EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
Final Report: North Dakota Child and Family Services Review  
March 2009  

INTRODUCTION

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

The North Dakota CFSR was conducted the week of April 21, 2008. The period under review was from April 1, 2007, to April 25, 2008. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the North Dakota Children and Family Services (CFS) Division
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB, which provides State child welfare data for fiscal year (FY) 2004, FY 2005, and the 12-month CFSR period ending March 31, 2006
- Reviews of 65 cases at 3 sites across the State (31 cases in Cass County, 17 cases in Burleigh/Morton County, and 17 cases in Ward County)
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders, including, but not limited to, children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys

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

Background Information

The CFSR assesses State performance on 23 items relevant to 7 outcomes and 22 items pertaining to 7 systemic factors. In the Systemic Factors Section B of the report, each item incorporated in each systemic factor is rated as either a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI) based on whether State performance on the item meets Federal policy requirements. Information relevant to each item comes from the Statewide Assessment and the stakeholder interviews conducted during the week of the onsite CFSR. The overall rating for the systemic factors is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor. For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 3 or 4) or “not in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 1 or 2).
Items relevant to the seven outcomes are discussed in the Outcomes Section A of the report. An overall rating of Strength or ANI is assigned to each of the 23 items, depending on the percentage of cases that receive a Strength rating in the case reviews. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed are rated as a Strength. Performance ratings for each of the seven outcomes are based on item ratings for each case. A State may be rated as having Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, or Not Achieved the outcome. The determination of whether a State is in substantial conformity with a particular outcome is based on the percentage of cases determined to have substantially achieved the outcome. Specifically, for a State to be in substantial conformity with an outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome.

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

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

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

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

Because many changes have been made in the onsite CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State’s performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the first round, particularly with regard to comparisons of percentages. Key changes in the CFSR process that make it difficult to compare performance across reviews are the following:
• An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases
• Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items
• Changes in criteria for specific items to increase consistency and to ensure an assessment of critical areas, such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents

CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes

North Dakota achieved substantial conformity with one of the seven CFSR outcomes, Well-Being Outcome 2 (Children receive services to meet their educational needs). Safety Outcome 1 (Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect) was substantially achieved in 89.3 percent of the cases; Well-Being Outcome 3 (Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs) was substantially achieved in 86.4 percent of the cases; and Permanency Outcome 2 (The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved) was substantially achieved in 82.5 percent of the cases reviewed. Safety Outcome 2 (Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate) was substantially achieved in 70.8 percent of the applicable cases; Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) was substantially achieved in 70 percent of the cases; and Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children’s needs) was substantially achieved in 53.8 percent of the cases.

North Dakota achieved overall ratings of a Strength for the following individual items:
• Timeliness of investigations (item 1)
• Repeat maltreatment (item 2)
• Services to prevent removal (item 3)
• Permanency goal for child (item 7)
• Reunification, guardianship, or placement with relatives (item 8)
• Placing children in close proximity to their parents (item 11)
• Preserving connections (item 14)
• Educational needs of the child (item 21)
• Physical health of the child (item 22)

Additionally, North Dakota met the national standard for the measure assessing the absence of maltreatment recurrence, Permanency Composite 2 (Timeliness of adoptions), and Permanency Composite 3 (Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods).

North Dakota did not meet the national standards for the measure pertaining to the absence of maltreatment in foster care. The State also did not meet the national standards for Permanency Composite 1 (Timeliness and permanency of reunifications) and Permanency Composite 4 (Placement stability).
The CFSR identified areas of concern with regard to achieving outcomes for children and families. Safety Outcome 2 (Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate) was determined to be substantially achieved in 70.8 percent of the cases reviewed. North Dakota’s lowest rating within Safety Outcome 2 was 74 percent for risk assessment and safety management (item 4).

Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) was determined to be substantially achieved in 70 percent of the cases reviewed. Within Permanency Outcome 1, North Dakota’s lowest rating was for item 9, which pertains to achieving adoption in a timely manner (62.5 percent). Performance on this item may be attributed, at least in part, to delays due to the agency not filing for termination of parental rights (TPR) in a timely manner and continuances granted by the court. Item 10, which pertains to Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangements (OPPLA), was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of the applicable cases. This was attributed, at least in part, to the agency not providing the child with sufficient services to assist in transitioning to independent living. Item 5, which pertains to foster care reentries, was rated a Strength in 79 percent of the cases. Stakeholders reported that reentries into foster care occur when support and services to meet the individual needs of the family after reunification have not been provided.

Concerns were identified with regard to Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children’s needs), which was determined to be substantially achieved in 53.8 percent of the cases. Item 17, which pertains to meeting the needs of children, parents, and foster parents, was rated a Strength in 60 percent of the cases; item 18, child and family involvement in case planning, was rated as a Strength in 65 percent of the applicable cases; item 19, caseworker visits with child, was rated as a Strength in 85 percent of the cases; and item 20, caseworker visits with parents, was rated as a Strength in 59 percent of the cases.

**CFSR Findings Regarding Systemic Factors**

With regard to systemic factors, North Dakota was found to be in substantial conformity with five of the seven systemic factors:

- Statewide Information System
- Quality Assurance (QA) System
- Training
- Agency Responsiveness to the Community
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

In regard to the Statewide Information System, stakeholders reported that CFS maintains multiple data systems to capture pertinent child welfare information. The Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Payment System (CCWIPS) maintains data on children in foster care. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that CCWIPS captures important information related to permanency and well-being of children in foster care, including their locations, demographics, legal status, case goals, and foster care payments.
North Dakota is in substantial conformity on the QA System systemic factor. CFS ensures that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children. Stakeholders reported that the Single Plan of Care (SPOC) is a check and balance for ensuring the needs of children are met, and the Foster Care Child and Family Team (FCCFT) meeting is used to monitor the quality of services for foster children. Stakeholders reported that the North Dakota Child and Family Services Review QA (ND CFSR QA) process is modeled after the Federal CFSR, including stakeholder interviews and an exit conference. Each region is reviewed annually. Findings from the ND CFSR QA process are used to implement changes in practice.

With regard to the Training systemic factor, CFS contracts with the University of North Dakota to operate a training center that provides the required pre-service training, which is generally viewed as excellent. Additionally, the university conducts an annual assessment of the training needs of caseworkers and other CFS staff and then provides ongoing training for CFS staff based on the results. North Dakota has a well-established pre-service and ongoing training program for foster and adoptive parents.

North Dakota is in substantial conformity on the Agency Responsiveness to the Community systemic factor. The general finding in the 2008 CFSR was that the State includes the input of stakeholders in the development of Annual Progress and Services Reports (APSRs). The CFSR found that there is coordination among CFS and other Federally assisted programs to meet the service needs of the children and families served by the agency. Additionally, the State consistently engages in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders to obtain their input into the goals and objectives of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP).

North Dakota is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The State has implemented standards for family foster homes, group homes, and child care institutions. Stakeholders reported that the State has consistent licensing standards that are applied equally to all licensed or approved family foster homes or child care institutions. Additionally, the State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. However, the recruitment efforts have not produced as many Native American homes as are needed. North Dakota was not in substantial conformity with two of the seven systemic factors, Case Review System and Service Array.

Although the State has policies and procedures in place for each child to have a written case plan that is developed jointly with the child and the child’s parents, the Onsite Review data indicate that parents, particularly fathers and youth, are not always involved in the development of the case plan. There also have been some delays in filing for TPR consistent with the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). Additionally, while the State has a process for notifying foster, adoptive, and relative caregivers of hearings, the opportunity for caregivers to be heard in court is inconsistent across jurisdictions.

North Dakota has a large array of services; however, the services are frequently not available in rural areas of the State. Medical, dental, and mental health services, and substance abuse treatment, were among the key services with limited availability statewide. Additionally, it is sometimes difficult to individualize services for families.
The specific findings with regard to the State’s performance on the safety and permanency outcomes are presented in Table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in Table 2. Table 3 presents the State’s performance with regard to the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. In the following section, key findings are summarized for each outcome and systemic factor.

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 the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment (item 2).

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. It should be noted that taken individually, the two indicators used to assess this outcome were rated as a Strength in more than 90 percent of the cases. However, because some of the cases rated as ANIs were different for each indicator, there were three cases for which the outcome was found to be partially achieved or not achieved. As a result, when the two indicators are considered together, the ratings do not meet the required 95 percent substantial achievement for the outcome. Safety Outcome 1 was substantially achieved in 100 percent of Ward County cases, 86 percent of Cass County cases, and 83 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The State met the national standard for the measure assessing the absence of maltreatment recurrence, but the State did not meet the national standard for the measure assessing absence of maltreatment of children in foster care.

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1 in the 2001 CFSR. Item 1, timeliness of investigations, was determined to be a Strength, and item 2, recurrence of maltreatment, was determined to be an ANI. A key concern identified during the 2001 CFSR was that repeat maltreatment was higher than the national standard. As part of the PIP, North Dakota implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA system to improve performance on repeat maltreatment. Additionally, the State developed a guide for child protection teams on decision-making processes and provided training for caseworkers on recognizing and addressing safety and risk issues. The State also developed a system in which all cases with repeat maltreatment and cases with five or more reports were reviewed. North Dakota conducted an analysis of the Child Abuse and Neglect Data System to examine factors that contribute to higher levels of repeat maltreatment.

During the 2008 CFSR, both items included in this outcome were rated as a Strength. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that investigations are generally initiated in a timely manner, and when maltreatment recurs it is generally related to substance abuse.

Stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level interviewed during the Onsite Review commented on the administrative assessment process to assess referrals of recurring maltreatment. According to stakeholders and the Statewide Assessment, if a new maltreatment report is received on a family currently receiving services, the assigned caseworker will assess the allegations in the new report. The caseworker has 31 days to complete the assessment on an existing case; however, a maltreatment disposition is not made.
If the new report could result in criminal charges, the report is assigned to a child protective services caseworker for a full assessment. According to internal and external stakeholders, more education and direction is needed on the administrative assessment process.

**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 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 agency’s efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children.

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 70.8 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Safety Outcome 2 was substantially achieved in 81 percent of Cass County cases, 65 percent of Ward County cases, and 59 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases.

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 in the 2001 CFSR. Item 3, services to protect children, was rated as a Strength; however, item 4, risk of harm to children, was rated as an ANI. A key concern identified during the 2001 CFSR was that risk of harm to children was not adequately addressed, which resulted in children being at risk of harm while remaining in their homes. Additionally, in some cases, safety and risk concerns of children were present in the home, but the family refused recommended services and the cases were closed.

As part of the PIP, North Dakota implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA system to improve performance related to Safety Outcome 2. Additionally, the State developed a guide for child protection teams on decision-making processes and provided training for caseworkers for recognizing and addressing safety and risk issues.

In the 2008 CFSR, item 3 was again rated as a Strength and item 4 continued to be rated as an ANI. The 2008 CFSR found that there was a lack of adequate initial and ongoing safety and risk assessments, which resulted in children being unsafe or at risk of harm in their homes. Additionally, risk was not assessed prior to reunification.

Stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR reported that North Dakota is providing services to prevent removal. It is the opinion of stakeholders that this has occurred because of the following:

- The family team meeting process is successful in identifying needs and services and ensuring the implementation of services.
- Caseworkers have become more cognizant of the services children and families need.
- Counties are providing preventive services, which have decreased court intervention.
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 agency’s efforts to prevent foster care reentries (item 5), ensure placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establish appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner (item 7). Depending on the child’s permanency goal, the remaining indicators focus on the agency’s efforts to achieve permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9) or to ensure that children who have OPPLA as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

In 2008, North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 70.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that, for the CFSR 12-month target period, the State did not meet the national standards for Permanency Composite 1 (Timeliness and permanency of reunification) and Permanency Composite 4 (Placement stability).

Permanency Outcome 1 was substantially achieved in 80 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases, 75 percent of Cass County cases, and 50 percent of Ward County cases.

North Dakota was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in the 2001 CFSR. Item 5, pertaining to foster care reentries, was rated as an ANI. All other items incorporated in the outcome were rated as a Strength.

To address concerns, North Dakota implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA process. Additionally, CFS increased its efforts to work with the Native American Tribes and the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS) to identify issues and develop solutions pertaining to foster care reentries. CFS analyzed case data from the computerized system to identify issues that contribute to higher reentry levels and reviewed the composition of the Permanency Planning Committees to ensure the required and recommended parties were in attendance.

North Dakota met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP period.

In the 2008 CFSR, item 7 (permanency goals) and item 8 (reunification, guardianship, or relative placement) were rated as Strengths. All other items included in this outcome were rated as ANIs. Related and additional findings of the 2008 CFSR are as follows:

- The onsite CFSR and the Data Profile for the Composite 1 individual measure on foster care reentries indicate that North Dakota has challenges in preventing foster care reentries within a 12-month period (item 5).
The Onsite Review indicates that there are issues in maintaining stable placements for foster children, particularly as relates to (1) meeting their behavioral needs, and (2) ensuring that their placements are safe and well-supported. In addition, the State did not meet the national standard for Data Composite 4: Placement stability for the 12-month CFSR period ending March 31, 2006 (item 6).

The 2008 CFSR indicates that North Dakota consistently establishes timely and appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care, and the Onsite Review results indicate that North Dakota is consistently meeting ASFA requirements and filing for TPR in a timely manner. Additionally, the State met the national standard for Data Composite 3: Permanency for children and youth in foster care for long periods of time (item 7).

Information from the Onsite Review indicates that North Dakota is effective and timely in achieving reunifications and guardianships for children. However, the State did not meet the national standard for Data Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification (item 8).

Information from the Onsite Review indicates that the State is not consistently achieving adoptions in a timely manner. However, the State met the national standard for Data Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions (item 9).

The State is not consistently assisting youth in achieving the goal of OPPLA (item 10).

Key concerns expressed in the 2008 CFSR by stakeholders with regard to Permanency Outcome 1 were the following:

- Reentries into foster care occur when support and services to meet the individual needs of the family after reunification have not been provided.
- There are limited resources available to support State foster parents.
- Timely achievement of permanency for Native American children is a challenge. Tribal involvement is frequently minimal, and permanency hearings for Native American children are often continued due to lack of an expert witness that is required for Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) cases.
- The TPR appeals process sometimes delays permanency.
- There is reluctance by some judicial circuits to terminate parental rights when an adoptive placement has not been identified.
- Delays in reunification generally occur when parents have not completed the required services, which is often due to wait lists for the services.
- All foster children 16 and older are assessed for Independent Living services; however, the services focus on children who are likely to age out of care.
- Independent Living services for youth who have aged out of foster care are inconsistent.

Additionally, stakeholders reported:

- Trial home visits prior to reunification and supportive services after reunification have resulted in a recent decrease in reentries into foster care.
- Reentries into foster care have significantly decreased due to improved post-reunification services and support.
- CFS attempts to match children and foster parents based on the strengths and skills of the foster parent and makes significant efforts to keep children in stable placements.
• When children are disruptive in a foster home, caseworkers and/or therapists work with the foster parent and child to try to stabilize the situation.
• CFS is generally aggressively moving cases to adoption.
• There have been an increased number of guardianship cases due to foster parents assuming guardianship rather than adopting foster children.
• Other placement options are thoroughly explored prior to choosing OPPLA. OPPLA is chosen based on the age, development, and needs of the child; relationship with the parent; and willingness of the foster parent.

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

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six indicators that assess the 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 among 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).

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 82.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of Ward County cases and 80 percent of Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County cases.

North Dakota achieved substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 in the 2001 CFSR. In the 2001 CFSR, all items incorporated in this outcome were rated as a Strength. Therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this outcome in the PIP.

Key findings from the 2008 CFSR were the following:
• Children in the cases reviewed were in foster care placements that were in close proximity to parents or potential permanent caregivers unless specialized placements were necessary (item 11).
• CFS is inconsistent in its efforts to place siblings together. Stakeholders indicated that resources are limited for teenage siblings and larger sibling groups (item 12).
• Visitation with mothers, fathers, and siblings was not of sufficient quality or quantity to meet the needs of the families. Visits were far more likely to occur with siblings than mothers and particularly fathers (item 13).
• CFS consistently supported children’s connections with extended family, siblings, school, and the community (item 14).
• There were inconsistent efforts made to search for maternal and paternal relatives as placement resources for children (item 15).
• The support of the parents’ relationships with their children while the children were in foster care was inconsistent. Less attention was given to promoting children’s bonds with fathers than with mothers (item 16).
Additional and related findings from the 2008 CFSR were the following:
- Reviewers and stakeholders reported that CFS provided transportation for children and parents to visitations.
- Child and parent visitation increased in length and occurred in less restrictive environments as families progressed to reunification.
- The frequency of visitation is reviewed quarterly by the FCCFT.
- Caseworkers make efforts for children to visit with their incarcerated parents, when appropriate.
- Reviewers indicated CFS did an excellent job of ensuring ICWA guidelines were maintained.

**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 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 agency’s efforts to actively involve parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two remaining indicators examine the frequency and quality of caseworkers’ contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children’s parents (item 20).

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 53.8 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

Well-Being Outcome 1 was determined to be substantially achieved in 59 percent of Ward County cases, 55 percent of Cass County cases, and 47 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The outcome was found to be substantially achieved in 62.5 percent (25 cases) of the 40 foster care cases and 40 percent (10 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases.

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 in the 2001 CFSR. Item 17 pertaining to needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents and item 19 pertaining to caseworker visits with the child were rated as ANIs. Key concerns identified in 2001 were the following:
- Comprehensive needs assessments were not completed for children.
- Visits between caseworkers and children did not meet State policy and/or were not sufficient to ensure safety and well-being.
- Stakeholders reported that there was confusion about case management responsibilities pertaining to children in foster care when contract agencies were involved.

To address these concerns, North Dakota implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA process. Additionally, CFS strengthened policy related to the following:
- Assessing the needs of children, parents, and foster parents
- Caseworker visits with foster children
- Case management responsibilities when multiple agencies are involved
The State met the target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

All items incorporated into Well-Being Outcome 1 were rated as ANIs in the 2008 CFSR. The following concerns were identified:

- CFS was more consistent in assessing and addressing the needs of foster parents and children than it was in assessing and meeting the service needs of mothers and fathers. Additionally, CFS was more effective in assessing and addressing needs in foster care cases than it was in in-home services cases (item 17).
- Mothers and children were more likely to be involved in case planning than fathers (item 18).
- CFS was not consistently effective in ensuring both the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children in in-home cases (item 19).
- CFS was not consistently effective in ensuring both the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with parents, particularly visits with fathers. Visits were more consistent in foster care cases than in-home cases (item 20).

