provided below.

Item 21	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	8	17	8	33	83
Area Needing Improvement	2	5	0	7	17
Total Applicable Cases	10	22	8	40	
Not applicable	7	9	9	25	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Seminole County cases, compared with 77 percent of Miami-Dade County cases and 80 percent of Alachua County cases. There also was some variation based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 85 percent (29 cases) of the 34 applicable foster care cases and 67 percent (4 cases) of the 6 in-home services cases.

Item 21 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and services were provided, if necessary. Item 21 was rated as an ANI in seven cases when case reviewers determined the following:

- There was a lack of assessment of educational needs even when there was clear evidence that the child was experiencing school-related problems (four cases).
- Educational needs were identified and noted in the case record, but no services were provided to address those needs and educational issues were not included in the case plan (one case).
- Truancy issues were not addressed by the agency (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 83 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for this item to be rated as a Strength. A 95-percent standard is established for this item because it is the only item included in the outcome.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida policy requires that the child's educational needs be addressed as needed and documented by (1) maintaining copies of the child's school records on an ongoing basis for use in case planning activities so that the current school records are incorporated into the child's judicial review and case plan updates; (2) referring the child for a psycho-educational evaluation and other necessary evaluations by the school if there is an indication that the child is eligible for special education services and following up on the results of that referral; (3) referring the child who is in an out-of-home placement to the school foster care liaison for the appointment of a surrogate parent if the child appears eligible for such appointment; (4) requesting services for identified educational needs such as tutoring; (5) requesting Early Intervention Services for pre-school age children; (6) referring the child for developmental evaluations where appropriate; (7) assisting the child in pursuing vocational educational services; (8) obtaining child care for pre-school or young school-age children; (9) providing or obtaining educational counseling, in conjunction with the school and other local agencies regarding the options and consequences of differing educational paths, such as the differences between GED, regular diploma, and special diploma, and the post-secondary educational options available through the Road to Independence scholarships, tuition waivers, and aftercare services for young adults formerly in foster care; (10) ensuring the child's enrollment in school and documenting these tasks and services in the current case plan, unless prevented by the court; and (11) referring to the Interagency Agreement between the Department, contracted service providers, and the local school board to determine the correct protocol for interacting with the child's school.

Although there is an Interagency Agreement between the DCF and the Department of Education, that DCF does not receive education data from the Florida Department of Education. QA data gathered through the internal Florida CFSTRs show that during State FY 2004, Florida was at 73 percent compliance with State and Federal requirements pertaining to assessing and meeting educational needs of children in care. Outcome rates rose to 75 percent in 2005 but fell to 74 percent in 2007 Florida CFSTR reviews.

The Statewide Assessment also reports the following barriers to meeting the educational needs of children:

- Data reflected ANIs in that case plans need to reflect educational needs of the child and include the child's school records, and that caregivers should be provided the child's educational records.
- A major challenge is obtaining information about adolescent foster children's educational needs and issues and establishing communication with local schools to better identify and address children's educational needs. Agencies continue in their struggle to establish protocols for sharing of information at the local level.

- Keeping children in their school of origin is another challenge. Funding is needed to ensure transportation is provided to keep a child in his school of origin until the school system's transportation is available.
- Funding is needed for tutorial services for remedial intervention for children performing at below grade level or struggling in school.
- Special education programs are not available or accessible to all children in all areas of the State.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review indicated that DCF has positive relationships with Department of Education. This was attributed to the Partnership, which has spearheaded the Children's Alliance that brings together the public and private agencies to work together for the benefit of children. Stakeholders from Alachua County report that Statewide there is an Educational Planning Team where all the people involved with the child talk about services needed and develop a plan. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County report that there is a mandatory staffing before a child's school can be changed and if it is not in the child's best interest, the child will be bused to his original school. Stakeholders also report having a great working relationship with the schools. Each courtroom has an educational liaison assigned to them, and liaisons are based in the courthouse. The educational liaisons are getting the children linked to the services needed including the need for tutoring and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The judges are looking at school records and attendance records. The liaisons have the power to have dependency children prioritized on existing lists for psychosocial and educational evaluations. Stakeholders also report having been able to get scholarships for some children to attend private schools and describe "special programs" in the school system to deal with probation and dependency children. Currently, each of the 330 schools in Dade County has two positions assigned to support the dependent and/or delinquent children in each school for both administrative and school resource functions.

In Seminole County, stakeholders describe the McKinney Vento Act, which ensures that children stay in the school of origin. This includes offering gas vouchers for reimbursement. Stakeholders report that schools have made tutors available to children, especially for elementary-age children, and they report that educational needs are assessed. CBC has hired a part-time education liaison to work with case managers and foster parents on education-related issues. The CBC liaison attends IEP staffings and supports caregivers and parents. Work is done on stabilizing children's educational placement. Relationship with the schools is very good, and they support the children in foster care, which is attributed to CBC efforts to foster the relationship with the school system. The agency school liaison also works with older children to help them apply to an appropriate college or program. In addition, stakeholders report that preschools provide early intervention services to children in foster care.

In Alachua County, stakeholders report that they are not routinely given information about schools and that there are problems getting children enrolled because they do not have the paperwork. Stakeholders also report having difficulty getting information about grades and report huge gaps in education. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicated that the majority of children have special education

needs, and concerns were expressed about whether case managers have sufficient training to understand the rights of the child and responsibilities of the school. Stakeholders also report there is an insufficient array of specific educational services to assist children with their long-range educational needs, as the percentage of children in foster care with learning needs is high coupled with the additional challenges of being a foster child. They also report that caseworkers are not consistently meeting with the schools regarding issues such as attendance, school progress, and planning.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	8	18	9	35	61.4
Partially Achieved	2	6	2	10	17.5
Not Achieved or Addressed	6	2	4	12	21.1
Total Applicable Cases	16	26	15	57	
Not Applicable	1	5	2	8	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 61.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 50 percent of Alachua County cases, 69 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, and 60 percent of Seminole county cases. Performance did not vary significantly based on the type of case reviewed. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 65 percent of the 41 foster care cases and 56 percent of the 16 applicable in-home services cases.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

Florida did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 in its 2001 CFSR. Key concerns identified during the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- The agency did not consistently document contacts with health care providers, and there was no documentation in the records that children received follow-up treatments.
- The agency did not provide health screenings within the State mandated timeframes.
- The agency did not consistently provide dental preventive care, and there was a lack of documentation that the child received dental care.
- In some cases, there was no indication that mental health needs assessments had been conducted.
- The agency did not provide psychological evaluations and therapy due to a lack of providers who accept Medicaid.

To address these concerns, the State developed PIP strategies, including the following:

- Revised the administrative rule to address the timeliness of physical and dental exams and treatment and that the child's case record and medical resource book, which is provided to caregivers, contains accurate, up-to-date information, on the results of exams and outlines any treatment provided or needs
- Expanded the provision of comprehensive assessments for infants and children up to 5 years of age
- In partnership with the Department of Health, increased the capacity for existing Sexual Abuse Treatment Programs to provide psycho-sexual assessments and treatment programs for sexually active and reactive children
- In collaboration with the Department of Health, Agency for Health Care Administration, and the Florida Dental Association, increased dental and physical health providers that accept Medicaid, and recruited others who are willing to provide the services to needy children without charge or at a reduced charge
- Revised the Judicial Review reporting format to include detailed information about the child's physical, dental, and mental health

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

In the 2008 CFSR, the items pertaining to meeting children's physical health needs and mental health needs continued to be rated as ANIs as they were in the 2001 CFSR. Many of the key concerns from 2001 continue to be challenges in 2008. The key concerns identified in the 2008 CFSR were that dental care services were not provided in some instances, and there were no assessments of physical or dental health consistently noted in case files. Stakeholders indicated that there are not enough medical providers, including specialists and dental providers across the State who accept Medicaid. They also indicate that there are often long waiting lists for providers who accept Medicaid. In several cases, mental health needs were not assessed or addressed; and in other cases, mental health needs were assessed, but children's needs were not met.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Well-Being Outcome 3 are presented and discussed below.

Item 22. Physical health of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 22 was applicable for 48 (74 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were in-home service cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) children’s physical health needs (including dental needs) had been appropriately assessed, and (2) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 22	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	9	21	8	38	79
Area Needing Improvement	5	2	3	10	21
Total Applicable Cases	14	23	11	48	
Not Applicable Cases	3	8	6	17	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Performance on this item did vary across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 91 percent of Miami-Dade County cases compared with 64 percent of Alachua County cases and 73 percent of Seminole County cases. There was also variation based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 76 percent (31 cases) of the 41 applicable foster care cases and 100 percent (7 cases) of the 7 in-home services cases.

Item 22 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children’s health needs (medical and dental) were routinely assessed and indicated services were provided.

Item 22 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one of the following:

- Dental care services were not provided (five cases).
- There were no assessments of physical or dental health noted in the case file (three cases).
- Medical needs were assessed and identified, but no services were provided (one case).

- Health assessment was incomplete when child entered foster care (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 22 is rated as an ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency was effective in assessing and meeting the physical health needs of children in 79 percent of the cases, which is below the 95-percent required for an overall rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, every child entering out-of-home care must have a child health check-up within 72 hours of removal from the home and follow-up treatment, including physical, dental, and vision examinations, in accordance with the Medicaid schedule. Florida's policy mandates development of a standardized record, called the Child Resource Record, which is maintained for every child entering out-of-home care. The Child Resource Record must contain copies of the basic legal, demographic, available, and accessible educational information as well as available and accessible medical, dental, vision, and psychological information pertaining to a specific child. In addition, the records must contain copies of any documents necessary for a child to receive medical treatment and educational services. All children entering out-of-home care eligible for Medicaid are placed into a Medicaid Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), or if a Medical HMO is not available, are placed in a fee-for-service Medicaid program.

The Statewide Assessment reported that in February 2003, the Florida Dental Association continued their pledge of support in assisting to identify dentists who will provide in-kind dental services specific to Florida children in care. In February 2004, a Medicaid locator link, <http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/Areas/index.shtml>, was added to the MyFlorida.com website. The site assists in finding contact information on Medicaid doctors, dentists, and specialists in every Florida community that serves Medicaid patients.

