

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report: Wyoming Child and Family Services Review
May 2009

INTRODUCTION

This document presents a summary of the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Wyoming. 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. The CFSR is authorized by the Social Security Amendments of 1994 requiring that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) 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 within HHS.

The Wyoming CFSR was conducted the week of June 9, 2008. The period under review was from April 1, 2007, to June 13, 2008. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB, which provides State child welfare data for fiscal year (FY) 2006 and the 12-month CFSR period ending March 31, 2007
- Reviews of 65 cases at three sites across the State (31 cases in the Laramie County office, 17 cases in the Sheridan County office, and 17 cases in the Sweetwater County office)
- 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 with regard to its substantial conformity with seven child and family outcomes and seven systemic factors. For the outcome assessments, each outcome incorporates one or more of the 23 items included in the review, and each item is rated as a Strength or Area Needing Improvement (ANI) based on the results of the case reviews. An item is given an overall rating of Strength if at least 90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed are rated as a Strength. Depending on item ratings, an outcome can be "substantially achieved," "partially achieved," or "not achieved." For a State to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. Two outcomes—Safety Outcome 1 and Permanency Outcome 1—also are evaluated based on State performance with regard to six national data

indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, both the national standards for each data indicator and the case review requirements must be met.

There are 22 items that are considered in assessing the State’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors. Each item reflects a key Federal program requirement relevant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) for that systemic factor. An item is rated as a Strength or an ANI based on whether State performance on the item meets the Federal program requirements. A determination of the rating is based on information provided in the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders held during the onsite CFSR. Additional information may come from other Federal reports or assessments.

Overall performance on each systemic factor is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor. For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” with that factor (i.e., a score of 3 or 4) or “not in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 1 or 2). Specific requirements for each rating are shown in the table below.

Rating the Systemic Factor			
Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
1	2	3	4
None of the CFSP or program requirements is in place.	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.	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.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

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.

Because many changes were made in the 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. Key changes in the process that make comparing performance difficult 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

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes

Wyoming achieved substantial conformity with one of the seven CFSR outcomes, Well-Being Outcome 2: Children received services to meet their educational needs. The State achieved overall ratings of Strength for the following individual indicators:

- Repeat maltreatment (item 2)
- Placement with siblings (item 12)
- Educational needs of child (item 21)

Additionally, Wyoming met the national standard for the data indicator pertaining to the absence of maltreatment recurrence. The State also met the national data standard for Permanency Composite 2 (Timeliness of adoptions) and Permanency Composite 3 (Permanency for children in care for extended time periods).

The CFSR identified the following key concerns with regard to the State's performance in achieving the desired outcomes for children and families:

- The State did not meet the national standard for the data indicator pertaining to the absence of maltreatment in foster care.
- The State did not meet the national data standard for Permanency Composite 1 (Timeliness and permanency of reunification) or for Permanency Composite 4 (Placement stability).
- The State was not in substantial conformity with six of the seven outcomes:
 - Well-Being Outcome 3 (Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs) was substantially achieved in 78.7 percent of the cases reviewed.
 - Safety Outcome 1 (Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect) was substantially achieved in 76.2 percent of the cases reviewed.
 - Safety Outcome 2 (Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate) was substantially achieved in 67.7 percent of the cases reviewed.
 - Permanency Outcome 2 (The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved) was substantially achieved in 67.5 percent of the cases reviewed.
 - Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide children's needs) was substantially achieved in only 49.2 percent of the cases reviewed.
 - Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) was substantially achieved in only 45.0 percent of the cases reviewed.

The State's low performance with regard to these CFSR outcomes and national data standards may be attributed in part to the following key factors:

- Not thoroughly assessing the needs of children and parents, particularly absent parents
- Families not receiving appropriate services

- The lack of service availability in some communities, particularly rural areas
- Limited placement resources, including therapeutic resources
- The large number of methamphetamine-related cases
- Inadequate permanency planning

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Systemic Factors

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with five of the seven systemic factors:

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

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with two of the seven systemic factors:

- Case Review System
- Service Array and Resource Development

The specific findings regarding 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. Information also is provided about the State's performance on each outcome and systemic factor during the Federal FY 2002 CFSR.