Additional findings from the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- Stakeholders reported that the needs of parents, children, and foster parents are assessed by the caseworkers on a regular basis. Ongoing and changing needs are reviewed through ongoing, frequent communication and Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings and FCCFT meetings.
- Stakeholders indicated that caseworkers are consistent in inviting parents and community partners to CFT and FCCFT meetings.
- In 100 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, CFS was consistent in the frequency and quality of the caseworker visits with the children.

**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 agency’s efforts to address and meet the educational needs of children in both foster care and in-home services cases (item 21).

North Dakota achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 95.3 percent of the cases reviewed. This meets the 95 percent required for substantial conformity.

Well-Being Outcome 2 was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of Ward County Cases, 95 percent of Cass County cases, and 92 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The outcome was substantially achieved in 100 percent of the 35 applicable foster care cases and in 75 percent of the 8 applicable in-home services cases.

North Dakota achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 in the 2001 CFSR and, therefore was not required to address this outcome in the PIP.
The key findings of the 2008 CFSR indicate CFS adequately assessed the education needs of children, and services were provided, if necessary. Additionally, reviewers reported that in-home caseworkers frequently assessed educational needs in cases even when the reason for involvement was not associated with educational issues.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review indicated that the majority of caseworkers are responsive to children’s educational needs. Caseworkers, parents, and/or foster parents participate in Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings on a consistent basis.

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

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

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 86.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. Well-Being Outcome 3 was determined to be substantially achieved in 93 percent of Cass and Ward County cases and in 69 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 93 percent of the 40 foster care cases and in 74 percent of the 19 applicable in-home services cases.

The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome for the 2001 CFSR. Item 22, pertaining to physical health of children, was rated as a Strength, and item 23, pertaining to mental health of children, was rated as an ANI. To address these concerns, North Dakota implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA process. Additionally, CFS strengthened policy related to assessing children’s mental health needs and ensuring appropriate services are provided. The State also implemented a mental/behavioral health screening tool for children who do not receive Health Tracks screening.

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

Similar to the 2001 CFSR, the physical and dental health of children (item 22) was rated as a Strength, and the mental health of children (item 23) was rated as an ANI in the 2008 CFSR. The Onsite Review indicated consistency in practice with regard to providing health assessments of children and obtaining health records.

There were, however, inconsistencies in practice with regard to assessing and addressing the mental health needs of children. The Onsite Review findings indicate that CFS is more consistent in meeting the mental health needs of children in foster care cases than children in in-home cases.
II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Statewide Information System

Substantial conformity with the systemic factor of a 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.

North Dakota achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of a Statewide Information System. North Dakota was in substantial conformity with this outcome in the 2001 CFSR.

CFS currently utilizes individual applications to document and track maltreatment reports, in-home services, family preservation, foster care, and adoption activities. These current CFS information systems are made up of multiple, disparate applications and databases. Information for family preservation services, child abuse and neglect (CA/N), and foster care and adoption activities are currently linked in varying degrees by the SPOC system, CA/N Index, and CCWIPS.

The CCWIPS provides case management information and tracks children in foster care placement. The assigned caseworker, regional supervisors, eligibility workers, and caseworkers from DJS can access information in the system. The system collects the following information on each child in foster care:

- Demographics
- Location and type of placement
- Changes in placements
- Case goals
- Time in foster care

Case Review System

Five indicators are used to assess the State’s performance with regard to the systemic factor of a 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 TPR in accordance with the time frames established by ASFA (item 28), and the notification and inclusion of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers in case reviews and hearings (item 29).

North Dakota is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of a Case Review System for 2008. North Dakota was in substantial conformity with this factor during the 2001 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its PIP.

Although the Wraparound Practice Model requires family engagement in identification of needs and treatment planning, and State policy requires that case plans be developed jointly with the parents and youth, the Onsite Review data indicate that parents,
particularly fathers and youth, are not always involved in the development of the case plan. Additionally, case review information indicates that parents and/or children were involved in case planning in 65 percent of the 63 applicable cases (item 25).

Based on information from the Onsite Review, North Dakota ensures that periodic reviews of the status of each child in foster care are held at least every 6 months and generally every 3 months through the FCCFT process. Additionally, some jurisdictions also require a judicial review every 6 months. Stakeholders indicated that the case reviews are substantive and help move the case forward in terms of achieving case goals and objectives (item 26). In addition, permanency hearings are held in the State 12 months from the point of the child’s removal from the home and at least every 12 months thereafter (item 27).

However, data from the onsite CFSR indicate TPR had not been filed in a timely manner in 10 of the 21 applicable cases and that compelling reasons for not filing were noted in 9 of the 10 cases. Although the State has a process for TPR, there is reluctance by some judicial jurisdictions to terminate parental rights when an adoptive placement has not been identified. Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review indicated that delays in filing for TPR occur and that the TPR appeal process also can delay permanency (item 28).

North Dakota has a process and policy in place for caseworkers to provide notifications of hearings and opportunities for foster parents and relative caregivers to be heard and, according to stakeholders, notification is generally consistent and timely. There is, however, inconsistency across judicial jurisdictions for foster parents and relative caregivers to be heard during court hearings. Some jurisdictions allow foster parents to attend and participate in the court proceedings, but others allow foster parents in the court primarily as observers (item 29).

**Quality Assurance System**

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

North Dakota is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of a QA System. The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in the 2001 CFSR; therefore, it was not required to address this factor in the PIP.

Findings from the 2008 CFSR indicated that the State developed and implemented standards to ensure the safety of children in foster care by requiring licensure for family foster homes and foster care facilities, requiring face-to-face visits with children in foster care at least every 30 days, and reviewing a family’s risk factors every 90 days during the FCCFT meeting. Additionally, stakeholders indicated that the SPOC is a check and balance to ensure the needs of children are met and that the FCCFT is used to monitor the quality of services for foster children. The progress of the service plan is reviewed at the quarterly meetings, as are the child’s
medical, mental health, educational, and Independent Living status, if applicable. Stakeholders also reported that a comprehensive health assessment is completed within 30 days of the child entering care, and periodic checks are required thereafter (item 30).

North Dakota implemented the ND CFSR QA process statewide in 2003, replicating the Federal model. The ND CFSR QA process is conducted annually in each of the eight Human Services Center (HSC) regions of the State. Stakeholders indicated that the ND CFSR QA process includes stakeholder interviews and an exit conference. Findings from the ND CFSR QA process are used to implement changes in practice. Each county is responsible for preparing a PIP and submitting it to the State office. However, stakeholders reported that they do not receive feedback on the content or progress of the PIP. Stakeholders also reported that the regional offices perform QA with the oversight and monitoring of case plans and the review of case records (item 31).

**Training**

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

North Dakota is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in the 2001 CFSR.

North Dakota has CFS contracts with the University of North Dakota Department of Social Work to operate the Child and Family Services Training Center (CFSTC). The training center is responsible for the majority of the child welfare training in the State. CFSTC provides a Child Welfare Practitioner Certification Program (CWPCP), which is a competency-based training curriculum. The training program incorporates classroom teaching, field assignments (e.g., completing a CA/N assessment), and online training. Training must begin within the first 6 months of employment and be completed within the first year of employment. Some stakeholders reported that the new caseworker training is adequate to prepare caseworkers to carry out the responsibilities of their jobs. Other stakeholders, however, noted that the training is unrealistic and that caseworkers learn more through peer interaction and field observations. According to stakeholders, new supervisor training for child welfare supervisors is not offered in the State (item 32).

The CFSTC, according to stakeholders, annually evaluates the training needs of CFS staff and develops an annual training plan. Stakeholders reported that ongoing training is available to CFS staff at the local, regional, and State levels. Most stakeholders reported that supervisors are generally supportive of ongoing training, and staff have the opportunity to attend. There is no required number of training hours that must be completed each year. However, CFS caseworkers are licensed social workers and are required to obtain 30 hours of ongoing training biennially. Additionally, caseworkers providing wraparound services are required to be recertified in wraparound biennially (item 33).

North Dakota was found to have a well-established, effective training program for foster and adoptive parents. The State uses a formal curriculum, Parents’ Resource for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE), that was perceived by stakeholders as
generally effective. In addition, the CFSTC conducts an annual survey to solicit input on ongoing training needs. Ongoing training was noted to be readily available for foster parents, with much of the ongoing training offered as part of local and statewide foster parent meetings (item 34).

**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 agency (item 35)? (2) Are these services accessible to families and children throughout the State (item 36)? (3) Can services be individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and families served by the agency (item 37)?

North Dakota is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array for the 2008 CFSR. The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in the 2001 CFSR.

The general finding of the 2008 CFSR was that there are many services available in the State, including the intensive in-home services, Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), and the Wraparound Practice Model to address the needs of children and families served by the system (item 35). However, many rural areas are without adequate medical, dental, and mental health and placement resources necessary to meet the needs of the families served. According to stakeholders, waiting lists are longer and the quantity of services is smaller in rural areas. Geography is a barrier to families accessing services. The cost of transportation, loss of wages and time spent traveling to services can impact the family’s willingness to participate in services required to complete their case plan (item 36).

The lack of services in some areas makes individualizing services difficult. Additionally, during the onsite CFSR, item 17, pertaining to the assessment of needs and the provision of services, was rated as a Strength in 60 percent of the cases reviewed. Stakeholders reported that when specific services are not available in a particular community, caseworkers are creative in arranging necessary services for the child or family (item 37).

**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 CFSP (items 38 and 39) and the extent to which the State coordinates services with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally assisted programs serving the same population (item 40).

North Dakota is in substantial conformity with the factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The State also was in substantial conformity with this factor in the 2001 CFSR.
The general finding in the 2008 CFSR was that the State includes the input of stakeholders in the development of APSRs. Although there is no formal CFSP advisory committee, preparations for the FY 2005 through 2009 CFSP included the facilitation of focus groups across the State. The focus groups included the following:

- County social service agency directors
- County social service supervisors
- Regional supervisors
- DJS
- Public and private service providers
- Parents
- Foster parents
- Tribal representatives

The discussions focused on safety, permanency, and well-being. Through the stakeholder focus groups, the CFSP goals and methods for achieving them were established (item 38).

Additionally, the CFSR findings indicate that North Dakota consistently engages in ongoing consultations with stakeholders. Their comments in group meetings or individual contacts are synthesized and included in the development of the CFSP and the APSR. CFS makes significant efforts to ensure that Tribal representatives, foster youth, and court personnel are involved in discussions and decision-making for the CFSP and APSR. Stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State regularly collaborates with other agencies (item 39).

The CFSR found that there is coordination among CFS and other Federally assisted programs to meet the service needs of the children and families served by the agency (item 40).

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**

The assessment of this systemic factor focuses on the State’s standards for foster homes and child care institutions (items 41 and 42), the State’s compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks for foster and adoptive parents (item 43), the State’s efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents 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 (item 45).

North Dakota is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. North Dakota also was in substantial conformity with this factor during the 2001 CFSR.

The 2008 CFSR found that the State has clear standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are implemented in a uniform manner and are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards (items 41 and 42). In particular, the same
standards are applied to both non-relative and relative foster homes. In addition, there was clear evidence that the State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background checks (item 43).

Additionally, the State has a process for ensuring diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the racial diversity in the State. Although the State has been diligent in recruiting Native American foster homes, the effort has not rendered the needed homes. According to stakeholders, 50 percent of the children in foster care in Burleigh/Morton County are Native American; however, there is only one Native American foster home. Some stakeholders noted the innate distrust of the government by Native Americans as a problem with recruitment efforts. Cass County stakeholders reported that Cass County is more successful in locating Native American relatives willing to be kinship care homes than those willing to be licensed foster homes (item 44).

The CFSR found that CFS is diligent in using cross-jurisdictional resources to locate adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children (item 45).
Table 1. North Dakota CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes and Indicators</th>
<th>Outcome Ratings</th>
<th>Item Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Substantial Conformity?</td>
<td>Percent Substantially Achieved*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>89.3</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 1: Timeliness of investigations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 2: Repeat maltreatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>70.8</td>
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<td>Item 3: Services to prevent removal</td>
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<td>Item 4: Risk of harm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>70.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 5: Foster care reentry</td>
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<td>Item 6: Stability of foster care placements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 7: Permanency goal for child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or placement with relatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 9: Adoption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 10: Other planned permanent living arrangement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>82.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 11: Proximity of placement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 12: Placement with siblings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 14: Preserving connections</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 15: Relative placement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

**Items may be rated as a Strength or an ANI. For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases must be rated as a Strength.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes and Indicators</th>
<th>Outcome Ratings</th>
<th>Item Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Substantial Conformity?</td>
<td>Percent Substantially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Well-Being Outcome 1:</strong> Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children’s needs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents</td>
<td>ANI</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning</td>
<td>ANI</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 19: Caseworker visits with child</td>
<td>ANI</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 20: Caseworker visits with parents</td>
<td>ANI</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Well-Being Outcome 2:</strong> Children receive services to meet their educational needs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>95.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 21: Educational needs of child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Well-Being Outcome 3:</strong> Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 22: Physical health of child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 23: Mental health of child</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

**Items may be rated as a Strength or an ANI. For an overall rating of strength, 90 percent of the cases reviewed for the item (with the exception of item 21) must be rated as a Strength. Because item 21 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95-percent Strength rating applies.
### Table 3. North Dakota CFSR Ratings for Systemic Factors and Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systemic Factors and Items</th>
<th>In Substantial Conformity?</th>
<th>Score*</th>
<th>Item Rating**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statewide Information System</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 24: The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case Review System</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 25: Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child’s parents that includes the required provisions</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>ANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 28: Provides a process for TPR proceedings in accordance with the provisions of ASFA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 29: Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Assurance System</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 30: The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 31: The State is operating an identifiable QA 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</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Factors and Items</td>
<td>In Substantial Conformity?</td>
<td>Score*</td>
<td>Item Rating**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Array</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 36: The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State’s CFSP</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 37: The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Responsiveness to the Community</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 39: The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 41: The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 44: The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom adoptive homes are needed</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Scores range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 means that the factor is not in substantial conformity. A score of 3 or 4 means that the factor is in substantial conformity.
**Items may be rated as a Strength or as an ANI.
Final Report
North Dakota Child and Family Services Review
March 2009

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

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

The North Dakota CFSR was conducted the week of April 21, 2008. The period under review was from April 1, 2007, to April 25, 2008. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the North Dakota Children and Family Services (CFS) Division
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB within HHS, which provides State child welfare data for fiscal year (FY) 2004, FY 2005, and the 12-month CFSR period ending March 31, 2007
- Reviews of 65 cases at three sites across the State (31 cases in Cass County, 17 cases in Burleigh/Morton County, and 17 cases in Ward County)
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders, including but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys

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

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

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State’s performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of the State’s status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State’s first CFSR review, the State’s status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Differences in findings across the sites included in the Onsite Review are described when noteworthy. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate. The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency’s ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.
# Key North Dakota Case Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Characteristics</th>
<th>Foster Care Cases</th>
<th>In-Home Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When case was opened/child entered foster care</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open prior to the period under review</td>
<td>28 (70%)</td>
<td>11 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open during the period under review</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>14 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child entered foster care during the period under review</td>
<td>14 (35%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child’s age at start of period under review</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger than age 10</td>
<td>17 (42.5%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 10 but younger than 13</td>
<td>5 (12.5%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 13 but younger than 16</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 and older</td>
<td>7 (17.5%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (of all races)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>5 (12.5%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary reason for opening case</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect (not including medical neglect)</td>
<td>14 (35%)</td>
<td>10 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical neglect</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse by parent</td>
<td>9 (22.5%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence in child’s home</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional maltreatment</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental/physical health of parent</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental/physical health of child</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s behavior</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child in juvenile justice system</td>
<td>3 (7.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Information on these characteristics for in-home services cases is not provided because all children in the family are considered in these cases. All 65 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review of April 1, 2007, through April 25, 2008.
SECTION A: OUTCOMES

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to North Dakota’s performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of the State’s status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State’s first CFSR review in 2001, the State’s status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Differences in findings across the sites included in the Onsite Review are described when noteworthy. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate. The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of North Dakota’s performance with regard to systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency’s ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

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

For the tables, figures displayed may not total 100 percent due to rounding.
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 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | Burleigh/Morton | Cass County     | Ward County     | Total Number    | Percent         |
| Substantially Achieved          | 5               | 12              | 8               | 25             | 89.3            |
| Partially Achieved              | 1               | 1               | 0               | 2              | 7.1             |
| Not Achieved or Addressed       | 0               | 1               | 0               | 1              | 3.6             |
| Total Applicable Cases          | 6               | 14              | 8               | 28             |                 |
| Not Applicable Cases            | 11              | 17              | 9               | 37             |                 |
| Total Cases                     | 17              | 31              | 17              | 65             |                 |

Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Standard (%)</th>
<th>State’s Percentage</th>
<th>Meets Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence of maltreatment recurrence</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>97.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff</td>
<td>99.68</td>
<td>98.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Status of Safety Outcome 1

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. It should be noted that taken individually, the two indicators used to assess this outcome were rated as a Strength in more than 90 percent of the cases. However, because some of the cases rated as Areas Needing Improvement (ANIs) were different for each indicator, there were three cases for which the outcome was found to be partially achieved or not achieved. As a result, when the two indicators are considered together, the ratings did not meet the required 95 percent substantial achievement for the outcome. Safety Outcome 1 was substantially achieved in 100 percent of Ward County cases, 86 percent of Cass County cases, and in 83 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The State met the national standard for the measure assessing the absence of maltreatment recurrence, but the State did not meet the national standard for the measure assessing absence of maltreatment of children in foster care.
Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1 in its 2001 CFSR. Item 1 was determined to be a Strength and item 2 as an Area Needing Improvement. A key concern identified during the 2001 CFSR was that the repeat maltreatment for Federal FY was higher than the national standard.

As part of its PIP, North Dakota implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and a quality assurance (QA) system with the goal to improve performance on repeat maltreatment. Additionally, the State developed a guide for child protection teams on decision-making processes and provided training for caseworkers on recognizing and addressing safety and risk issues. The State also developed a system in which all cases with repeat maltreatment and cases with five or more reports were reviewed. The State conducted an analysis of their child abuse and neglect data system to examine factors that contribute to higher levels of repeat maltreatment.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

During the 2008 CFSR, both items included in this outcome were rated as a Strength.