Internal Florida CFSR review data related to physical health needs of children for both in-home and out-of-home care cases for the calendar year 2004 were 69 percent, in 2005 69 percent, in 2006 73 percent, and in 2007 to 55 percent.

The Statewide Assessment also reports the following barriers to meeting the health needs of children:

- Some areas of the State have found it extremely difficult to conduct an initial medical screening within 72 hours of removal when the child is with an HMO.
- One of the major challenges continues to be accessing preventative dental care. Only 35 percent of the QA cases reviewed documented preventative dental care; however, 81 percent of these dental needs were receiving appropriate treatment.
- The physical health issues of the children are addressed in slightly different ways by each of the CBC lead agencies.
- Although the Medicaid locator link has been implemented in Florida, stakeholders continue to express difficulty in locating local medical and dental service providers that will accept Medicaid.

- Florida CFSR stakeholder interviews with parents, as well as the KidCare Coordinating Council, are concerned about the limited number of dentists who will take Medicaid, especially in the rural areas of the State.
- The challenge for some areas is to maintain continuity for provision of physical health care as children change placements, often resulting in a move between HMOs.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from the State reporting on this item during the onsite CFSR report that the medical exams children receive are very comprehensive. They reported that some areas of the State have groups of dentists that accept children with Medicaid or offer *pro bono* services. In Alachua County, stakeholders reported that children entering out-of-home care are required to receive a check-up within 72 hours. In Miami-Dade County stakeholders report that the Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) are ensuring that most children are getting physical health and vision checks. In Seminole County, children are required to be seen within 72 hours of placement, and this occurs most of the time, although for children being placed in facilities it can take a little longer.

However, stakeholders across sites concurred that there are not enough medical providers, including specialists and dental providers across the State who accept Medicaid. They also indicate that for those who take Medicaid, services to children are delayed due to long wait lists. Alachua County stakeholders reported that infants are screened within 72 hours; however, older children may not receive a health screening in this timeframe. Stakeholders from the State indicate that while dental services are a priority across the State, it continues to be an issue. Stakeholders from the State and Miami-Dade County report that some youth do not receive routine medical or dental care and follow-up care. In Alachua County stakeholders indicate that dental evaluations and care are not widely available and there are long waiting lists. In Miami-Dade County, stakeholders also indicate that providing dental services to children is a challenge, particularly for children who change foster care placements and move to a different area of the city because they must reapply for dental insurance, which can take up to 90 days. Stakeholders also reported that a serious issue as a result of delays in children receiving Medicaid is that foster parents are paying out of pocket for the dental and health services. In addition, concern was expressed by stakeholders that undocumented children are not eligible to receive Medicaid and, therefore, the agency must absorb the healthcare costs for these children. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also indicated that there is no system to track medical screenings or health care provided, and children’s routine medical care was described as haphazard.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 23 was applicable for 46 (71 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or if there were no mental health concerns. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed, and (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below:

Item 23	Alachua County	Miami-Dade County	Seminole County	Total Number	Percent
Strength	8	15	8	31	67
Area Needing Improvement	6	6	3	15	33
Total Applicable Cases	14	21	11	46	
Not Applicable Cases	3	10	6	19	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

*Figures displayed may not total to 100% due to rounding.

There was variation in performance on this item across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 80 percent of Seminole County cases and 71 percent of Miami-Dade County cases, compared with 57 percent of Alachua County cases. There was also variation in performance based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 76 percent of the 33 applicable foster care cases and 46 percent of the 13 applicable in-home services cases.

Item 23 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children's mental health needs were appropriately assessed and the identified mental health needs were addressed. Item 23 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:

- Mental health needs were not assessed nor addressed (six cases).
- Mental health needs were assessed but not met (seven cases).
- Services were provided, but they were not appropriate to the child's needs (one case).
- Agency did not monitor ongoing mental health services (one case).
- Other children in the home were not assessed (one case).

Ratings Determination

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 67 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in Florida's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida policy requires that all children from birth through age 17 in shelter status and Medicaid eligible must receive a CBHA within 30 days of removal from their home. The purpose of this assessment is to provide a detailed assessment of the behavioral health issues that resulted in the child being placed into the care and custody of the Department and to make behavioral health service recommendations that will aid in resolving these issues.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the Children's Mental Health Services maintains a statewide database that tracks CBHA referrals, assessments, and services provided for children in out-of-home care. The Department has addressed the process of ensuring that children placed in the custody of relative and non-relative caregivers are quickly enrolled in Medicaid in order to fully access the needed services. For children not Medicaid eligible to receive mental health and medical services, title IV-E Waiver funds or general revenue funds can be accessed. Title XXI (KidCare Program) and TANF programs provide alcohol, drug abuse, and mental health services. The KidCare Program also enables children of parents without health coverage to receive medical and mental health care at a minimum cost.

CWIQA data for 2006 and 2007 show that 82 percent of the children coming into the care and custody of the Department received an assessment or screening to determine behavioral health care needs. Eighty percent of the mental health or substance abuse services provided to the children were consistent with the identified needs and/or recommendations in the CBHA, including type, frequency, and duration.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, within the last year, the Medicaid funded Child Welfare Prepaid Mental Health Plan has been implemented. The plan places most children served by the Department into a statewide behavioral health prepaid plan, which is required to provide all medically necessary behavioral health services as listed in the Medicaid Community Behavioral Health Services and Limitations Handbook. However, the enrollment of all eligible children and the provision of a full array of services in all areas of the State is challenging. Substance abuse services for children are not included in the prepaid plan.

In addition to the requirement for a detailed behavioral health assessment for all children coming into shelter care, the Department has also developed a Psychotherapeutic Medication Consultation Line program. Part of this program is a mandatory pre-consent consultation for all children prescribed a psychotherapeutic medication from birth through age 5. This service is provided through a contract with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Florida.

The following include stakeholder statements for the Statewide Assessment regarding mental health services and assessments:

- CBHAs should be available to all children served by child welfare, including those served in their own home.

- Funding is a major problem for getting mental health services. If the child does not have Medicaid, it is very difficult to get mental health services.
- There is a concern that many mental health practitioners that accept Medicaid are entry level and thus do not have the experience to provide quality services to these children with very challenging behavioral and emotional issues.
- Transporting children to services is a problem, especially in the more rural areas of the State.
- There is a concern about the amount of psychotherapeutic medications prescribed for and provided to the children served by child welfare.
- In some areas of the State, even if the child has Medicaid, it takes too long for them to get the services that they need. In some cases this delay results in children losing placements.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from the State report that youth mental health needs are met in a timely and consistent manner. Stakeholders in Alachua County report that psychiatric services are available, including services being offered in the schools and some providers offering flexible hours in the evening. They also report that staff members are available to assess mental health needs of children at shelter care. Stakeholders also noted that services are available for parents and foster parents including detoxification, day/night intervention, and traditional services. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicated that children are receiving mental health services, including an initial assessment within 30 days. Some stakeholders indicated that mental health issues are identified proactively and addressed up front in cases. They reported that a detailed mental health assessment is done for all children, and there is a comprehensive evaluation provided to the court. In addition, stakeholders note that the agency has a mental health unit specializing in adoption.

Stakeholders in Seminole County report that the county is dedicated to meeting the clinical needs of children and that each child in licensed foster care has a comprehensive behavioral health assessment when the child comes into foster care. The child must have Medicaid before the assessment which should be initiated within 7 days and completed within 21 days. The assessments outline the child's needs and also the parent's needs. These assessments when completed are sent to the court and the case managers. Most child-placing agencies are Medicaid providers and will pay for treatment for children in foster care. Stakeholders noted when there is a crisis with a child the service can be initiated immediately.

However, stakeholders from the State reported there is a need for better and more comprehensive mental health assessments for developmental, mental, and behavioral issues. Stakeholders also indicated that overall Florida is not providing adequate Medicaid and mental health coverage to children. Alachua County stakeholders report problems with accessing mental health screening and services. They also report not having adequate funding for sex-offending children. They attribute staff turnover to children missing appointments and lacking follow-up of services. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicate there are service gaps with Medicaid that result in delays for psychological testing. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also reported that children with severe delays

and/or autism are coming into foster care because they cannot receive services otherwise. Services for children with disabilities have long waiting lists, and parents are “forced” to abandon their children in order to access services. Stakeholders in Seminole County reported that mental health services and funding are limited and that because there are not enough mental health providers, children are placed on waiting lists. A serious concern noted by stakeholders is that children in unlicensed out-of-home care do not receive mental health services. This includes a majority of the children in foster care who reside with relatives.

SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

This section of the CFSR Final Report provides information regarding the State’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors examined during the CFSR. Information for the items included in each systemic factor comes from the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders held during the onsite CFSR. A score for substantial conformity is established for each systemic factor. A score of either 1 or 2 represents that a State is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor; a rating of 1 means that none of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) requirements is in place, and a 2 indicates that some or all of the CFSP requirements are in place but more than one of the requirements fails to function. Scores of 3 and 4 represent substantial conformity; a rating of 3 means that all of the CFSP requirements are in place, and no more than one fails to function, and a 4 indicates all of the CFSP requirements are in place and functioning. In addition, information is provided regarding the State’s performance on each systemic factor for the State’s first CFSR. If the systemic factor was part of the State’s PIP, the key concerns addressed in the PIP and the strategies for assessing those concerns are noted as well as any changes in ratings that occurred as a result of the State’s second CFSR.

