

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

FINAL REPORT
MISSOURI CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

March 2004
With Executive Summary

Final Report: Missouri Child and Family Services Review Executive Summary

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Missouri. The CFSR assesses State performance on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well being and on seven systemic factors related to the State's capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. The Missouri CFSR was conducted the week of December 8, 2003 (in Federal fiscal year 2004). The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Department of Social Services, Children's Division (CD).
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 1999 through 2002;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites in the State (Jackson County [Kansas City], Jasper County, and St. Louis 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.

A key finding of the Missouri CFSR was that the State is not in substantial conformity with the seven child welfare outcomes assessed through the CFSR. However, in one of the CFSR sites (Jasper County) case review findings revealed that the site met the criteria for substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1 (Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect), Safety Outcome 2 (Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate), Well-Being Outcome 2 (Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs), and Well-Being Outcome 3 (Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs). In that site, 100 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for 12 of the 23 items.

Despite the high level of performance of the Jasper County site on many outcomes, the performance of all three sites was quite low for Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations). This outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in only 34.6 percent of the foster care cases reviewed. The outcome was substantially achieved in 58 percent of Jackson County cases, 17 percent of Jasper County cases, and 12.5 percent of St. Louis County cases. Although information from the State Data Profile and the CFSR case reviews indicates that CD has achieved success in ensuring that children who leave foster care do not re-enter within 12 months, CFSR findings also demonstrate that CD is not consistent in its efforts to establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner or achieve permanency for children (through adoption, reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner.

Case review and stakeholder interview findings suggest that barriers to achieving permanency in a timely manner can be attributed to a tension between CD and the courts with regard to adherence to the provisions of ASFA. Stakeholders noted that some courts in the State do not support the Federal timeframes pertaining to permanency established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Although the agency and the courts engage in several joint initiatives, the achievement of permanency is hampered by a lack of clarity regarding the respective roles of child welfare children's service workers and court personnel in making permanency decisions.

Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that key barriers to achieving adoptions in a timely manner pertain to the process of filing for termination of parental rights (TPR). Stakeholders reported that in many instances, CD does not file for TPR in a timely manner due to the following factors: (1) an insufficient number of State attorneys assigned to represent the agency in all court matters, including filing for TPR; (2) a perception of the agency and the courts that children age 12 and older and children with behavioral issues are "unadoptable;" and (3) an unwillingness on the part of the courts to hear a TPR petition unless an adoptive family has been identified for the child.

Another area of concern with regard to State performance on the child welfare outcomes pertained to Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs). This outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in only 42.0 percent of the cases reviewed. Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 29 percent of Jackson County and St. Louis County cases. CFSR findings for this outcome indicate that CD is not consistent in meeting the services needs of children, parents, and foster parents; involving children and parents in the case planning process; and ensuring that agency social workers have sufficient contact with the children and parents in their caseloads.

In addition to the concerns pertaining to permanency and well-being, CFSR findings indicate that CD is not consistent in its efforts to address the safety concerns of children who come into contact with the child welfare system. Case review findings indicate that CD is not initiating responses to maltreatment reports in accordance with State-established timeframes on a consistent basis (item 1), and that some children are not being sufficiently protected from risk of harm while in their own homes (items 3 and 4). In addition, the State did not meet the national standards for either the rate of recurrence of a substantiated maltreatment within 6 months or the incidence of maltreatment in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

With regard to the systemic factors, the CFSR determined that the State is in substantial conformity with the factors of Statewide Information System; Quality Assurance System; Training; Agency Responsiveness to the Community; and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The State did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Case Review System or Service Array.

The overall 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 relative to the national standards and table 4 provides information pertaining to the State's substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. A summary of major findings is presented below.

I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

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 whether children experience a recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment (item 2).

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 78.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standard for (1) the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period or (2) the percentage of children experiencing substantiated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 92 percent of Jasper County cases and 91 percent of St. Louis County cases, compared to 67 percent of Jackson County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that CD is not consistent with regard to initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports or establishing face-to-face contact with the child subject of the report in accordance with the State-established timeframes. In addition, both the State Data Profile and case reviews indicate that CD is not effective in preventing the recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month period. Repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period occurred in 8 (53%) of the 15 cases in which there was at least 1 substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review. Six of these cases were in Jackson County.

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 the child welfare agency's 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 effectiveness in reducing risk of harm to children.

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 70.0 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 71 percent of St. Louis County cases and 54 percent of Jackson County cases.

A key concern identified during the CFSR pertained to a lack of service provision. Case reviews found that although families were being assessed for service needs, in several cases, services were not provided to either the children or the parents, particularly in the in-home services cases. Consequently, risk of harm was not adequately addressed.

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 effectiveness in preventing foster care re-entry (item 5), ensuring placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establishing 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 success in achieving permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9), or whether children who have "other planned living arrangements" as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 34.6 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year (FY) 2002, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the percentage of children reunified who were reunified within 12 months of the time of entry into foster care; (2) the percentage of children adopted who achieved a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care, or (3) the percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced no more than 2 placements.

The FY 2002 data provided in the State Date Profile indicate that the State meets the national standard for the percentage of children entering foster care who were re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

Although performance on this outcome was generally quite low, there was variation across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 58 percent of Jackson County cases, compared to 17 percent of Jasper County cases and 12.5 percent of St. Louis County cases.

A key finding of the CFSR was that CD is effective in preventing re-entry into foster care (item 5). However, all other indicators for this outcome were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. Case reviewers determined that CD was not consistent in its efforts to (1) ensure children's placement stability while in foster care (item 6), (2) establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner (item 7), and (3) achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner (items 8, 9, and 10).

Information from the case reviews and stakeholder interviews suggests that key barriers to attaining permanency in a timely manner are: (1) the fact that some courts in the State do not adhere to the timeframes pertaining to permanency established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act, (2) the insufficient number of State attorneys representing the child welfare agency in all court matters (resulting in continuances and ongoing delays), and (3) the unwillingness of some courts to hear TPR petitions if an adoptive family has not been found for the child.

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 (1) placing children in foster care in close proximity to their parents and close relatives (item 11); (2) placing siblings together (item 12); (3) ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); (4) preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); (5) seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and (6) promoting the relationship between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 61.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 58 percent of Jackson County cases, and 50 percent of St. Louis County cases.

CFSR case review findings indicate that CD makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families. However, the findings also indicate a lack of consistent effort on the part of CD to (1) place siblings together in foster care; (2) promote frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, (3) seek and assess relatives as placement resources, (4) preserve children's connections to their families and heritage, and (5) support or promote the parent-child relationship.

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 effectiveness with regard to actively involving 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).

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 42.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 29 percent of Jackson County and St. Louis County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that all indicators for Well-Being Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviews found that CD was not consistent in its efforts to assess children and families for services and provide necessary services, involve parents and children in the case planning process, and establish sufficient face-to-face contact between agency children's service workers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

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 effectiveness in addressing and meeting the educational needs of children in both foster care and in-home services cases (item 21).

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that the outcome was achieved in 80.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of Jasper County cases and 81 percent of Jackson County cases, compared to 62.5 percent of St. Louis County cases.

A key CFSR finding was that, although the educational outcome was achieved in 80.0 percent of the cases, CD is not consistent in meeting children's educational needs across all of the sites. Findings show that the State did not consistently address truancy and educational neglect for children served in the in-home services cases selected for review.

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.

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 71.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 92 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 70 percent of Jackson County cases and 57 percent of St. Louis County cases.

The CFSR case reviews found that CD was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical and mental health needs. A particular concern pertained to the mental health needs of children in the in-home services cases. In many of those cases, reviewers determined that a mental health assessment and/or mental health services were warranted, but the agency did not respond.

II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Statewide Information System

Substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System is determined by whether the State is operating a Statewide information system that can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care (item 24).

Missouri achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The CFSR determined that the State's information system can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care.

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).

Missouri is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. This determination is based on the following CFSR findings:

- Case plans are not developed jointly with the child's parent on a consistent basis.
- The 6-month case reviews are conducted through Family Support Team meetings, but these are not always held in a timely manner and often do not meet the Federal requirement that a person who is not involved in the case must be a participant in the review (i.e., a third-party participant).
- The State has not established a process that ensures that each child in foster care has a permanency hearing no later than 12 months from the date a child enters foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter and that ensures that 12-month hearings involve full hearings and not just paper reviews.
- This item is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because CFSR findings indicate that the State does not comply with TPR proceedings in accordance with the provisions of ASFA.
- The State does not have a statewide process to ensure that caregivers are notified regarding hearings and reviews on a consistent basis and that they are routinely given the opportunity to be heard in court hearings. Although there is a State

statute requiring notification, the statute does not specify who (i.e., child welfare agency or court) has the responsibility for notification.

Quality Assurance System

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Quality Assurance 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 quality assurance system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement (item 31).

Missouri is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The CFSR determined that the State has standards to protect the safety and health of children and that the State has a statewide quality assurance system that focuses on outcomes and uses data and case reviews to improve performance with regard to achieving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children.

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).

Missouri achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. The CFSR determined that children's service workers receive initial training that supports the goals and objectives of the agency and usually they are required to complete the training before being assigned cases. The CFSR also found that the State provides both pre-placement and ongoing training to foster and adoptive parents that is available statewide. However, CFSR findings indicate that although ongoing training opportunities are made available to staff, ongoing training is not mandated. Consequently, many children's service workers and supervisors do not participate in ongoing training. In addition, training for new supervisors is no longer provided due to budget cuts.

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 family served by the child welfare agency (item 37)?

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. The CFSR determined that the State has critical gaps in its service array, particularly in the areas of mental health services and substance abuse treatment. In addition, services are not consistently accessible to children and families on a statewide basis. Families in rural communities, in particular, have difficulty accessing a full array of services, such as crisis intervention and family reunification services. Finally, the CFSR found that services are not consistently individualized to meet the needs of families and children.

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 (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).

Missouri is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The CFSR determined that the State engages in ongoing consultation with stakeholders and uses their input in developing the State's 5-year plan and preparing progress reports. CFSR findings also indicate that the CD has implemented or is part of a number of efforts to coordinate and integrate services for the children and families that are served by various agencies.

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 that 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.

Missouri is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. The CFSR determined that Missouri has implemented comprehensive standards for licensing foster family homes and child care institutions and that these standards are consistently applied to all foster homes and child care institutions receiving title IV-E and IV-B funds. In addition, criminal background checks are consistently completed for prospective foster and adoptive parents and the State has a process in place that promotes use of cross-jurisdictional resources for placing children with foster and adoptive parents. However, the CFSR also determined that the State's recruitment and retention efforts are not meeting the need for an adequate pool of foster and adoptive homes.

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

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings			Item Ratings		
	<i>In Substantial Conformity?</i>	<i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i>	<i>Met National Standards?</i>	<i>Rating**</i>	<i>Percent Strength</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>
Safety Outcome 1-Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	78.7	No			
Item 1: Timeliness of investigations				ANI	67	
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment				ANI	83	No
Safety Outcome 2 - Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	70.0				
Item 3: Services to prevent removal				ANI	76	
Item 4: Risk of harm				ANI	72	
Permanency Outcome 1- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	34.6	Met 1, did not meet 3			
Item 5: Foster care re-entry				Strength	100	Yes
Item 6: Stability of foster care placements				ANI	77	No
Item 7: Permanency goal for child				ANI	75	
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship and placement with relatives				ANI	50	No
Item 9: Adoption				ANI	12.5	No
Item 10: Other planned living arrangement				ANI	33	
Permanency Outcome 2 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	61.5				
Item 11: Proximity of placement				Strength	95	
Item 12: Placement with siblings				ANI	79	
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	70	
Item 14: Preserving connections				ANI	81	
Item 15: Relative placement				ANI	81	
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	68	

*90 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).

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

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings		Item Ratings			
	<i>In Substantial Conformity?</i>	<i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>	<i>Rating**</i>	<i>Percent Strength</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>
Well Being Outcome 1 - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs	No	42.0				
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents				ANI	54	
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning				ANI	56	
Item 19: Worker visits with child				ANI	62	
Item 20: Worker visits with parents				ANI	57	
Well Being Outcome 2 - Children receive services to meet their educational needs	No	80.0				
Item 21: Educational needs of child				ANI	80	
Well Being Outcome 3 - Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs are met	No	71.4				
Item 22: Physical health of child				ANI	82	
Item 23: Mental health of child				ANI	77.5	

*90 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).