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

__X__ Strength  ____ Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings
The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 28 (43 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable if there were no child maltreatment reports during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with the State child welfare agency policy requirements.

North Dakota policy states that all assessments of alleged child abuse must be initiated within 72 hours. The State currently uses a three-tiered category system to prioritize investigations:
- **Category A**
  - Sexual abuse and serious physical abuse
  - Face-to-face contact with alleged victims within 24 hours of the report

- **Category B**
  - Less serious physical abuse
  - Investigation initiated within 24 hours
  - Face-to-face contact with alleged victims within three calendar days of the report

- **Category C**
  - Include all other maltreatment reports
  - Investigation initiated within 72 hours
  - Face-to-face contact with alleged victims within 14 calendar days of the report

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 1</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the Ward County cases, 93 percent of Cass County cases, and 83 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was established with the children in the family within the timeframes required by State policy or law. Item 1 was rated as an ANI in the two applicable cases when the investigation and face-to-face contact were not initiated within the required timeframes. Both cases rated an ANI were Category B referrals. In both cases, the alleged victims were not seen in a timely manner.

**Rating Determination**
Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of a Strength. In 93 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percent exceeds the 90 percent required for an overall item rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.
**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS implemented the policy to guide timelines for face-to-face contacts with alleged victims on December 1, 2007. Early feedback on the implementation indicates there are challenges in meeting the required time frames due to caseload size and geographical/rural challenges. To assist caseworkers in meeting timeframes for face-to-face contacts with alleged victims, the new policy incorporates the ability to rely on “community partners” to make the initial face-to-face contact. The community partner must be a professional who has access to the legal process to ensure immediate removal is necessary. Community partners include law enforcement, medical personnel, Juvenile Court staff, or military family advocacy staff.

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the North Dakota CFSR QA process indicate that in 2006, timeliness of initiating assessments of reports of child maltreatment was rated at 98 percent.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

The majority of stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that investigations are generally initiated in a timely manner. Stakeholders commented on new contact policy which requires face-to-face contact with the alleged victim within 24 hours, 3 days, or 14 days depending on the category of the case. Stakeholders at the three review sites reported CFS is successful in contacting the alleged victims within the required time frames. However, Burleigh County stakeholders indicated that it has been difficult meeting the time frames and created stress for the caseworkers. Cass County stakeholders advised the new policy has made obtaining preliminary information prior to face-to-face contact a challenge. Ward County stakeholders reported that the county is fully staffed and therefore has not been challenged by the new contact policy.

**Item 2. Repeat maltreatment**

| X | Strength | Area Needing Improvement |

**Case Review Findings**

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 19 (29 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review. For all applicable cases, reviewers were to determine whether there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report involving similar circumstances had occurred within a 6-month period before or after that identified report. Information regarding the ratings is provided below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 2</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the Burleigh/Morton County and Ward County cases and in 91 percent of Cass County cases.

Item 2 was rated as a Strength when there was no indication of two or more substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports on the family within a 6-month period. Item 2 was rated as an ANI in one case because there were two substantiated maltreatment reports during the period under review that occurred within a 2-month period. Although reports occurring prior to the period under review are not included in the ratings, reviewers found that in 55 of the cases reviewed, there were multiple maltreatment reports on the family during the life of the case, 11 of which had over 10 reports, including 1 case with 22 maltreatment reports. Information regarding the disposition of reports that were received prior to the period under review is not available.

**Rating Determination**

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of a Strength. In 95 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that there was no recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period. In addition, the State met the national standard for the measure assessing the absence of maltreatment recurrence. This item was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process indicate that in 98 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, there was no recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS policy allows for the administrative assessment of maltreatment reports. The policy allows a new report on a family already receiving case management services to be referred to the caseworker providing these services. The intent is to allow the caseworker to assess additional child abuse or neglect concerns and incorporate additional services or recommendations as needed. This process eliminates multiple Child Protective Services (CPS) assessment processes and multiple caseworkers being simultaneously involved with a family. Maltreatment reports that require extensive assessment, specialized skills (e.g., forensic interviewing), or reports of a serious or criminal nature are not considered appropriate for administrative assessment.
Stakeholder Interview Information
Burleigh/Morton County and Ward County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that when maltreatment recurrence does occur, it is frequently related to parental substance abuse. According to Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders, families frequently have several maltreatment reports/assessments prior to a finding of services required and the assignment of an ongoing caseworker.

A number of stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level interviewed as part of the Onsite Review commented on the use of administrative assessments when recurrence occurs. Stakeholders reported that the administrative assessment was developed as a family-friendly and service-integrated approach. According to stakeholders, if a new maltreatment report is received on a family currently receiving services, the assigned caseworker will assess the allegations in the new report. The caseworker has 31 days to complete the assessment on an existing case; however, a disposition is not made on the case. If the new report could result in criminal charges, the report would be assigned to a CPS caseworker for a full assessment.

Several stakeholders at the review sites expressed the need for education on the administrative assessment process.

Safety Outcome 2

| Safety Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|------|
| Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement | Burleigh/Morton County | Cass County | Ward County | Total Number | Percent |
| Substantially Achieved | 10 | 25 | 11 | 46 | 70.8 |
| Partially Achieved | 5 | 4 | 6 | 15 | 23.1 |
| Not Achieved or Addressed | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 6.2 |
| Total Cases | 17 | 31 | 17 | 65 | |

Status of Safety Outcome 2

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 70.8 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Safety Outcome 2 was substantially achieved in 81 percent of Cass County cases, 65 percent of Ward County cases, and 59 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases.
Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 in its 2001 CFSR. Item 3 (services to protect children) was rated as a Strength; however, item 4 (risk of harm to children), was rated as an ANI. A key concern identified during the 2001 CFSR was that risk of harm to children was not adequately addressed, which resulted in children being at risk of harm while remaining in their homes. Additionally, in some cases, safety and risk concerns of children were present in the home, but the family refused recommended services, and the cases were closed.

As part of the PIP, North Dakota implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA system to improve performance related to Safety Outcome 2. Additionally, the State developed a guide for child protection teams on decision-making processes and provided training for caseworkers on recognizing and addressing safety and risk issues.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

In the 2008 CFSR, item 3 was again rated as a Strength, and item 4 continued to be rated as an ANI.

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

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

| X | Strength | Area Needing Improvement |

Case Review Findings
An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 43 (66 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded from this assessment if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and there were no other children in the home or if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or identified risk of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent placement of children in foster care while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 3</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Burleigh/Morton County and Ward County cases and 81 percent of Cass County cases.

Item 3 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:
- Services were provided to the parents and child to prevent removal (25 cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home to ensure the child’s safety (12 cases).
- Services were provided after the child was reunified with his/her parents to prevent re-entry (five cases).

Case review information indicates that a broad range of services was offered or provided to families. These included services provided by agency staff and the following additional services:
- Behavioral management
- Parenting skills training
- Counseling
- Financial assistance
- Substance abuse assessment and treatment
- Individual therapy
- Family therapy
- Parent support groups
- Nonoffending parent therapy
- Nurturing parent therapy
- Education services
- Child care services
- Transportation services
- Inpatient mental health services
Item 3 was rated as an ANI in four cases when reviewers determined that services were not provided to ensure the safety of children remaining in-home.

**Rating Determination**

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 91 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percent exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, 2006 ND CFSR QA process data indicate that protective and preventive services were considered a strength in 97 percent of the applicable cases reviewed.

Wraparound case management, according to the Statewide Assessment, is the practice model used by CFS to address child safety and to prevent removal or reentry into foster care. The philosophy of this model is that the family is the expert on their own family; and the family has their own unique culture, values, morals, beliefs, and traditions. ND CFSR QA process team leaders noted families and youth were more involved in their treatment planning, and children were less likely to be removed when the wraparound process was utilized.

The eight Human Services Centers (HSCs) provide core services to assist families and children at risk of removal or to prevent removal from their home. Services to families and children are provided through an array of family preservation services including parent aide, intensive in-home services, prime-time child care, safety/permanency funds, respite care, and the FGDM process.

Even though North Dakota has a wide array of services, the services are not always available or accessible in every region or county. Each HSC has varied and limited outreach services to communities during regular and off-hours to address the needs of families and children.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Many stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFS is effective in providing services to prevent placement. Several stakeholders at the State level indicated that the counties are
providing preventive services, which have decreased the need for court intervention. Additionally, caseworkers have become more cognizant of the services children and families need. Stakeholders in Burleigh/Morton County reported that the family team meeting process is successful in identifying needs and services and ensuring the implementation of services. Stakeholders at the State level and in Ward County said that intensive family services are used to provide support to families in some in-home services cases.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

___ Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings
An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing item 4, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to address the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 4</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cases</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 81 percent of Cass County cases, 65 percent of Ward County cases, and 59 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. This item was rated as a Strength in 75 percent of foster care cases and 72 percent in-home cases.

Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 48 cases when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by the agency through (1) conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children’s home or in the children’s foster home and (2) addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment.

Item 4 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:
- There was a lack of adequate initial and ongoing safety and risk assessments during the period under review (10 cases).
  - 8 cases lacked ongoing safety and risk assessments.
  - 2 cases lacked both initial and ongoing safety and risk assessments.
- Risk was not assessed prior to or following reunification (five cases).
- Risk was not assessed prior to or during a trial home visit (two cases).
Rating Determination
Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had appropriately addressed the risk of harm to the children in 74 percent of the cases. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for an overall rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, the development of safety plans as part of the Single Plan of Care (SPOC) ensures the caseworker and the family are addressing the safety concerns and risk of harm to children. The assessment of risk and safety for the child is achieved by completing the Strengths Discovery.

The Safety/Strength/Risk Assessment (SSRA) is completed by the CPS caseworker and is the foundation for evaluating ongoing safety and risk concerns. Risk and safety is evaluated throughout the life of the case in both in-home and foster care cases during Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings and Foster Care Child and Family Team (FCCFT) meetings, respectively. In addition to assessing safety and risk to the child, CFT and FCCFT meet at least quarterly to:
- Identify family strengths
- Identify family needs
- Identify resources to reduce and/or eliminate the risk of removal from the home
- Assess physical/medical needs
- Assess psychological/emotional needs
- Assess educational needs
- Review progress toward safety, permanency, and well-being

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, 2006 ND CFSR QA data indicate that in 98 percent of applicable cases reviewed, reviewers determined that there was evidence of agency effectiveness in reducing the risk of harm to children.

Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders across the review sites expressed the opinion that the agency is effective in assessing safety and risk throughout the life of the case. The SSRA is completed during the CPS assessment process, which assists caseworkers in identifying the strengths, needs, safety, and risk in the family. According to stakeholders, the Strengths Discovery tool and the SPOC assists the caseworkers in addressing risk in the family in foster care and in-home cases. Ward County stakeholders reported that caseworkers discuss risk factors with the families monthly.
II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burleigh/Morton County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Achieved or Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Foster Care Cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Standard (Scaled Score)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite 4: Placement stability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 70 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for the CFSR 12-month target period, the State did not meet the national standards for Permanency Composite 1 (timeliness and permanency of reunification) and Permanency Composite 4 (placement stability).

However, the State did meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 2 (timeliness of adoptions) and for Permanency Composite 3 (permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods). Performance on the individual measures included in the composites is presented in the discussion of the items related to each measure.
Permanency Outcome 1 was substantially achieved in 80 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases, 75 percent of Cass County cases, and in only 50 percent of Ward County cases.

**Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR**

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 in its 2001 CFSR. In the 2001 CFSR, item 5 pertaining to foster care reentries was rated as an ANI. All other items incorporated in the outcome were rated as Strengths.

To address the issues with foster care reentries, the State implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA process. Additionally, CFS increased its efforts to work with the Native American Tribes and the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS) to identify issues and develop solutions pertaining to foster care reentries. CFS analyzed case data from the computerized system to identify issues that contribute to higher reentry levels and reviewed the composition of the Permanency Planning Committees to ensure the required and recommended parties were in attendance.

North Dakota met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP period.

**Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

In the 2008 CFSR, item 7 (permanency goals) and item 8 (reunification, guardianship, and relative placement) were rated as Strengths. All other items included in this item were rated as ANIs.

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

**Item 5. Foster care reentries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Area Needing Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Case Review Findings**

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 14 (35 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not enter foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 5</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 83 percent of Cass County cases and in 75 percent of the Ward County and Burleigh/Morton County cases.

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 9 of the 14 applicable foster care cases because the child’s entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. Two additional cases were rated as a Strength because, although the children reentered foster care, CFS made concerted efforts to prevent the reentry.

Item 5 was rated as an ANI in three cases. In one case, although aftercare services were put in place, they were not sufficient to prevent reentry. In the second case rated as an ANI, the issues that initially brought the child into foster care were not adequately addressed, thus these issues were present when the child returned home, which resulted in the child’s reentry into foster care. In the last case rated as an ANI, the discharge placement was not adequately explored and disrupted shortly after the child’s placement.

**Rating Determination**

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. The item was rated as a Strength in 79 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which is lower than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Performance on Composite 1: Measure Relevant to the Permanency of Reunification**

State performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was as follows: 16.9 percent of the children exiting foster care to reunification in the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage exceeds the median of 15 percent. For this measure, lower percentages are associated with higher levels of performance.

These data are presented to provide additional information about foster care reentry. There is no national standard for this measure. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite scores.
Statewide Assessment Information
As noted in the Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process indicate that 83 percent of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for the item addressing reentry into foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the wraparound process and SPOC are utilized at reunification to develop the discharge plan and coordinate aftercare services. Additionally, individual residential facilities are implementing follow-up services to families for youth discharged from their programs. Professional Association of Treatment Homes (PATH), which provides therapeutic foster care, has implemented a family support program that includes mentoring and respite care aimed at reducing reentries into foster care.

Transportation services in rural areas greatly affect the ability to access services and to conduct visitations between children and parents working toward the goal of reunification. Safety/permanency funds are used to assist with fuel for cars and minor car repairs, and agency staff provide transportation to services and visitations whenever possible.

Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that reentries into foster care have significantly decreased due to improved post reunification services and support. Ward County reported trial home visits prior to reunification and supportive services after reunification have resulted in infrequent reentries into foster care in their county. Cass County stakeholders reported that reentries into foster care occur when support and services to meet the individual needs of the family after reunification have not been provided. Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders did not comment on this item.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

___ Strength _____ X__ Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings
All 40 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child’s permanency goal or meet the child’s service needs. Reviewers also assessed the stability of the child’s current placement setting. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.
**Item 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases, 85 percent of Cass County cases, and 70 percent of Ward County cases.

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:
- The child did not experience a placement change during the period under review, and either the current placement was stable or the child was discharged from foster care during the period under review (22 cases).
- The placement changes experienced were in the child’s best interest and were intended to further achievement of the child’s permanency goal or to provide specialized services to the child (12 cases).

Item 6 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one or both of the following:
- The child was in multiple placement settings during the period under review, and at least one placement change was not planned by the agency to further attainment of the child’s permanency goal (five cases). In most of these cases, placements were disrupted at the request of the foster parent or relative caregiver because they did not believe that they could meet the needs of the child or adequately handle the child’s behaviors.
- The child’s current placement setting, at the time of the onsite CFSR, was not stable (two cases).

Additional findings of the case review were the following:
- Children in 22 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in 13 cases experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Children in five cases experienced three or more placements during the period under review, including one case with five placements.

**Rating Determination**

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 85 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability or that changes in placements were in the best interest of the child. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.
Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 4: Placement stability
North Dakota’s performance on the individual measures of placement stability included in Composite 4 is reported below:

- 82.2 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days, but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is very close to but less than the national median for this measure of 83.3 percent.
- 57.7 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is less than the national median for this measure of 59.9 percent.
- 37.6 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage exceeds the national median for this measure of 33.9 percent but is lower than the 75th percentile of 41.8 percent.

These data are presented to provide additional information about placement stability. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite scores.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process indicate that placement stability was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases. Success in this area is attributed to the implementation of the wraparound process and involvement of families in the development of their case plan. Additionally, according to Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Payment System (CCWIPS) data, relative placements have increased by 140 percent in the last 6 years.

Assessments of the child’s needs and the level of care required for the child have improved in recent years. According to the Statewide Assessment, caseworkers are efficient in searching for and locating placements that meet the needs of the child. Whenever possible, pre-placement visits are made between the foster family and/or facility and the youth in an attempt to solidify a positive match and ensure a stable placement. Youth who are in their late teens and have a record of sex-offending behaviors are the most difficult to place and the most difficult to maintain in a stable placement.

The reasons for placement change are reviewed by custodians and regional supervisors during case management and at FCCF meetings.

Stakeholder Interview Information
The majority of the stakeholders at the review sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFS attempts to match children and foster parents based on the strengths and skills of the foster parent and makes significant efforts to keep children in stable placements. Unfortunately, due to emergency placements and initial short term placements, the first placement may not be the best or a long term placement. Additionally, there are a limited number of family foster care providers in the State.
Stakeholders at the review sites expressed the opinion that when placements disrupt, it is generally related to the behavior of the child. Stakeholders believe the children currently served in the foster care system begin to experience behavior problems and mental health issues at a young age, which increases placement disruptions. Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County stakeholders reported that when children are disruptive in a foster home, caseworkers and/or therapists work with the foster parent and child to try to stabilize the situation. However, according to some stakeholders, there are limited resources available to support State foster parents.

**Item 7. Permanency goal for child**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X___ Strength</th>
<th>___ Area Needing Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Case Review Findings**

All 40 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established a permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and whether the most current permanency goal was appropriate. The results of this assessment are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 7</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 95 percent of Cass County cases and 90 percent of Burleigh/Morton County and Ward County cases.

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 ANI in three cases when reviewers determined the following:

- The child’s permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (two cases).
- A termination of parental rights (TPR) petition was not filed in accordance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) guidelines and no compelling reasons were documented (one case).

Case review findings pertaining to case plan goals were as follows:

- 5 children had a single goal of other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA).
- 13 children had a single goal of adoption.
- 16 children had a single goal of reunification (including living with other relatives).
• 1 child had a single goal of guardianship.
• 2 children had concurrent goals of reunification with parents and adoption.
• 1 child had concurrent goals of reunification with parents and reunification with relatives.
• 1 child had concurrent goals of reunification with parents and OPPLA.
• 1 child had concurrent goals of adoption and reunification with relatives.

Case review findings pertaining to TPR were as follows:
• At the time of the Onsite Review, 21 of the 40 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.
• TPR had been filed in a timely manner in 11 of the 21 cases applicable for TPR.
• Compelling reasons for not filing were noted in 9 of the 10 cases in which TPR had not been filed timely.