I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Statewide Information System

Florida is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. This systemic factor was in substantial conformity in the 2001 CFSR, and the State was not required to address it in the PIP. Findings for the item assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 24. State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength because the State is operating a statewide information system that can readily identify child demographic characteristics as well as the status, location, and permanency goals of children in the foster care system. In the State's first CFSR, this systemic factor was also rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Department's automated child welfare case management system, FSFN, was implemented statewide on July 30, 2007. The system readily identified the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care, as well as other children served by Florida's child welfare system. The Statewide Assessment reports FSFN currently provides enhanced functionality for intake, case management, and data reporting activities, including:

- Individualized decision support tools for high-risk case management, institutional investigations, and special conditions reports involving child-on-child sexual activity and requests for assistance
- A single automated case record that will follow a child who moves from one agency or provider to another
- Immediate access to children's services, medical, and mental health history
- Tools for supervisory and management review of child welfare casework
- Improved data interpretation and accuracy of management reports

The Statewide Assessment describes two primary challenges related to the FSFN. The first concerns historical data transferred from the Disk Operating System-based Client Information System into the legacy system; historical data are unavailable to most users because the data are not compliant with the current system. The second challenge concerns the provision of ongoing support and training as users adapt to differences in the system's navigation, data interpretation, and reporting methodology. The Statewide Assessment reports that representatives from some CBC lead agencies and subcontractors indicated that their own information system maintained by their agency was easier to use, captured a greater variety of data, and provided administrative and management supports not available in the legacy system.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the current data system, FSFN, captures required information related to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in foster care or in-home care. FSFN is effective in identifying the location, demographic information, legal status, and case goals for children in foster care. Several stakeholders noted that while the transition from the previous system to the FSFN was challenging, the current system is working well. In addition, a few stakeholders noted that system-wide reports and local issue-specific reports are available for QA management and analysis purposes. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County report that mechanisms are in place that address identified deficits and improvements are ongoing. There seemed a general consensus that FSFN is an improvement over HomeSafenet, but the system has a ways to go to fully meet the needs of staff, supervisors, and administrators. Stakeholders also described supervisor concerns regarding the accuracy of data due to incomplete record transfer in some cases and the lack of full conversion of historical data. Some stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also noted that the Helpdesk is largely unresponsive and frequently refers callers back to the local offices for assistance.

Stakeholders identified the following Strengths of the current DCF information system.

- The current system tracks medical information, legal information, and telephone contacts, which were not previously tracked in the old system.
- Private agencies use the FSFN system for case management purposes.
- There is a Helpdesk that all staff can access to get assistance as needed.
- In Miami-Dade County, super users have been identified in local offices who are experts in the system and assist colleagues.
- In Miami-Dade County, law enforcement has access to FSFN, which was found to be very helpful.
- Supervisors review data and check for accuracy every 30 days.
- There are ticklers from the system to assist caseworkers.
- Case information is uploaded to the Dashboard.

II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2X	3	4

Status of Case Review System

Florida is not in substantial conformity with the factor of the Case Review System. This systemic factor was not found to be in substantial conformity in the 2001 CFSR; therefore, the State was required to address it in the PIP. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below. During the 2001 CFSR, item 25 (case plan) and item 29 (notification to caregivers and the opportunity to be heard) were found to be ANIs, and they remain ANIs in the 2008 CFSR. Items found as a Strength in the 2001 CFSR and the 2008 CFSR were item 26 (periodic review) and item 27 (12-month permanency hearing). Although a Strength in the 2001 CFSR, item 28 (TPR proceedings) is rated as an ANI in the 2008 CFSR.

Key Findings From the 2001 CFSR

Florida was found not to be in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in the 2001 CFSR. Item 25 (case planning) and item 29 (notification to caregivers) were determined to be ANIs in the 2001 CFSR. Some of the key concerns included the following:

- Parents and children were not consistently involved in developing the case plan.
- There was a lack of provider coordination with regard to case planning.
- The use of the case plan as a tool to achieve outcomes with children and families was inconsistent.
- Stakeholders reported that there was no standard procedure for notifying all parties of the hearings.
- Concerns were raised regarding foster parents not being encouraged to participate in the hearing process and foster parents were not consistently allowed in the courtroom.

In response to the 2001 CFSR findings, the State developed PIP strategies, including the following:

- Educate attorneys regarding family/child involvement in case planning
- Develop a fact sheet on the court process
- Develop a tracking mechanism for notices to substitute caregivers
- Provided technical assistance to field staff on how to individualize case plans
- Taught clinical supervision skills to 350 supervisors on engagement and assessment of families
- Included family engagement, assessment, and family-centered practice in the pre-service training
- Provided a Case Review Tool for supervisors to use during supervisory reviews

The State completed the PIP strategies for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Item 25. Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an ANI because of the lack of consistent case plan development with parents. In the State's first CFSR, this item was rated as an ANI. In addition, item 18 in the case review, which examines child and family involvement in the case planning process, was also assigned an overall rating of an ANI in the 2008 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all children under the supervision of Florida's child welfare system are required to have a case plan or a voluntary services plan that specifies services to address the contributing factors and underlying conditions leading to maltreatment in order to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of each child. The plan must provide the most efficient path to quick reunification or permanent placement. A safety assessment is conducted for each child and family within 48 hours from the time the first child victim is seen. The assessments, conducted with the family, determine if the child is able to live safely in the current home or placement; if the family is able to provide a permanent and stable home; what needs the family may have; and what resources, strengths, and protective capacities will contribute to improving the child's and family's well-being. The safety assessment becomes the basis for the case plan. A case plan for each child must be developed within 60 days in a face-to-face conference with the parent of the child, any court-appointed GAL, and if appropriate, the child and the temporary custodian of the child. The case plan can be amended at any time in order to: Change the goal of the plan; employ concurrent planning; remove tasks the parents must complete to substantially comply with the plan; provide appropriate services for the child; and update the child's health, mental health, and education records.

The Statewide Assessment noted challenges with developing written case plans that include CBC agencies struggling with staff turnover, staff burnout, fiscal operating challenges, overburdened systems, and the ability to develop additional resources to support their agencies. Additionally, the Statewide Assessment reports crowded judicial docket demands in urban areas contribute to stress on the system, staff, families, and court processes.

State CFSR stakeholder interviews cited in the Statewide Assessment indicate that FTC is being used, but improvements must continue regarding individualization of the case plans. Casework decisions are said to be driven by local agency budgets rather than what the child or family needs.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The majority of stakeholders commenting on this item were of the opinion that service plans are developed in a timely manner. However, stakeholders were not in agreement that parents are involved in the development of their case plans, and there were inconsistent comments with regard to how often youth are involved in the development of case plans. Some stakeholders across the three sites suggested that while parents consistently sign service plans, they are not included in their development.

Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicated that once a case is opened, a case plan must be developed in 30 days and updated every 12 months, unless circumstances or the courts require an update prior to 12 months. Several stakeholders' report that the quality of the plan varies based on the contractor. When FTC is used, there is more timely movement toward permanency. Stakeholders in Alachua County report that turnover with contractor staff is a barrier to holding FTC because staff lacks the training necessary to facilitate FTCs. Stakeholders in Miami report that when agencies are using family engagement models of practice there are improved outcomes and more timely movement toward permanency. Miami-Dade County stakeholders reported that a case conferencing protocol was previously in place, but currently the provision of case conferencing is dependent upon practices within the individual agencies. Stakeholders acknowledge that a marked difference is seen in outcomes for children and families between agencies that have implemented family engagement models and those that have not.

Several stakeholders describe the completion of an initial family assessment prior to working with families to develop individualized case plans that meet their needs. Stakeholders from the State indicate that parents are not invited to develop the case plan and there is not true engagement of the parent. They also noted that there are so many different models of case planning across the State that it is hard to talk about family engagement. Stakeholders in Seminole County report that the case plan is developed by the case manager and supervisor and presented to the parents. Other stakeholders reported the use of the ESI staffing to develop case plans. Participating in the ESI staffing is the Protective Investigator and supervisor, program manager, and QA from the CBC. The parent is not in attendance at the ESI staffing. After the development of the case plan by the agency staff, a meeting is convened with the parents and the attorneys. The goal of this meeting is making people aware of the case plan rather than the development of the case plan. Stakeholders reported that DCF attorneys often lead this meeting. At other times, the case plan is presented to the parents at the shelter hearing, and they are informed of the content. Stakeholders in Alachua County also voiced concern that the judicial review and attorneys drive the case plan, and this practice minimizes parent involvement. Stakeholders in Seminole County report that family participation was not encouraged and the format was not conducive to family participation.

Item 26. Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as a Strength because the status of children are reviewed at least once every 6 months, either by a court or by an administrative review. In the State's first CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength. It should be noted that the 2007 Florida title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review found that Judicial reviews are held often to assess DCF' progress in achieving the child's permanency plan.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the court has continuing jurisdiction and is required to review the status of the child at least every 6 months or more frequently as the court sees necessary or desirable or until the child reaches permanency status. The hearings may be reviewed by the court or a CRP.

Prior to every judicial review, an assessment is completed to determine the progress and needs of the case plan. The court retains jurisdiction over a child returned to his or her parents for a minimum period of 6 months following the reunification, but, at that time, based on a report of the social service agency and the GAL, if one has been appointed, and any other relevant factors, the court determines whether supervision and the court's jurisdiction will continue or be terminated.

The Statewide Assessment reports ongoing challenges experienced in urban communities, including backed up court dockets as well as parent and caregiver' ability to attend all the court hearings. Attending court hearings can be difficult for parents due to the need to take time off from work. Transportation and child care issues were also cited in the Statewide Assessment.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that cases are being reviewed at least every 6 months. Many stakeholders report hearings held every 5 months. They also indicated that, in general, the case reviews are substantive and help move the case forward in terms of achieving case goals and objectives. They describe having statutes and processes in place that ensure timely reviews. Stakeholders also describe strong collaboration between the court and DCF. In Miami-Dade County, Stakeholders report that hearings are sometimes held more often than 6 months, depending on the case circumstances and the court's desire for closer monitoring; stakeholders report there are rarely continuances. In Miami-Dade County, cases also have an administrative review convened by a CRP, and workers must report to the court at the next judicial hearing regarding recommendations by the CRP and action taken by the agency to meet those recommendations.

Item 27. Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 27 is rated as a Strength because the permanency hearings are occurring no later than 12 months from the date the child entered care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter. In the State's first CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength. It should be noted that the 2007 Florida title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review found that judicial reviews are held often to assess DCF' progress in achieving the child's permanency plan.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, there is extensive collaboration between the Department, courts, GAL Program, and community agencies, which has led to many innovative court processes to facilitate timely permanency. Florida statute provides a process that ensures that a permanency hearing must be held no later than 12 months after the date the child was removed from the home, or no later than 30 days after a court determines that reasonable efforts to return a child to either parent are not required, whichever occurs first. Early in the life of every out-of-home placement, the case is evaluated to determine if concurrent case planning is appropriate. The permanency hearing determines when the child will achieve the permanency goal or whether modifying the current goal is in the best interest of the child. A permanency hearing must be held at least every 12 months for any child who continues to receive supervision from the Department or awaits adoption.