Table 3: Missouri Performance on the Six Outcome Measures for Which National Standards have been Established

Outcome Measure	National Standard	Missouri Data FY 2002
Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report in the first 6 months of CY 2001, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period?	6.1% or less	7.3%
Of all children who were in foster care in the first 9 months of CY 2001, what percent experienced maltreatment from foster parents or facility staff members?	0.57% or less	0.62%
Of all children who entered foster care in FY 2001, what percent were re-entering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode?	8.6% or less	8.5%
Of all children reunified from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care?	76.2% or more	65.9%
Of all children who were adopted from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were adopted within 24 months of their entry into foster care?	32.0% or more	30.3%
Of all children in foster care during FY 2001 for less than 12 months, what percent experienced no more than 2 placement settings?	86.7% or more	78.7%

Table 4: Missouri CFSR Ratings for the Seven Systemic Factors

Systemic Factors	In Substantial Conformity?*	Rating**
IV. Statewide Information System	Yes (3)	
Item 24: System can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals of children in foster care		Strength
V. Case Review System	No (1)	
Item 25: Process for developing a case plan and for joint case planning with parents		ANI
Item 26: Process for 6-month case reviews		ANI
Item 27: Process for 12-month permanency hearings		ANI
Item 28: Process for seeking TPR in accordance with ASFA		ANI
Item 29: Process for notifying caregivers of reviews and hearings and for opportunity for them to be heard		ANI
VI. Quality Assurance System	Yes (4)	
Item 30: Standards to ensure quality services and ensure children’s safety and health		Strength
Item 31: Identifiable QA system that evaluates the quality of services and improvements		Strength
VII. Training	Yes (3)	
Item 32: Provision of initial staff training		Strength
Item 33: Provision of ongoing staff training that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge.		ANI
Item 34: Provision of training for caregivers and adoptive parents that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge		Strength
VIII. Service Array	No (1)	
Item 35: Availability of array of critical services		ANI
Item 36: Accessibility of services across all jurisdictions		ANI
Item 37: Ability to individualize services to meet unique needs		ANI
IX. Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Yes (4)	
Item 38: Engages in ongoing consultation with critical stakeholders in developing the CFSP		Strength
Item 39: Develops annual progress reports in consultation with stakeholders		Strength
Item 40: Coordinates services with other Federal programs		Strength
X. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention	Yes (3)	
Item 41: Standards for foster family and child care institutions		Strength
Item 42: Standards are applied equally to all foster family and child care institutions		Strength
Item 43: Conducts necessary criminal background checks		Strength
Item 44: Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect children’s racial and ethnic diversity		ANI
Item 45: Uses cross-jurisdictional resources to find placements		Strength

*Systemic factors are rated on a scale from 1 to 4. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates “Not in Substantial Conformity.” A rating of 3 or 4 indicates Substantial Conformity.

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

FINAL REPORT MISSOURI CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Missouri. The CFSR assesses State performance on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well being and on seven systemic factors related to the State's capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. The Missouri CFSR was conducted the week of December 8, 2003 (in Federal fiscal year 2004). The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Department of Social Services, Children's Division (CD).
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 1999 through 2002;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites in the State (Jackson County [Kansas City], Jasper County, and St. Louis 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, Tribal representatives, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 50 cases reviewed are the following:

- Twenty-four cases were reviewed in Jackson County, 14 in St. Louis County, and 12 in Jasper County.
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- 26 cases were "foster care cases" (cases in which the State child welfare agency had care and placement responsibility and the child was in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 24 were "in-home services cases" (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained with their families and no child in the family was in out-of-home care during the period under review).
- Of the 26 foster care cases, 11 children (42%) were younger than age 10 at the start of the period under review; 6 children (23%) were at least 10 years old, but not yet 13 years old; and 9 children (35%) were 13 years of age or older at the start of the period under review.
- Of the 26 foster care cases, 14 children were male and 12 were female.

- Of the 50 cases reviewed, there were 22 cases (44%) in which all children in the family were White; 23 cases (46%) in which all children in the family were African American; 3 cases (6%) in which all children in the family were of two or more races; and 2 cases (4%) in which the children in the family were Native American.
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, reviewers identified the following as the **primary** reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case:
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 18 cases (36%)
 - Physical abuse – 11 cases (22%)
 - Substance abuse by parents – 8 cases (16%)
 - Sexual abuse – 5 cases (10%)
 - Abandonment – 4 cases (8%)
 - Child’s behavior – 3 cases (6%)
 - Domestic violence in the home – 1 case (2%)
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the most frequently cited of all reasons for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency were the following:
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 25 cases (50% of all cases)
 - Physical abuse – 19 cases (38% of cases).
 - Substance abuse by parents – 18 cases (36% of cases)
 - Sexual abuse – 12 cases (24% of cases)
- In 19 (79%) of the 24 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in care during the entire period under review.

The first section of this report presents CFSR findings relevant to the State’s performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting key findings, a discussion of the State’s status with regard to the outcome, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the seven systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency’s ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

SECTION 1: OUTCOMES

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:					
	Jackson County	Jasper County	St. Louis County	Total	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	16	11	10	37	78.7
Partially Achieved:	5	1	0	6	12.8
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	0	1	4	8.5
Not Applicable:	0	0	3		
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:					
	National Standard (Percentage)	State's Percentage	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	
Repeat maltreatment	6.1 or less	7.3		X	
Maltreatment of children in foster care	0.57 or less	0.62		X	

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 78.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standard for (1) the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period or (2) the percentage of children experiencing maltreatment by a foster care provider.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 92 percent of Jasper County cases and 91 percent of St. Louis County cases, compared to 67 percent of Jackson County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that CD is not consistent with regard to initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports or establishing face-to-face contact with the child subject of the report in accordance with the State-established timeframes. In addition, both the

State Data Profile and case reviews indicate that CD is not effective in preventing the recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month period. Repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period occurred in 8 (53%) of the 15 cases in which there was at least 1 substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review. Six of these cases were in Jackson County.

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

Review Findings: The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 18 of the 50 cases. Thirty-two cases were not applicable because they did not have reports of child maltreatment 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 requirements. CD requires that investigations and assessments be initiated within 24 hours of receipt unless the report is identified as educational neglect. Every child victim must be seen face-to-face within 24 hours of receipt of the report and every child in the household must be seen face-to-face within 72 hours. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 12 (67%) of the 18 applicable cases (5 of the 12 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (33%) of the 18 applicable cases (3 of the 6 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for item 1 varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 61 percent of Jackson County cases and 50 percent of St. Louis County cases. However, there were only two applicable cases in St. Louis County and three in Jasper County. The majority of the applicable cases were in Jackson County.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when face-to-face contact was established with the child within the required timeframe (24 hours). The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when face-to-face contact was not established within the required timeframe. Of the 6 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, delays in meeting the 24-hour time frame ranged from 2 days to almost 1 month.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed concern about the agency's efforts to respond to maltreatment reports in a timely manner. Some of the barriers identified to timely investigations were insufficient training for new investigative staff and supervisors who do not have experience with investigations. Several stakeholders reported that a new State law (HB613) that prevents child welfare agency staff from seeing children in school has had a negative impact on the worker's ability to

establish face-to-face contact with the child in a timely manner. Stakeholders also noted that sometimes there are delays in responding to reports received after business hours or on weekends.

Several stakeholders reported that calls are given specific letter designations based on the State's classification system and that worker's responses to these calls often are influenced by the letter designation. They noted, for example, that reports received from mandated reporters that are not considered to involve maltreatment are classified as M Reports and sent forward for investigation because they come from mandated reporters. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that agency children's service workers often do not respond to these reports within the required timeframe because they perceive M Reports as not involving maltreatment and therefore as requiring minimal attention. Stakeholders indicated that children's service workers do not take these reports seriously. Stakeholders also expressed concern about the agency response to maltreatment reports classified as N Reports (reports of maltreatment by non-caretakers) and P Reports (reports that do not require a formal assessment or investigation).

Despite these concerns, State-level stakeholders reported that the use of Structured Decision Making has resulted in significant improvements in the functioning of the Hotline and the ability of the Hotline to assess the risk involved in maltreatment reports. Stakeholders noted that reports are sent on either for an investigation or a family assessment, depending on the determination of risk.

Determination and Discussion: Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 33 percent of the applicable cases, CD had not established face-to-face contact with the child subject of a maltreatment report in accordance with the State's required timeframes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, all abuse and neglect hotline reports are made to Missouri's Central Statewide Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline Unit, also known as the Central Registry Unit. Once screened and classified, they are transmitted by telephone or computer to the appropriate county Children's Division office for appropriate action. Missouri's centralized Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline received 103,000 calls last year; 54 percent of these were child abuse or neglect reports, 29 percent were referrals for services, and 17 percent were screened out because they did not meet criteria for a report. The Hotline operates continuously 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Some of the Hotline personnel hired at the Central Registry Unit are experienced field staff and have completed all basic training modules required for staff. Other Hotline personnel receive 8 days of pre-service training. In addition, they have the opportunity to shadow an investigator to familiarize them with the investigation process.

The Statewide Assessment reports that Missouri has a statewide flexible response child protection system. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, this delivery approach is designed to focus investigation efforts on reports that would involve a violation of law if they were substantiated. Reports are screened to determine whether they meet the criteria for an investigation or for the family assessment track. If a report meets the criteria for an investigation, CD co-investigates with law enforcement. If the report does not meet the

criteria for investigation, the family is provided with a comprehensive Family Assessment in order to address service needs. The Statewide Assessment also notes that Missouri uses regional Child Assessment Centers in many parts of the State to coordinate the sexual and physical abuse investigation process. The goals of the Child Assessment Centers are to reduce the emotional trauma of the investigation to the child, improve the ability of investigators to reach an appropriate finding, and improve multi-disciplinary collaboration at the community level.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 47 of the 50 cases. Three cases were not applicable because there was never a substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report on any of the children in the family. Two of these cases involved a “crisis newborn assessment,” which CD does not consider a maltreatment report. In the third case, the case was opened for services although none of the several maltreatment reports had been substantiated. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had ever been a substantiated report on the family. Reviewers also were to determine if there was at least one substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, if another substantiated or indicated report occurred within 6 months of that report. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 39 (83%) of the 47 applicable cases (23 of the 39 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (17%) of the 47 applicable cases (3 of the 8 cases were foster care cases). Six of the eight cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were in Jackson County.

Item 2 was rated as a Strength under the following circumstances:

- There was a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report involving the family prior to the period under review, but no substantiated or indicated report during the period under review (32 cases).
- There was a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report involving the family during the period under review, but there was no substantiated or indicated report within 6 months of that report (7 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when a substantiated maltreatment report occurring during the period under review was within 6-months of another substantiated maltreatment report involving the same perpetrator and similar circumstances. Repeat maltreatment occurred in 8 (53%) of the 15 cases in which there was at least one substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review.

Additional findings with respect to the frequency of maltreatment reports (both substantiated and unsubstantiated) on the family prior to and during the period under review for all 50 cases were the following:

- In 3 cases, there was never a maltreatment report on the family.
- In 4 cases, there was 1 maltreatment report.
- In 20 cases, there were between 2 and 5 maltreatment reports.
- In 18 cases, there were between 6 and 10 maltreatment reports.
- In 5 cases, there were more than 10 maltreatment reports.

Although in 23 (46%) of the 50 cases reviewed there were more than 6 maltreatment reports on the family during the life of the case, it is not known how many of these reports were substantiated.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that maltreatment recurrence is a problem in the State. Stakeholders attributed repeat maltreatment to a variety of factors, including poverty, lack of funding for services, barriers to accessing services for children and families in in-home services cases, and chronic neglect. Stakeholders also expressed concern that children who are the subject of unsubstantiated reports are not receiving any services and are at risk for maltreatment. While Missouri statutes do not require families with unsubstantiated reports to accept services, Missouri CD does have policy regarding services for unsubstantiated cases. Case workers are to close cases unless the family requests services to improve family functioning and such services are available through the Division or community resources. For cases concluded as “unsubstantiated-preventive services indicated”, continued case opening and services are also voluntary for families. However, since the worker has identified indicators for potential abuse/neglect, families are encouraged to accept services and are informed regarding services available through the Division as well as community resources.

Determination and Discussion: Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following findings:

- In 17 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that at least 2 substantiated maltreatment reports occurred within a 6-month period; and
- The State's rate of maltreatment recurrence for 2002 (7.3%), as reported in the State Data Profile, does not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent or less.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CD recognizes the need for further evaluation and planning on the issue of repeat maltreatment. The Statewide Assessment notes that CD has not yet created procedures for examining cases of repeat maltreatment, identifying patterns of circumstances, or examining the relationship between cases open for services and the incidence of repeat maltreatment. The Statewide Assessment also notes that CD anticipates that the Structured Decision Making approach that the agency is implementing to conduct risk and safety assessments will result in a reduction in the maltreatment recurrence rate.

Safety Outcome 2

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:					
	Jackson County	Jasper County	St. Louis County	Total	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	13	12	10	35	70.0
Partially Achieved:	5	0	2	7	14.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	6	0	2	8	16.0
Not Applicable:	0	0	0		

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 70.0 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 71 percent of St. Louis County cases and 54 percent of Jackson County cases.

A key concern identified during the CFSR pertained to a lack of service provision. Case reviews found that although families were being assessed for service needs, in several cases, services were not provided to either the children or the parents, particularly in the in-home services cases.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: There were 33 cases for which an assessment of item 3 was applicable. Cases were not applicable if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and/or there were no substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to any 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 removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 25 (76%) of the 33 applicable cases (7 of these 25 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (24%) of the 33 applicable cases (2 of these 8 cases were foster care cases)

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. Six of the eight cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement were in Jackson County. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 75 percent of St. Louis County cases and 68 percent of Jackson County cases.

Item 3 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- Appropriate services were provided to parents and children to prevent removal (18 cases).
- The family received appropriate post-reunification services to prevent re-entry into foster care (2 cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home to ensure their safety (5 cases).

Services provided to the families included, but were not limited to, individual and family counseling and therapy, homemaker services, parent aide services, domestic violence services, legal services, health and dental care services through Medicaid, intensive in-home services, parenting classes, anger management and behavioral control classes, case management, housing services, education-related services, mental health assessment and treatment services, substance abuse assessment and treatment services, mentors for children, referrals for Food Stamps and energy assistance, and referrals for assistance from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency did not provide services (6 cases) or that the services provided by the agency were insufficient to maintain the child safely in the home (2 cases). In three cases in which services were not provided there was a subsequent maltreatment report on the family.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that CD is consistent in assessing the family's service needs, but that the services necessary to meet those needs are not always available or accessible to families. Jackson County stakeholders also expressed concern that contract agencies providing case management for families must get authorization from the agency before referring children or parents for services and this causes delays in initiating services. Several stakeholders voiced concern that the agency and/or the court tends to leave children in their homes even when there are not sufficient services to address risk issues. Jackson County stakeholders reported that if parents do not admit to drug use and there is no actual proof, the court will not support the agency's request for substance abuse treatment or urinalysis unless the parent agrees voluntarily.