Rating Determination
Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of a Strength. In 92.5 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. This percent exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods
North Dakota met the national standard for Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. Performance on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:
• 22 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the 12-month CFSR target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage is below the national median for this measure of 25 percent.
• 97.2 percent of the children exiting foster care during the CFSR 12-month target period who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home. This percent exceeds the national median for this measure of 96.8 percent but is below the 75th percentile of 98 percent.
• 26.6 percent of the children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month target period with a discharge reason of emancipation had been in foster care for three years or longer at the time of discharge. This percentage is lower than the national median of 47.8 percent and the 25th percentile of 37.5. For this measure, lower scores indicate more positive performance.

These data are presented to provide additional information about permanency. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite scores.
Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS policy requires that the permanency goal be established at the initial FCCFT meeting, which is held within 30 days of the child’s entry into foster care. Concurrent goals may be established if appropriate but are not required. The permanency goal is reviewed at every FCCFT meeting thereafter to ensure that the goal is appropriate for the child. The FCCFT plan includes the services and supports essential to achieving the permanency goal.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process indicate that establishing permanency goals in a timely manner was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at the review sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFS establishes initial permanency goals in a timely manner. However, stakeholders in Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County reported that timely achievement of permanency for Native American children is a challenge. According to these stakeholders, Tribal involvement is frequently minimal, and permanency hearings for Native American children are often continued due to the lack of an expert witness that is required for Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) cases.

Stakeholders at the three review sites reported that concurrent goals are established for children when appropriate and that caseworkers focus on both goals simultaneously.

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

__X__ Strength  __Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings
Item 8 was applicable for 22 (55 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the permanency goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals.

The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 8</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Burleigh/Morton County and Ward County cases and 90 percent of Cass County cases.

Item 8 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency was making concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner (21 cases). Item 8 was rated as an ANI in one case when reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner.

**Rating Determination**

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 95 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship in a timely manner. This percentage exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength.

**Performance on the Individual Measures Pertaining to Timeliness Included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification**

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

- 69 percent of the reunifications occurred in less than 12 months of the child’s entry into foster care, which is at the national median of 69.9 percent.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children discharged to reunification was 8.5 months. This length of stay exceeds the national median of 6.5 months. For this measure, lower scores indicate more positive performance.
- 36.5 percent of children entering foster care in the last 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage is below the national median of 39.4 percent.

North Dakota’s performance on the fourth measure included in this composite, which pertains to reentry into foster care, is discussed under item 5.
**Statewide Assessment Information**
The FCCFT plan, as reported in the Statewide Assessment, includes the services and supports designed to assist the family with reunification of the child. These services and supports are to alleviate the issues causing the need for placement and are to be provided in a manner to address the individualized needs of the family.

The predominant permanency goal and discharge reason in the State is reunification. Based on data from the CFS 2005-2006 Statistical Bulletin, in 2006, 71 percent of children in foster care were reunified within one year. According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process indicate that in 97 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the State was effective in reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.

Analysis of placement settings between 2000 and 2006 shows an increase of 140 percent in the use of relative placements.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**
Stakeholders in Cass County and Ward County commenting about reunification during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that reunification generally occurs within 12 months of the child’s removal. According to Ward County stakeholders, delays in reunification generally occur when parents have not completed the required services. They indicate that this is often due to wait lists for the services. Cass County stakeholders reported that sometimes reunification occurs before the family is ready to reunify.

Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders reported that there have been an increased number of guardianship cases. According to these stakeholders, foster parents are assuming guardianship rather than adopting foster children.

**Item 9: Adoption**

|   | Strength | X | Area Needing Improvement |

**Case Review Findings**
Item 9 was applicable for 16 (40 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being made, to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. The results are shown in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 9</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
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<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>37.5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 75 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases, 67 percent of Cass County cases, and 33 percent of Ward County cases.

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

- The adoption was delayed because of frequent continuances granted by the courts or delays in scheduling TPR hearings (two cases).
- The adoption was delayed because the adoption agency had not completed the necessary paperwork (two cases).
- There was a delay by CFS in requesting adoption services (one case).
- Adoption was the concurrent plan, and it was not pursued (one case).
- The agency failed to provide timely notification to the child’s Tribe of adoption proceedings (one case).
- The child had behavioral issues that had not been addressed that were impeding the adoption process (one case).

Additional findings relevant to this item were the following:

- Adoption was finalized during the period under review in 4 of the 16 applicable cases. In three cases, the adoption was finalized in less than 24 months from the child’s entry into foster care. In the other case, the adoption was finalized in 30 months.
- Of the 12 children who remained in foster care, 5 children had been in foster care for more than 2 years, including one who had been in foster care more than 9 years. Two of the 12 children were placed in a pre-adoptive home.

**Rating Determination**
Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 63 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.
Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions
North Dakota met the national standard for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions. Performance during the 12-month CFSR target period on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:

- 50.7 percent of the children exiting to adoption were discharged in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care. This percentage exceeds the national 75th percentile of 36.6 percent.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 23.4 months. This length of stay is less than the national 25th percentile of 27.3 months. For this measure, lower scores indicate more positive performance.
- 16.9 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the target period. This percentage is below the national median of 20.0 percent.
- 6.3 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within 6 months. This percent is less than the national median for this measure of 8.8 percent.
- 46.4 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percent exceeds the national median for this measure of 45.8 percent but is lower than the 75th percentile of 53.7 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process indicate that timeliness of adoptions was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases.

CFS provides adoption services to children and adoptive families through a contract with Catholic Charities of North Dakota, who is collaborating with PATH North Dakota, to provide these services through the Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK) Program.

AASK adoption staff can become involved in the permanency planning for a child as soon as adoption becomes a consideration, even as a concurrent plan. CFS policy requires that a referral be made to the adoption program no later than when the petition is filed for TPR. Adoption staff assist the local team with issues such as ICWA, Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, and relative search. Adoption staff may meet with birth family and relatives regarding adoption to facilitate possible voluntary cooperation in relinquishment by the birth parents.

Postadoption services are provided to families who adopt children from foster care and include adoption assistance for those children who are determined to have special needs. According to the Statewide Assessment, there have been efforts within the last 2 years to increase efficiency in the adoption assistance program. Adoption subsidy negotiations are done at the county level, with final approval at the State level. Some disparity exists in negotiated amounts from one part of the State to another; however, this is being addressed by standardizing the evaluation of the special needs of the child. Additionally, information and referrals to postadoption service providers and supports are provided. Local recruitment/retention coalitions facilitate support groups in their areas.
Adoptive families also may receive family preservation services through established programs in the counties, HSCs, and private providers under contract with CFS, accessing them as any other family that needs these services. Funding for postadoption services is limited.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**
Stakeholders in Cass County and Ward County and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFS is generally aggressively moving cases to adoption.

State level and Cass County stakeholders indicated that the adoption contractor, AASK, provides efficient adoption services. Ward County stakeholders reported several issues with AASK, including lost paperwork, staff turnover, and waiting lists for home studies which delay adoptive placements for children. Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders did not comment on this item.

**Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Needing Improvement</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td><strong>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Case</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Ward County cases, 67 percent of Cass County cases, and 50 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases.
Item 10 was rated as a Strength in cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a long-term placement for the child and to provide the necessary services to prepare the child for independent living. The item was rated as an ANI in the two cases when reviewers determined the agency was not providing the child with sufficient services to assist in transitioning to independent living.

**Rating Determination**

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 67 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. The item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, 11 percent of youth in foster care at the end of FY 2006 had a permanency goal of OPPLA. Data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process indicate that securing the goal of OPPLA for children was a Strength in 94 percent of the applicable cases.

All youth in foster care, age 16 and older, are required to have their IL needs assessed and addressed through the Casey Life Skills Assessment, Chafee Assessments, and the SPOC Strengths and Needs Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS has made efforts to place more emphasis on permanency efforts for older youth and to involve them in all aspects of the child welfare system, including life planning.

Permanent connections to supportive adults are stressed as part of the discharge planning process for all children in foster care. Based on the belief that the majority of youth who age out of foster care will reconnect with their biological family after their 18th birthday, CFS partners with FGDM providers to assist the family in making the reconnection as successful as possible.

According to the Statewide Assessment, IL services are coordinated by eight Regional IL Program Coordinators. Additionally, several group and residential facilities teach life skills within their programs. The Regional IL Coordinators and the facility IL caseworkers coordinate their IL efforts for youth placed within the facility. This collaboration has enhanced the program and benefited youth in the program.

To gather youth input on experiences in foster care, CFS facilitates youth stakeholder groups in each ND CFSR QA process. Through the youth stakeholder meetings, CFS has been able to gain valuable input on the foster care program. This information is used to formulate changes in policy and practice.
According to the Statewide Assessment, the following services and supports relating to older adolescents have been identified as issues for older youth in foster care:
- Additional need for case management services for 18–21 year olds
- The need to develop a spectrum of transitional living arrangements available to foster youth up to age 21
- Inadequate services to address the mental health and developmental needs of youth who age out of foster care
- Inadequate services and supports to address the needs of sex offenders or sexually reactive youth who have aged out of the foster care system
- Lack of affordable housing
- Need for connections to supportive adults (e.g. mentoring programs)
- Residential resources for college students when dorms close for holidays and breaks
- Development of a liability waiver to allow foster youth to obtain a driver’s license while in foster care

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders in Cass County and Ward County commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that other placement options are thoroughly explored prior to choosing OPPLA. Cass County and Ward County stakeholders reported that OPPLA is chosen based on the age, development, and needs of the child, relationship with parent, and willingness of foster parent.

According to stakeholders at the State level, all children 16 and older are assessed for IL services. IL services focus on children who are likely to age out of foster care.

The opinions about the State’s IL program differed among stakeholders in Cass County and Ward County. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the IL program is strong and prepares youth for transitioning from foster care to independent living. They also indicated that youth who had aged out of foster care continued to receive services from the Regional IL coordinator.

However, other stakeholders in Cass County and Ward County voiced concern that the current program is ineffective. These stakeholders suggested that the youth do not receive enough training or individualized services to ensure a successful transition to living independently. Furthermore, services for youth who have aged out of foster care are inconsistent.

Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders did not comment on this item.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Burleigh/ Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantially Achieved</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Achieved</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Achieved or Addressed</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Status of Permanency Outcome 2

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 82.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. Permanency Outcome 2 was determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of Ward County cases and in 80 percent of Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County cases.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

North Dakota achieved substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 in its 2001 CFSR. In the 2001 CFSR, all items incorporated in this outcome were rated as a Strength. Therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this outcome in its PIP.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

In the 2008 CFSR, item 11 (proximity of placements) and item 14 (preserving connections) were rated as Strengths. All other items included in this outcome were rated as ANIs.

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

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

___X___ Strength  ______ Area Needing Improvement
Case Review Findings
Item 11 was applicable for 33 (82.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which (1) TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, (2) contact with parents was not considered to be in the child’s best interest, and/or (3) parents were deceased or their whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child’s most current foster care setting was in close proximity to the child’s parents or close relatives. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 11</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 11 was rated a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases. Item 11 was rated as a Strength in cases when reviewers determined that the child was placed in the same community or county as the parents or that the child’s placement was not in the same community or county, but was still in close proximity to the parents. The item also was rated as a Strength if the child was placed out of his or her community or county, but that the placement was necessary to meet the needs of the child and/or support attainment of the permanency goal.

Case reviews indicated that if children were placed outside their communities in order to meet their needs, CFS was providing transportation, gas vouchers, hotel accommodations, and telephones to assist families in maintaining contact.

Rating Determination
Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 100 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CFS had made diligent efforts to ensure that children were placed in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives, or that were necessary to meet special needs. This percent exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, efforts are made by CFS and the FFCFT to identify and locate placement options in close proximity to family. The rural and geographic nature of the State makes placement in close proximity difficult due to limited foster
care resources. Additionally, youth experiencing issues such as substance abuse or sexual-offending behaviors may have to be placed outside of their county of residence because of limited services in rural areas.

If placement cannot be made in close proximity, CFS makes effort to ensure contact is maintained between the foster child and family members. Efforts often include financial assistance, phone calls, interactive video, and transportation for family members, parents, and/or the foster child.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the 2006 ND CFSR QA process data indicate that children were placed in close proximity to their parents in 100 percent of the applicable cases reviewed.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders in Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that although CFS caseworkers diligently attempt to place children in close proximity to their families, a lack of sufficient placement resources sometimes limits their ability to do so. Ward County stakeholders did not comment on this item.

**Item 12. Placement with siblings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Item 12 was determined to be a Strength in 100 percent of Burleigh/Morton County and Ward County cases and in 70 percent of Cass County cases.

Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 13 cases when reviewers determined that the child was placed with siblings or that the child was not placed with siblings but that the separation was in the best interest of the child or was necessary because the child or one of the siblings had special placement needs.

Item 12 was rated as an ANI in three Cass County cases when reviewers determined CFS had not made sufficient efforts to locate a placement for a sibling group when it was appropriate for the group to be placed together.

**Rating Determination**
Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 81 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever possible and appropriate. This is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**
According to the Statewide Assessment, 2006 ND CFSR QA reviewers rated this item as a Strength in 97 percent of the applicable cases.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that CFS policy requires siblings live together in the same foster home when it is in the best interest of each child. This policy is monitored by the FCCFT and documented in CCWIPS and SPOC. The Statewide Assessment notes it is difficult to locate placements that are able to accommodate sibling groups due to limited placement resources across the State, particularly in rural areas.

When it is not possible to place siblings together, visitation between siblings occurs. Although face-to-face contact is the preferred method, letters, phone calls, and interactive video also are utilized to maintain contact between siblings.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**
Stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that diligent efforts are made to place siblings together. Stakeholders in Burleigh/Morton County and at the State level indicated that resources are limited for teenage siblings and larger sibling groups.

Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County stakeholders reported that when siblings are not placed together, it is generally in the best interest of one of the children.
Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Strength    Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings
Item 13 was applicable for 37 (92.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item if the child had no siblings in foster care and if one of the following conditions was met with regard to the parents: (1) TPR was established prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the child’s life (or parents were deceased) or (2) visitation with a parent was considered to not be in the best interests of the child. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine (1) whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care and (2) whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 13</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Total Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 87.5 percent of Ward County cases, 84 percent of Cass County cases, and 80 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases.

Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 31 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visitation with parents and siblings met the needs of the children. Item 13 was rated as an ANI in 6 cases when reviewers determined the agency did not make concerted efforts to promote frequent and/or quality visitation with mothers, siblings, and/or fathers.

Reviewers reported that CFS provided transportation for children and parents to visitations. Additionally, visitation progressed to less restrictive environments and increased in length as families moved closer to reunification.

Specific findings with regard to the frequency of visitation with mothers, fathers, and siblings are provided in the table below. Visits with mothers occurred at least once a month in 72 percent of the cases, visits with fathers occurred at least once a month in 52 percent
of the cases, and visits with siblings occurred in 89 percent of the cases. Visits were far more likely to occur with siblings than mothers and particularly fathers.

### Visitation Frequency for Children in Foster Care (During the period under review)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitation Frequency</th>
<th>Mother (Number of cases)</th>
<th>Father (Number of cases)</th>
<th>Siblings in Foster Care (Number of Cases)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred at least weekly</td>
<td>13 (41%)</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>9 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less than weekly, but at least twice a month</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
<td>3 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less than twice a month, but at least once a month</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less frequently than once a month</td>
<td>9 (28%)</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits did not occur</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cases for which item 13 was applicable</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 84 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the family. This percent is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

### Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, each case plan must include a written visitation plan with parents and siblings in foster care. Frequency of visits is determined and monitored at the FCCFT meetings.

Visits occur in visitation centers, the social service office, foster care facilities, or in the family home. Phone calls, mail, and video conferencing are used to supplement regular, scheduled visits. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, CFS will reimburse parents for travel associated with visiting their child. In addition, CFS may provide the transportation for either the parents and/or children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS staff often transport parents and/or children long distances, up to 400 miles, to promote connections and to facilitate reunification.

The frequency and quality of visits is monitored through the ND CFSR QA process. In 2006, data from the ND CFSR QA process rated visitation with parents and siblings as a Strength in 96 percent of the applicable cases. According to the Statewide Assessment, information gathered from children and parents in the ND CFSR QA process indicate that visits are occurring on a consistent basis.
Stakeholder Interview Information
Most stakeholders at the review sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that visitation with parents and siblings occurs according to the plan established by the FCCFT. Furthermore, the frequency of visitation is reviewed quarterly by the FCCFT. Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders reported caseworkers make efforts for children to visit with their incarcerated parents, when appropriate. Additionally, caseworkers encourage phone calls between siblings to maintain the connection.

Cass County stakeholders reported that Cass County CFS employs two full-time and two voluntary transporters to assist in facilitating visitation with parents and siblings. Ward County stakeholders indicated that bus tickets, transportation, and gas money are provided to families to ensure visitation occurs.

Item 14. Preserving connections

X Strength   ___ Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings
Item 14 was applicable for 39 (97.5) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child’s connections to neighborhood, community, heritage, extended family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care. The results of the assessment are provided in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 14</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Ward County cases, 95 percent of Cass County cases, and 90 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases.

Item 14 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:
- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with extended family members (e.g., through phone contact and visits and placements with relatives) (32 cases).
- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with the child’s religious or cultural heritage (19 cases).
- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with the school, community, and important activities such as dance class or sports (e.g., selecting placements that do not require a change of school, jobs, sports teams, etc.) (20 cases).
- The agency ensured that the child’s connection to previous long-term foster parents was preserved (two cases).

Information from the Onsite Review indicated the agency did an excellent job of ensuring ICWA guidelines were maintained. Additionally, CFS provided opportunities for Native American children to stay connected with the Native American culture. CFS also made extensive efforts to maintain children in their schools, which often meant transporting the children out of district.

Item 14 was rated as an ANI in one case when reviewers determined the agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to extended family. In the second case rated as an ANI, the agency did not make concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections to school.