The Statewide Assessment notes that during the 2006 Florida Legislature, Florida's child welfare statute was updated to bring permanency goals in agreement with the Federal guidelines. Agencies throughout the State have incorporated various methodologies to track the ongoing staffing process from the time of the initial removal to the 12 month hearing. Some circuits have opted to set the judicial reviews and the permanency hearing at disposition, therefore, ensuring up-front notification and Federal compliance in meeting court deadlines.

The Statewide Assessment reports barriers that affect timeliness of permanency include caseload size, staff turnover, new case managers, and limited array of services especially in rural areas, transportation hardships, time to complete substance abuse programs, and additional time needed for parents to become employed and locate safe housing.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The opinions of stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR echoed the description of the process in the Statewide Assessment. They described hearings occurring every 12 months. They also report these hearings are scheduled far in advance, and there are generally no extensions or delays. Miami-Dade County stakeholders reported that in response to the 2001 CFSR results, Florida instituted a process whereby all relevant court dates are assigned at the shelter hearing, which has been effective in ensuring that cases meet Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeframes. They indicated that this process has been implemented statewide, but that it must be checked for accuracy.

Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated an ANI because the State does not consistently monitor the TPR provision for children in care for 15 of 22 months nor has the State demonstrated that the compelling reasons not to proceed with TPR is consistently documented in the case plan. At the time of the Onsite Review, 23 of the 41 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. TPR was filed in a timely manner in 13 of the 23 cases applicable for TPR and compelling reasons for not filing were noted in 5 of the 10 cases in which TPR had not been filed timely.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, if at any judicial review the court finds the parents have failed to substantially comply with the case plan to the degree that further reunification efforts are without merit and not in the best interest of the child, the court may order the filing of a petition for TPR whether or not the time period as contained in the case plan for substantial compliance has expired. The State has established parental circumstances that meet grounds for termination such as abandonment, aggravated child abuse, murder, and incarceration. The Statewide Assessment reports that court systems that have large dockets, and case manager turnover resulting in multiple workers on a single case, cause delays to court hearings and have negative impacts on permanency and filing for TPR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

State-level stakeholders reported that while progress has been made in the area of timeliness and compelling reasons are documented in case plans, the State does not monitor the timeframe of 15 of 22 months as closely as needed.

The Stakeholders in the three counties reported that most TPR petitions are filed in a timely manner. However, delays in the filing of the petitions were noted in Alachua and Seminole Counties. Alachua County stakeholders reported the timely filing of the TPR petition is delayed when the agency has not obtained a birth certificate or conducted a diligent search for absent parents. Contributing to the delays in the filing of the petition in Seminole County is the disconnect between the case managers and the agency attorney, which creates delays in the completion of the TPR packet. In Miami-Dade County, the judges require the clerks to set hearings, including the TPR, to comply with the State and Federal mandates.

Stakeholders in all three sites reported that compelling reasons are documented through the court process. In Seminole County, the compelling reasons not to file are documented at the permanency hearing. The court in Alachua County makes a finding if there are compelling reasons not to proceed with termination of parental rights. A court process has been instituted in Miami-Dade County to ensure that compelling reasons are noted.

Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated as an ANI because there are inconsistencies in the manner in which caregivers are notified of reviews or hearings and afforded the opportunity to be heard. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was also rated as an ANI.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State must provide notification of court hearings to foster parents or legal custodians in whose home the child resides, pre-adoptive parents, and the child's GAL, and these parties are to have an opportunity to be heard in any review or hearing held with respect to the child. However, the August 2007 statewide survey regarding caregiver' notification of court hearings showed the primary complaint was regarding poor communication, including not sharing dates and times, no notices ever given in some instances, being discouraged from attending and last minute notifications. Some described being notified and then being treated as a non-entity at the actual hearing. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that there is inconsistent practice in the notification process and some of it is culturally biased; for example, there is little oversight to ensure case managers actively seek caregiver' involvement, especially when language is an issue. Stakeholders interviewed during the State's CFSR reviews indicate that the courts serve notice regarding hearings to birth parents, relative caretakers, and GALs, but notice to the foster parents is mostly delegated to case managers, with no formal tracking system, and generally no case file documentation for verification.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in January 2005, the “Caregivers and the Courts, A Primer on Dependency Proceedings for Florida Foster Parents and Relative Caregivers” brochure was developed to explain the rights of these individuals. The brochure addresses foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caretaker notification and opportunity to be heard in any review or hearing.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The Stakeholders reported many of the same barriers that were noted in the Statewide Assessment. Stakeholders from the State reported that the Clerk of the Circuit court is required by law to send notice of hearings. However, opinions varied with regard to who actually sends notice, and the practice of notification varies across the State. Stakeholder responses varied across the three sites regarding sending notice, and foster parents and relative caregiver opportunities to be heard. Stakeholders indicated that variation in their ability to be recognized and heard is due to differences among judges. In Alachua County, stakeholders indicated that sending notice is the responsibility of the caseworker, but there is no system in place to ensure this occurs. Stakeholder opinions in Alachua County varied in terms of being given the opportunity to be heard and involvement of parents in hearings. Another issue reported by stakeholders was adequate transportation for youth to attend hearings. Some stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicate that foster parents are “welcomed” into court proceedings when they appear and are given ample opportunity to participate, but stakeholders acknowledge that additional efforts need to be made in ensuring that they receive proper notice. Stakeholders in Seminole County indicated that notice is not given consistently and foster parents are not encouraged to participate in the hearings.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
Rating	1	2	3	4X

Status of Quality Assurance System

Florida is in substantial conformity with the factor of a QA System. In the initial CFSR, the State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor and was not required to address it in the PIP. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as a Strength because the State has mechanisms in place that address the health and safety of children in foster care. This item was rated as a Strength in the 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State law provides standards and expectations that apply to most aspects of the system of care for child welfare. To support the implementation of a community-based system of care, the State's procedures have been integrated into the State's administrative rules, which are updated to reflect Federal and State legislative changes. Rules are highly prescriptive about service delivery in many areas and are intended to complement the requirements in statute. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that service standards may also be set in program guidance documents issued from the central program office. This guidance is issued in formal memos to the field and provided by way of an intranet document repository.

Specific requirements are provided in statute for most programmatic components of the Department's child welfare system of care, including:

- Medical and psychological care and treatment, including parental consent and use of psychotropic medications
- Licensing of foster homes, child care institutions, and child placing agencies
- Child protective investigations
- Adoption
- Case planning
- Judicial reviews

The Statewide Assessment reports also that there are State statutes that set standards and expectations for various organizations' operational and financial processes that are related but are not necessarily unique to the child welfare system. These may directly or indirectly apply to protecting the safety and health of children in foster care. Examples include:

- Child welfare training and education
- Foster grandparent and retired senior volunteer program
- Contract mediation between the Department and its providers
- Requirements for administrative infrastructure to support service providers
- Interagency agreements to assure collaborative service delivery between health and human services

- Qualifications of clinical social workers
- Background screening for staff

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders from the State indicated there are standards in place for children from birth to age 5 regarding the use of psychotropic medication. There are QA standards in place that specifically look at the health and safety of children in foster care at the case level using the Dashboard. In Alachua County, stakeholders describe standards that require that children receive a physical evaluation within 72 hours of placement; however, they report this does not always occur due to a shortage of doctors. Stakeholders across the three sites report that there are standards in place that require staff be in the home every month to ensure the safety and well being of children and that licensing issues are being addressed. In addition, stakeholders report that thorough supervisory reviews are completed on each case. Standards require quarterly visits to licensed providers/foster parents by licensing staff to review quality and safety issues in the home. Additionally, stakeholders described the use of customer satisfaction surveys, client surveys, and random monitoring calls to caregivers to ensure standards are met. Stakeholders in Miami describe a process created by the legislature that reviews policies, fiscal issues, data integrity, and administrative issues.

Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 31 is rated as a Strength because the State is operating a QA system that evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths, produces reports, and evaluates program improvement. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was also rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, in July 2005, the Office of Quality Management was created. The department-wide QA process includes provider assessment, contract oversight and monitoring, and quality improvement activities. The Family Safety/Child Welfare QA system was implemented during FY 2004/2005, and activities have been revised to incorporate a three-tiered QA system that is based on Federal and State requirements and outcomes for child safety, permanency, and well-being as assessed by the Federal CFSR process. It involved QA planning, various reviews, and validation of quality processes. In January 2007, the review process was refined to include monthly onsite supervisory coaching and mentoring components; a validation review of the closed cases; and desk audits completed by QA specialists on a semi-annual basis. Other features of the quality management process around this timeframe included:

- The internal Florida CFSRs, modeled on the Federal process, to assess individual lead agency success
- Integrated reviews that combined the Department's oversight responsibilities in child welfare, licensing, contract oversight, and Federal funding to review common requirements and case files, promoting efficiency for both Department and lead agencies
- A PaRT process, at the State and local levels, which integrated a seven-step problem analysis and solution process focused around key outcome indicators
- A readily accessible tool for tracking performance and identifying gaps in achieving outcomes in major Department programs, called the Dashboard

The Statewide Assessment also reported that Stakeholders indicate that the QA three-tier model for development and implementation of Federal and State standards for children provided a strong foundation supporting local and uniform functioning. Stakeholders at local levels indicate that the review process provided valuable information relating to performance and continuous quality improvement. As the transition from a State-operated child welfare system to one composed of multiple CBC agencies progressed, stakeholders suggested that modifications were needed to provide further tools and processes to support service delivery, administration, and management of direct and contract services. The Statewide Assessment reports that in 2007 the QA resources were reassigned under the direction of the local geographic areas in five regions. Additionally in 2007, the State undertook a major revisiting of the approach to accountability. The new approach will slightly modify some existing quality management approaches. This latest Quality Management redesign is scheduled for implementation in January 2008. A QA system also is in place for the FAH. Reviews are conducted by a contracted provider to evaluate the manner in which reports are screened out or accepted, the completeness and accuracy of information documented in the reports, and the professionalism with which calls are routinely conducted.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the ability of both Department regions (for protective investigation) and lead agencies (for foster care and other services) to recruit, train, and retain qualified staff has been a barrier. Turnover results in staff frequently not remaining in their positions long enough to reach and maintain proficiency needed for basic tasks, much less to reach standards of expectation for quality performance. Furthermore, the turnover in both worker and supervisor positions hampers the ability to focus on process and performance refinement. With respect to QA staff, the Statewide Assessment notes it is challenging to find or develop staff that can combine analytical skills, programmatic knowledge, and the ability to facilitate service staff in support of quality improvement.