Determination and Discussion: Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 24 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made diligent efforts to provide the services necessary to maintain children safely in their own homes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CD has a number of in-home services available to children and families, including Family Centered Services, Intensive In-Home Services, Family Reunion Services, in-home counseling services, parent aide and other services through Children’s Treatment Services. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CD believes that the high quality of these services has contributed to the slight decline from 2001 to 2002 in the number of children entering foster care.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the “System of Care” initiative, which is supported by the Governor and the legislature, has increased the level of cooperation among the child welfare, mental health, education, and court systems. The goal of this initiative is to divert children from the child welfare system who need mental health services but are not at risk of abuse or neglect from caretakers.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 50 cases. In assessing item 4, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 36 (72%) of the 50 applicable cases (22 of the 36 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 14 (28%) of the 50 applicable cases (4 of the 14 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. Ten of the 14 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were in Jackson County. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 71 percent of St. Louis County cases and 58 percent of Jackson County cases.

Item 4 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined 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 (19 cases).

- 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 seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) (2 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remained in the home (14 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the perpetrator from the home (1 case).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Either no services were provided or the services provided were not adequate to reduce risk of harm for all children in the family (12 cases).
- The agency did not monitor service participation or conduct a safety assessment before closing the case, thus risk of harm remained (1 case).
- There was insufficient assessment of risk of harm to a child in a foster home and risk issues were not addressed (1 case).

In many cases, reviewers identified serious problems in the family that the agency did not address but that had a high potential for contributing to risk of harm to children. These included, but were not limited to, sexual abuse perpetrated by a sibling, parental substance abuse (which was ongoing while children remained in the home), self-mutilation by an adolescent girl, evidence of physical injuries to a child, evidence of neglect, and a mother discontinuing a 6-year-old child's therapy for sexual abuse because the mother did not believe the child had been abused despite the child testing positive for a sexually transmitted disease.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that although risk assessments are being conducted, risk of harm often is not addressed because there is little follow up regarding service participation or effectiveness in bringing about change in the family. State-level stakeholders reported that risk of harm in foster care is addressed through training and that there is a new focus of the agency on safety in foster care. However, several stakeholders voiced concern that the agency places children with relatives who do not receive training and sometimes the placement occurs prior to conducting criminal background checks.

Determination and Discussion: Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 28 percent of the applicable cases reviewers determined that CD had not made diligent efforts to address the risk of harm to the children. A key concern was that services were not being provided to address potential areas of risk in the family.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Structured Decision Making is being used in the field to determine risk and safety during the hotline reports. It incorporates the parental history of maltreatment and information regarding any prior injuries to the child. The CPS-1 Child Abuse/Neglect Investigation/Family Assessment Summary was piloted in 2002 in selected parts of the State and was gradually expanded to statewide implementation in 2003.

With regard to maltreatment in foster care, the Statewide Assessment notes that CD employs a strength-based, formal process to review foster homes that have been the subject of a maltreatment report to the Hotline. Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that CD recently purchased the *Confirming Safe Environments* curriculum developed by ACTION for Child Protection in order to better ensure the safety of children in kinship and foster care placements. This curriculum is being field tested by three groups in St. Louis City, Greene County, and Pettis/Cooper Counties.

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:					
	Jackson County	Jasper County	St. Louis County	Total	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	7	1	1	9	34.6
Partially Achieved:	2	5	6	13	50.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	0	1	4	15.4
Not Applicable:	12	6	6		
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:					
	National Standard (percentage)	State's Percentage	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	
Foster care re-entries	8.6 or less	8.5	X		
Length of time to achieve reunification	76.2 or more	65.9		X	
Length of time to achieve adoption	32.0 or more	30.3		X	
Stability of foster care placements	86.7 or more	78.7		X	

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 34.6 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year (FY) 2002, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the percentage of children reunified who were reunified within 12 months of the time of entry into foster care; (2) the percentage of children adopted who achieved a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care, or (3) the percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced no more than 2 placements.

The FY 2002 data provided in the State Data Profile indicate that the State meets the national standard for the percentage of children entering foster care who were re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

Although performance on this outcome was generally quite low, there was variation across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 58 percent of Jackson County cases, compared to 17 percent of Jasper County cases and 12.5 percent of St. Louis County cases.

A key finding of the CFSR was that CD is effective in preventing re-entry into foster care (item 5). However, all other indicators for this outcome were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. Case reviewers determined that CD was not consistent in its efforts to (1) ensure children's placement stability while in foster care (item 6), (2) establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner (item 7), and (3) achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner (items 8, 9, and 10).

Information from the case reviews and stakeholder interviews suggests that key barriers to attaining permanency in a timely manner are: (1) the fact that some courts in the State do not adhere to the timeframes pertaining to permanency established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act, (2) the insufficient number of State attorneys representing the child welfare agency in court matters (resulting in continuances and ongoing delays), and (3) the unwillingness of some courts to hear TPR petitions if an adoptive family has not been found for the child.

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

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Six of the 26 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of foster care re-entries because they involved children who entered 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 assessment resulted in all six cases (100%) being rated as a Strength.

Item 5 was rated as a Strength when a child's entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. All six of these cases were in Jackson County. There were no cases in Jasper County or St. Louis County in which the child entered foster care during the period under review.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that re-entry into foster care was a problem in at least some areas of the State. They attributed re-entry to poverty, the scarcity of drug treatment services, intergenerational patterns of chronic neglect, and children's mental health problems. Stakeholders also suggested that large caseloads contribute to the re-entry rate because children's service workers close cases too early and all services are dropped when the case is closed. Consequently, children return to foster care because they need the services and their parents cannot pay for the services. Several stakeholders indicated that this situation occurs frequently when relatives assume guardianship of the child, and lose eligibility for medical and other services. St. Louis stakeholders voiced concern that contractors can keep cases open for only 3 months after children are returned home, noting that this is not enough time to resolve many of the risk issues that remain in the home.

Determination and Discussion: Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following:

- In 100 percent of the applicable cases, children entering foster care during the period under review were not entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.
- The data from the State Data Profile indicate that Missouri's re-entry rate (the percentage of children entering care who were entering within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode for FY 2002) of 8.5 percent meets the national standard of 8.6 percent or less.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the percent of entries into foster care occurring within 12 months of a prior foster care episode has decreased from 8.8 percent in 2000 to 8.5 percent in 2002.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 26 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. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 20 (77%) of the 26 applicable cases.
- Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (23%) of the 26 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. Five of the six cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement were in Jackson County. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases and 87.5 percent of St. Louis County cases, compared to 58 percent of Jackson County cases.

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 11 cases experienced only 1 placement during the period under review (no placement changes).
- Children in 7 cases experienced 2 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 4 cases experienced 3 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 4 cases experienced 4 or more placements during the period under review. (During the period under review, one of these children experienced eight placement changes and another child had six placement changes.)

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (11 cases), or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest (9 cases), such as moving a child from a foster home to a pre-adoptive placement or relative home.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child experienced multiple placement changes because of a lack of appropriate resources to meet the child's placement needs (5 cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support a placement that was at risk of disruption (1 case).
- The child's current placement is not stable (2 cases).

Three of the six children in the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were adolescents during the period under review. In two cases, the children were 10 years old, and in one case, the child was 4 years old and had experienced 6 placement changes during the period under review.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that many children in foster care do not experience placement stability. Jackson County stakeholders noted that foster children in that locality often are placed in emergency foster care for 30 days when they first enter the system. Because of a lack of placement resources, rather than moving from emergency foster care to long-term foster care after the 30-day period, many children are just moved to another emergency foster care placement for another 30 days.

St. Louis and Jasper County stakeholders suggested that placement instability is due in large part to children's behavior problems and the insufficient training and support for foster parents to enable them to effectively parent these children. State-level stakeholders suggested that placement instability may be due in part to the large caseloads carried by children's service workers that make it difficult for them to visit foster homes with sufficient frequency to address potential placement issues when they arise. State-level stakeholders also voiced concern about relative placements because they receive very little support from agency children's service workers and thus are likely to disrupt when problems arise. Finally, several stakeholders voiced concern that often the agency does not provide foster parents with adequate information about the child prior to the placement, particularly with regard to the child's problems.

Determination and Discussion: Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 23 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made concerted efforts to ensure placement stability for the children in foster care.
- Data from the State Data Profile for FY 2002 indicate that the percentage of children experiencing no more than 2 placements in their first 12 months in foster care (78.7%) does not meet the national standard of 86.7 percent or more.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CD policy encourages appropriate matching of children with foster families at the beginning of placement. However, due to the scarcity of available foster family resources, children frequently are placed in emergency foster home care or emergency residential care. The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that emergency placements are limited to 30 days (although case reviews found that some children remained in shelters for as long as 6 weeks). The Statewide Assessment also notes that State FY 2003 data indicate that the average number of placement changes children experience while in alternative care is 3.2.

Information from the Statewide Assessment suggests that the lack of available foster families may be attributed to the low maintenance payments allowed by the State. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, Missouri has traditionally been rated as one of the lowest States in the nation for basic maintenance payments to foster parents (approximately \$227 to \$307 monthly, depending on the age of the child).

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 26 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 7 was rated Strength in 17 (65%) of the 26 applicable cases.
- Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (35%) of the 26 applicable cases.

Case reviews found that the children in the 26 foster care cases had the following primary permanency goals:

- 8 children had a goal of adoption.
- 11 children had a goal of reunification.
- 4 children had a goal of guardianship.
- 2 children had a goal of long-term foster care/emancipation.
- 1 child had concurrent goals of guardianship and long-term foster care.

At the time of the onsite review, 18 of the 26 children had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. The agency had filed for termination of parental rights (TPR) in 9 of these cases. For the nine cases for which TPR had not been filed, there was no “exception” or “reason for not filing” noted in the case file.

Ratings for this item did not vary substantively across CFSR sites.

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. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The goal is appropriate but was not established in a timely manner (3 cases).
- The goal is not appropriate given the needs of the child and the circumstances of the case (7 cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that although the agency and the courts establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner for many children, there are many other children in the system whose permanency goals are not appropriate or whose permanency goals were not established in a timely manner. Several stakeholders suggested that this problem is due in part to the high level of worker turnover in the State. They noted that when a case is assigned to a new worker, that worker usually wants to “start over again,” regardless of the case history. This results in situations in which reunification is maintained as the case goal even when there is no evidence that this goal will be achieved. Several stakeholders suggested that there is a reluctance on the part of the agency and some courts to make adoption the child’s goal, particularly if the child is age 12 or older or has special needs.

Other stakeholders reported that the greatest barrier to establishing permanency goals in a timely manner is the poor communication between the courts and the agency. Stakeholders said that the judiciary in one of the review sites generally does not support the timeframes established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and perceives them as a violation of due process. Several stakeholders also suggested that some judges in the State will not terminate parental rights until an adoptive home has been found for the child. However, State-level stakeholders reported that the Court’s *Benchbook of Best Practices* has greatly improved the judiciary’s focus on permanency planning and that when the leadership within the circuit court is focused on timeframes and on moving children toward permanency, appropriate permanency goals are being established in a timely manner. Stakeholders indicated that in some localities children rarely have a goal of guardianship because the court does not view guardianship as an appropriate permanency option.

Finally, there was general agreement among stakeholders that “true” concurrent planning is not taking place consistently across the State. They noted that in most cases in which there are concurrent goals in the case file, there are not concurrent efforts to achieve the goals. Stakeholders reported that even when there are two goals, the courts and the agency usually focus on reunification first, and only when that appears problematic do they turn their attention to the other goal. Some stakeholders attributed this primarily to the courts because they determine what goals the agency can work toward.

Determination and Discussion: Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 35 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD had not established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner. A key concern identified by reviewers was that the goal of reunification was being maintained by the agency even when existing evidence indicated that the prognosis for reunification was low.

According to the Statewide Assessment, initial permanency goals are established with the family at the time of the 72-hour Family Support Team (FST) meeting. The FST meets every 30 days and reviews the permanency plan until the adjudication hearing. FST

meetings continue to be held every 6 months after adjudication (or more often if requested). The Statewide Assessment also notes that there are a number of quality assurance tools within the child welfare system to track and monitor permanency. The Continuous Quality Improvement teams at the local, regional, and State levels review Missouri's child welfare quarterly outcome reports and monthly management reports. Peer record review data also are collected quarterly and the results are shared with staff.

Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship, or Permanent Placement With Relatives

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Item 8 was applicable for 16 of the 26 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the goals of reunification or guardianship for children in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 8 (50%) of the 16 applicable cases.
- Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (50%) of the 16 applicable cases.

None of the cases in Jasper County had a permanency goal of reunification or guardianship. The item was rated as a Strength in 64 percent of the Jackson County cases compared to 20 percent of the St. Louis County cases.

Of the 16 applicable cases, 11 had a goal of reunification, 4 had a goal of guardianship, and 1 had concurrent goals of guardianship and long-term foster care. The goal was achieved in 7 cases (5 reunifications and 2 guardianships); in 3 of those cases, the goal was achieved within 12 months. The child had been in foster care for more than 12 months in 6 of the 9 cases in which the child's goal had not been achieved.