**Rating Determination**
Item 14 was rated as a Strength. In 95 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections with extended family, culture, religion, community, and school. This exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in North Dakota’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**
According to the Statewide Assessment, connections such as neighborhoods, community, faith, family, Tribe, culture, school, and friends are assessed by identifying the child’s needs during the Strengths Discovery process. Case specific and individualized planning, which are a part of the wraparound case management process, emphasize continued connections to the child’s community for medical care, dental care, and involvement with friends and family. The FCCFT meeting promotes the involvement of significant people in the child and family’s life in order to preserve connections. Access to communication such as visits, telephone calls, interactive video conferencing, and mail are other avenues for children in foster care to maintain connections.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that CFS often places Native American children in non-Native American homes because there are very few Native American foster care providers. Tribes are notified and special efforts are made to help ensure there is continuity and connection to the child’s family and Tribe. Native American children in foster care are encouraged to participate in cultural and/or familial activities.

ND CFSR QA process data from 2006 indicate that preserving connections was rated as a Strength in 91 percent of the applicable cases.
Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at the review sites reported CFS makes every effort to maintain children in their neighborhoods, schools, Head Start programs, and day care programs. Additionally, stakeholders reported children have contact via telephone, e-mail, letter, and visits with extended family. Foster parents in Cass County are credited with assisting children in maintaining connections.

According to Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders, Native American foster children and their foster parents attend monthly “Keeping Culture Alive” meetings. Speakers at these meetings cover various topics pertinent to the Native American population. Additionally, the stakeholders reported that Tribal notification occurs on all ICWA-related cases.

Item 15. Relative placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Area Needing Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Case Review Findings
Item 15 was applicable for 27 (67.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because (1) the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period, or (2) the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 15</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Case</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases, 73 percent of Cass County Cases, and 62.5 percent of Ward County cases.

Item 15 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:
- The child was placed with relatives or close family members (five cases).
The child was not placed with relatives, but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives when applicable (15 cases). In these cases, children were not placed with relatives because a relative could not be found or because identified relatives were unable or unwilling to care for the children and/or had a criminal record or history of substantiated child maltreatment.

Item 15 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:
- The agency had not made diligent efforts to search for known maternal and paternal relatives during the period under review (two cases).
- The agency made diligent efforts to search for maternal relatives, but not paternal relatives (four cases).
- The agency located relatives but did not make efforts to place the children with them (one case).

**Rating Determination**

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 74 percent of cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, relative placements have increased 140 percent in the last 6 years. ND CFSR QA process data from 2006 indicate that relative placements were a Strength in 94 percent of the applicable cases.

CFS policy requires that searches for relatives be initiated as early as possible after removal, but no later than when a determination has been made that the child cannot return home. The searches may include “US Search” and/or other local and State methods or tools available to locate absent parents and maternal and paternal relatives.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders at the three review sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFS makes concerted efforts to seek relatives as potential placement resources. Searches are completed early in the case and, according to stakeholders, are also used to find connections for the child. However, some Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County stakeholders indicated that relatives are not screened thoroughly prior to placement.

Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders reported the use of kinship care, which allows relatives to be a placement resource for a child after completing a background check. According to stakeholders, financial payment cannot be made to the family; however, the family is eligible to apply for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

___  Strength   ___X_ Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings
Item 16 was applicable for 34 (85 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if (1) parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, (2) a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child’s best interests throughout the period under review, or (3) both parents were deceased. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers through efforts other than arranging visitation. The results of this assessment are provided in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 16</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Foster Care Cases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Foster Care Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 89 percent of the Ward County cases and 80 percent of the Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County cases.

Item 16 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children through various activities. The table below identifies the activities as well as the number of cases relevant for each type of activity.
### Effort Made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effort Made</th>
<th>With Mother</th>
<th>With Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the parent’s participation in school activities and case conferences, attendance at doctors’ appointments with the child, or engagement in the child’s after school or sports activities?</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide or arrange for transportation or provide funds for transportation so that the parent could attend the child’s special activities and doctors’ appointments?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for therapeutic situations to help the parent and child strengthen their relationship?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the foster parents to provide mentoring or serve as role models to the parent to assist her/him in appropriate parenting?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage and facilitate contact with incarcerated parents (where appropriate) or with parents not living in close proximity to the child?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewers also noted that CFS attempted to include incarcerated parents to the extent possible.

Item 16 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child’s relationship with the father (three cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child’s relationship with either parent (three cases).

**Rating Determination**

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 82 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the 2006 ND CFSR QA process rated maintaining parent and child relationship at 92 percent. Cases reviewed during the ND CFSR QA process show increasing involvement of parents with activities of children in foster care. The reviews indicated that caseworkers are developing and offering opportunities for parental involvement in activities, including school conferences, medical appointments, therapy appointments, extracurricular activities, Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and spiritual activities.
Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders in Cass County and Ward County commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported CFS makes diligent efforts to support the parent child bond. Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders did not comment on this item.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well-Being Outcome 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burleigh/Morton County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Achieved or Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 53.8 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 59 percent of Ward County cases, 55 percent of Cass County cases, and in only 47 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The outcome was found to be substantially achieved in 62.5 percent (25 cases) of the 40 foster care cases and in 40 percent (10 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 in its 2001 CFSR. Item 17 (needs and services of the child, parents, and foster parents) and item 19 (caseworker visits with the child) were rated as ANIs. Key concerns identified in 2001 were the following:

- Service needs had been assessed for parents in in-home cases; however, a comprehensive assessment was not completed for children.
- Visits between caseworkers and children did not meet State policy and/or were not sufficient to ensure safety and well-being.
- Stakeholders reported that there was confusion on case management responsibilities pertaining to children in foster care when contract agencies and CFS were involved.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA process. Additionally, CFS strengthened policy related to:
- Assessing the needs of children, parents, and foster parents
- Caseworker visits with foster children
- Case management responsibilities when multiple agencies are involved

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

**Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

All items incorporated into this outcome were rated as ANIs in the 2008 CFSR.

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Area Needing Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Review Findings**

Item 17 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had (1) adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents; and (2) provided the services necessary to meet those needs. This item excludes the assessment of children’s (but not parents’) needs pertaining to educational, physical health, and mental health needs as these are addressed in later items. The results of this assessment are provided in the table below.
Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 65 percent of Cass and Ward County cases and in 47 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 70 percent (28 cases) of the 40 foster care cases and in 44 percent (11 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases.

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

Specific case review findings for item 17 are shown in the table below. These data indicate that, for foster care cases, CFS was more likely to assess and meet the needs of children and foster parents than it was to assess and meet the needs of mothers or especially, fathers. CFS was less effective in assessing and meeting the needs for the in-home services cases. CFS was effective in assessing and meeting the father’s needs in 41 percent of the cases reviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target person for needs assessment and services</th>
<th>Foster Care</th>
<th>In-Home Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s needs assessed and met?</td>
<td>26 (81%)</td>
<td>6 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s needs assessed and met?</td>
<td>19 (66%)</td>
<td>10 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s needs assessed and met?</td>
<td>39 (98%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster parent’s needs assessed and met?</td>
<td>28 (93%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to reviewers, assessments and services for children included psychological evaluations, psychosocial evaluations, cultural assessments, interest finder assessments, IL assessments, substance abuse assessments, character enrichment education, cultural education, cultural diversity groups, mentoring, and support of foster children’s extracurricular activities. Additionally, assessments and services for parents included parental capacity evaluations, substance abuse assessments, home health services, parent aide services, transportation assistance, and Trac phones for telephone communication.
Rating Determination
Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 60 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the State had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, the wraparound process includes the caseworker completing a comprehensive Strengths Discovery with all individuals involved in the life of the child, to include exploration of the needs and appropriate referral to services and support. The comprehensive assessment process continues throughout the life of the case. The CFT and FCCFT meet to identify and assess the family and foster parent’s strengths, needs, risks, and resources to reduce and/or eliminate the conditions that created the safety, risk, and/or removal from the home. Additionally, the CFT/FCCFT addresses reunification and identifies and addresses emotional and educational needs, child maltreatment, and ensures the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

CFS, along with other system partners, developed the Mental Health Screening Toolkit to assist in assessing the mental health needs of all children in the child welfare system for both in-home and out-of-home care. If a need is identified in the assessment process, the caseworker will follow up with the necessary and appropriate referrals to address the identified need.

IL policy states that all foster children age 16 and older are required to have their needs related to IL assessed and addressed through the FCCFT and the development of an IL plan. Those children, age 16 and older, who have been identified as “likely to age out of foster care” are referred to the Regional IL Coordinator who assesses their needs and develops an IL plan.

The ND CFSR QA process indicated that needs, services, and strengths were more frequently addressed in cases and counties where the wraparound process was fully implemented. According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process show that needs assessment and the provision of appropriate services to meet those needs was rated as a Strength in 94 percent of the applicable cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, service access varies depending on the community in which a family resides. Rural areas are generally isolated in regard to available resources and may not offer the array of services that can be accessed in more urban areas. HSCs are available to provide services, and in some regions, outreach services are provided to outlying areas. The Statewide Assessment reports that stakeholders interviewed as part of the Statewide Assessment process indicated that a barrier to providing services to families is the lack of resources and services, specifically in the frontier areas.
**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that parents’, children’s, and foster parents’ needs are assessed by the caseworkers on a regular basis. Ongoing and changing needs are reviewed through ongoing, frequent communication and CFT and FCCFT meetings. Stakeholders also commented on the availability of services. These comments are included under item 35 in the Systemic Factors section.

**Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Cases</td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Cases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cases</td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 71 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases and in 63 percent of Cass County and Ward County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 76 percent (29 cases) of the 38 applicable foster care cases and in 48 percent (12 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 41 cases when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in the case planning process. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 22 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the
mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process. It was reported that in some cases, case plans were created without parental input and then presented to the parents for signatures. In other cases, case plans were completed by the case manager but there was no parent signature.

Specific information regarding involvement in case planning is provided in the table below. The data indicate that involvement of parents and children in case planning did not always occur. However, mothers (88 percent) and children (85 percent) were more likely to be involved in case planning than were fathers (64 percent). The exclusion of fathers from case planning occurred even when fathers’ whereabouts were known and they were involved with or living with the child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement in Case Planning</th>
<th>Evaluation Results</th>
<th>Number of Applicable Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother involved in case planning?</td>
<td>49 (87.5%)</td>
<td>7 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father involved in case planning?</td>
<td>30 (64%)</td>
<td>17 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child (when age appropriate) involved in case planning?</td>
<td>39 (85%)</td>
<td>7 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Determination**

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 65 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the wraparound process, which includes CFT and FCCFT meetings; FGDM; and intensive in-home services are services that encourage parent and child involvement in their SPOC. The primary focus of the FCCFT meeting is to involve parents, foster parents, children, and other formal or informal supports in the development of the case plan.

A SPOC is based on the family’s needs and expectations as identified by the family and is developed to work toward change through the use of identified community-based supports, strengths, needs, risks, goals, and tasks specific for the family with the use of formal and natural supports or resources. The plan is strength-based, comprehensive, flexible, culturally competent, measured by outcomes and written in the family’s language. The SPOC is reviewed formally every 90 days at the family team meetings.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, during the 2006 ND CFSR QA process, reviewers determined that the involvement of children and their families in the case planning process was a Strength in 94 percent of applicable cases. Additionally, CFS has received comments from families and children through the ND CFSR QA process indicating involvement in case planning. According
to the Statewide Assessment, these reviews indicate CFS is making concerted efforts to ensure parents, children, and support system involvement in case plan development. Telephone and videoconferencing are being used if the parents or the child is unable to attend.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**
Stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that caseworkers are consistent in inviting parents and community partners to CFT and FCCFT meetings. Additional comments regarding the case planning process are provided in the Systemic Factors section of this report under item 25.

**Item 19. Caseworker visits with child**

___ Strength ___X__ Area Needing Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 19</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 94 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases, 84 percent of Cass County cases, and 76 percent of Ward County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 60 percent (15 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases.

Item 19 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child’s safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals. Item 19 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:
- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child and the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (six cases).
The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (two cases).

There was a long period of time during the period under review in which the agency caseworker did not visit the child (two cases).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical frequency of caseworker visits with child (during the period under review)</th>
<th>Foster Care Cases (Number and Percent)</th>
<th>In-Home Services Cases (Number and Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred at least weekly</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less than weekly but at least twice a month</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less than twice a month but at least once a month</td>
<td>19 (47.5%)</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less frequently than once a month</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>8 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits did not occur</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Determination**

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 85 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and/or quality. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS policy requires face-to-face contact every 90 days for children receiving in-home services. Face-to-face caseworker visits are required every 30 days with children in family foster care and in residential care within the State. Visits are required at least quarterly with children in out-of-State placements. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, caseworkers may utilize technology such as video conferencing or similar interactive systems to facilitate this contact and maintain connections with children and youth who are in placement at some distance. However, per policy, this method of visitation should be used infrequently.

Face-to-face visits, according to the Statewide Assessment, focus on the child’s safety, needs, case plan, issues, and conditions needed to address successful reunification or permanency and ensure the well-being of the child and the family. Visitation is an issue reviewed at the FCCFT and CFT meeting.
The ND CFSR QA process monitors the quality and frequency of the visitation between the caseworker and child to determine if planning, goals, tasks, and outcomes are reviewed with the child. This review includes both the frequency and quality of the visit. In 2006, the ND CFSR QA process rated caseworker visits with children at 91 percent.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders at the three review sites commenting on this item indicated that quality and quantity of caseworker contacts are sufficient. Visits focus on the status and needs of the child. Stakeholders indicated that caseworkers are responsive to calls and will make visits in the evenings and on weekends if necessary.

**Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents**

___ Strength  ____X__ Area Needing Improvement

**Case Review Findings**

Item 20 was applicable for 58 (89 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this assessment if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of their children. All cases that were not applicable were foster care cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker’s face-to-face contact with the children’s mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and/or ensure the children’s safety and well-being. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 20</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Cases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 60 percent of Ward County cases, 59 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases, and 58 percent of Cass County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 70 percent (23 cases) of the 33 applicable foster care cases and in 44 percent (11 cases) of the 25 in-home services 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. Item 20 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:

- Visits with the mother and father were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality (eight cases).
- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality (two cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality (14 cases).

Specific information pertaining to the frequency of caseworker visits with parents is provided in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical frequency of caseworker visits with parents</th>
<th>Foster Care Cases</th>
<th>In-Home Services Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred on a weekly basis</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less than weekly but at least twice a month</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>5 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less than twice a month but at least once a month</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>3 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits occurred less frequently than once a month</td>
<td>9 (30%)</td>
<td>7 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits did not occur</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional findings were the following:

- For the 30 foster care cases and the 25 in-home cases for which visits with mothers were applicable, there were 13 cases (24 percent) in which these visits occurred less than once a month or not at all.
- For the 24 foster care cases and the 18 in-home cases for which visits with fathers were applicable, there were 25 cases (59 percent) in which these visits occurred less than once a month or not at all.

**Rating Determination**

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 59 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with parents were sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

Although CFS policy requires contact every 30 days for parents with children in foster care and every 90 days for in-home cases, the
Statewide Assessment indicates that the frequency of caseworker visits with the parents must be sufficient to meet the needs of the family and promote achievement of the case plan goals. The goal of the visitation plan, according to the Statewide Assessment, is to strengthen the parent-child relationship, engage and build a relationship with the parents, and assess readiness for and services required to facilitate reunification, when possible.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process show that caseworker visits with parents was rated as a Strength in 87 percent of the applicable cases.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Cass County stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review indicated that quality of visits with parents is sufficient. Additionally, Ward County stakeholders reported that video conferencing is utilized for caseworker/parent visitation, including for incarcerated parents. Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders did not comment on this item.

### Well-Being Outcome 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burleigh/ Morton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Status of Well-Being Outcome 2**

North Dakota achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 95.3 percent of the cases reviewed. This meets the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. There were minimal differences in performance on this outcome across sites. Well-Being Outcome 2 was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of Ward County Cases, 95 percent of Cass County cases, and 92 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The outcome was substantially achieved in 100 percent of the 35 applicable foster care cases compared with 75 percent of the 8 applicable in-home services cases.
Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

North Dakota achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 in its 2001 CFSR; therefore, the State was not required to address this outcome in its PIP.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

The key findings of the 2008 CFSR indicate that CFS adequately assessed the educational needs of children and services were provided if necessary.

The specific findings pertaining to the item assessed under Well-Being Outcome 2 is presented and discussed below.

**Item 21. Educational needs of the child**

___ X ___ Strength __ ___ Area Needing Improvement

**Case Review Findings**

Item 21 was applicable for 43 (66 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if any of the following applied: (1) children were not of school age; or (2) children in in-home cases did not have service needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of this assessment are provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 21</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Applicable Cases</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cases</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 21 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and services were provided, if necessary. Item 21 was rated as an ANI in two cases. In one in-home case there was a lack of ongoing assessments of educational needs even when there was clear evidence that the child was experiencing school-related problems. In the other in-home case rated as an ANI, educational issues were assessed and addressed; however, provisions were not made at case closure to ensure continued compliance by the family.
Reviewers indicated that in-home caseworkers frequently assessed educational needs in cases even though the reason for involvement was not associated with educational issues.

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

**Statewide Assessment Information**
According to the Statewide Assessment, the wraparound process utilizes the Education Life Domain to assess needs and services and to assist in the development of the SPOC. The SPOC must include the most recent information available pertaining to the child’s education including:
- Names and address of educational providers
- Grade level performance
- School records
- Assurances that placement in foster care takes into account proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement
- Any other relevant education information

When appropriate, education partners are invited to participate in FCCFT meetings. According to the Statewide Assessment, their input and support are critical to ensuring educational needs are addressed. In some counties, education representatives are permanent members of the FCCFT meetings. In most counties the caseworker and/or the foster parents participate in IEP meetings.

Educational needs and documentation in case files are reviewed on applicable cases in the ND CFSR QA process. Data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process indicate that CFS’s effectiveness in providing children in its care with appropriate educational services was rated as a Strength in 98 percent of the applicable cases. Concerns have been expressed by stakeholders and the QA process review team members that some case files lack documentation of school records and that school records are not provided to foster parents in a timely manner. However, the Statewide Assessment reports that based on case file reviews and foster parent comments, this is improving.

Stakeholders attending Statewide Assessment meetings indicated the following:
- Educators participate in FCCFT meetings.
- County staff and foster parents attend IEP meetings.
- CFS makes strong efforts to work toward the educational goals of children.
- Collaboration and communication occurs among system partners.

Additionally, education and system partners expressed concerns in stakeholder meetings that foster youth are being discharged from foster care placement, and/or transferred from school to school, in the middle of the semester. Preference from these partners is to wait until the end of the semester or the end of the school year to change a placement and make an educational transition. Youth stakeholders reported difficulties with the educational system regarding credits earned and their ability to transfer schools.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders at the review sites commenting on this item during the Onsite Review indicated that the majority of caseworkers are responsive to children’s educational needs. Caseworkers, parents, and/or foster parents participate in IEP meetings on a consistent basis. Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders reported that caseworkers bring parents to school conferences. Additionally, Ward County stakeholders reported that a school social worker is a permanent team member of CFT and FCCFT.