In addition to staff, another foundation of QA is the ability to obtain good data to identify and define performance gaps, test the efficacy of improvements, validate service provision, and identify and communicate strengths such as areas of best practice. The transition to the new statewide automated child welfare information system (SACWIS) solution [FSFN] has required significant retraining of staff and accompanying data issues. However, lack of resources has hampered the Department's ability to capture, analyze, and report comprehensive data and information.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR were generally in agreement that Florida’s QA system is a Strength. DCF conducts many kinds of quantitative and qualitative reviews to evaluate the quality of services, review systems, and develop plans for improving services. Stakeholders from the State describe a collaborative process between QA staff and supervisors that support them in reviewing cases and provide them with more structure in ensuring quality improvement for direct services. Each agency has a QA system in place that includes QA consultation, multiple types of reviews, stakeholder surveys, and the development of mini-action plans based on the results of QA data. Stakeholders in Alachua County reported that they meet with the county’s CBCs every month and look at performance data as part of its QA practice and monthly statistical reports. Stakeholders in Seminole County report having local level QA reviews and State-level reviews for both CPIs and the CBC. In addition, stakeholders in Seminole County report having monthly meetings to discuss QA findings and improvements and that they use data reports to track performance. Stakeholders in Seminole County also indicated that QA is incorporated into local training. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County report that each agency has a QA system in place. Miami-Dade County stakeholders describe QA reviewers pulling cases randomly and complete either a peer review or supervisory review of the case and feedback being given.

IV. TRAINING

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2X	3	4

Status of Training

Florida is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training, in part because while the State provides a pre-service curriculum for the training of staff, the State identified in the Statewide Assessment that the pre-service training is not sufficient to equip newly trained staff to carry out their duties. The ongoing training for staff is also an ANI due to no clearly understood minimum requirements or expectations for ongoing training as well as no clear process to insure ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to enable staff carry out their duties. Training for foster and adoptive parents is also rated as an ANI in part because the State identified in the Statewide Assessment that foster parents expressed a need for more training that will better equip

them to provide care for children requiring behavioral interventions and that some foster parents leave pre-service training feeling misled and unequipped to address children's problems.

This item was determined to be in substantial conformity in the 2001 CFSR and, therefore, not was addressed in the PIP. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services

_____ Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as an ANI in part because while the State provides a pre-service curriculum for the training of staff, the State identified in the Statewide Assessment that the pre-service training is not sufficient to equip newly trained staff to carry out their duties. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Department contracts with Florida International University (FIU) to develop and maintain Florida's pre-service curriculum. The current curriculum was implemented on January 1, 2007. The design of the curriculum encompasses 148 core competencies presented to the Florida Legislature, which states that all persons providing child welfare services shall be required to participate in and successfully complete the program of training pertinent to their areas of responsibility. On January 18, 2006, the Department entered into a contract with the University of South Florida, Child Welfare Training Academy (USF-CWTA) to "Train-the-Trainer" and to certify pre-service trainers statewide. Pre-service training of field staff is offered at the local level and provided by certified pre-service Trainers. Each agency tracks completion of pre-service and ongoing training for employees.

The Statewide Assessment notes that while it is recommended that opportunities be available for trainees to shadow experienced staff, observe hearings, and attend case staffings as a component of the pre-service training curriculum, it is not mandated and therefore it is not occurring consistently across the State.

The Statewide Assessment reports that although the Department's staff development and training program supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP by providing initial training for all staff that provide services under titles IV-B and IV-E, stakeholders reported that the pre-service training is not sufficient to prepare newly hired staff.

Stakeholder Interview Information

According to stakeholders, DCF contracted with FIU to develop a curriculum based on the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Model. The USF trains trainers to deliver the curriculum. Revisions are made to the curriculum based on participant feedback. Changes in the curriculum are also based on recommendations from legislative and special panels.

Stakeholders from the State report there is no monitoring of the quality of the trainer and certificates are issued to participants. There are 142 competencies addressed in the curriculum. Participants are tested at the beginning and end of training, and the results provide them with a blueprint of their strengths. All staff must pass the post-training test. The results of post-tests are used to inform the trainer about the efficacy of training. Stakeholders from the State report that a revised curriculum was released in January 2007.

Skillnet tracks everyone who has completed the pre-service training. Some stakeholders in Miami-Dade County report that the pre-service training needs to be improved and that staff receive cases prior to completing training. They also report that workers are supposed to be shadowed before receiving training, but that is not always the case. Stakeholders in Seminole County describe 3 weeks of classroom pre-service training for investigations and 4 to 6 weeks for caseworkers with some field days mixed in. Stakeholders in Alachua County report the training was 8 weeks, with 6 weeks classroom-based training and 2 weeks field-based training. They report investigation staff must be observed prior to being cleared to take cases. Stakeholders from Seminole County CBC and the CPI unit describe caseworkers receiving cases on a gradual basis after they have demonstrated competencies. They initially receive five test cases, have close supervision, and have a mentor after completing the pre-service training. Stakeholders in Seminole County also report that the CBC and the CPI unit have their own training and QA systems.

DCF contracts with the Broward County Sheriff's Office to provide training for its investigative staff. Stakeholders report that the 6-week training is primarily focused on Florida statutes and use of Florida's SACWIS, FSN. Although certification is required prior to assignment of cases, due to staff shortages, workers are currently being given case responsibility prior to completion of training and certification. Stakeholders in Alachua County report that pre-service training could be enhanced if more field experience was incorporated. Other concerns reported by Alachua County stakeholders included that more time should be spent on training on adoption topics. Also, there is no formal mentoring of new staff in Alachua County. For some staff informal mentoring does occur. In addition, Stakeholders in Alachua County stated the training should place more emphasis on helping workers with report writing, such as the Predisposition Summary, case plans, and judicial reviews.

Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 is rated as an ANI due to no clearly understood minimum requirements or expectations for ongoing training as well as no clear process to ensure ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to enable staff to carry out their duties. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as an ANI; therefore, it was addressed in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Certified Family Services Counselors and CPIs must complete a minimum of 48 hours of in-service (ongoing) training every 3 years. The mandatory hours can be achieved by participating in any child welfare specific training, as there is no standardized curriculum for ongoing training in Florida. The Statewide Assessment reports the Department's CPI staff, CBC case management staff, and county sheriffs' offices CPI staff receive ongoing training through various means that include in-house staff trainers, purchase of trainer services, and payment for participation in conferences. Each entity provides training via in-service workshops, monthly training bulletins, online courses, as well as seminars and classroom instruction that address the skills and knowledge needed to carry out the duties of child welfare professionals.

The Statewide Assessment describes other ongoing training offerings in various locales across the State, such as: local "Lunch and Learn" sessions, research libraries of CD's, DVD's and books on relevant topics, local training websites, monthly training conference calls by the Office of Family Safety and Child Welfare Legal Services (CWLS) attorneys, area guest speakers during staff meetings, and some mentoring within agencies. Since July 2006, the Office of Family Safety has published a monthly Training Bulletin for local child welfare case managers and supervisors, which provides best practice articles, updates on State and National child welfare laws, and child welfare's most current research and practices.

In an effort to supplement ongoing training offered by CBC providers, the Office of Family Safety conducts monthly conference calls with multiple child welfare groups (that is, adoptions, out-of-home care, licensing, and independent living) to disseminate pertinent information. The Office of Family Safety also offers semi-annual regional trainings for direct care staff. Topics for the trainings are determined during conference calls, as well as QA report findings, statewide initiatives, direction of the Secretary and his leadership team, Inspector General investigations, field technical assistance requests, and repeat practice deficiencies as described in localized performance improvement plans.

The Statewide Assessment reports that Florida lacks performance data in the area of training. Some staff report the online, in-service courses offered in Skillnet (a Web-based learning application, that also administers pre-service testing, allows registration for courses, and retains some course completion information) are ineffective. Workers do, however, gain useful information from the regional trainings offered by the DCF, Office of Family Safety. Stakeholders cited in the Statewide Assessment reported that more staff training is needed in the areas of domestic violence, substance abuse, service availability in the community, the ICWA, and how to

conduct family conferences and joint planning meetings with families. Stakeholders reported for the Statewide Assessment concerns about insufficient opportunity for agency workers to take advantage of national training symposiums or other distance learning. County staff described the available in-service training as repetitious, out-of-date, and/or irrelevant for experienced staff.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholder responses regarding ongoing training for staff were varied across and within sites. Stakeholders commenting on this item during the CFSR Onsite Review report 40 hours of ongoing training are required per year to maintain certification, while others report that 40 to 48 hours is required every 3 years to renew certification. The differences in required hours may be due to the varying accreditation standards of CBCs.

Stakeholders also report offering regional training schedules which include informal and formal training opportunities. Stakeholders in Alachua County report getting training ideas from the field, in addition to topics such as FTC. They describe having a system to track training and that you must be re-certified to stay in the field.

Stakeholder responses in Miami-Dade County were not consistent regarding requirements for ongoing training. There was inconsistency among stakeholders about the number of hours required for ongoing training, with some stating that there is not a State requirement for ongoing training, while others stated workers must complete 48 hours to maintain caseworker certification. Each sub-contracted case management agency offers training to meet the agency's accreditation standards. The lead CBC develops training based on QA results. Agencies also plan training according to needs expressed by staff. Juvenile court offers monthly training and staff attend these sessions. Stakeholders stated that the Protective Investigative staff is not offered training to maintain certification. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County describe multiple agencies developing their own curriculum for ongoing training; there is no consistent curriculum required between the agencies; 40 hours of training is required per year and they report contracts will not be renewed with these agencies unless training requirements for staff are met. Each agency determines its own requirements for ongoing training and they track the number of hours completed by each worker. Stakeholders also stated that agency supervisors do not support caseworkers in attending training. According to stakeholders, there are no ongoing training requirements for protective investigators. Stakeholders suggested that a barrier to attending trainings is not having enough staff and, therefore, enough time to attend trainings.