Item 8 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had made or was making concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that CD had not made diligent efforts to achieve the goal of reunification or guardianship in a timely manner.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that reunifications do not routinely occur in a timely manner. Although many children are reunified with their families very quickly (i.e., within the first 3 months) after their removal from the home, other children are staying in foster care for long periods of time before they are reunified. Stakeholders attributed delayed reunification to (1) an agency practice of keeping children in foster care (e.g., in a trial home visit) even after safety

issues have been resolved, (2) parental relapse into substance abuse, (3) incarceration of parents, (4) lack of adequate housing, and (5) scarcity of services for parents. Stakeholders reported that when parents are able to and willing to access services reunification occurs in a timely manner.

Determination and Discussion: Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following findings:

- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that for FY 2002, the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (65.9%) does not meet the national standard of 76.2 percent or more, and
- In 50 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the CD had not made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification or guardianship in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, in 2000, 68 percent of the children reunified from foster care were reunified in 12 months and in 2002, 65.9 percent were reunified in 12 months. The Statewide Assessment notes that this decline in the percentage of timely reunifications coincides with a period of staff shortages experienced in the CD and that inadequate staffing may be a critical barrier to achieving reunification in a timely manner. The Statewide Assessment also reports that the Peer Record Reviews indicate that family assessments, service plans, and service delivery are areas needing improvement in order to achieve timely reunification. However, as indicated in the Statewide Assessment, Missouri's current information system does not have the capacity to assess the correlations among the number of services, type of services, and/or length of services provided to families and the achievement of reunification in a timely manner.

Item 9. Adoption

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Eight of the 26 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 9. 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 were the following:

- Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 1 (12.5%) of the 8 applicable cases.
- Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (87.5%) of the 8 applicable cases.

None of the cases in Jackson County and only two cases in St. Louis County involved a permanency goal of adoption. The only case rated as a Strength for this item was in Jasper County.

During the CFSR period under review, adoption was finalized in 2 of the 8 applicable cases; in both of these cases, the adoption was not finalized within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care. All of the six remaining children were in adoptive placements during the period under review.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 1 case when reviewers determined that the State was making concerted efforts to achieve the goal of adoption within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when the adoption had not been finalized within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care (2 cases) or reviewers determined that there were unnecessary delays and a lack of diligent effort to finalize adoption in a timely manner (5 cases).

Case review findings indicate that the most significant barrier to achieving adoptions in a timely manner was the agency's failure to file for TPR in a timely manner. In addition, in Jasper County, case reviewers reported that the delays in adoption were due to the excessive caseload of the one attorney contracted to do termination of parental rights. In many cases, the agency recommended seeking TPR, but the attorney did not file TPR for more than a year. Reasons for delays in St. Louis County also were agency-related and pertained to late filings for TPR. In one case, delays were attributed to the need to resolve concerns pertaining to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that adoptions are occurring in a timely manner if an adoptive family is readily available and if the agency files for TPR in a timely manner. They noted that the court is likely to approve TPR and to move the case toward adoption if there is an adoptive family. They also noted that a State statute mandates that an Appeals Court must hear TPR appeals quickly, so there are no extensive delays in adoption due to TPR appeals. However, there was general agreement among stakeholders that CD is not consistent in filing for TPR in a timely manner. This was attributed in part to the perception of the agency and the courts that children age 12 and older and children with behavioral issues are "unadoptable." Stakeholders reported that very little is done by the agency or the courts to obtain TPR for a child who does not have an identified adoptive family, particularly a child in a group home or residential treatment center who does not have foster parents who would be interested in adopting him or her.

Stakeholders at the State and local levels expressed concern about the insufficient number of State attorneys assigned to represent the agency in all court matters.

Determination and Discussion: Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's percentage of finalized adoptions in FY 2002 occurring within 24 months of entry into foster care (30.3%) does not meet the national standard of 32.0 percent or more.

- In 87.5 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the State had not made concerted efforts to achieve an adoption in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there has been an increase in the percentage of children adopted within the 24-month time frame and the total number of adoptions has increased from 1,076 in 2000 to 1,337 in 2002. The Statewide Assessment attributes the increase in adoptions to improved CD and court implementation of ASFA and the resources for recruitment and training available through an Adoption Opportunities grant.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that as of August 2003, Missouri had approximately 2000 children with a goal of adoption. It was noted that staff shortages have decreased the capacity to recruit one-on-one for children, which is important in finding families for the hard to place population. The Statewide Assessment also notes that adoption staffing patterns vary across counties with some counties having adoption specialists and others not having access to an adoption specialist.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Three of the foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 10. 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 other planned permanent living arrangements. The results were the following:

- Item 10 was rated as a Strength in 1 (33%) of the 3 applicable cases.
- Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (67%) of the 3 applicable cases.

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in the one case when reviewers determined that the child was close to the age of emancipation and was receiving appropriate services to make a successful transition from foster care to independent living. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case because reviewers noted that CD had not provided appropriate services to help the child achieve independence and in another case because alternative goals had not been considered before establishing the goal of long-term foster care.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the number of children with a goal of long-term foster care has declined in recent years. They also reported that the State offers an array of independent living services and that youth

perceive these services as useful. Some stakeholders reported that youth receive extensive assistance in transitioning out of foster care and can continue to receive services until they are self sufficient.

Determination and Discussion: Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in two (67%) of the three applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri considers long-term foster care, emancipation, and guardianship as permanency goals of “other planned permanent living arrangement.” It should be noted that in the fall of 2003, the Division eliminated the use of long-term foster care as a goal. The Statewide Assessment also states that independent living services are provided in each area of the State in order to meet the individual needs of youth. While in out-of-home care, adolescents are provided with life skills training, regardless of their placement or permanency goals. Life skills training is one component of a host of programs offered through the Independent Living Program. These programs are not mandatory, but youth are strongly encouraged to participate. Missouri enhanced the capacity to serve younger children (under age 16) by setting aside a portion of the Chafee funding to supplement State funds to provide hands-on learning opportunities through a program called *Choices*. However, due to severe budgetary constraints, State funding for the *Choices* program has been eliminated.

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:					
	Jackson County	Jasper County	St. Louis County	Total	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	7	5	4	16	61.5
Partially Achieved:	5	1	3	9	34.6
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	1	1	3.8
Not Applicable:	12	6	6		

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 61.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 58 percent of Jackson County cases, and 50 percent of St. Louis County cases.

CFSR case review findings indicate that CD makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families. However, the findings also indicate a lack of consistent effort on the part of CD to (1) place siblings together in foster care; (2) promote frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, (3) seek and assess relatives as placement resources, (4) preserve children's connections to their families and heritage, and (5) support or promote the parent-child relationship.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 2 are presented below.

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Of the 26 foster care cases, 19 were applicable for an assessment of item 11. 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 whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's most recent foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 18 (95%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 11 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (5%) of the 19 applicable cases.

Item 11 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed in the same community as parents or relatives (14 cases).
- The child's out-of-county placement was necessary to meet the child's needs (4 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case because reviewers determined that the out-of-State placement with the child's great aunt was not appropriate because she no longer wants to adopt the child.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in agreement that CD makes concerted efforts to place children near parents, and that most children in foster care are placed in their same county or nearby. St. Louis stakeholders reported that the

Family-to-Family initiative in St. Louis City focuses on finding foster care placements for children in their own neighborhoods. Stakeholders noted that most out-of-State placements occur when the child is placed with a relative.

Determination and Discussion: Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 95 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD 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 were necessary to meet special needs.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the proximity of foster care placement is addressed at the time of Family Support Team meetings and during the case planning and case review process. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the Family-to-Family Project in St. Louis City strives to find placements for children within their own communities and placements that reflect the child's cultural and ethnic background.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Nineteen of the 26 foster care cases involved a child with siblings who were also in foster care. 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. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 15 (79%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (21%) of the 19 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 80 percent of St. Louis County cases and 62.5 percent of Jackson County cases.

In 15 of the 19 applicable cases, the child was in a placement with at least one other sibling, and in 8 of those cases, the child was in a placement with all siblings.

Item 12 was rated as a Strength if the child was in placement with all of his or her siblings (8 cases), or if reviewers determined that the separation of the siblings was necessary to meet at least one child's safety or treatment needs (7 cases). The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that there was no valid reason for the separation of the siblings.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency attempts to place siblings together, but that there are not enough foster home resources to accommodate sibling groups.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 21 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made concerted efforts to place siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CD child welfare policy requires staff to make special efforts to place siblings together whenever possible.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 13 was applicable for 23 of the 26 foster care cases. Three cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item because TPR had been established prior to the period under review and the parents were no longer involved in the children’s lives (or parental visitation was terminated by court order), and the child had no siblings in foster care (or visitation between siblings was considered to be not in the child’s best interest). 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 were the following:

- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 16 (70%) of the 23 applicable cases.
- Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (30%) of the 23 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 82 percent of applicable Jackson County cases, compared to 67 percent of Jasper County cases and 50 percent of St. Louis County cases.

Typical visitation between children and their mothers for the 15 cases for which this assessment was applicable was the following:

- Weekly visits – 7 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 1 case
- Monthly visits – 3 cases.
- Less than monthly visits – 4 cases.

In two of the four cases in which visits with mother occurred less frequently than once a month, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Typical visitation between children and their fathers for the 12 cases for which this assessment was applicable was the following:

- Weekly visits – 2 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits – 4 cases.
- No visits – 5 cases.

In four of the nine cases in which visits with father occurred less frequently than once a month, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

An assessment of visitation among siblings was applicable in 11 cases. Typical visitation between siblings was the following:

- Weekly visits – 2 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 4 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 5 cases.

In two of the five cases in which visitation between siblings was less than monthly, reviewers determined that the agency had made efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Item 13 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency of visitation met the needs of the child and parent, or that, when visitation was less frequent than needed, CD had made diligent efforts to promote more frequent visitation. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- CD did not promote sufficient visitation between the child and his/her father (3 cases).
- CD did not promote sufficient visitation between siblings (3 cases).
- CD did not promote sufficient visitation between the child and his/her mother (2 cases).

The opinions of stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR differed across sites. Jackson County stakeholders reported that children's service workers are committed to ensuring that children have sufficient visitation with parents and siblings. Jasper County stakeholders expressed concern that although visits between children and their parents occur once a week on a routine basis, the visits usually are only 1 hour in length and take place in the agency office. These stakeholders also noted that visitation schedules are not sufficiently flexible to accommodate working parents. St. Louis County stakeholders reported that visits are not occurring with sufficient frequency because there are not enough transportation resources to facilitate visits. These stakeholders said that there often are long waiting lists for transportation aides.

Determination and Discussion: Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 30 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation between parents and children and between siblings was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the child.

According to the Statewide Assessment, visitation between parents and siblings in foster care is arranged on an individual basis and is usually intended to occur either in a neutral setting or in the out-of-home care placement. Visits also occur during monthly Family Support Team meetings and may be more frequent based upon the Team recommendations for the family. Visitation plans and schedules are developed at the time of the Family Support Team meetings.

Item 14. Preserving connections

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 26 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 14. 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, family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 21 (81%) of the 26 applicable cases.
- Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (19%) of the 26 applicable cases.

In 20 of the 26 cases, case reviewers determined that children's primary connections had been “significantly” preserved while they were in foster care; and in 6 of the 26 cases, reviewers determined that children’s primary connections had been “partially” preserved. In two cases, the child in foster care was Native American. In one case, reviewers determined that CD had notified the Tribe appropriately and had made concerted efforts to ensure that the child’s connections to the Tribe were maintained. In the other case, reviewers noted that CD had not contacted the Tribe in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Item 14 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that CD had made diligent efforts to achieve one or more of the following:

- Preservation of child’s primary connections with extended family members (19 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with school, community, and friends (5 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with religion and ethnic/racial heritage (2 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with former foster parents (2 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency had not made appropriate efforts to ensure that the child’s connection with his Native American heritage was preserved (1 case).
- The agency had not made efforts to preserve the child’s connections to extended family (4 cases).
- The agency had not made efforts to preserve the child’s connections to family, friends, community, or culture (2 cases).

Some stakeholders commenting on this item reported that CD makes concerted efforts to preserve connections, although other stakeholders suggested that cuts in the budget have had a negative impact on the agency’s ability to preserve children’s connections. A few stakeholders noted that religious beliefs are not taken into account when children are placed in foster care. Other stakeholders indicated that part of the foster parent training focuses on the foster parent’s responsibilities with regard to preserving children’s connections.

Determination and Discussion: Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 19 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections. A key concern identified by case reviewers was that CD is not consistent in its efforts to promote or maintain children’s connections with extended family members.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri policy requires that all terms of the Indian Child Welfare Act be followed in cases in which the child or family is identified as being Native American.

Item 15. Relative placement

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 26 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 15. 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 were the following:

- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 21 (81%) of the 26 applicable cases.
- Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (19%) of the 26 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases and 87.5 percent of St. Louis County cases, compared to 67 percent of Jackson County cases.

Item 15 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children were placed with relatives (13 cases) or that CD had made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives (8 cases). The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the child was not placed with a relative and CD had not made diligent efforts to search for either paternal or maternal relatives (1 case), or had searched for maternal but not paternal relatives (4 cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CD views placement with relatives as a priority and makes concerted efforts to seek relatives as placement resources, including conducting searches for absent fathers. However, a few stakeholders indicated that the court sometimes will not place children with relatives because there is a perception that some problems, such as substance abuse, are intergenerational or are likely to be exhibited by more than one family member. Other stakeholders suggested that agency children's service workers need to be more diligent in seeking appropriate relatives.

Several stakeholders also voiced concern that there is little financial support for relative caregivers and that agency children's service workers who are responsible for relative caregiver families (Legal Status 3 cases) have very high caseloads and generally cannot provide relatives with case management or other services. Missouri does provide financial support for relative caregivers through several programs. One program is available through the Division of Family Support, and the CD provides several other programs specifically for relative caregivers. A few stakeholders expressed concern that the court will order placement with a relative before a criminal background check has been completed. However, if the Division is placing a foster child in a relative placement, a criminal background check and a child abuse and neglect check must be completed along with competency-based training and a home study prior to placement.