**Well-Being Outcome 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burleigh/Morton County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Achieved or Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Status of Well-Being Outcome 3**

North Dakota did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 86.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. Well-Being Outcome 3 was determined to be substantially achieved in 93 percent of Cass County and Ward County cases and 69 percent of
Burleigh/Morton County cases. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 93 percent (37 cases) of the 40 foster care cases and in 74 percent (14 cases) of the 19 applicable in-home services cases.

**Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR**

The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome for the 2001 CFSR. Item 22, pertaining to the physical health of children, was rated as a Strength, and item 23, pertaining to the mental health of children, was rated as an ANI.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the Wraparound Practice Model and the QA process. Additionally, CFS strengthened policy related to assessing children’s mental health needs and ensuring appropriate services are provided. The State also implemented a mental/behavioral health screening tool for children who do not receive Health Tracks screening.

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

**Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

Similar to the 2001 CFSR, the physical and dental health of children (item 22) was rated as a Strength and the mental health of children (item 23) was rated as an ANI in the 2008 CFSR.

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

**Item 22. Physical health of the child**

| X | Strength | Area Needing Improvement |

**Case Review Findings**

Item 22 was applicable for 48 (74 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were in-home 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 (including dental needs) had been appropriately assessed and (2) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 22</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Cases</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 22 was rated a Strength in 100 percent of Burleigh/Morton County and Ward County cases and in 96 percent of Cass County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the 40 applicable foster care cases and in 87.5 percent (7 cases) of the 8 applicable in-home cases.

Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 47 cases when reviewers determined that children’s health needs (medical and dental) were routinely assessed and identified needs were addressed by appropriate services. Item 22 was rated as an ANI when the agency did not meet the medical or dental needs of the child. In the one in-home case rated as an ANI for this item, CFS referred the family for physical and dental assessments; however, the family did not comply nor did the agency take further action to ensure compliance.

**Rating Determination**

Item 22 is rated as a Strength. Reviewers determined that the agency was effective in assessing and meeting the physical health needs of children in 98 percent of the cases, which exceeds the 90 percent required for an overall rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, 80 percent of the counties in the State are designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas. ND CFSR QA reviewers rated CFS’s performance in the area of physical health to be a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases reviewed in 2006.

Children’s physical, medical, and dental needs are assessed through Health Tracks/Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) screening and the comprehensive strengths and needs assessment, which includes the Physical Health domain.

Within 30 days of entering care, children are required to have a Health Tracks/EPSDT screening. Health Tracks/EPSDT utilizes the Pediatric Symptom Checklist to assess for emotional/developmental and behavioral risk factors. Additionally, children in foster care receive annual physical examinations. Following an assessment or screening, all identified health and dental concerns are addressed and documented in the case file. The case file contains the most recent information available pertaining to the child’s health.
The caseworker is responsible for monitoring the physical and emotional health of foster children and assists the parents and/or foster family in coordinating appropriate referrals to medical providers. Foster parents, as part of the FCCFT, are actively involved in facilitating the receipt of medical and dental care for children. Additionally, the SPOC requires documentation of consultation with physicians regarding the health of foster children.

The FCCFTM or CFTM reviews the status of the child’s overall health and well-being at least every 90 days. Additionally, caseworkers can add medical professionals as team members, either as active participants or consultants. If children in in-home cases do not qualify for Medicaid or other insurance programs, Safety/Permanency funds can be accessed to cover health expenses.

According to the Statewide Assessment, access to dental care is an issue in the State. The University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health reports that 16 of the State’s 53 counties are designated as Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas. Additionally, the Center for Rural Health also noted that only 7 percent to 25 percent of dentists in the State accept any and all Medicaid patients who present for treatment. Rural dentists accept more Medicaid patients than urban dentists. HSC staff work closely with families to assist them with accessing dental care. At times, caseworkers transport families hundreds of miles to access dental care from a provider who accepts Medicaid patients.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during a Statewide Assessment meeting indicated the following concerns:
- Access to medical care in rural areas
- Poverty/economic hardships
- Lack of medical insurance
- Limited early intervention/early prevention services

**Stakeholder Interview Information**
Stakeholders statewide commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFS is effective in assessing the physical and medical needs of children receiving foster care services. Each child, according to stakeholders, receives a Health Track/EPSDT assessment within 30 days of entering care. Additionally, health needs are identified and assessed during the CFT and FCCFT.

Dental providers who accept Medicaid are limited in the State, which, depending on the area, can make obtaining dental services a challenge.
Item 23. Mental health of the child

___ Strength    ___X___ Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings
Item 23 was applicable for 50 (77 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs, or if there were no mental health concerns. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 23</th>
<th>Burleigh/Morton County</th>
<th>Cass County</th>
<th>Ward County</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Needing Improvement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Applicable Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable Cases</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 93 percent of Ward County cases, 90 percent of Cass County cases, and 67 percent of Burleigh/Morton County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 91 percent (29 cases) of the 32 applicable foster care cases and in 72 percent (13 cases) of the 18 applicable in-home services cases.

Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 42 cases when reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were appropriately assessed and the identified mental health needs were addressed. Item 23 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:
- Mental health needs were not assessed or addressed (two in-home cases).
- Mental health needs were assessed but were not met (four cases: one in-home case and three foster care cases).
- Services were provided, but they were not appropriate to the child’s needs (one in-home case).
- Mental health assessments were not conducted, yet some services were provided (one in-home services case).
Ratings Determination
Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 84 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in North Dakota’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the 2006 ND CFSR QA process on CFS’s effectiveness in assessing the mental health needs of children in foster care and providing appropriate services was rated as a Strength in 95 percent of the applicable cases.

Mental health needs are an area of assessment on the SSRA completed at the conclusion of a Child Abuse/Neglect (CA/N) Assessment. Additionally, assessment of the child’s emotional health is done through the Health Tracks/EPSDT screening and through the comprehensive strengths and needs assessment using the Emotional/Behavioral Life Domain. Furthermore, CFS policy requires mental/behavioral health needs of children be identified in ongoing assessments and case planning activities.

A mental health screening toolkit is used by CFS and other system partners. A State form, identified as Preliminary Questions for Social/Emotional/Developmental Screening, is utilized. Through the screening, information is gathered to determine if the family has had prior mental health screenings or involvement. If needs are identified through this assessment process, the caseworker provides the necessary and appropriate referrals.

Additionally, stakeholders commenting on this item during Statewide Assessment meetings indicated the following strengths:

- Array of services and funding resources
- Wraparound process
- Evidence-based practice
- Assessments of family and children’s mental health needs
- Expanded outreach services
- Intensive in-home services
- Residential treatment facilities

Stakeholders indicated the following concerns:

- Lack of resources in some regions of the State
- Lack of prevention services
- Need for cross-systems training
- Lack of child psychiatrists and psychologists at the HSCs
Stakeholder Interview Information
According to stakeholders at the review sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR, children are generally referred for appropriate mental health services. The availability of mental health services varies across the State and some areas, including Ward County and Cass County, have waiting lists for mental health and psychiatric services.
SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

This section of the CFSR Final Report provides information regarding North Dakota’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors examined during the CFSR. Information on the items included under each systemic factor comes from the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders conducted during the onsite CFSR. It should be noted that ratings for the systemic factors are not based on single comments from an individual stakeholder; however, these comments are included in the report when they provide important insight or clarification regarding the State’s performance on a particular systemic factor.

A score for substantial conformity is established for each systemic factor. Scores of 3 and 4 represent substantial conformity. Scores of 1 or 2 mean that a State is not in substantial conformity with the requirements of the systemic factor. Specifically, a score of 1 is given when none of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) or program requirements is in place. A score of 2 indicates that some or all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirement. A systemic factor is rated a 3 when all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement. A rating of 4 is given when all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

Information also is provided regarding the State’s performance on each systemic factor for the State’s first CFSR. If the systemic factor was part of the State’s PIP, the key concerns addressed in the PIP and the strategies for assessing those concerns are noted.

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity</th>
<th>Not in Substantial Conformity</th>
<th>Substantial Conformity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Status of Statewide Information System**

North Dakota is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this factor in the PIP.

Specific findings for the item included in this systemic factor and the reason for the item rating are presented below.
Item 24. State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care

**Item 24** is rated as a Strength. North Dakota operates a statewide information system that can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for all children in placement. The system, however, provides minimal data to support CFS management. The State is in the process of developing an information system (FRAME) that will be more comprehensive than the current system. Additionally, FRAME will provide a common entry point between the current applications and will provide a consistent system of record from which data will be reported. Development began in 2006 and North Dakota anticipates that it will be completed in August 2009.

This item was rated as a Strength in the 2001 CFSR. Therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in its PIP.

**Statewide Assessment Information**
According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS currently utilizes individual applications to document and track maltreatment reports, in-home services, family preservation, foster care, and adoption activities. These current CFS information systems are made up of multiple, disparate applications and databases. Information for family preservation services, CA/N, foster care, and adoption activities are currently linked in varying degrees by the SPOC, CA/N Index, and CCWIPS.

The CCWIPS provides case management information and tracks children in foster care placement. The assigned caseworker, regional supervisors, eligibility workers, and caseworkers from DJS can access information in the system. The system collects the following information on each child in foster care:
- Demographics
- Location and type of placement
- Changes in placements
- Case goals
- Time in foster care

The CCWIPS generates the required Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data for children in foster care and children who have been adopted. Quarterly reports that identify due dates for court orders, permanency plans, and foster home licensing reviews are generated by the system. According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders commenting on CCWIPS during the ND CFSR QA process suggested that some agency staff do not view the system as an effective management tool and do not
use reports generated by the system for management purposes. The CCWIPS does not collect information on maltreatment reports, assessments, or in-home cases nor can it search for prior maltreatment reports within or across counties.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CPS data system, used by CFS for tracking and analyzing repeat maltreatment, has been in operation since the 1970s. The system, according to the Statewide Assessment, has limited capability, which hinders the ability to monitor service delivery to families. The CPS data system provides weekly updates on caseload numbers and pending cases. The Child Abuse and Neglect Data System is not connected to the SPOC system or the Foster Care Data System. Therefore, it is not possible to track families and services from CPS decision to service delivery. Institutional CPS data currently resides in a standalone Microsoft Access database that does not interface with the other systems. Therefore, it is not possible to track situations of institutional abuse or neglect across programs.

According to the Statewide Assessment, each county and region currently has its own process and may use only portions of existing child welfare applications and data systems, if they use these systems at all. Many counties and Regional Offices use paper methods or have their own tracking/data systems. Additionally, according to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders identified the following as barriers in this area:

- The lack of connection and common entry points between the system applications create problems with duplicate entry and workflow efficiencies for social workers and frontline staff.
- Scattered case information across systems complicates decision-making for a child and family.
- Partners and families have expressed the desire for an abbreviated case plan document.
- Basic program management decisions are often complicated by a system that has no single, consistent system of record from which data can be extracted.

Application use and workflow are inconsistent across systems, agencies, and users.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that CFS maintains multiple data systems to capture pertinent child welfare information. According to stakeholders, the systems do not interface, which can make locating information, particularly historical information, difficult.

CCWIPS maintains data regarding children in foster care. Stakeholders statewide expressed the opinion that CCWIPS captures important information related to permanency and well-being of children in foster care, including their location, demographics, case goals, and foster care payments. However, stakeholders at the three review sites referred to the system as “antiquated” and not “user-friendly.” Data entry is generally completed by the caseworkers and is considered current and accurate by the majority of the stakeholders interviewed. CCWIPS, according to Burleigh County stakeholders, is used to report required data to AFCARS.
According to stakeholders, SPOC is an automated case management system used primarily for case planning. Cass County stakeholders indicated that they are completing dual data entry by having to use both the State maintained data systems and the in-house data system. According to Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County stakeholders, CPS assessment information is maintained in county data systems, which makes completing a quick check for previous CPS involvement difficult.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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<th>Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity</th>
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Status of Case Review System
North Dakota is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in the 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this factor in the PIP.

Specific findings for each item included in this systemic factor and the reasons for item ratings are 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 __ X__ Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an ANI. Although the Wraparound Practice Model requires family engagement in identification of needs and treatment planning and the State has policy requiring that case plans be developed jointly with the parents and youth, the Onsite Review data indicate that parents, particularly fathers, and youth are not always involved in the development of the case plan. Additionally, case review information indicates that parents and children were involved in case planning in 65 percent of the 63 applicable cases.

This item was rated as Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.
**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS policy requires a written case plan be completed in the SPOC for each child within 30 days of a placement. The plan is to be developed jointly with the child and parents. Stakeholders interviewed during the ND CFSR QA process indicated that caseworkers have clear expectations that families should be engaged in developing case plans. When concurrent planning is used, parents are given the opportunity to be involved in developing the concurrent plans. In addition to parent and child involvement, CFS utilizes FCCFT to assist in the development of the case plan. The FCCCT meeting addresses the permanency issues, goals, and tasks of the child and team members present. The initial plan and updates are maintained on CCWIPS and the SPOC. Additionally, CFS policy requires an IL plan be developed for each foster and former foster child, when appropriate, or at age 16. The IL plan becomes a part of the foster child’s SPOC. The youth is required to participate in the development of the plan.

According to policy, in-home cases must have a family assessment and Strengths Discovery completed prior to the development of a written case plan. An initial CFT meeting is held within 45 days of case assignment at which time the case plan is developed and recorded in the SPOC. All team members sign the document and indicate their agreement or disagreement with the case plan. If the parent is not present at the CFT meeting, policy dictates that the meeting be rescheduled.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that CFS prepares case plans for children in foster care and receiving in-home services and that case plans are developed in a timely manner. Furthermore, stakeholders reported family involvement in case planning through the CFT meetings and the FCCFT. Stakeholders indicated that families are actively involved in identifying their needs and in developing the plan to address those needs. Additionally, Burleigh County stakeholders report that incarcerated parents are involved with case planning through telephone contact.

According to stakeholders in Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County, case plans are individualized to the family’s specific circumstances. Goals are to address the presenting problems as well as the underlying issues that brought the family to the attention of CFS. The case plan is goal oriented and task oriented so that the parent understands exactly what they need to do to resolve the situation. Case plans are discussed with the family at each contact and are updated at each family team meeting.

While children begin to be involved with case planning at approximately 8 years old, stakeholders across the review sites agreed that children may not be involved in all planning activities if the issues are extremely sensitive, e.g., domestic violence. Stakeholders reported that caseworkers explain the case plan to children in ways appropriate to the child’s age and development.

The case plan is computer generated through SPOC. Stakeholders in Burleigh/Morton County and Cass County reported that SPOC is not user- or family-friendly due to the length of the actual document.
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

_X_ Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as a Strength because North Dakota provides a process for the periodic review of each child at least every 6 months, with the majority of the reviews occurring every 3 months. North Dakota reviews each foster care case on a quarterly basis via the FCCFT. Additionally, in some jurisdictions, the court conducts the periodic reviews. To ensure case reviews are completed, the CCWIPS will not process foster care payments unless a review is documented in the system. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, policy requires the FCCFT (previously known as the Permanency Planning Committee) to review the plan for each child in foster care on a quarterly basis. These quarterly FCCFT meetings are documented in CCWIPS and the SPOC. CCWIPS provides numerous alerts to case managers and supervisors related to required elements and timeframes for the periodic reviews. According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed that quarterly reviews keep the focus of the agency on goal achievement. FCCFT reviews also are convened at the time a child is moved to a more restrictive placement or at the time of a change in the case status.

Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at the State level and at the review sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that cases are being reviewed through the FCCFT at a minimum of every 3 months. Reviews may occur more frequently if warranted by the circumstances of the case. The participants include a CFS representative, usually the regional supervisor, who is responsible for co-facilitation and administrative oversight of the meetings. Stakeholders indicated that the case reviews are substantive and help move the case forward in terms of achieving case goals and objectives.

Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders indicated that the FCCFT is generally where the sensitive/challenging family issues are discussed. The team process, according to stakeholders, helps the family maintain focus and ensures all team members are working toward the same goals.

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

Item 27 is rated as a Strength because the State ensures permanency hearings are conducted by the court no later than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care and no less than 12 months thereafter. The results from North Dakota’s most recent title IV-E review are consistent with these findings. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, it was not required to address this factor in its PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, State law and CFS policy require permanency hearings be conducted by the court at least every 12 months for all children in foster care, although permanency hearings occasionally occur more frequently. Additionally, State law requires the court to conduct a permanency hearing within 30 days after a determination that reasonable efforts are not required or the parental rights of the parent have been involuntarily terminated.

The permanency hearing is considered by CFS and court staff as the opportunity to evaluate and examine the steps CFS and the parents have taken to assure the child is moving toward permanency. According to the Statewide Assessment, the role of the courts is to review the goal and the process used to achieve that goal, rather than to “determine the goal.” Permanency hearings are required to be hearings, conducted by either a District Court judge or a Judicial Referee. The time allotted for these hearings varies by judicial district. According to the Statewide Assessment, continuances are requested by both State’s attorneys and parent’s counsel and are a challenge to achieving permanency in a timely manner.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the ND CFSR QA process have reported that judges are beginning to accept the use of concurrent planning for children in foster care and will review both plans during the permanency hearing.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, several stakeholders identified the following practices that contribute to delays in attaining permanency for children in foster care:
- Late requests, or requests for court-appointed counsel from parents that occur in the midst of the legal process, often resulting in continuances that delay permanency hearings or other legal processes
- Lack of training for judges and/or judicial application of the concept of child-centered permanency

Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has placed emphasis on the timeliness of permanency hearings. They reported that while continuances do occur, they are infrequent. Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders indicated that continuances are generally related to the lack of an “expert witness” for cases affected by ICWA and parent’s request for an attorney at the time of the permanency hearing.
According to stakeholders in Burleigh/Morton County, CCWIPS notifies the caseworker and the supervisor 104 days prior to the expiration of the court order. The caseworker prepares and files an affidavit with the attorney assigned to the case. This allows the attorney time to prepare and file the petition and schedule the hearing prior to the expiration of the court order.