Stakeholders in Seminole County describe certification every 3 years and needing to complete 40 to 48 hours of recertification training. They describe the training as effective and meeting the workers needs. They noted that training is tracked formally by the training coordinator. "Lunch and Learn" sessions are held regularly, and a calendar is developed with training topics. The CBC trainer partners with other agencies, such as local providers, to enhance training options and keep staff updated on changes.

Several stakeholders described the requirement for supervisors to attend the 9-day “Supervising for Excellence” course. Seminole County stakeholders report that CBC supervisors have completed the new mandatory State supervisory training that is being offered statewide and suggested this is a strength of the program.

Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children

_____ Strength ___X___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 is rated as an ANI because in part the State identified in the Statewide Assessment that foster parents expressed a need for more training that will better equip them to provide care for children requiring behavioral interventions and that some foster parents leave pre-service training feeling misled and unequipped to address children’s problems. In the State’s 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Florida statute requires that the Department provide or have provided through its contracted providers (CBC agency employees) pre-service training for prospective foster parents and emergency shelter parents and in-service training for foster parents and emergency shelter parents who are licensed and supervised by the Department. As a condition of licensure, foster parents and emergency shelter parents shall successfully complete a minimum of 21 hours of pre-service training. Prior to licensure renewal, each foster parent and emergency shelter parent shall successfully complete 8 hours of in-service training. Twelve hours of training are required during the first 2 years of licensure. State-licensed facilities (group homes) are required to provide its staff with training in areas to ensure the safe care and supervision of children. The Statewide Assessment reports that most agencies use the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) curriculum to train foster and adoptive parents. However, they report varied perspectives of the model’s effectiveness among trainers and prospective parents. The successful completion of the specified training (initial and ongoing) is tracked locally by QA staff through the licensing and re-licensing process. Ongoing training opportunities for foster and adoptive parents also are provided locally, and vary by agency.

The Statewide Assessment reports that some foster parents report some satisfaction with pre-service training but feel it could be more in-depth with a need for special attention given to the topic of child behaviors, as some parents leave pre-service training feeling misled and ill-equipped to handle children’s problems. They also recommended making the training longer, using experienced trainers, to include veteran foster parents and/or child welfare workers, using real case scenarios in training, and to incorporate information about the abuse report/investigation process in the foster parenting pre-service curriculum. Some licensed foster parents

reported that they would greatly benefit from an experienced foster parent mentor for at least 1 year. They commented that agency supports (for example, a foster parent liaison) who actually respond to foster parents would be helpful, and night and weekend trainings for parents who are employed, would be a great supplement to daytime, in-service training offerings.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that the State uses the MAPP 30-hour training course for prospective foster and adoptive parents. In addition, foster parents are required to receive 8 hours of training annually. Medical foster parents are required to receive 12 to 15 additional hours of training. Staff of group homes and child care institutions are required to have 40 hours of annual training. The DCF licensing specialists track the required hours for these staff. FSFN tracks foster parent training at the local level. Stakeholders from Alachua County report topics such as discipline, legal resources, problem solving, and scenarios covering what is and is not acceptable, were addressed in the training. They also noted that there are ample ongoing training opportunities for foster parents and a newsletter that has training information. Foster parents have access to online training and community classes and shared that there are a variety of training topics that can count toward the 8-hour requirement.

Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County reported that in addition to the required MAPP training, foster parent liaisons offer additional training. They also report that the MAPP training emphasized working with birth parents, which they describe as valuable. Stakeholder opinions regarding whether current foster parent training includes critical components and is sufficient to prepare resource parents were mixed. Plans are underway to conduct an in-depth review of the curriculum. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also noted that the in-service calendar is distributed at quarterly foster parent meetings. Stakeholders in Seminole County reported that licensed foster parents must receive the MAPP training prior to a child being placed. They noted additional training is required for therapeutic foster care and that there is a requirement for annual first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation training. In terms of ongoing training, they describe that foster parents are encouraged to diversify the training they attend, based on their individual needs and the needs of their foster children.

In addition, stakeholders in Alachua County report that more training was needed for foster parents in identifying needed resources, WIC, and how to access other concrete services and that training is very general and did not address the “day-to-day” issues that foster parents encounter.

V. SERVICE ARRAY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2X	3	4

Status of Service Array

Florida is not in substantial conformity with the Service Array systemic factor because while the State, in part, has improved the array of services to address the needs of families and children, the Statewide Assessment determined this as an ANI due to the gaps in the continuum of services for families and children. The State identified in the Statewide Assessment that there are waiting lists for mental health and substance abuse services for children and adults and delays in the service referrals and follow-up. The individualization of services to meet the unique needs of children and families is another ANI as the State does not consistently implement the practice of individualization. In the 2001 CFSR, the State was also not in substantial conformity and was required to address this factor in the PIP. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

Key Findings From the 2001 CFSR

Florida was found not to be in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in the 2001 CFSR. Item 35 (service array), item 36 (service accessibility), and item 37 (service individualization) were determined to be ANIs in the 2001 CFSR. Some of the key concerns included the following:

- Stakeholders reported that there were too few foster homes in the State, and the agency often had to place children in shelters because they had no alternative placements.
- There were long waiting lists for mental health services for children.
- There was a lack of integration/coordination between mental health and child welfare agencies, resulting in service fragmentation and problems in obtaining mental health services
- IL Program and transitional living services were needed for older youth in care and the juvenile justice youth with dual adjudication.
- There was a lack of services for sexually abused children, their families, and child perpetrators of sexual abuse.
- Substance abuse treatment was difficult to access, especially residential treatment.

- There was a lack of respite services for parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents.
- There was a need to strengthen cultural responsiveness, especially for the Creole, Hispanic, and Russian populations.
- There was a need for an increase in preventive services and adoptive services.
- There were waiting lists for specialized therapeutic foster homes.
- Transportation was a problem in accessing available services, especially in the rural areas.
- There was frequent use of shelter care, which did not individualize children’s needs for appropriate out-of-home care.
- Case record reviews revealed that there were instances when the same services were offered regardless of the specific needs of children and families.
- Services were not consistently provided to children and families of Spanish and Creole backgrounds.

The State developed PIP strategies, including the following:

- Implemented Foster Home Recruitment and Retention Plans in all Districts
- Provided a directory of local and State resources
- Increased placement resources for children with mental health needs or behavioral health needs
- Completed comprehensive assessment for children in out of home care
- In partnership with other agencies, increased the available and accessible services targeted for issues related to mental health, sexual abuse, and domestic violence
- Provided consistent post-adoption services

The State completed the PIP strategies for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as an ANI because there are identified gaps in the service array for families and children. In the State’s 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as an ANI.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, a partnership with the Department and the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) resulted in the development of an extensive array of community-based behavioral health services available to Medicaid-eligible children and their families/caregivers. Included in this array of services are medical and dental care, psychiatric assessment and treatment services, behavioral analysis services provided by certified Behavior Analysts, individual, group, and family therapy, and infant mental health. Residential services include therapeutic foster and group homes and in-patient psychiatric care.

In addition to the Medicaid-funded services, the Department, Sheriff's offices, and CBC provider agencies offer an array of services that include, but are not limited to, homemaker care, day care, protective supervision, intensive family preservation services, and an extensive array of behavioral health services.

The Statewide Assessment noted that the evaluation of the Department's title IV-E Waiver demonstration, implemented October 1, 2006, has created a renewed focus toward prevention and diversion and should result in an expanded array of community-based services. Practice guidelines for the waiver promote the wraparound process that provides individualized, need-driven planning, services, and support for the child and family. Since the implementation of the waiver, 15 lead agencies reported an expansion of existing services and strategies for the development of new prevention services.

Gaps in the service array that were consistently identified by youth, parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents include respite care, child care, after-school programs, and summer camps for children with emotional disturbances. In addition, in a statewide survey, respondents stated that services to rural areas and/or transportation to services were problematic.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders reported that local child welfare agencies have initiated efforts to enhance the array of services available to children. However, services for parents, such as mental health services, substance abuse treatment, affordable day care, and services for persons with a dual diagnosis, are not as developed nor as comprehensive as the service array for children. Services available in the parents' language also are lacking and there is a need for interpreters among service providers.

Several Stakeholders reported that CBC agencies are instituting a pre-pay mental health plan for children. This plan offers a single point of access for mental health services, including a comprehensive mental health assessment. The pre-pay plan has been in place around a year and enables the local agency to develop a service array determined by identified needs. The pre-pay plan is designed to ensure that certain services are available to all children in the child welfare system, including children in their own home. Miami-Dade County Stakeholders reported the requirement for a preauthorization is a barrier to quickly access needed services.

State-level stakeholders reported that in an effort to assess children's mental health issues, a Mental Health Summit was recently convened by the Chief Justice and attended by persons in high leadership positions across the three branches of Government. The purpose of the summit was to identify solutions to complicated mental health issues, such as child trauma and attachment disorder. State-level Stakeholders, as well as stakeholders in Miami-Dade and Alachua Counties, voiced concerns regarding the quality of the therapy provided by mental health clinicians. These clinicians are described as inexperienced with high caseloads and frequent turnover, which adversely impacts the continuity and effectiveness of the therapy. In addition, Alachua County stakeholders expressed concern regarding the lack of mental health therapists willing to accept Medicaid. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County voiced a lack of mental health services for youth aging out of care.

State-level stakeholders and the Miami-Dade County stakeholders expressed concerns that the DCF CPIs do not have access to intensive in-home services or flex funds that could enable children to remain in their own home and prevent removal. However, in Alachua County, a Mobil Crisis Response Team and Diversion, a preventive service, is available for an immediate response and prevents children from coming into foster care.

The need for dental providers was voiced by Miami-Dade County and State-level stakeholders. However, in an effort to increase the pool of providers, the agency in Seminole County has developed relationships with local dentists to provide services.

Several stakeholders expressed the need for affordable housing for parents as well as for youth aging out of care.

Stakeholders in Miami-Dade and Alachua Counties and at the State level voiced concern over inadequate post-adoptive services. In Alachua County, a family must have an open case to access services, while in Miami-Dade County minimal funding has been designated for these services.

In Miami-Dade County, the court is active in creating services such as developing a parenting curriculum and collaborating with the community to assist parents in accessing services. Addiction specialists are available in the drug courts and will be expanded to all courts. The court has established an infant/parent dyadic psychotherapy and also has been instrumental in establishing a Healthy Girls initiative, for girls age 13 and older, to prevent teen pregnancy.