Determination and Discussion: Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 27 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess all relatives as potential placement resources.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri child welfare policy requires that when out-of-home placement is considered, priority must be given to immediate and extended family members. The Statewide Assessment notes that the Point-in-Time Permanency Profile indicates that the number of children in relative foster homes decreased from 24 percent in Federal FY 2000 to 20.7 in Federal FY 2002. The Statewide Assessment also notes that Missouri's *Grandparents as Foster Parents Program* is an Income Maintenance program that offers financial support to grandparents, and in some cases, other relatives who care for related children in their custody or guardianship. However, children receiving services under this program are not in the custody of the Children's Division and applicants for this program must meet a needs test of 200 percent below the Federal poverty level. The Statewide Assessment notes that funding for this program was severely cut by the legislature in 2003.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 16 was applicable for 19 of the 26 foster care cases. A case was considered not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, or if a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child’s best interests. 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/or fathers. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 13 (68%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (32%) of the 19 applicable cases.

Item 16 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that CD had made concerted efforts to promote the parent-child bond of children in foster care. These efforts included encouraging visitation and providing therapy and counseling to parents. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency did not promote parental involvement with the child or attempt to strengthen the parent-child relationship through visitation or participation in other activities. In four of these cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made sufficient efforts to promote the child’s relationship with the father by encouraging visitation with the father or involvement of the father in planning for the child.

St. Louis stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that parent-child bonding is promoted by maintaining visits, encouraging letter writing, involving parents in school meetings, and inviting parents to medical appointments. Barriers to bonding were lack of sufficient transportation, parental behavior at visits, and parents’ work schedules.

Determination and Discussion: Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 32 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made diligent efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. A key concern pertained to a lack of effort to maintain children’s relationships with non-custodial fathers.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there are a number of initiatives in the State that are designed to promote the relationship between children in foster care and their parents. Several initiatives focus on developing and maintaining positive interaction between children in foster care and parents who are incarcerated; a Transition from Prison to Community Initiative is a model developed through the National Institute of Corrections and a pilot project being planned for all women’s prison facilities is being developed to assist with transportation, supervision, and counseling for children and their mothers. In addition, a federally-funded demonstration project, called the Fatherhood Initiative, is being implemented to provide opportunities, resources, and supports to promote

responsible fatherhood. The Statewide Assessment also notes that State child welfare policy requires agency staff to make and document diligent efforts to locate absent or missing parents of children in foster care.

In addition, information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that State child welfare policy requires staff to encourage parents to discuss out-of-home placement in a positive manner with the child and to assist the family in notifying the child’s school, doctors, dentists, and others with whom the child may have been involved. A visit between the child and parents is required to occur prior to the initial 72 hour team meeting unless the court has restricted visitation. Birth parents also are encouraged to remain involved in the decision making process throughout placement and to be involved in developing life books for children when appropriate.

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:					
	Jackson County	Jasper County	St. Louis County	Total	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	7	10	4	21	42.0
Partially Achieved:	10	2	4	16	32.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	7	0	6	13	26.0
Not Applicable:	0	0	0		

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 42.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 29 percent of Jackson County and St. Louis County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that all indicators for Well-Being Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviews found that CD was not consistent in its efforts to assess children and families for services and provide necessary services, involve

parents and children in the case planning process, and establish sufficient face-to-face contact between agency children's service workers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

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, foster parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 50 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. The results were the following:

- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 27 (54%) of the 50 applicable cases (15 of the 27 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 23 (46%) of the 50 applicable cases (11 of the 23 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for item 17 did not differ substantively by type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services case). Item ratings did vary considerably across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 42 percent of Jackson County cases and 36 percent of St. Louis County cases.

Item 17 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that CD had made diligent efforts to (1) assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents, and (2) provide appropriate services to meet identified needs. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Children's needs were not assessed (10 of 50 applicable cases, 1 of which was a foster care case).
- Mother's needs were not assessed (11 of 45 applicable cases, 4 of which were foster care cases).
- Father's needs were not assessed (16 of 35 applicable cases, 5 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to children (14 of 50 applicable cases, 5 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to mothers (11 of 45 applicable cases, 3 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to fathers (11 of 35 applicable cases, 4 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to foster parents (6 of 20 applicable cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR suggested that CD is effective in assessing needs and identifying services, but that accessing services often is problematic. Stakeholders reported that funding for services is insufficient to meet the need and that recent budget decreases have resulted in increased difficulty accessing services for families. Several stakeholders reported that services are not funded even when they are court ordered.

Determination and Discussion: Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 46 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CD had not adequately assessed and/or addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. A key concern pertained to the lack of assessment and service provision to fathers. The father’s needs were not assessed in 46 percent of the applicable cases, and services were not provided to address identified service needs in 31 percent of the cases. However, a large percentage of mothers and children also were not assessed for service needs and did not receive services.

According to the Statewide Assessment, for intact families, Missouri policy requires an initial assessment of the family to be completed within 30 days of receipt of a Hotline referral. If the case is open longer than 30 days, a more in-depth assessment is completed on the family, and tools, including the eco-map, genogram, and timelines, are completed. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the comprehensive information gathered drives the development of the Family Plan for Change. This plan is reviewed by supervisors monthly and revised every 90 days. For children in out-of-home care, the needs of parents and children are assessed at the time of the initial 72-hour Family Support Team (FST) meeting and ongoing assessments occur every 30 days thereafter until adjudication. FSTs continue to be held every 6 months after adjudication.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 18 was applicable for all 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents (including pre-adoptive parents or permanent caregivers) and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in the case planning, 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 was rated as a Strength in 28 (56%) of the 50 applicable cases (16 of the 28 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 22 (44%) of the 50 applicable cases (10 of the 22 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item varied by type of case, with the item rated as a Strength in 61 percent of foster care cases compared to 50 percent of in-home services cases. Ratings also differed across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 43 percent of St. Louis County cases and 42 percent of Jackson County cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Fathers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (16 [46%] of 35 applicable cases).
- Mothers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (15 [35%] of 43 applicable cases).
- Children who were old enough to have been involved in case planning were not involved (12 [39%] of 31 applicable cases).

The opinions of stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR differed across sites. Jasper County stakeholders reported that parents are routinely involved in the case planning process. State-level stakeholders expressed the opinion that parents are involved in case planning in the foster care cases, but not in the in-home services cases (intact cases). St. Louis County and Jackson County stakeholders suggested that the extent of involvement of parents in case planning depends on the skills and experience of the children's service workers.

All stakeholders were in agreement that the FST meetings are an effective vehicle for engaging parents and children in case planning. However, some stakeholders suggested that although children frequently attend the FST meetings, they are not always given the opportunity to speak at those meetings, even when they are older. Stakeholders also noted that while all parents are invited to attend FST meetings, they often do not perceive that their issues or concerns are heard or incorporated into the planning process.

Determination and Discussion: Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 44 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. A key concern pertained to the lack of involvement of fathers in case planning, although more than one-third of the mothers and eligible children also were not involved in the case planning process.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State recognizes that only limited efforts are made to reach out to families to fully engage them in the case planning process and encourage them to attend FST meetings. The Statewide Assessment also notes that case plans are not always developed in conjunction with the families. Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates improvement in this area, however. State Practice Development Reviews found that in State FY 1999, 69 percent of children and families were active participants in case planning, while in State FY 2002, 79 percent of children and families actively participated in case planning.

Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 50 cases were applicable for an assessment of item 19. In conducting this assessment, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the children's service workers 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 were the following:

- Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 31 (62%) of the 50 applicable cases (18 of the 31 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 19 (38%) of the 50 applicable cases (8 of the 19 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item differed somewhat by type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 69 percent of the foster care cases compared to 54 percent of the in-home services cases. Ratings also differed across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 62.5 percent of Jackson County cases and 43 percent of St. Louis County cases.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of children's service workers' face-to-face visits with children in the 26 foster care cases:

- In 1 case, visits typically occurred once a week.
- In 7 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 11 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 7 cases, visits typically occurred less frequently than once a month.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of children's service workers' face-to-face visits with children in the 24 in-home services cases:

- In 2 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 17 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 5 cases, visits typically occurred less frequently than once a month.

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

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of social worker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child and when visits did occur, they did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (12 cases).
- The frequency of social worker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, but when visits did occur, they focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (2 cases).
- The frequency of social worker visits was sufficient to meet the needs of the child, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (5 cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the level of face-to-face contact between children's service workers and the children in their caseloads is not sufficient to ensure children's safety and well being and promote case goals, particularly for children in the in-home services cases. Stakeholders voiced concern about the lack of caseworker contact with children whose families are receiving services while the children remain in their homes. They noted that these children's service workers have too many cases to permit sufficient face-to-face contact with the children, and that children's service workers tend to make a lot of visits in a few cases and no visits in other cases. Jasper County stakeholders suggested that children's service workers need to visit children more often in their homes or foster homes.

Determination and Discussion: Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 38 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality to ensure children's safety and promote attainment of case goals.

According to the Statewide Assessment, for intact families, the frequency of in-person contact is based on the level of risk and the Family Plan for Change. However, CD children's service workers are required to have face-to-face contact with the child in the home at least once every 30 days. Missouri's Peer Record Review results indicate that the mandated frequency of worker visits with intact families occurred 82 percent of the time during the fourth quarter of 2002.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that for out-of-home care cases, the CD worker is required to meet face-to-face with children once every 2 weeks, not including supervised visitation with siblings or other family members. In Jackson County, the Consent Decree mandates that weekly contact with the child occur for the first 8 weeks of any new placement. After the first 8 weeks, the CD worker must have twice a month, face-to-face contact with the child. The CFSR case reviews indicate that for the foster care cases, many children's service workers are not adhering to State policy with regard to the required face-to-face contact with children every 2 weeks. Information in the Statewide Assessment notes that key barriers preventing more frequent worker contacts with the child are large caseloads and high turnover rates.

Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 20 was applicable for 47 cases. Cases were not applicable for assessment if parents were no longer involved in the lives of their children despite agency efforts to involve them. Reviewers were to assess whether the worker's face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers (including pre-adoptive 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 were the following:

- Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 27 (57%) of the 47 cases (14 of the 27 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 20 (43%) of the 47 cases (9 of the 20 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item did not differ substantively by type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 61 percent of the foster care cases, compared to 54 percent of the in-home services cases. However, ratings for the item did vary across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 82 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 54 percent of St. Louis County cases and 48 percent of Jackson County cases.

Typical patterns of social worker visits with mothers (including pre-adoptive mothers) were the following (42 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits – 3 cases (all of which were foster care cases).
- Twice a month visits - 3 cases (none of which were foster care cases).
- Monthly visits – 22 cases (7 of which were foster care cases).
- Less than monthly visits – 13 cases (7 of which were foster care cases).
- No visits – 1 case (which was a foster care case).

Typical patterns of social worker visits with fathers (including pre-adoptive fathers) were the following (30 applicable cases):

- Monthly visits - 13 cases (4 of which were foster care cases).
- Less than monthly visits – 10 cases (6 of which were foster care cases).
- No visits – 7 cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

Item 20 was rated as a Strength 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. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Caseworker visits with parents were not occurring with sufficient frequency, and even when they did occur, they did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (12 cases).
- Caseworker visits with parents occurred with sufficient frequency, but did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (3 cases).
- Caseworker visits with parents were not occurring with sufficient frequency, but when they did occur they focused on substantive issues pertaining to the case (4 cases).
- There were no visits between the caseworker and the parents (1 case).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSSR expressed the opinion that the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with parents varies across children’s service workers. Several stakeholders indicated that scheduling visits with parents is challenging for children’s service workers because of their high caseloads.

Determination and Discussion: Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 43 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with both mothers and fathers were not sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals.

According to the Statewide Assessment, children’s service workers are required to visit parents in the home at least monthly. In addition, children’s service workers are expected to have contact with parents during visitation and FST meetings. CD children’s service workers are also required to have weekly phone contact with the family and on-going contact with other professionals working with the family.

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:					
	Jackson County	Jasper County	St. Louis County	Total	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	17	6	5	28	80.0
Partially Achieved:	2	0	1	3	8.6
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	0	2	4	11.4
Not Applicable:	3	6	6	15	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that the outcome was achieved in 80.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of Jasper County cases and 81 percent of Jackson County cases, compared to 62.5 percent of St. Louis County cases.

A key CFSR finding was that CD is not consistently effective in meeting children's educational needs, particularly children in the in-home services cases.

The findings for the item assessed for Well Being Outcome 2 are presented below.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 21 was applicable for 35 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for assessment were those in which the children were not of school age or were in their own homes and educational needs were not an issue. 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 were the following:

- Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 28 (80%) of the 35 applicable cases (17 of the 28 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (20%) of the 35 applicable cases (4 of the 7 cases were foster care cases).

Item 21 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all potential educational needs were assessed and addressed as appropriate. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that there was clear evidence that the child had education-related service needs that were not being addressed by the agency. For example, in three in-home services cases, children were not attending school on a routine basis and the agency did not respond to this concern. In one foster care case, the child was suspended from school until January 2004 and the agency did not provide alternative education-related services.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CD makes concerted efforts to meet children's educational needs, although placement changes often result in children having to change schools. State-level stakeholders

reported that there are 80 school-based social children's service workers in the State to address issues pertinent to children who have had contact with the child welfare agency. The social worker is an employee of the school district but CD pays 75 percent of the salary. Jackson County stakeholders reported that under the Consent Decree, the agency has hired an Educational Advocate for children in foster care and this has resulted in improved education-related services for these children.