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

___ Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated as an ANI because there is reluctance by some judicial jurisdictions to terminate parental rights when an adoptive placement has not been identified. Additionally, there are in some instances delays in filing for TPR and the TPR appeals process can delay permanency. Data from the onsite CFSR indicate TPR had not been filed in a timely manner in 10 of the 21 cases applicable for TPR and that compelling reasons for not filing were not noted in 1 of the 10 cases. North Dakota did not provide data that would contradict the findings from the sample in the onsite CFSR. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR. However, since North Dakota was in substantial conformity with the systemic factor, the State was not required to address this item in its PIP.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, caseworkers, in conjunction with legal and FCCFT partners, review and apply permanency options for children in accordance with ASFA. If compelling reasons exist not to seek TPR, the caseworker must document the reasons and submit the information to the State office. Additionally, the caseworker reports the compelling reasons to the court through testimony or an affidavit. The most frequent compelling reasons cited are reunification with parent or a plan to live permanently with a relative. The decision to pursue TPR is made during a FCCFT meeting chaired by the regional supervisor.

While TPR cases are reported in the CCWIPS, the Statewide Assessment indicates this data may be unreliable, as it is dependent on the caseworker entering specific information (e.g., it might be entered as a “court order” as opposed to a “TPR order”). This lack of TPR data becomes an obstacle in reporting on TPR cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the North Dakota Supreme Court has upheld the majority of the TPR cases. However, the appeals process creates a permanency delay for children. Furthermore, the stakeholders reported that TPR is delayed when Tribes intervene in a case, or when a Tribe does not respond to the required notification of hearing in a timely manner.
Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that, in general, CFS and the courts follow Federal guidelines with regard to filing for TPR in a timely manner, holding TPR hearings in a timely manner, and documenting compelling reasons when a TPR petition is not filed. Ward County stakeholders reported that in a few recent cases there have been delays in filing for TPR due to the lack of diligence on the part of the State’s attorney. Despite the State’s general diligence in filing for TPR in a timely manner, Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders reported that there is unwillingness on the part of the courts to pursue TPR if an adoptive placement has not been identified.

Stakeholders at the three review sites reported that the Regional Office reviews all compelling reasons. The compelling reasons most often documented are the child’s significant bond to his or her parents, the child entered foster care for reasons other than deprivation (e.g., child’s behavior), and the child does not want to be adopted.

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

__ Strength __ Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated as an ANI because while the State has a process for notifying foster, adoptive, and relative caregivers of hearings, the opportunity for caregivers to be heard in court is inconsistent across jurisdictions.

This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, the North Dakota Supreme Court adopted a rule requiring the notification of the child’s foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relatives providing care for the child when any proceeding is held with respect to the child. Policy requires CFS to provide the notification. Foster parents indicated during the ND CFSR QA process that there have been times when they did not receive notification of proceedings. However, in the past year, stakeholders advised notification has occurred in almost all cases.

Caregivers who do not participate in the court hearing have the opportunity to submit written reports to the court. Additionally, CFS practice directs caseworkers to solicit foster parent input to be included in the court affidavit.
The Statewide Assessment indicates that there is no data to provide information about foster parent participation and/or attendance or testimony at hearings. Furthermore, there is no information on the number of hearings at which the foster parents were offered an opportunity by the court to be heard.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**
Stakeholders at the sites and the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that caseworkers are notifying relatives, foster parents, and adoptive parents of family team meetings and permanency hearings on a consistent basis. The method of notification is generally verbal notice and/or written notice by the caseworker or support staff.

Stakeholders interviewed across the sites also expressed the opinion that the opportunity for foster parents, relative caregivers, and pre-adoptive parents to be heard in hearings varies across the State. Active engagement and opportunity for foster parents to be heard depends primarily on the jurisdiction. Burleigh/Morton County and Ward County stakeholders indicated that foster parents are allowed to attend and participate in the family team meetings and the hearings. Cass County stakeholders indicated that caregivers attend and participate in the family team meetings, but the court does not consider them a party to the action; therefore, if no one objects, they may attend the hearing but their participation is limited.

**VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM**

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**Status of Quality Assurance System**

North Dakota is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this factor in the PIP.

Specific findings for each item included in this systemic factor and the reasons for item ratings are presented below.
Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children

___X___ Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as a Strength because the State has implemented standards for licensure of foster family homes and foster care facilities to ensure the safety and health of children in foster care, which includes background checks for all adults living in the home and all employees of child care facilities and face-to-face visits with children every 30 days. A Health Tracks/EPSDT screening is completed on each child entering foster care. Additionally, a family’s risk factors are reviewed every 90 days during the FCCFT. This item was also rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment
According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS ensures that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children through the following procedures:
- Licensure for all family foster homes and foster care facilities
- Background checks on all adults living in foster homes and background checks on employees of group homes and residential facilities
- Rules and policy regarding residential child care facilities have been developed and implemented
- Notification to appropriate parties of the availability of Health Tracks/EPSDT screenings for all children in foster care
- Requirement that all children in foster care through age 17 are secured in an appropriate restraint or car safety seat while in a car
- Approval of foster homes on Native American reservations by the State pursuant to an affidavit executed by a Tribal official
- Review of family risk factors every 90 days during the FCCFT
- Face-to-face visits with children in foster care at least every 30 days to monitor safety
- Quarterly face-to-face visits with foster children placed out of State

Stakeholder Interview Information
Based on information provided by stakeholders statewide during the onsite CFSR, the State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. Cass County stakeholders indicated that placement service providers must comply with comprehensive standards. Foster parents are required to seek agency approval prior to allowing children to spend the night with friends, mow the lawn, and other activities. According to Ward County stakeholders, caseworkers have weekly contact with foster parents and children are seen in the home on a monthly basis.
According to Ward County stakeholders, the SPOC is a check and balance for ensuring the needs of children are met and the FCCTM is used to monitor the quality of services for foster children. The progress of the service plan is reviewed at the quarterly meetings as well as the child’s medical, mental health, educational, and IL status, if applicable. In addition, stakeholders statewide reported that a comprehensive health assessment is completed within 30 days of the child entering care and periodic checks are required thereafter.

**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**

_**X**___ Strength  ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 31 is rated as a Strength because the State has a well-established QA system that replicates the Federal CFSR. The reviews are conducted in the five regions of the State annually. The ND CFSR QA process was implemented as part of the PIP following the 2001 Federal review. In addition, the State has other QA processes and tools that evaluate program performance, including supervisory case reviews, the CPS multidisciplinary teams, case staffings, and client satisfaction surveys. This item was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR. However, since the State was in substantial conformity with the systemic factor, the State was not required to address this item in the PIP.

**Statewide Assessment Information**
According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS implemented the ND CFSR QA process statewide in 2003, replicating the Federal model. The ND CFSR QA process is conducted annually in each of the eight HSC regions of the State. A total of eight child welfare cases, four in-home and four foster care, are reviewed in each region. The cases are randomly drawn from the CCWIPS and SPOC data systems. These cases will include, if possible, one Tribal case, one IL case, and one adoption case. Four of the cases are typically from the largest county and four from the more rural counties in the region. Record reviews of each case, case-related interviews, and the case debriefing components from the Federal model have been implemented as part of the process. Included in the reviewer pool are 50 trained individuals from the public and private child welfare sectors.

In addition to the case reviews, seven stakeholder meetings are held in each region. The stakeholder groups include:

- Youth currently and previously served by CFS
- Caseworkers
- Legal/court representatives
- Education personnel
- Foster parents
- Community service providers
- County social service supervisors and directors

An exit interview open to all child welfare staff, community partners, and the public is held in each region upon completion of the onsite ND CFSR QA process. A written report with outcomes of both case ratings and stakeholder comments is provided within 30 days of the review. A community/regionwide meeting is held in each region to address issues discussed during the stakeholder meetings in an effort to resolve issues specific to the region. Regional supervisors are responsible for identifying specific problem areas and assisting the counties with the development of a PIP if required.

In addition to the ND CFSR QA process, each program area has QA processes and procedures including the following:

- **Child Protection Services**
  - The regional supervisor annually reviews 10 percent of the CPS cases from each county in the region.
  - CPS multidisciplinary teams review CPS assessments and assist with decisions about safety and risk.
  - A monthly review of all open CPS cases in the State is conducted by the State CPS administrator to evaluate the quality of services, case load sizes, and assessment timelines. A report on these reviews is sent to the regional supervisor for review and action. The information is used by State, regional, and county staff for program improvement planning.

- **Wraparound case management**
  - The supervisor conducts ongoing case reviews to monitor service effectiveness and agency success in providing time-limited services.
  - The supervisor conducts a formal case review on all closed cases.

- **Foster care**
  - Once a month the regional supervisors meet with foster care staff to discuss State and Federal law changes, Federal rules and regulations, policy and trends, and other pertinent programmatic issues.

- **Adoption**
  - Cases are staffed in a monthly staff meeting.
  - A QA peer review of open and closed case files is conducted on a quarterly basis.

- **Independent Living**
  - Regional IL coordinators staff cases with their agency supervisor.
  - Detailed quarterly reports are submitted to the State IL Administrator.
  - The State IL Administrator conducts annual site reviews of each of the IL programs.
  - CFS conducts annual regional youth stakeholder groups.
  - Youth surveys are conducted to gather information regarding youth in foster care.
Local QA processes include:
- Child protection teams
- Review of cases by supervisors
- Individual client satisfaction surveys
- DJS annual audits, which include interviews with families
- Title IV-E reviews by CFS staff

**Stakeholder Interview Information**
Stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level commenting in this item during the onsite CFSR reported that the ND CFSR QA process is modeled after the Federal CFSR, including stakeholder interviews and an exit conference. Each region is reviewed annually. Findings from the ND CFSR QA process are used to implement changes in practice. The county, according to Ward County stakeholders, is responsible for preparing a PIP and submitting it to the State office. These stakeholders reported that they do not receive feedback on the content or progress of the PIP.

According to stakeholders in Cass County, the Regional Office performs QA with the oversight and monitoring of case plans and the review of cases. Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders reported that surveys are sent to all mandated reporters. Stakeholders from the three review sites reported that clients have the right to appeal the findings of the investigation, which stakeholders viewed as a type of quality assurance.

Cass County, according to stakeholders, has an in-house QA process. Caseworkers have individual benchmarks, which are connected to the CFSR outcomes. In addition, in-home service providers and stakeholders evaluate the caseworkers. The information from the in-house QA process is utilized for performance evaluations and county strategic planning.

**IV. TRAINING**

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Status of Training

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

Specific findings for each item included in this systemic factor and the reasons for item ratings in this round are presented below.

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

_X_ Strength  _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as a Strength because 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 an initial 4-week, 100-hour competency-based curriculum developed and taught by the University of North Dakota for all staff who deliver these services. The training is comprehensive and is continually evaluated by caseworkers and supervisors and modified as needed. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR. Therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in its PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS contracts with the University of North Dakota Department of Social Work to operate the Child and Family Services Training Center (CFSTC). The training center is responsible for the majority of the child welfare training in the State. CFSTC provides a Child Welfare Practitioner Certification Program (CWPCP), which is a competency-based training curriculum. The training model incorporates classroom teaching, field assignments (e.g., completing a CA/N assessment), and online training. Training must begin within the first 6 months of employment and be completed within the first year of employment. According to the Statewide Assessment, the training is delivered as a 4-week, 100-hour curriculum offered in both spring and fall. If a caseworker begins employment after a session has commenced, they can begin during any week of the cycle with the exception of the week on legal training. At the end of each week, participants evaluate their specific competencies/skills. They rate themselves on their understanding of the concepts or their skill acquisition. Feedback is also elicited from the training group on any additional training needs. If a participant does not understand a concept or skill, CFSTC staff will work with the individual and their supervisor to help them attain the skill. Child Welfare Certification Training is mandatory for all caseworkers who conduct CPS assessments, wraparound case management, and foster care case management. Caseworkers who are limited to child care or foster care licensing are not required to attend this training. At this time, however, all foster care licensors currently employed have completed Child Welfare Certification.
Stakeholders commenting on this issue for the Statewide Assessment expressed the opinion that the CWPCP is a valuable training program and that 90 percent of all child welfare staff complete the training. The remaining 10 percent are not required to complete this training as their job duties are limited to child care or foster care licensing. A few stakeholders said that the CWPCP does not focus sufficiently on the foster care system nor does it include training on cultural outreach.

The Statewide Assessment reports that there is not specific mandatory training for supervisors or administrators.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that caseworker training is a 4-week competency-based training that combines classroom and field training. According to stakeholders at the State level, there is not a mentoring component of the training. Classroom training is offered twice a year which results in some caseworkers waiting a maximum of 4 months to begin training. According to stakeholders at all the sites and at the State level, caseworkers frequently have a small caseload when they begin training.

Some stakeholders interviewed across the sites reported that the new caseworker training is adequate to prepare caseworkers to carry out the responsibilities of their jobs. Other stakeholders, however, noted that the training is unrealistic and that caseworkers learn more through peer interaction and field observations. Burleigh County stakeholders reported that new caseworkers do not interact with families alone for the first 6 months of employment.

Feedback on a caseworker’s performance in training is an informal process. Stakeholders at the State level reported that caseworkers with supervisors that are engaged in the training process perform better in training. Cass County stakeholders reported that in addition to the State’s mandated training, Cass County caseworkers are required to complete in-house training with their supervisors and a training officer.

According to stakeholders statewide, new supervisor training for child welfare supervisors is not offered in the State. However, according to Ward County stakeholders, training on generic supervision topics is available. Courses include:

- “Now that you are a supervisor”
- Conflict resolution
- Drugs and alcohol in the workplace
- Hiring and dismissal
- Risk management
- Sexual harassment
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

__X__ Strength    ____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 is rated as a Strength because the State provides ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties. Caseworkers in North Dakota are required to complete 30 hours of training every 2 years in order to maintain the required licensure and must also be re-certified in wraparound services every 2 years. Additionally, the CFSTC conducts an annual needs assessment of the training needs of caseworkers and then offers ongoing training for caseworkers based on the results. The ongoing training is provided through the CFSTC and county resources.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, individuals who provide child welfare services in the State are required to have a license to practice social work. To maintain their license, they are required by law to complete 30 hours of continuing education units (CEUs) every two years. In addition, caseworkers who provide case management services are required to be certified in the Wraparound process and must be recertified every 2 years. Otherwise, according to the Statewide Assessment, CFS does not have a formal plan for ongoing training for caseworkers following their completion of the CWPCP.

CFS develops an annual work plan with the CFSTC to address ongoing training needs. Training sponsored by CFS or the CFSTC is documented and a record of participation in the training is maintained by the CFSTC.

ND CFSR QA process stakeholders commenting on this item noted there are many ongoing training opportunities available for staff at the State, regional, and county levels, including annual State conferences, which focus on a variety of issues.

Stakeholder Interview Information
According to State level stakeholders responding to this item during the onsite review, the CFSTC annually evaluates the training needs of CFS and develops an annual training plan. Stakeholders statewide expressed the opinion that ongoing training is available to CFS staff at the local, regional, and State level. Most stakeholders also reported that supervisors are generally supportive of ongoing training and staff has the opportunity to attend.
There is not, according to stakeholders at all the sites, a required number of training hours that must be completed each year. However, CFS caseworkers are licensed social workers and are required to obtain 30 hours of ongoing training biennially. The Social Work Licensing Board monitors the completion of training required for license renewal. Additionally, caseworkers providing wraparound services are required to be re-certified in wraparound biennially. Some training qualifies for credit for both licensing renewal and wraparound re-certification.

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

| X | Strength | ___ | Area Needing Improvement |

Item 34 is rated as a Strength because the State has a well established pre-service and ongoing training program for foster parents. The program required 27 hours of pre-service training for all prospective foster/adoptive parents and 20 hours of annual in-service training for foster parents. This item was rated as a Strength in North Dakota’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this factor in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS through CFSTC provides foster and adoptive parent training statewide using the 27-hour Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) foster/adopt parent pre-service training curriculum. Prospective foster or adoptive parents must complete the training prior to placement of children in their home. However, this requirement may be waived with the approval of the regional supervisor on a case-specific basis. All foster and adoptive parents must complete the training within their first year of licensure.

The frequency of training varies across the State. More-populated regions may hold up to six sessions a year while less-populated regions hold fewer sessions. Although the preferred method of training, according to the Statewide Assessment, is live delivery, CFSTC also delivers PRIDE pre-service training twice a year over the Interactive Video Network (IVN). Using this technology has proven to be a successful model for training foster parents residing in remote areas. Regions have used the IVN training when there are not sufficient numbers for a group session and waiting for additional participants would delay preparation and licensure for those interested in fostering. Evaluations of those attending IVN training do not reflect a difference in the satisfaction of the training.

CFS requires 20 hours of ongoing training for foster parents. CFSTC annually assesses the training needs of foster parents via a survey sent to foster parents. Regional plans and workshops are developed based on the needs and the interests of foster parents. A family
development plan is prepared for each foster family, and specific training is provided to meet their needs. In addition, various areas of specialty training are provided at conferences and in individual training sessions across the State.

The Statewide Assessment provided the following information from a survey conducted with foster parents about foster parent training:

- 80 percent of respondents indicated PRIDE training adequately prepared them to be a foster parent.
- 6 percent of respondents did not feel adequately prepared to be foster parents by PRIDE training.
- 86 percent of respondents indicated they have access to ongoing training.
- 5 percent of respondents indicated that they did not have adequate access to ongoing training.
- 86 percent of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the content of ongoing training.
- 5 percent of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the content of ongoing training.

Foster parents interviewed during the ND CFSR QA process indicated that they need additional training on ICWA and Native American cultural issues. It was also indicated that it is difficult to work with case managers who have not had the PRIDE training experience because they do not understand the concept of working with foster parents as partners.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders statewide commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that foster, adoptive, and relative foster parents are required to complete PRIDE, which is a 27-hour training model conducted over a 9-week period. Stakeholders also said that prospective foster parents often have to wait to access training because training is offered only once a year in some regions of the State. To diminish the wait time, PRIDE training is occasionally offered via the IVN.

According to stakeholders, CFS foster and pre-adoptive parents are required to complete 20 hours of ongoing training annually. Stakeholders at all the sites reported that the CFSTC surveys foster parents annually to solicit input into upcoming training. Stakeholders statewide were in agreement that there are numerous ongoing training opportunities for foster parents, including foster parent association meetings, online training, resources borrowed from the local office, and the annual foster parent conference. Stakeholders reported that foster parents are required to attend 2 hours of fire safety training annually. There are more training opportunities, according to stakeholders, in the urban areas than in the rural areas of the State. The CFSTC maintains records of foster parent training hours and notifies foster parents if their training hours are deficient.
V. SERVICE ARRAY

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Status of Service Array

North Dakota is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. Although North Dakota has a large array of services, the services are frequently not available in rural areas of the State, making it difficult to individualize services for families. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in the 2001 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in the PIP.