Stakeholders in Miami-Dade and Seminole Counties expressed concern that youth placed with relatives are unable to access Independent Living services. State-level stakeholders reported that Tribal youth are unable to access IL services.

Seminole County Stakeholders reported that community service providers work well with the child welfare agency to ensure that most needed services are available to families and children.

Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State’s CFSP

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an ANI because services are not accessible to families and children in all areas of the State. In the State’s 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as an ANI.

Statewide Assessment Information

The Statewide Assessment reported that the QA reviews completed in FY 2006 and FY 2007 with 19 CBC providers indicate that the provision of services vary greatly related to the initiation of services for the child, parents, and caregiver as identified in the case plan.

Prevention and early intervention services, in-home services and intensive crisis intervention services were seen as limited, especially in rural areas. Medicaid-funded services such as Medicaid-funded psychiatric, medical and dental services, adult mental health services, residential mental health treatment for children, and domestic violence services also are viewed as being limited. Other barriers noted in the accessibility of the service array include limited collaboration across agencies in some areas, limited funds to create needed services not available, services offered only during working hours, and waiting lists. Despite the implementation of community-based services that has created additional resources for children and their families, some services continue to be limited or not accessible to families and children in all locations of the State.

Stakeholder Information

A barrier to accessing services noted by stakeholders is issues with Medicaid eligibility. Almost all children in foster care are able to access Medicaid. However, stakeholders reported issues with children being disenrolled, such as when switching to managed care. Once disenrolled, it can take an average of 2 months to re-enroll children, thus adversely affecting their ability to receive services.

Stakeholders noted another barrier for families accessing services is that newly hired case managers are unfamiliar with the array of available services.

Waiting lists were also mentioned as a barrier to families accessing services. The State-level as well as Seminole and Miami-Dade County stakeholders reported that the Medicaid waiver wait list for services for children and youth with disabilities is more than 15,000. Other services that maintain a wait list are wraparound services, substance abuse services for adults and youth, and mental health services. Alachua County does not encounter a wait list for mental health services as the agency has a memorandum of

understanding with the local mental health service provider. However, youth in Alachua County are placed on a wait list to access IL services.

Alachua County stakeholders also reported a lack of transportation is a barrier to accessing services. As a rural county, an hour drive may be required to access a specific service provider.

Stakeholders also reported that foster parents and especially relative caregivers are not consistently provided with information on how to access funding for services.

Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as an ANI because the State is not consistent in individualizing services to meet the unique needs of children and families. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as an ANI.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, a partnership with the Department and the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) resulted in the development of an extensive array of community-based behavioral health services available to Medicaid eligible children and their families/caregivers. Guidelines require strength-based and individualized assessment and service provision, with the unique challenges of children and families involved with the child welfare system in mind.

Stakeholder Interview Information

During the Onsite Review, stakeholders from the State-level describe progress being made in the area of individualizing case plans and services for children. The stakeholders stated that the comprehensive mental health assessment that is mandated for all children entering out-of-home care is required to look at individual service needs. Stakeholders from Alachua County reported that, for the most part, services are tailored to the individual needs of children. They described the comprehensive assessment prepared by a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) and FTC process as a method of developing individualized plans. Stakeholders from Miami-Dade County noted that case managers have the ability to tailor individualized services to families and that flex funds support meeting the individual needs of children. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County also noted that efforts are made to meet the parent's specific needs and that everyone is not given the same service. Stakeholders in Seminole County reported that individualized services are available through Children's Medical Services (CMS) flex funds, however, they noted that sometimes those funds are not available.

Seminole County stakeholders also reported the local CBC agency, in collaboration with community partners, used creative approaches to ensure individual needs are met.

However, stakeholders indicate the individualization of services is not a consistent practice across the State and the categorical array of services contributes to this inconsistent practice. Another barrier noted by stakeholders in Miami-Dade County is that the investigative staff do not have access to flex funding to create individualized services for families and children.

VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Florida is in substantial conformity on the Agency Responsiveness to the Community systemic factor. In the initial CFSR, this systemic factor was also determined to be in substantial conformity. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as a Strength because the State is engaged in consultation with a variety of stakeholders in the State, although there continues to be a need to strengthen consultation and collaboration with the Tribes. In the State’s 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Florida DCF, in consultation with local communities, has established a community alliance of stakeholders, community leaders, client representatives, and funders of human services in each county to provide a focal point for community participation and governance of community-based services. The community alliances represent the diversity of the community. The Statewide Assessment notes that the Department's CFSP is driven by the needs and choices of their customers to promote family and personal self-determination and choice. They also partner with community and faith-based organizations in an effort to foster open and collaborative relationships. The Department receives input from the local agencies and external stakeholders on services and innovations which is incorporated into the yearly Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR).

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting during the onsite CFSR from the State suggested consultation with stakeholders is a strength of the system. They described a coalition involving 22 agencies that looks at the new Federal performance measures, reviews the QA system, gives input into State planning, and makes policy. Several stakeholders from the three counties expressed the opinion during the onsite CFSR that there is a high level of collaboration and engagement with lead agencies. Stakeholders report the State has made efforts to include the CBCs in the State's plan and reported ongoing collaboration. They also noted that while the Court Improvement Program has resources and collaborates with the agency, they are not involved in the CFSP process. Stakeholders in Seminole County report there are quarterly meetings with the court where system issues are addressed. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County described the CBC Alliance that includes representatives from county government, the school system, law enforcement, and DCF. Stakeholders in Seminole County referenced the Community Alliance and Children's Cabinet as collaborative efforts to engage community stakeholders. Stakeholders also report that the Tribes were invited to participate in planning for the CFSR, however, the Tribes indicated that there was no formal request for their opinion of services or the 5-year plan.

Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress, and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because the agency consults with stakeholders in the development of the annual progress and services report. In the State's first CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Department collects information for the APSR from the 19 child welfare contracted lead agencies, the Office of Court Improvement, and the Dependency Court System. In the survey of community partners, responders noted

that the APSR is not extensively distributed. The Statewide Assessment reports that in response to CAPTA requirements, Florida has established three panels that provide data and other information to the Department for annual reporting: (1) the foster care citizen review programs (Miami-Dade, Manatee, and Collier counties), (2) the statewide fatality review team, and (3) the Statewide Advocacy Councils.

The State and local Advocacy Councils investigate complaints on behalf of individuals in programs or facilities that are operated or regulated by the Department or by other State agencies. Local councils are composed of volunteers appointed by the Governor to protect the rights and advocate for a better quality of life for the citizens of Florida who have unique needs.

Florida's citizen review programs conduct judicial reviews of dependent children. The programs are located in the largest urban city—Miami-Dade County—and two smaller counties, Manatee and Collier. Citizen review programs use community volunteers to help the courts monitor the cases of children in foster care. Extensive collaboration is required between the Department, the CBC agencies, the courts and the program. Data reports that track children reviewed, compliance with statutes and best practices, and identify barriers to children's permanency are provided to the courts and the community. An annual report is provided to the Department.

The State Child Abuse Death Review Team under the auspices of the Department of Health collaborates with the Department to analyze child deaths due to verified abuse or neglect, providing an annual report of findings. The annual report is intended to draw attention to identified issues to reduce and prevent future deaths due to abuse or neglect.

Stakeholder Interview Information

During the Onsite Review, stakeholders from the State indicated that CBC agencies are provided an opportunity to provide input into the development of the State plan. Other stakeholders such as mental health and Medicaid are also invited to participate in the development of the plan. A State liaison is assigned to the Tribes to promote Tribal involvement. However, the Tribal response was mixed as to their involvement in the development of the annual reports.

Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally-assisted programs serving the same population

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because there is coordination with other Federal or Federally-assisted programs serving the same population. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCF coordinates with other Federal or Federally-assisted programs in support of Florida's children and families. Examples include:

- The Department-enacted administrative rules for the ICWA in 2006. Negotiations were ongoing with the Seminole Tribe toward a State-to-Nation agreement to further define Tribal matters of child welfare nature. The Department also has collaborated with the Seminole and Creek Tribes as joint presenters in State and local child welfare conferences.
- The Court Improvement Program institutionalized regular meetings between the Department, its stakeholders and the courts. This collaboration has continued for more than 10 years, resulting in improved communication and better handling of cases by juvenile court judges, child welfare administrators, and others involved in the dependency process. The majority of judicial circuits have monthly meetings to review systemic issues and discuss training on court-related procedures.
- The Independent Living Advisory Council is a legislatively mandated group of interested and committed volunteers that advises the legislature as well as the Department on the status of IL services in the State. The group has successfully collaborated in the development of proposed service delivery measures for the population of children age 13 to 17 in foster care and youth transitioning out of foster care.
- A statewide youth board, Florida Youth Shine, has been involved in planning efforts with the Department, the legislature, and CBC agencies. In response to issues raised by Florida youth, the Department has partnered with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Lumina Foundation for Education, and various other civic and private supporters to implement a program aimed at improving outcomes for foster youth.
- Community-based alliances encourage community participation and provide some oversight of community-based services. There are approximately 33 community alliances in the State. Members include Department staff, GALs, county governments, school districts, circuit courts, sheriffs' offices, United Way, advocates, family representation, foster parent representation, Children's Service Boards, and others. In many circuits, they serve as a catalyst for the development of resources, lobbying for increased resources for families, developing interagency agreements, endorsing and supporting outcomes, and reviewing performance on a local level with the lead agency.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item cited a number of collaborations with Federally-funded or Federally-assisted programs. State-level stakeholders stated that there is coordination through the community-based alliances. During the onsite CFSR, stakeholders reported coordination of mental health services in collaboration with Medicaid. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County described collaboration with Department of Juvenile Justice, mental health, and child welfare staff to coordinate services and address mutual issues. Stakeholders in Seminole County report that the Seminole County CBC collaborates with public assistance programs to establish a kiosk where families and caregivers can apply for services and benefits with staff assistance. In Alachua County, stakeholders noted efforts to coordinate and collocate with TANF and Medicaid to assist with TANF eligibility for clients around

issues related to child support. Stakeholders gave positive feedback regarding Our Kids and their role in facilitating these activities. However, a lack of coordination between DCF and the Department of Education was described by several stakeholders.