Determination and Discussion: Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 20 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made diligent efforts to meet children's educational needs. A key concern pertained to addressing truancy and educational neglect in the in-home services cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri policy requires that specific educational information be collected on children in out-of-home care in order to document the child's grade level, individual education plan, special classes, extracurricular activities, and special achievements/honors. In addition, as part of the Consent Decree, Jackson County employs an Educational Advocate for children in out-of-home care. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, Peer Record Review results found that children in alternative care were receiving the appropriate educational services 96 percent of the time during the last quarter of 2002.

The Statewide Assessment notes that foster parents are expected to serve as the representative surrogate parent for foster children with disabilities during the Individual Education Plan process and other educational activities. For children placed in residential care, it is the responsibility of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to appoint a representative.

Information in the Statewide Assessment notes that Missouri Senate Bill 757 strengthened the cooperation between CD and school districts by requiring each school district to identify a school liaison. Upon receipt of a Hotline referral, the assigned children's service worker is required to contact the designated school liaison as part of the investigation/assessment protocols.

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:					
	Jackson County	Jasper County	St. Louis County	Total	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	16	11	8	35	71.4
Partially Achieved:	5	1	3	9	18.4
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	0	3	5	10.2
Not Applicable:	1	0	0	1	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 71.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 92 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 70 percent of Jackson County cases and 57 percent of St. Louis County cases.

The CFSR case reviews found that CD was not consistently effective in meetings children’s physical and mental health needs. A particular concern pertained to the mental health needs of children in the in-home services cases. In many of those cases, reviewers determined that a mental health assessment and/or mental health services were warranted, but the agency did not respond.

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 Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 22 was applicable for 44 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for this assessment were in-home services 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 had been appropriately assessed; and (2) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 36 (82%) of the 44 applicable cases (23 of the 36 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (18%) of the 44 applicable cases (3 of the 8 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item varied by type of case, with 88 percent of foster care cases rated as a Strength for the item compared to 72 percent of applicable in-home services cases. Ratings also varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 91 percent of Jasper County cases and 85 percent of Jackson County Cases, compared to 69 percent of St. Louis County cases.

Item 22 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children's health needs were routinely assessed and services were provided as needed. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that there was clear evidence of health-related needs that were not being addressed by the agency.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CD is consistent in ensuring that the physical health needs of children in foster care are met, although they noted that in some areas of the State, it is difficult to find a dentist who will accept Medicaid. Jackson County stakeholders reported that there is a dental van that travels around the county to provide dental care. Stakeholders in this county also suggested that the consent decree has improved the county's ability to meet children's physical health needs and that having a medical unit has been helpful with cases in which a child has medical concerns.

Determination and Discussion: Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 18 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD had not adequately addressed the health needs of children, particularly children in the in-home services cases. A key concern pertained to the lack of health services for all children in the family in the in-home services cases and a lack of sufficient dental services for children in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CD policy requires that an initial health exam for the child be held within 24 hours of coming into foster care (or as soon as possible), including a complete Healthy Child and Youth screening. If a medical provider is not readily accessible, this exam must occur within 10 days of the initial placement. Policy also requires children's service workers to ensure that medical information is obtained from the parent/physician and given to the foster parents within 72 hours of placement, if possible, and no later than 30 days.

The Statewide Assessment notes that placement providers must maintain a record of health care, especially immunization records, and cooperate with CD in arranging for routine medical and dental care and ensuring that children receive appropriate care during any illness.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that although Medicaid covers all children in out-of-home care, foster parents across the State have reported that it is difficult to locate dentists who will accept Missouri Medicaid. The CD has developed medical foster homes to care for medically fragile children in out-of-home care. This has helped to keep children in the community and out of institutions. Foster parents receive specialized training geared to the specific medical needs of the child.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Jackson County is required to collect data in regard to prevention as well as on-going health care for children in out-of-home placement. The County has a special database that was custom-built for the Consent Decree and serves as a model for the rest of the State. In addition, the County has a Medical Unit that is available to answer staff questions regarding any medical issue. Staff frequently contact the Medical Unit to obtain information on medications children are prescribed in order to determine side effects or safety risks to the child. The Medical Unit also is contacted about Medicaid, healthcare billing, and medical foster home questions.

For children from intact families, the children's parents are responsible for all health care. Through the Child Health Incentive Program, Missouri offers health insurance to families whose income is up to 300 percent of the poverty level.

Stakeholders expressed concern regarding how difficult it is to access medical services through an HMO or Medicaid when a child is placed in care or when a child switches placements. They reported that it can take up to 15 days to secure Medicaid coverage when a child moves from an area of the State that is covered by an HMO to an area that does not have a managed care provider. Conversely, if the child is originally covered by Medicaid and then needs to switch to an HMO, there are also delays. As reported by stakeholders, the State Medicaid office cannot process changes until the caseworker changes the child's placement location in the system, and there are frequent delays in entering this critical information.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 23 was applicable for 40 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were those in which the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or in-home services cases in which mental health needs were not an issue. 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 were the following:

- Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 31 (77.5%) of the 40 applicable cases (18 of the 31 cases were foster care cases).

- Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (22.5%) of the 40 applicable cases (3 of the 9 cases were foster care cases).

Item ratings differed as a function of case type. The item was rated as a Strength in 86 percent of the foster care cases compared to 68 percent of the in-home services cases. Ratings also varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 73 percent of Jackson County cases and 67 percent of St. Louis County cases.

Reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were “significantly” assessed in 31 cases, “partially” assessed in 3 cases, and “not at all” assessed in 6 cases. Reviewers determined that identified mental health service needs were “significantly met” in 31 cases, “partially met” in 5 cases, and “not at all met” in 4 cases.

Item 23 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were "significantly" or “partially” assessed, and mental health needs were significantly addressed when necessary. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Mental health needs were not fully assessed, although a mental health assessment was warranted (7 cases).
- Mental health needs were assessed but needed services were not provided (2 cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there are insufficient mental health services in many areas of the State to meet the needs of the children in foster care and in-home services cases. They noted that the child welfare agency has difficulty obtaining psychological services and substance abuse treatment services for children through the State mental health agencies. Specific concerns noted were a lack of qualified therapists who understand child abuse and neglect, a scarcity of services for dually diagnosed children, and a lack of services for children with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. However, most Jasper County stakeholders suggested that children in foster care and in-home services cases in that county have access to sufficient and high quality mental health services. In addition, State-level stakeholders reported that the System of Care initiative implemented in conjunction with the mental health agency is focused on providing mental health services to children with serious mental health concerns without bringing them into residential care.

Determination and Discussion: Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 22.5 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CD had not made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires that the children’s service worker must ensure that children with serious emotional and behavioral needs receive appropriate counseling, therapy, and/or medication. Also, the worker must ensure that the

placement provider has the knowledge and skills necessary to provide appropriate care for the child. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the mental health system in Missouri has very limited resources for placing children in residential treatment. The new System of Care initiative has the goal of improving interagency coordination and better matching youth to the agency most suitable for their needs. To address this concern, CD has developed Behavioral Foster Care and Career Foster Care for children with behavioral and/or emotional problems. These foster parents receive payments that are more than the traditional foster care board rates but are less than the residential care rate.

The Statewide Assessment notes that access to mental health services for children remains an issue for intact families due to barriers of transportation, insurance, and lack of knowledge about the mental health system.

SECTION 2: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

Missouri achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. Information pertaining to the item addressed for this factor is provided 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 months, has been) in foster care.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item is rated as a Strength because the CFSR determined that the State’s legacy system captures all of the information required to identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State’s current legacy system can accurately determine the status, demographics, location, and goals for all children involved in foster care. However, the Statewide Assessment notes that case level data are not always entered in a timely and consistent manner, making their validity questionable, and that outcome data produced by the system for the monthly management reports are not consistently used by the area and county offices or the Central Office to target problems with service delivery.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, Missouri is in the process of creating a comprehensive case management system, which will be known as the Family and Children’s Electronic System (FACES). As part of the multi-year development and implementation process, the State recently launched a new routine that links all clients in the various subsystems through a common departmental client number, which produces a case history using a unique identifier.

Stakeholders commenting on the legacy system during the onsite CFSR reported that it can track the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals of children in foster care. While stakeholders acknowledged that the system contains valuable data, they reported that accessing information is a cumbersome process that requires multiple steps. While some stakeholders found that the system-generated reports are helpful, other stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the accessibility and quality of the reports. Stakeholders also expressed concern that data are not entered in a timely manner.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

The State of Missouri is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Information on the items assessed for this systemic factor is presented below.

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 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because CFSR findings indicated that case plans are not developed jointly with the child’s parent on a consistent basis.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires that case planning and review activities must be conducted within specified time frames through use of Family Support Team (FST) meetings. Family Support Teams are required to meet within 72 hours of a child’s entry into care. Each team consists of the children’s service worker, the supervisor, the parents/caregivers, child (if age appropriate), juvenile officer, guardian *ad litem* and/or CASA, parents’ attorneys, family advocates, placement provider, treatment provider(s), and school personnel. The preliminary treatment plan developed with the family during the 72-hour FST meeting establishes the foundation for the initial 30-day treatment period. After the initial meeting, the FST meeting is held every 30 days to

assess the progress of services, visitation plans, financial support, and continued case planning. After adjudication, FST meetings are held every 6 months.

The Statewide Assessment notes that despite the use of FST meetings, the agency is not consistent in its efforts to reach out to families to encourage their attendance at FST meetings and engage them in the case-planning process. It was reported in the Statewide Assessment that case plans are not always developed in conjunction with families.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that foster children have case plans. Although stakeholders noted that FST meetings are helpful and engage multiple parties in the development of the plan, they observed that parental participation varies across jurisdictions and programs. This is consistent with case review findings indicating that parents and youth were involved in case planning in only 56 percent of the cases. However, parents and youth were involved in case planning in 100 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 43 percent of St. Louis County cases and 42 percent of Jackson County cases.

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 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR determined that FST meetings are not consistently held in a timely manner and do not meet the Federal requirement that a person who is not involved in the case must be a participant in the review (i.e., a third-party participant).

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires periodic reviews to be held every 6 months for every child in out-of-home care. As Missouri does not have a citizen review process and does not conduct court reviews every 6-months, the FST meeting serves as the agency-administered, third-party review process. An FST meeting must be scheduled prior to the end of the child's first 30 days in out-of-home care and monthly thereafter until adjudication. After adjudication, FST meetings must be held at least every 6 months.

The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that despite policy requirements, FST meetings are not held in compliance with mandated timeframes on a consistent basis. A review conducted in September 2003 found that only 68 percent of the necessary FST meetings were held in a timely manner. The Statewide Assessment reports that when the FST meetings are not held in a timely manner, it is

usually because the worker has experienced difficulties in finding the time to schedule and facilitate the meeting due to high caseloads. The Statewide Assessment also reports that even when FST meetings occur within required timeframes, children’s service workers do not always enter information in the database in a timely manner, and this impacts the accuracy of available tracking data.

Stakeholders in Jasper and St. Louis Counties and at the State level who commented on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the 6-month FST meetings are taking place in a timely manner. Stakeholders in Jasper County indicated that the reviews regularly occur every 6 months. St. Louis County stakeholders noted that reviews are held every 90 days following adjudication. However, Jackson County stakeholders indicated that FST meeting reviews are not held in a timely manner. These stakeholders also expressed concern about the children’s service workers’ ability to schedule the meetings given their caseload demands, and the general quality of the review.

Stakeholders also voiced concern about the absence of a third-party reviewer during the FST meeting. Federal law requires that the review process must include at least one person who is not directly involved with the case, but most FST meetings do not meet this requirement because only those individuals involved in the case are invited to participate.

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 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR determined that the State does not have a process in place to ensure that, on a consistent basis, each child in foster care has a permanency hearing no later than 12 months from the date the child enters foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter. In addition, many of the 12-month hearings involve only “paper” reviews and full hearings are not being held unless one of the parties specifically requests it.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri State Code requires that juvenile courts conduct a permanency hearing within 12 months of the date of the child’s initial placement and at least annually thereafter. Several judicial circuits have increased the frequency of permanency hearings to every 6 months, or even every 3 months, in order to expedite permanency for children.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the State has implemented several measures to ensure that the 12-month hearings promote permanency. These include providing training on permanency-related issues for commissioners and court personnel and using bench

cards for juvenile judges to guide reviews. In addition, the three courts involved in the Juvenile Court Improvement Project (CIP) have been successful in implementing the court reforms required by the Adoption and Safe Families Act (i.e., establishing mandatory hearings, increasing the thoroughness of the review, providing timely appointment of legal representation, reducing continuances, etc.). Although five new CIP efforts were approved in 2001, the legislature has not appropriated State funds to permit the implementation of these projects.

The Statewide Assessment also notes, however, that there is no statewide system in place for tracking the timeliness of permanency hearings, although some judicial circuits have developed internal mechanisms to track the hearings and ensure they are occurring in a timely manner. At present, there is no existing method to measure the quality, quantity, and timeliness of juvenile court hearings on a statewide basis, except in the three sites involved in the CIP.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the 12-month permanency hearings are held in a timely manner. However, Jasper County stakeholders reported that there currently is a backlog of reviews scheduled, which makes it difficult to ensure that they are held in a timely manner. Stakeholders in Jackson County reported that the first permanency hearing is usually a comprehensive review, but that subsequent 12-month permanency hearings are often “paper reviews” rather than full hearings, unless a full hearing is requested by one of the parties. Finally, consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment, State-level stakeholders noted that while most metropolitan circuit courts have established internal systems to track the timeliness of permanency hearings, a statewide system will not be implemented until 2007.