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

X Strength  ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as a Strength because North Dakota, although a frontier State with a population of less than 700,000, has an array of services that can meet the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children, parents, and foster and adoptive parents. North Dakota is challenged by its geography. The State works continually to develop methods to meet the needs of all of its communities and has developed the capacity to provide some training and services electronically.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, the North Dakota was not required to address it in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders interviewed during the ND CFSR QA process and the Statewide Assessment meetings spoke favorably of the services available in the State. It was noted that services enable children to remain safely with their parents when appropriate and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. According to those interviewed,
noteworthy services include intensive in-home services and wraparound services to prevent placement and support reunification. Services available statewide include:

- Intensive in-home services
- FGDM
- TANF kinship care
- Wraparound case management
- Family preservation services
- Partnerships Program/Mental Health
- Safety/permanency funds

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS’s eight regional HSCs provide core services to assist families and children at risk of removal. Adolescents and children are also served in the community through a variety of services including:

- Crisis stabilization and resolution
- Inpatient services
- Psychiatric/medical management
- Social services
- Residential services and supports
- Vocational and educational services and supported employment
- Social and leisure activities
- Evidence-based practice of Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS)

Services to families and children in their home are provided through an array of family preservation services including:

- Parent aide
- Intensive in-home services
- Prime-time child care
- Safety/permanency funds
- Respite care
- Intensive case management (wraparound)
- FGDM
Stakeholder Interview Information
Most stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that North Dakota has an array of services available to assist families. However, many other stakeholders at the review sites reported that the ability to access the services in a timely manner is frequently an issue in both urban and rural areas. (This is addressed under item 36).

Stakeholders at the review sites reported that the following services are available across the State:
- Mental health services, although the provider may be in the community only once a week
- Parent aide services
- Parenting classes, although a wait list may exist
- IL services available to youth
- Flexible spending funds
- Intensive family preservation services, although at times a wait list may exist and funding may be limited

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

___ Strength  ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an ANI because the Onsite Review identified a lack of services available in all areas of the State to meet the needs of the families served. The State’s array of services is limited to the larger populated areas; therefore, rural areas and Native American reservations do not have the same accessibility. With a population of only 700,000 in the State, the small rural areas have a difficult time supporting services, especially specialized services, such as a child psychiatrist or a residential treatment center. Substance abuse treatment and residential treatment facilities for children in foster care were among the services with limited availability statewide. IL services are not easily accessible statewide due to geography and the lack of transportation. This item was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR. However, since the State was in substantial conformity with the systemic factor, the State was not required to address this item in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, the delivery of services to residents in rural areas has been and continues to be a major concern of the State’s human services delivery system. Service accessibility and availability throughout the State remains a challenge because two-thirds of the counties are designated as frontier areas. Vast distances between towns, farmsteads, and services require residents to spend many hours in travel. Round trips of 200 miles or more to obtain services are not uncommon. Additionally, the weather can be a barrier for obtaining needed services.
According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders noted the following service gaps:

- Dental providers
- Drug/alcohol treatment for youth
- Treatment for sexual offenders
- Services for children with severe emotional issues
- Culturally responsive services for Native Americans (statewide) and refugee families (specific to counties with refugee resettlement)
- Services for youth aging out of foster care
- Respite care for foster parents
- Community-based services for Serious Emotional Disorder (SED) children

The eight regional HSCs serve areas ranging from three to ten counties. In attempts to address the difficulty rural residents have with accessing needed services, each center has staff traveling to rural communities to provide mental health services (e.g., diagnostic screening, evaluations, follow-up counseling, information and referral). According to the Statewide Assessment, services provided through the HSCs and county social agencies are not consistent across the State. In some areas, especially in rural settings, there are waiting lists for specific services. In some instances where access to services is a challenge, gas vouchers for transportation are provided to the families. Additionally, caseworkers have access to safety/permanency funds to assist families in meeting their basic needs, such as rent, utilities, food, clothing, and furniture. Stakeholders, according to the Statewide Assessment, have consistently expressed concern about access to services for children residing on Native American reservations.

According to the Statewide Assessment, health and mental health resources are limited in many areas. Parent aide services are available in 46 counties and prime-time child care is available in 36 counties. There are eight regional IL coordinators available across the State. Youth in outlying counties are likely to have less face-to-face contact with the IL coordinator, with more contact by telephone and e-mail. Although the IL program serves many Native American youth, several reservations are not being adequately served due to lack of resources. The State has 720 licensed foster family homes, which include 291 therapeutic homes and 37 Tribal affidavit homes. Fifteen children are placed outside the State. Additional resources for placements continue to be a need.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Many stakeholders statewide commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that services are limited in the rural areas of the State. Waiting lists are longer and the quantity of services is smaller in these areas. Geography, according to stakeholders statewide, is a barrier to families accessing services. The cost of transportation, loss of wages, and time spent traveling to services can impact the family’s willingness to participate in services required to complete their case plan.
Stakeholders identified that the availability and accessibility of the following services is limited in the State:

- Dental providers who accept Medicaid
- Addiction treatment programs for youth and Native Americans
- Placement resources for older children; children with specific emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs; and sexual offenders
- Child psychiatrists
- Transportation for families to access services
- Affordable marital counseling
- Parenting services available to parents with development disabilities
- Crisis intervention services to prevent placement into foster care
- Services to assist youth with developmental disabilities in transitioning from foster care

Stakeholders statewide also reported that residential treatment programs are not readily available in rural areas, which results in children being placed outside their community and away from their families. In addition, outpatient substance abuse treatment programs are not available in rural areas.

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

_____ Strength  X_____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as an ANI. Although the State’s practice model promotes the individualization of services to meet the unique needs of children and families, the services do not always meet the individualized needs of Native American families, refugees in the resettlement areas of the State, and families and children in the remote areas of the State. Additionally, during the onsite CFSR, item 17 pertaining to the assessment of needs and the provision of services was rated as a Strength in 60 percent of the cases reviewed.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, the item was not required to be addressed in its PIP.
**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders interviewed during the ND CFSR QA process indicated that services provided by CFS are child-centered, family-focused, community-driven, and strength-based. Therefore, according to the Statewide Assessment, these services can be described as individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and families served by the agencies.

However, stakeholders indicated that the resettlement of refugees into Cass and Grand Forks counties has had an impact on the ability of CFS to ensure individualized services for families of different cultures. For example, in Cass County there are 57 languages represented by the children in the school system. Public and private service providers continually learn about new cultures, the need for training to work with interpreters, and the need to find methods to engage the families in services in their communities and neighborhoods. Annual conferences provide training about the various cultures and service provision.

Serving the growing rural and urban Native American population in the State presents challenges in providing an individualized and culturally competent array of services. The out-of-home care facilities, family, and therapeutic foster care providers also face challenges to meet the unique cultural and spiritual needs of Native American youth.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State is challenged in treating youth with substance abuse problems and sexually reactive behaviors. Due to disparity in services among regions, youth are sometimes placed out of their communities, or must travel hundreds of miles to obtain these services.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency is cognizant of the need to individualize and tailor services to the individual circumstances of the family. Several stakeholders commented that when specific services are not available in a particular community, caseworkers are creative in arranging necessary services for the child or family.

Stakeholders reported that the State has culturally competent services to serve the large Native American population; however, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that there is room for improvement in this area. Issues concerning the language barrier in working with refugee populations were mentioned by some stakeholders. Parenting classes are available across the State; nevertheless, stakeholders noted that the classes are not always effective or adequate to meet the needs of the families nor are they geared to different age and developmental needs of the children.
VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

North Dakota is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The general finding in the 2008 CFSR was that the State includes the input of stakeholders in the development of annual reports of progress and services. The CFSR found that there is coordination between CFS and other Federally-assisted programs to meet the service needs of the children and families served by the agency. The finding in the CFSR was that the State does consistently engage in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders to obtain their input regarding the goals and objectives of the CFSP. North Dakota also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address the factor in the PIP.

Specific findings for each item included in this systemic factor and the reasons for item ratings are presented below.

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

| X | Strength | Area Needing Improvement |

Item 38 is rated as a Strength because the State is very engaged in ongoing collaboration and consultation with all of the stakeholders and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.
**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, planning for the FY 2005–2009 CFSP included the facilitation of focus groups across the State. The focus groups included:

- County social service agency directors
- County social service supervisors
- Regional Supervisors
- DJS
- Public and private service providers
- Parents
- Foster parents
- Tribal representatives

The discussions focused on safety, permanency, and well-being. Through the stakeholder focus groups, the CFSP goals and the plans to achieve them were established.

There is not a formal CFSP Advisory Committee. However, through the identified systems, committees, and entities, CFS is able to incorporate the feedback in the development and implementation of the CFSP. According to the Statewide Assessment, many community partners have provided input for planning and policy development for the next 5-year CFSP, including gathering information to formulate goals and objectives to be included in the CFSP. Partners in this effort include, but are not limited to:

- ND County Directors Association
- CPS Task Force
- Foster Care/Adoption Task Force
- Children’s Justice Act Task Force
- Citizen Review Committee
- Child Fatality Review Panel
- Head Start
- Tribal social services directors
- Native American Training Institute
- County social services
- Foster Parent Recruitment/Retention Coalition
- Foster Parent Association
- Residential child care facilities/psychiatric residential treatment facilities
Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders did not comment on this item during the Onsite Review.

Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, Annual Progress and Services Reports (APSRs) pursuant to the CFSP

___ Strength  ____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because CFS consults with stakeholders when preparing the APSR. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment
According to the Statewide Assessment, collaboration and consultation with stakeholders is a part of CFS regular business practice. Although there is not a formal CFSP Advisory Committee, stakeholder comments through group meetings or individual contacts are synthesized and included in the development of the CFSP and the APSR. CFS makes significant efforts to ensure Tribal representatives, foster youth, and court personnel are involved in discussions and decision-making for the CFSP and APSR. Additionally, administrators of the various child welfare programs within CFS provide updates and new information for the APSR.
Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State regularly collaborates with other agencies; however, stakeholders did not comment on collaborating on the APSR.

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

_X__ Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because the State’s services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally-assisted programs serving the same population. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this factor in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS coordinated services with the following agencies that serve the same populations:
- Medicaid
- Medicaid providers
- TANF
- TANF Kinship Care Program
- Office of Refugee Resettlement
- Community-based child abuse and neglect prevention funding recipients
- The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program
- ND Court Improvement Project
- Children’s Justice Initiative Task Force
- Juvenile Justice Services

Stakeholder Interview Information
Most stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item expressed the opinion that CFS has strong collaboration with key stakeholders. Stakeholders indicated that CFS has a positive collaborative relationship with workers in child support, TANF, Medicaid, public health, the Board of Education, and the university’s School of Social Work.
VII. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

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

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

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

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions in accordance with recommended national standards. The CCWIPS will not issue any payments until licensing standards are verified in the system. Findings from the recent title IV-E review conducted in North Dakota indicated that foster homes and child care institutions were licensed in accordance with policy. CFS is the licensing agency and thus insures that the standards are applied.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this factor in the PIP.

**Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, one of the barriers the State faces in licensure activities is the absence of a licensing unit within CFS and the Department of Human Services. Licensing for family foster homes, group homes, and residential child care facilities is governed by State law and administrative rule. Foster home licenses are issued for one year. Annual licensing studies are completed by a county social worker or staff of a licensed child-placing agency and submitted to the regional supervisor, who issues or denies the license. Licensure is required for relative homes when Federal or State funding is used for foster care payment.

A team, including a regional supervisor, a CFS representative, and other child welfare staff, conducts group home and residential child care facilities licensing reviews. The licensing studies are reviewed by CFS and approved or denied. The State has instituted a 2-year
licensure period for group homes and residential child care facilities. A full facility review is conducted the first year with the review the second year focusing on programmatic activities.

Additionally, the State has six psychiatric residential treatment facilities. These facilities are funded through Medicaid and must be accredited. The facilities have joint approval through licensure from the Medical Services Division, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Services Division. The facilities are either accredited through the Council on Accreditation or the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. The psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs) are licensed for a 2-year period. A team of professionals, which includes a registered nurse, clinical social worker, psychiatrist, and a representative from the Federation of Families, licenses the PRTFs. The Health Department conducts a review of one facility per year to examine compliance with seclusion and restraint protocol and policy.

Licensed child-placing agencies are licensed by CFS. This includes adoption programs, maternity homes, and therapeutic/treatment foster care agencies. The licensed child-placing agencies licensing process includes all the safety requirements for family homes and additional specific requirements related to administration, administrative and staff training, and programmatic content and activities.

Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at the sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the State has consistent licensing standards for all foster homes. Stakeholders did not comment on the licensing of group homes, child care institutions, or child-placing agencies.

Stakeholders in Ward County and Cass County advised that children can be placed in kinship care homes when relatives have an approved home study and criminal background check. The relative will not receive a per diem for the child but is eligible to apply for TANF.

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

_X_ Strength \_ ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength because standards are applied to all licensed or approved family foster homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds. The title IV-E Eligibility Review held in August 2008 found that licensing standards were applied to all licensed foster homes and facilities.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.
Statewide Assessment
According to the Statewide Assessment, all foster homes, relatives, and non-relatives must meet the same State standards for licensure if they are to receive State or Federal funds. This requirement includes Tribal foster homes. Regional supervisors have the responsibility for reviewing foster home studies for compliance. A Tribal authority certifies compliance with State law and administrative rules via an affidavit to CFS for homes on Tribal reservations. License applications for all group homes and residential child care facilities are reviewed and acted on by CFS staff.

Compliance with State policy relating to licensure requirements must be met in order to receive foster care payments in any of the foster care settings. The State, according to the Statewide Assessment, does not issue initial, provisional, or probationary licenses for residential child care facilities, family or therapeutic family foster care homes, or group homes.

Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at all sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that licensing standards are applied equally for all providers.

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

X__ Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 is rated as a Strength because the State is in compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks related to licensing foster and adoptive placements and does have a case planning process that provides for attending to safety issues of foster and adoptive children in placement. The CCWIPS requires verification that criminal background checks have been completed before the system will authorize payments to providers. The title IV-E Eligibility Review held in August 2008 found that criminal background clearances were completed for all licensed foster homes.

This item was also rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.
**Statewide Assessment Information**
According to the Statewide Assessment, all prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and employees of facilities, including PRTFs, are required to provide fingerprints for a nationwide, FBI background check. CFS conducts State, local, and Federal background checks in accordance with State and Federal law and policy.

CFS has recently employed additional staff to assist with processing criminal background check requests due to an increasing backlog. A barrier CFS faces related to this item is the lack of available technology to transmit fingerprints electronically to the FBI. Background check results are generally being returned to the requester within 14 days of receipt. Internally, CFS criminal background check staff analyze negative results in light of statutory authority for each applicant. The applicants have the option of providing additional information that may affect the decision. CFS advises the licensing agent of negative results affecting the applicant’s ability to provide foster care, provide direct care in a facility, or to be approved as an adoptive resource for foster children.

Additionally, the availability of Tribal resources to meet State and Federal requirements is a challenge as Tribal child welfare agencies strive to comply with criminal background check requirements.

**Stakeholder Interview Information**
Stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFS requires criminal background clearances for all licensed foster homes. Information from the stakeholder interviews is consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. Stakeholders reported that in the recent past there were significant delays, often up to 3 months, in receiving the FBI results. However, the wait time has decreased to about 2 weeks.

**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**

_X_ Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 is rated as a Strength because the State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. However, the recruitment efforts have not produced as many Native American homes as are needed.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2001 CFSR. However, since the State was in substantial conformity with the systemic factor, the State was not required to address this item in the PIP.
Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS received training and technical assistance from AdoptUSKids to conduct a statewide assessment and facilitate a statewide foster care/adoption recruitment plan. The plan was developed with statewide goals and objectives to be addressed locally by the regional recruitment and retention coalitions and the AASK Program. This plan is included in the yearly title IV-B CFSP.

In 2006, CFS funded a pilot project designed to increase the number of licensed Native American foster homes in the Bismarck-Mandan area. The project targeted individuals of Native American descent who are potential foster parent candidates as well as Tribal-based and Native American owned businesses. The businesses serve as advocates and become “ambassadors” to “spread the word” about the need for foster parents among the urban Native American community. The year long effort resulted in the identification of nearly two-dozen potential Native American foster parent candidates. Three of the families are currently in the process of becoming licensed in the Bismarck/Mandan area. Ongoing Native American recruitment efforts continue.

An additional $150,000 was appropriated during the 2007 legislative session to fund statewide foster care and adoption recruitment and retention activities. A memorandum of understanding was completed with each of the eight regions of the State for the funding and proposals outlining regional activities and budgets to support those activities were submitted by each region.

Stakeholder Interview Information
Most stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR said that there are a variety of recruitment activities, including billboards, publications, adoption events, websites, and radio announcements. In addition, the State has a coalition whose primary focus is recruitment of foster and adoptive homes.

Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that there are not enough foster homes, particularly for older youth, Native American children, and children of refugees. According to Burleigh/Morton County stakeholders, 50 percent of the children in foster care in the area are Native American and the area has one Native American foster home.

Stakeholders at all review sites commented on efforts made to recruit Native Americans as foster parents. Some stakeholders noted the innate distrust of the Government by Native Americans as a problem with recruitment efforts. Cass County stakeholders reported that Cass County is more successful in locating Native American relatives willing to be kinship care homes than those willing to be licensed foster homes.
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

**X** Strength  _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because the State has a process for the use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive and other placements for children. This item was rated also as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR; therefore, North Dakota was not required to address this item in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information
According to the Statewide Assessment, biographies of children free for adoption are mailed monthly to families who have an approved home study, within and outside the State. Biographies of “waiting” children are regularly listed in a quarterly newsletter published by the AASK Program. Children who may be placed cross-jurisdictionally are also placed on the AdoptUSKids website. Other organizations’ websites that have been used are those of the Adoption Exchange, Adopt America Network, and REACH program (a division of PATH). The AASK Program received funding in July 2006 from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids program, to fund an adoption recruitment caseworker for children who do not have an identified adoptive resource.

Stakeholder Interview Information
Stakeholders at the three review sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that generally children are not placed outside the State unless it is a relative placement. Stakeholders noted that AASK locates in-State and out-of-State adoptive placements for children. AASK utilizes AdoptUsKids to locate adoptive placements outside the State.