VII. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Florida is in substantial conformity for the systemic factor Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. In the 2001 CFSR, this systemic factor was determined to be in substantial conformity. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions, which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the State maintains standards for foster family homes and child care institutions. In the State’s 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Florida licensing and relicensing process is conducted by the lead agencies or subcontracted agencies. Each agency utilizes its own tracking system to monitor timeliness for this process from the initial call through the licensing and relicensing process. The August 2007 client self-assessment survey and QA stakeholder interviews report that relicensing processes can become cumbersome with much paperwork to be completed by families. The Statewide Assessment noted that focus groups held during the 2006 District 1 Placement Stability Project reported that their relicensing process had become

burdensome with much paperwork. The District’s examination of the process found that requirements beyond the Licensing Code had been gradually added to the process, and they report taking corrective steps to streamline the process.

Stakeholder Interview Information

During the onsite CFSR, the majority of stakeholders reported that the Agency implements effective licensing standards for both foster family homes and child care institutions that ensure the health and safety of children in foster care. Stakeholders from the State described licensing and relicensing for foster homes and group homes follow the same process. Stakeholders indicate that foster parents are relicensed annually and that they complete re-licensure on time. They describe private agencies doing recruitment, training, and home study and the CBCs review the home study and send it on to the Department. There is no provisional standing for new applicants. However; veteran foster parents can be placed on provisional standing, which requires they complete the requirements before additional children can be placed in the home. In addition, stakeholders report that kinship parents must meet the same requirements as regular foster parents. Stakeholders from Seminole County describe the new standards as being less vague and closing loopholes left open by the previous standards. They also describe the standards as very sufficient and gave examples of standards involving the health of the foster parents and the physical safety of the home.

Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength because the State applies all standards to family foster homes and child care institutions. In the State’s 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength. It should be noted that the 2007 Florida title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review found that foster homes were fully licensed.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all licensed homes are licensed on the same standards, including foster homes, adoptive homes, and relative foster homes. All licensing requirements must be met prior to the issue of the license. The Statewide Assessment reports that in 2006, Florida conducted a QA review of 264 initial licensing files. The review found that licensing staff provide good documentation of the home study and training requirements.

Stakeholder Interview Information

During the onsite CFSR, stakeholders from the State describe the different types of homes that are licensed—regular foster homes, child specific homes, medical foster homes, therapeutic homes, and foster/adoptive homes. Stakeholders indicated that there are no

special types of licenses or standards for relatives and that a relative would be required to go through the same licensing process as regular foster care. However, most relatives are not licensed.

Waivers can be requested, for example, in order to keep siblings together, by requesting a change in the number of children the home is licensed to foster. However, as part of the waiver process, the licensing staff explore safety issues, and waivers must be reviewed by the CBC program specialist and the CBC Director. Stakeholders generally agreed that waivers are not done frequently and when in place they must be renewed every 30 days.

Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 is rated as a Strength because the State has a process in place for completing criminal background clearances. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength. It should be noted that the 2007 Florida title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review found that in most cases, safety considerations with respect to the staff and caretakers of the institutions and foster homes were adequately addressed.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, licensing and adoptive home studies require that background checks, including national and local criminal and abuse history checks, be completed on all household members before an applicant is licensed as an out-of-home caregiver and before any child is placed in the home. An applicant cannot be approved if the criminal history check results in one of the fatal items listed in the ASFA and now in Florida law. The Adoption Administrative Rule, 65C-16, includes all of the necessary background checks as required by Federal regulations.

Stakeholder Interview Information

During the onsite CFSR, there was general consensus among stakeholders that the State is effective in conducting criminal background checks on all prospective foster and adoptive parents. Stakeholders reported there are three background screening checks, FBI fingerprint screening, statewide Florida records check [FDLE] and local law screening in the county where the applicant resides. Background checks are completed on anyone in the home over age 12. Stakeholders reported that some CBCs have the capacity to do Live Scan checks routinely and others use Live Scan only in emergency situations to expedite the process. They also noted that fingerprinting is not creating delays in the system, and there generally is a 60-day turnaround by the FBI when using fingerprint cards.

Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 is rated as a Strength because the State engages in the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom homes are needed. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as an ANI.

The 2001 CFSR Final Report provided the following concerns:

- The focus of the State needs to be on retention of foster families. In the two sites, foster parents expressed frustration because they often are unable to contact their workers and their phone calls often are not returned.
- Many homes are overcrowded with adolescents due to few placement resources.
- There are not enough therapeutic foster homes and group homes for older children.
- In 1 site there are 113 licensed foster homes, but only 35 actively serve as foster parents. In addition, there is a growing population of Hispanics and Russians. More emphasis should be placed on aggressively recruiting foster/adoptive homes for these populations.

The State implemented the following strategies:

- Implemented a foster parent recruitment and retention plan
- Formed a unit at Headquarters dedicated to licensure and recruitment/retention to support efforts throughout Florida
- Required local recruitment and retention plans
- In collaboration with NRC **AdoptUsKids**, developed a model recruitment and retention plan

Statewide Assessment Information

The Statewide Assessment reports that QA reviews conducted by a team of Headquarters staff in FY 2006/2007, found that all but one of the lead agencies had approved and effective management plans in place that addressed how each area recruits and retains foster/adoptive parents. In addition, five counties were monitored under the Florida Child and Family Services Review model during the same period. Some strengths and promising practices noted include:

- Identifying family support specialists to work directly with foster parents in meeting their needs, advocating for corrective actions as needed
- Conducting satisfaction surveys

- Improving the matching process based on comprehensive assessments and meeting the foster parent’s level of experience, expertise, and population preferences
- Targeting foster/adoptive parent recruitment to find homes for minority children, infants, and teens
- Supporting foster parent associations
- Recognizing good performance and sharing best practices
- Enhancing services for the child and foster parent while also improving training for foster parents, especially related to working with children displaying behavioral challenges
- Tracking placement stability
- Including foster parents in the decision-making process

Some innovative efforts noted in the Statewide Assessment include: grants to support “normalcy;” involving community alliances to recruit from various segments of the community; collaborating with the school boards to assist the foster parent with school issues (including tutoring); recruiting businesses to “adopt” a family; and networking with child care centers for support.

According to the Statewide Assessment several of the lead agencies have established a traveling “Heart Gallery” in their areas and some lead agencies were awarded a Dave Thomas grant to pay for a Wendy’s recruiter position. This position provides the same functions as an adoption home finder and establishes recruitment efforts for the more difficult and hard-to- place children. In addition, some of the areas have been successful in reviving the Wednesday’s Child segment with their local television stations.

The 2007 Legislature also increased the population of eligible applicants for the State Employee Adoption Benefit program. In addition to employees of State agencies and State universities, personnel within the 67 school districts and community colleges are now eligible to receive a one-time lump sum payment of \$10,000 for adoption of a special needs child or \$5,000 for adoption of a non-special needs child.

Stakeholder Interview Information

During the onsite CFSR, stakeholders commenting on this item from the State describe county specific efforts to recruit and retain foster families. They reported diligent recruitment efforts and described working with the NRC to help develop a data tool specifically to support diligent recruitment efforts. Stakeholders also report that the State and local agencies are required to have an annual recruitment plan and utilize a matrix that determines the action steps of the plan. Some stakeholders described using Heart Gallery, **AdoptUSKids**, Adoption.com, and Children Awaiting Parents (CAP). Stakeholders also described using fairs, radio, churches, Parent Teacher Association meetings, corporate newsletters, billboards, and local television channels. Some stakeholders in Miami-Dade County and Seminole County indicated the annual recruitment plan targets the search for specific foster parents based on child characteristics such as age, ethnicity, and medical needs.

Some stakeholders also noted that children are registered for adoption on national and local sites, and that representatives from the One Church, One Child program are part of a pilot. Stakeholders reported that all CBCs are required to use the statewide exchange and have their own local and State websites. Stakeholders from the State described actively recruiting for specific populations, such as teens and Hispanic families. Stakeholders in Seminole County report that each agency does its own recruitment and collaborates with the CBC to develop a county recruitment plan. Stakeholders report targeted needs include children with special medical needs, Hispanic children, teens, and African-American children. Stakeholders in Miami-Dade County indicate that subcontractor agencies are responsible for recruitment of homes. These agencies serve targeted geographic areas, and they conduct outreach in the community, often using foster parents to assist with recruitment. More recently, agencies have pooled resources and share homes across agencies.

Stakeholders in Alachua County report there are broad recruitment efforts such as special events, visiting churches and targeting areas where families live. Some stakeholders were unaware of efforts to recruit foster families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children needing foster and adoptive placements.

Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because there is a process in place for the use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely placement for waiting children. In the State's 2001 CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) unit and Circuit ICPC units throughout the State process interstate placement requests to send children to, and receive children from, other States. The Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC) reports Florida's ICPC traffic to be the highest in the United States, and is managed through a statewide ICPC database. The QA revision currently under way includes a monitoring process of ICPC performance outcomes.

The Department and CBC agencies have several means for ensuring cross-jurisdictional resources are available: Florida Adoption Information Center, HomeFinder conference calls, One Church One Child program, and the Florida Adoption Exchange website—<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/adoption/search/indexnew.asp>.

Stakeholder Interview Information

During the onsite CFSR, there was general consensus that children are placed in adoptive homes across jurisdictions, including in other States. They noted that adoptive resources in other counties or States are used by the State, along with activities to recruit families such as the Heart Gallery, the **AdoptUsKids** photolisting website, and the Florida Adoption Resource Exchange.

Most stakeholders agreed that while ICPC can present a barrier in the use of cross-jurisdictional resources for permanent placements and because it is a cumbersome process, many stakeholders describe having ICPC Coordinators that ensure the process is completed. They also report the use of Live Scans for fingerprinting has helped to increase timely adoptive and permanent placements cross-jurisdictionally. Some stakeholders describe the process as difficult and also reported when delays do occur it is often after the paperwork has left the agency. They cited the lack of uniformity nationwide with ICPC as a barrier in placing children. Stakeholders in Seminole County reported difficulty in obtaining home studies from other counties, as each district handles these requests based on their workload. Stakeholders in Seminole County also reported that kickbacks of paperwork happen frequently and slow down the process. However, stakeholders noted the study is successfully completed when the General Magistrate issues a subpoena for the receiving county to appear in court.