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

This item is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because CFSR findings indicate that the Children’s Division does not comply with the statewide process for termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings in accordance with the provisions of ASFA.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri statutes support ASFA provisions regarding the filing of TPR petitions and the juvenile courts have become increasingly committed to meeting these provisions and other ASFA timeframes. In Missouri, the juvenile court officers typically file the petitions for TPR, although child welfare agency children’s service workers have access to Department of Social Service attorneys who prepare TPR petitions for some cases. The Statewide Assessment notes that foster parents also may file TPR petitions on behalf of children in their care. The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that practices

regarding TPR continue to vary among the juvenile courts in the State. For example, some courts prefer to file TPR petitions only after a prospective adoptive family has been identified, while other courts will file in accordance with ASFA timeframes even if an adoptive resource has not been located. The Statewide Assessment reports that dissemination of the *Missouri Resource Guide for Best Practices in Child Abuse and Neglect Case Timelines* represents a major systemic enhancement to ensure greater consistency of practice.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that the State has established procedures for filing for TPR in accordance with ASFA timeframes. However, although State-level stakeholders indicated that TPR hearings are usually held in a timely manner, local-level stakeholders reported that there are lengthy delays. These stakeholders expressed frustration with both agency and judicial practices pertaining to TPR and identified the following as barriers to completing the TPR process:

- Lack of agency representation in court that results in the granting of continuances for hearings.
- Lack of legal representation for parents until the first TPR hearing that also results in the granting of continuances.
- The practice of having the Juvenile Court Officer make decisions regarding the appropriateness of the agency's TPR petition before allowing it to be scheduled on the court docket.
- Lack of a diligent search for fathers by the agency early on in the case so that the search must begin at the time of the TPR petition.
- Reluctance by the agency to pursue adoption as a goal due to the perception that (1) the court will not grant TPR or (2) the adoptive resource must be in place before proceeding.
- Denial of TPR petitions by the court if an adoptive resource is not available (thus children languish in foster care).
- Judicial hesitancy to cease "reasonable efforts" with parents (often due to lack of services).
- Judicial bias toward reunification and opposition to TPR (in principle).
- Resistance by the courts to acknowledge agency recommendations.

Many stakeholders also expressed concern about the extent of tension between CD and the courts with regard to adherence to the provisions of ASFA, although they acknowledged that the agency and the courts engage in several joint initiatives. State-level stakeholders expressed concern that CD performance is hampered by a lack of clarity regarding the respective roles of child welfare children's service workers and court personnel in making permanency decisions.

Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive 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 Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR determined that the State does not have a statewide process to ensure the consistent notification of caregivers about court hearings or to ensure that they can be heard in those hearings on a consistent basis. One concern identified was that although the State statute mandates notification, it does not specify who is responsible for notification—i.e., the courts or the child welfare agency.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri’s statute mandates that the current foster parents, or any pre-adoptive parent or relative currently providing care for the child, shall be provided with notice of hearings and be given an opportunity to be heard in any permanency or other review hearing held for the child. The statute also enables former foster caregivers, who have cared for the children within the previous 2 years, to testify at any hearing after the child has been adjudicated.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the roles and responsibilities of CD and the courts regarding notification are not clearly defined in the statute. There is no automated process for sending notification of hearings and tracking contact information, within either CD or the courts. Contact information is not shared between the two systems. Therefore, court personnel do not have access to the CD management information system to help locate individuals who should be notified of hearings. It is not known to what extent foster/adoptive parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers are given notice of hearings, as the courts and the agency do not track this information.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers are routinely notified of hearings. However, stakeholders reported that responsibility for notification varies across jurisdictions, with the child welfare agency having the responsibility in one locality, while the court has responsibility in another locality. Children’s service workers have responsibility for notifying foster parents about FST meetings. Stakeholders reported that foster parents attend hearings, but that the opportunity for caregivers to be heard during court proceedings varies across judges and circuits. Most stakeholders suggested that, in general, foster parents will attend the FST meetings and the court hearings, but are not really involved in these processes.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Missouri is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided 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 CFSR findings indicate that the State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that foster children are provided with quality services that protect their safety and health.

According to the Statewide Assessment, all foster and adoptive parents in Missouri must undergo a rigorous approval process that includes a State criminal background check, a child abuse/neglect registry check, an assessment of the physical health of the family, and fire and safety inspections. Residential Care Agencies also must meet minimal guidelines for safety and fire protection for licensure. These include maintaining adequate sanitation, space, and necessary equipment to meet the child’s needs and meeting licensing requirements regarding health care, emergency medical care, psychiatric and psychological care, and medication monitoring.

The Statewide Assessment notes that in order to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health, CD has established a standard that requires agency workers to visit children twice a month, with at least one of those visits occurring in the home of the foster family. However, the Statewide Assessment notes that the results of a Peer Record Review conducted in 2002 reveal that staff visited children on a bimonthly basis only 63 to 70 percent of the time. The CFSR case review

findings indicate that visitation involving weekly or twice a month visits was typical in only 8 (31%) of the 26 foster care cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that the Out-of-Home Investigative Unit (OHI) investigates allegations of abuse and neglect in all child-caring facilities, including licensed foster homes, residential treatment centers, licensed day care providers, and schools. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, having a specialized unit within the agency responsible for investigating maltreatment allegations of children in foster care enables consistent, objective, and high-quality investigations.

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR indicated that the State's standards and practices are effective in ensuring that children in foster care are provided with quality services to protect their health and safety. Stakeholders identified *Specialized Training, Assessment, Resources, Support, and Skills* (STARS) training, the use of FST meetings, and a rigorous biennial re-licensing process as effective practices to uphold these standards. State-level stakeholders also noted that the State has established safety outcome measures and standards for foster care that are tracked and monitored.

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 CFSR found that the State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system statewide.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri has two direct avenues for quality assurance that feed into the overall CQI System. The first component includes the Practice Development Review (PDR) and the Peer Record Review (PRR). The second component uses outcomes and outcome measures to monitor agency performance and guide future initiatives. Outcome measures mirror the Children's Bureau outcomes of safety, permanency, and well being, as well as other outcomes such as the timeliness of initial child contact when investigating child abuse and neglect, adoption disruptions, placing children with relative care providers, and the number of family-centered service cases remaining open longer than 12 months.

The Statewide Assessment notes that Missouri has implemented other statewide efforts to assess the strengths and needs of the child welfare system. For example, the CD sends out monthly client and foster/relative family surveys to receive feedback regarding the quality of service delivery.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, special quality assurance efforts have been established in Jackson County as a result of the *G.L. v. Stangler* Consent Decree. Jackson County now has an internal Quality Assurance Unit that monitors compliance with the requirements of the Consent Decree. In addition, an external Monitoring Committee reviews agency outcomes and identifies action steps regarding areas needing improvement, as part of the Consent Decree requirements. The Committee reports on progress and outcomes to the Federal Court.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency has a Statewide QA system in place that effectively assesses the quality of services and outcomes for children and families. Stakeholders reported that the Practice Development Reviews and Peer Record Reviews are critical tools that identify areas of concern and promote resolution of problems. However, stakeholders expressed concern that there is a lack of “buy-in” with the continuous quality improvement process at all levels within the agency. In particular, some stakeholders observed that because front-line staff do not understand how their practice impacts agency performance, they often are not aware of the benefits of the quality assurance process. These stakeholders suggested that it is important for children’s service workers to receive feedback from all reviews. Jackson County stakeholders reported that children’s service workers in that county do receive feedback and that the process is effective.

VII. TRAINING

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

Missouri did achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided 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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as a Strength because the CFSR determined that the State operates a comprehensive initial training program for new staff. However, CFSR findings also indicate that because of staff shortages, children's service workers in some areas of the State carry cases prior to completion of training, and because of budgets cuts, there has been no training for new supervisors in recent years.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CD's Staff Training and Development Unit provides training to various staff throughout the State. The Child Welfare Practice Basic Orientation training is a competency-based curriculum provided to all new children's service workers. This training also is given to contracted agency staff members who provide case management services. The Statewide Assessment notes that this pre-service training is required. It takes place during the first 3 months of employment and includes 129 hours of classroom training. The curriculum addresses: principles of family-centered practice; CAN investigations, assessments, and treatment planning; permanency and out-of-home care; and systems training. Training in Jackson County, which is governed by the Consent Decree, is the same as the State-based training. At the outset of Basic Orientation training, newly hired staff members attend a 1-week classroom session in a central location. This is followed by approximately 1 week of on-the-job training in the field office, which is overseen by supervisors. The Statewide Assessment reports that the quality of on-the-job training varies and needs to be more consistent throughout the State.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that Basic Orientation training is provided six times per year, with up to three sessions occurring simultaneously to accommodate newly-hired staff. However, due to current staff shortages across the State, children's service workers in some circuits carry cases prior to the completion of training, although this is not permitted in Jackson County. Under the Consent Decree, Jackson County children's service workers must complete training prior to carrying a caseload.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that training for new supervisors has been on hold because there is insufficient money in the budget to pay for the training. However, the Jackson County Consent Decree also requires that new supervisors in that county must receive training on a regular basis.

Many stakeholders commenting on the area of training during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State provides effective competency-based training to new children's service workers. However, some stakeholders observed that the training does not adequately prepare staff to do their jobs and is generally too generic. State-level stakeholders voiced concern that agency children's service workers are not credentialed and that the State does not require a Bachelor's degree in Social Work in order to be licensed.

State-level stakeholders reported that in some areas of the State, workers assume a full caseload before completing pre-service training. St. Louis stakeholders said that children's service workers often begin with a full caseload and that all supervisor training has been eliminated. However, Jackson County stakeholders noted that children's service workers in that county do not carry a caseload prior to completing training, because that would be a violation of the Consent Decree.

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 Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR found that ongoing training is not provided to all agency staff (both supervisors and direct service providers) statewide.

According to the Statewide Assessment, limited ongoing training is offered to all staff that have completed Basic Orientation training. The agency provides in-service training for frontline children’s service workers and supervisors that is based on identified needs and/or policy changes. Although training sessions are offered each year, CD has not established an ongoing, in-service curriculum and does not require ongoing training statewide. However, the Statewide Assessment notes that the Consent Decree in Jackson County requires that children’s service workers, supervisors, and managers attend 30 hours of in-service training after their second year on the job. In addition, children’s service workers who conduct child abuse and neglect investigations are required by State statute to participate in 20 hours of ongoing, in-service training each year.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, CD currently is developing a competency-based, 2-year curriculum for staff, which will include the initial in-service training and advanced, ongoing core curricula. There are several initiatives underway to develop a statewide, clinically-based curriculum to meet the training needs of CD supervisors. The State also has identified a need for a statewide training advisory committee to assess training needs and a system to evaluate training.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR expressed concern regarding the lack of ongoing training for staff on a statewide basis. Stakeholders in Jasper and St. Louis Counties indicated that in-service training is not readily available and there is little funding for it. These stakeholders noted that children’s service workers who are interested generally have to seek free training opportunities on their own.

In contrast, Jackson County stakeholders noted that child welfare agency staff members in that locality receive regular, ongoing training, as mandated by the Consent Decree and also have direct input into the training curriculum. It was noted that this situation does not occur in other locations in the State.

State-level stakeholders suggested that the lack of strong ongoing training efforts may contribute to the high rate of worker turnover and therefore the area of ongoing training should be strengthened. State-level stakeholders noted that supervisors are in need of

ongoing training in order to support and guide children’s service workers, and they expressed concern that supervisor training has been on hold for more than two years. Stakeholders also reported that there is no formal, statewide system to assess training needs and measure the effectiveness of training.

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 Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 was rated as a Strength because CFSR findings indicate that the State provides pre-service and ongoing training for all current and prospective foster and adoptive parents.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State legislation mandates that foster parents receive pre-service training before a foster home license can be issued. Prospective foster/adopt families must successfully complete 27 hours of pre-service training. Prospective adoptive families must successfully complete an additional 12 hours of training. The STARS curriculum is used for foster/adoptive parent training and adoptive parents receive training developed by Spaulding. Kinship caregivers also are required to complete a condensed version of STARS training to become licensed, and to participate in 15 hours of in-service training each year.

The Statewide Assessment notes that licensed foster parents (both relative and non-relative) are required to complete 30 hours of additional training during the 2-year licensing period. There are additional training requirements for behavioral, medical, and career-level foster parents. Behavioral foster parents receive 12 hours of training, using the “*People Places*” curriculum. Training for medical foster parents is coordinated with the child’s physician and is tailored to meet the individual child’s needs. Career parents are required to take the “*People Places*” training and at least 4 additional hours of training each year. At the time of licensure and re-licensure, a Family Development Plan is prepared by the worker and foster parents. This plan addresses areas of ongoing knowledge and skill development. The agency provides foster parents with day care and reimbursement for mileage while they attend training.

Residential care staff are required to attend at least 40 hours of training each year. The Residential Care agency is required to document the dates, locations, training subjects, and the name of the person(s) who conducted the training. Verification of training is conducted at the supervisory or licensing renewal meeting with the Residential Licensing Consultants.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that the agency provides high quality pre-service training to foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship caregivers, and residential care staff. While observing that the initial training is beneficial, they noted that caregivers are in need of supplementary and/or specialized training to address the complex needs of children in their care (e.g., mental health issues, dealing with older youth). Stakeholders noted that ongoing training is not readily available due to lack of resources (i.e., funding, staff, and time). As a result, many caregivers seek opportunities in the community to meet their need for more specialized training (e.g., sexual abuse, ADHD, methamphetamine abuse). Local and state support groups also facilitate access to training for foster parents.

State-level stakeholders reported that although budget cuts have impacted the quantity and quality of ongoing training across Missouri, training is available and accessible in metropolitan areas and is offered at flexible times and locations in urban centers. State-level stakeholders noted, however, that pre-service and in-service training opportunities are very limited in rural areas. There is little funding available to bring trainers to rural areas or to pay for foster parents to go outside the area. In addition, in some areas of the State, STARS training is not readily available so that potential foster parents are put on waiting lists until the training is provided.

State-level stakeholders reported it is the State’s expectation that contractors providing training will use experienced foster parents as co-trainers. However, several stakeholders expressed concern that this is not happening on a consistent basis. Stakeholders also suggested that the content of the training relevant to the CD was inadequate.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

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

Missouri did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. Information on the items assessed for this factor during the CFSR is presented below.

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 Area Needing Improvement because CFSR findings indicate that, although the State has an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families, the availability of services does not meet the demand and there are numerous gaps in services.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri offers a broad range of services that support family preservation, reunification, and permanency (i.e., Family Reunion Services, Family Centered Services, and Intensive In-Home Services). There are also a number of non-traditional services offered, such as Newborn Crisis Assessments, the Family-to-Family Initiative (in St. Louis City only), Drug Courts (adult, juvenile, and family), and Early Childhood/Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services.

The Statewide Assessment notes that services to promote permanency when reunification is not possible are available. Services to support kinship placements include subsidized guardianships/adoptions, case management, information and referral, temporary assistance, parent education, support groups, and supportive services. Older youth in out-of-home care receive independent living services and life-skills training. They also participate in the Missouri Mentoring Program, which features work-site mentoring opportunities.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, despite the existence of services, the availability does not meet the demand, resulting in waiting lists for many services. In addition, the fact that both the Intensive In-Home Services and Family Reunion Services have caps placed on caseloads precludes some families from receiving needed services.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there is a broad array of contracted and community-based services available to meet a range of needs. However, they noted that the demand for services does not keep pace with the supply. Stakeholders also voiced concern that budget cutbacks tend to result in fewer services provided to parents and children in intact families. Stakeholders noted that there is a chronic lack of funding for contracted service providers, but an increasing need for their services.

Stakeholders reported that in many cases, services are limited or interrupted by annual funding freezes. When this occurs, a provider's ability to make gains in counseling or treatment with a child or family is compromised.

Stakeholders identified the following service gaps in the State:

- Mental health services, including therapists and psychiatric services.
- Dentists who will accept Medicaid.
- Assortment of foster homes to accommodate siblings, older children, disabled children, and medically fragile children.
- Parenting classes, particularly for teen parents, and parent aides to work one-on-one with parents.
- In-patient and outpatient substance abuse services and aftercare.
- Post-adoption services such as tutoring, respite, day treatment, day care (these are no longer available due to budget cuts).
- Interpreter services for non-English speaking families.
- Transportation to assist in visitation and to access services.

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 Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR found that services are not accessible to families and children in all jurisdictions in the State, particularly in rural areas.

According to the Statewide Assessment, although some services are available statewide, such as the Independent Living program for youth and Intensive In-home services, there are key services geared toward crisis intervention and family reunification that are not consistently available to children and families on a statewide basis. For example, Family Reunion services are provided in only 11 sites across the state, including Kansas City and St. Louis County. Some Children’s Treatment Services (CTS), which include counseling, use of parent aides, and psychological evaluations, are not always available in local communities and to non-Medicaid families. Furthermore, budget restrictions have affected the agency’s ability to provide CTS services to all families in need.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that necessary services are not accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions in the State. State-level stakeholders reported that rural areas and smaller communities are underserved, particularly concerning the availability of dental care, mental health services, and services to address special medical needs. They noted that families in rural areas must travel to metropolitan areas to access these services. Stakeholders also noted that although in-home services are available in communities throughout the State, there is limited access to Family Reunion services, due to limited resources.

Stakeholders also reported that there are extensive waiting lists to access services, particularly in Jasper County. State-level stakeholders noted that it is difficult to access mental health services for children who live in St. Louis City but are placed in foster care in St. Louis County.

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 Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR findings indicate that services are not available to meet the individualized needs of children and families.

According to the Statewide Assessment, individualized service plans are developed by FSTs to meet the specific needs of all family members. Children’s Treatment Services (CTS) also provide flexible funding to meet individual needs of families in order to prevent removal from the home. However, CTS flexible funding is not always available.

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR reported that family service plans tend to be “cookie cutter” and are not sufficiently individualized to meet family needs. In addition, stakeholders reported that services do not always correspond to the reason that the child entered care, resulting in “boilerplate service agreements.” Although some flexible funding is available, stakeholders noted that these funds are too limited to ensure individualization of services to children and families.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

Missouri is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided 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.

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as a Strength because the State engages numerous external partners in implementing the provisions of the CFSP.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Title IV-B Advisory Group in Missouri provides input into the development of the CFSP and gives feedback on the performance of the child welfare system. The group consists of nine external partners and three internal managers. The external partners include: University of Missouri School of Social Work, United Way, Family Court, child advocacy groups, foster care and adoption association, Department of Mental Health, Children’s Treatment service providers, Children’s Justice Act Task Force, State Youth Advisory Board, Office of State Court Administration, and the faith community. Individual stakeholders also provide feedback on the CFSP.

Missouri also engages in ongoing consultation with community partners through standing advisory groups, committees, task forces, policy and program work groups, and planning sessions. External partnering groups include the Children’s Justice Act Task Force, Child Fatality Review Panel, and the State Youth Advisory Board. Although Missouri has no federally recognized Indian tribes, three Indian Centers provide social and child welfare services in different areas of the State. The Indian Centers also function as advocates and administrators for the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that CD engages in ongoing consultation with multiple community partners. State-level stakeholders indicated that CD is very receptive to input from the courts and advocacy organizations. They also noted that the agency uses multiple venues to access community resources, to remedy problems, and to keep lines of communication open. Jackson and St. Louis County stakeholders reported that the agency engages in ongoing consultation with its community partners. However, stakeholders in Jasper County noted that the working relationships between the agency and other agencies such as law enforcement and the school system could be improved.

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 CFSR findings indicate that the agency develops annual reports in consultation with numerous external stakeholders.

According to the Statewide Assessment, program planning committees assisted in the development of the CFSP through reviews of various drafts. These committees consisted of local, regional, and State representatives from public agencies, private providers, law enforcement, the faith community, consumers, government, and the courts. Stakeholders annually review the CD's progress on key goals and objectives.

Most state-level stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR indicated that the agency requests their feedback on annual reviews of agency performance.

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

This item is rated as a Strength because the CFSR found that the State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with other Federal programs serving the same population.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri coordinates service delivery across multiple State and community agencies. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, implementation of the Federal Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act involved the creation of two major community-wide collaborations across the State. These Community Partnerships, which include public and private partners, serve as focal points for organizing and financing services for families and children. The Caring Communities links services and supports for children and families through the schools, neighborhood, and public agencies.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the CD partner in a number of cross-agency efforts. Other multi-agency efforts address specific issues, such as promoting fatherhood (Transition from Prison to Community Initiative), addressing child maltreatment and domestic violence (Greenbook Initiative), improving physical and sexual abuse examinations for child victims (Sexual Abuse Forensic Exam Advisory Group), preventing teen drug use (Drug-Free Communities), meeting the needs of drug-exposed infants and mothers (Perinatal Substance Abuse Advisory Committee), and providing mental health services to children with severe needs (System of Care initiative). However, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, not all of these initiatives operate statewide due to limited funding resources.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR commended the coordination and delivery of services by the child welfare agency and other social services. Stakeholders noted that CD coordinates services with Head Start programs and with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. They also remarked favorably on the System of Care initiative. However, stakeholders noted that recent implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA) has hampered open discussions and access to information across providers regarding health-related matters.

The Greenbook Initiative, which promotes collaboration among community members to develop interventions and measure progress for improving responses to child maltreatment and domestic violence, is being piloted in St. Louis and Jackson Counties. The Family Court of St. Louis County and Jackson County Domestic Violence Coordinated Community Council are the lead agencies.

According to stakeholder interviews, the goal of the Greenbook Initiative is to achieve: 1) increased safety and well-being for adult and child victims of abuse; 2) increased accountability of batterers; 3) a comprehensive community service system with multiple points of entry to address the needs of a wide range of family circumstances; and 4) system change within and between the primary partner agencies that incorporates best practices and Greenbook recommendations. The Initiative was cited by stakeholders as an exemplary model of community collaboration between the Children’s Division, the Circuit Courts, and the domestic violence service providers.

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

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

Missouri is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided 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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the CFSR determined that the State has implemented standards that are reasonably in accord with national standards.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri has standardized licensing regulations for foster, kinship, and adoptive homes. The licensing process also includes specialized training for kinship caregivers and foster and adoptive parents. According to the Statewide Assessment, all foster and adoptive parents in Missouri must undergo an approval process that includes a State criminal background check, a child abuse/neglect registry check, assessment of the physical health of the family, and fire and safety inspections. The home study assessment requires 4 in-home consultations and approximately 10 hours of interviews with all household members. Any licensed home, whether kinship or foster home for an unrelated child, must meet the same licensing requirements. Homes are licensed for a 24-month period.

The Statewide Assessment notes that CD also provides regulatory oversight for licensing Residential Child Caring agencies and Child Placing agencies. Re-licensure occurs every 2 years for residential/child-placing agencies. There is a sufficient number of staff to monitor licensed facility homes.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR affirmed that effective standards are in place for foster/adoptive homes and child-placing agencies. Stakeholders reported that licensing and re-licensing occurs in a timely manner.

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 CFSR findings indicate that licensing standards are applied to all foster family homes and child-care institutions receiving IV-E or IV-B funds.

According to the Statewide Assessment, licensing standards are applied equally to all foster and relative caregiver homes. This includes training, assessment, home safety standards, and meeting the five required competencies. Adoptive families must meet all of the foster home requirements and complete additional adoption training and assessment. Rules pertaining to Residential Child Caring agencies and Child Placing agencies are applied equally to all licensed residential facilities. Agencies may request a variance of a particular rule, if needed, during a specific licensure period.

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue for the onsite CFSR indicated that the standards are applied equally to licensed foster families and relative homes. Jasper County stakeholders, however, indicated that relative homes are not held to the same standards as foster homes regarding safety, cleanliness, and size limitations.

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 CFSR determined that the State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background checks.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State regulations and agency policy require criminal background checks and child abuse/neglect background checks for (1) foster and adoptive parents, and (2) staff of Residential and Child Placing agencies. Criminal record checks of all household members age 18 and older are conducted during the licensing and re-licensing process.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the criminal records held by the Missouri Highway Patrol are not sent to the local office in a timely manner, and at times, the records contain incomplete information. Another concern is that the Highway Patrol does not maintain records related to civil matters, such as Orders of Protection. There is currently no statewide system available that agency staff can access to obtain information about restraining orders. The agency is in the process of implementing State and FBI fingerprint checks, which is expected to improve the efficiency of the clearance process and to provide fuller information about individuals considered as placement resources.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that criminal background checks and child abuse and neglect registry checks are completed for foster/adoptive and relative placements. They noted that background checks are conducted during both the licensing and re-licensing process, although it can take up to 8 weeks to receive the results of a background check.

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 an Area Needing Improvement because CFSR findings indicate that the State does not have a statewide recruitment plan and recruitment activities are not conducted year-round.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri has a number of ongoing efforts to recruit foster and adoptive families to match the diversity of children in State care and custody. The agency contracts with private agencies to conduct foster and adoptive recruitment, training, and assessments. These contracts specifically target placement resources for African American and special needs children. Placements for African American children are also the focus of the “One Church, One Child” program, which operates in three sites across the State, and the “Family-to-Family” project in St. Louis.

The Statewide Assessment notes that statewide efforts include the development of culturally-appropriate recruitment, retention, and support strategies through the Adoption Exchange, distribution of new recruitment brochures, and expansion of media recruitment (i.e., television and radio segments, billboards, and child-specific efforts).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR indicated that the CD has a number of effective, local recruitment efforts in place to recruit/retain foster homes that reflect the ethnic diversity of the foster care population, and noted the success of the “One Church, One Child” project and targeted recruitment activities in Jackson and St. Louis Counties. However, State-level stakeholders expressed concern that due to limited funds, targeted recruitment efforts do not occur on a year-round basis and do not occur in all jurisdictions. Stakeholders reported that metropolitan areas have more funding for recruitment than do rural areas. This was reflected in the concerns expressed by Jasper County stakeholders about the agency’s ability to successfully recruit and retain foster families. Stakeholders also indicated that the Jasper County Court imposes a barrier on child-specific, adoptive recruitment by not allowing photo-listings of children. In addition, stakeholders indicated that some foster homes are underutilized, and that a significant number of licensed families do not have children placed with them.

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 the State effectively uses cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely placements for waiting children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri employs a number of approaches to facilitate cross-jurisdictional placements. The State uses the Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC) and the Adoption Exchange. Many children available for adoption are placed on Missouri’s state photo-listing Internet site and also on the national adoption web site. A “Second Level Matching Team,” composed of representatives from around the State, meets every two months to “match” children and prospective adoptive families from Missouri and other states. The Statewide Assessment notes that delays in processing ICPCs, problems in finalizing adoption subsidies, and a lack of financial incentives for placement of children with special needs are barriers to the use of cross-jurisdictional resources.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR noted that CD uses multiple resources to achieve adoptive placements, such as the ICPC and State and national registries. However, stakeholders reported delays in ICPC processing that impact timely adoptions. They also reported it is difficult to place children with high medical needs due to differences in Medicaid guidelines across States.