I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

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

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two items. 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). Safety Outcome 1 also incorporates two national data indicators for which national standards have been established. These data indicators measure the absence of maltreatment recurrence and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 76.2 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity. Safety Outcome 1 was substantially achieved in 100 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 89 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 33 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. Wyoming 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. One particular key finding from the 2008 CFSR was that the case reviews identified inconsistent practice in regard to initiating a response to child maltreatment reports and establishing face-to-face contact with children.

The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its first CFSR, conducted in 2002. The following key concerns were identified during the 2002 CFSR:

- DFS was not consistent in responding to child maltreatment reports in a timely manner or in preventing maltreatment recurrence.
- There were a large number of maltreatment reports screened out for investigations.
- Maltreatment reports received on children in active cases were not investigated as new reports.

To address this concern in its PIP, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Wyoming developed a standard report in the Wyoming Child Assistance and Protection System (WYCAPS) to determine the length of time between intake and initiation of investigation.
- The State developed a QA process to monitor compliance and provide consultation to underperforming offices. The State modified policy and provided training for field staff to ensure that all new maltreatment reports on existing cases are treated as new reports and investigated as directed in policy.

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

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

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two items. One item (item 3) assesses State efforts to prevent children's removal from their homes by providing the family with services to ensure children's safety while they remain in their homes. The other item (item 4) assesses efforts to manage safety and reduce the risk of harm to children in their own homes and in their foster care placements.

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 67.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 76 percent of Sheridan County cases and 71 percent of Laramie County Cases, compared to 53 percent of Sweetwater County cases. Both items incorporated into this outcome were rated as ANIs. Findings from the 2008 Onsite Review indicate the following:

- DFS is inconsistent in providing services to prevent removal.
- In some cases, the risk and safety assessment tools were being completed before children were seen.
- Reviewers noted that some prevention and assessment track cases were inappropriately assigned to these tracks and should have been assigned as higher priority cases.

The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2002 CFSR. Both items incorporated into this outcome were rated as ANIs. Key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were the following:

- DFS was not consistent in efforts to maintain children safely in their homes or reduce risk of harm to children.
- DFS conducted safety and risk assessments that focused only on the target child rather than conducting comprehensive assessments of the family, including the potential risk of harm to other children.

To address this concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- Implemented a family-centered practice services model
- Developed a system of easily accessible, flexible funding to provide immediate and individualized services to families at risk of having a child removed from the home
- Developed policy requiring assessment of safety and risk at the time of key events such as placement changes and reunification
- Required group homes and residential treatment providers to address safety issues in each child's service plan
- Implemented a standardized monthly report form for all service providers that includes the child's progress, health services provided, educational progress, cultural connections, visitation with family members, life skills development, and emotional health to provide timely feedback on the child's progress and other placement issues

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

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

Six items are incorporated in the assessment of Permanency Outcome 1; some are not relevant for all of the foster care cases reviewed. All six items pertain to State efforts to prevent foster care reentry (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 items focus on an assessment of State 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 a case goal of other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA) are in stable long-term placements and are adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in only 45.0 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 for the data indicators, 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 Permanency Composite 3 (Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods).

The outcome was substantially achieved in 60 percent of Sheridan County cases, 45 percent of Laramie County cases, and 30 percent of Sweetwater County cases.

All items included in this outcome were rated as ANIs. Key findings for this outcome in the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- Preventing foster care reentries within a 12-month period is a challenge for the State (item 5).
- There are problems in maintaining stable placements for foster children, particularly relating to meeting their behavioral needs and ensuring that their placements are safe and well supported (item 6). In addition, the State did not meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 4 (Placement stability) for the period ending March 31, 2007.
- The State does not consistently establish timely and appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care and is not consistently meeting Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requirements in filing for termination of parental rights (TPR) in a timely manner (item 7). However, the State met the national standard for data in Permanency Composite 3: Permanency for children and youth in foster care for long periods of time.
- DFS did not make diligent efforts to reunify children with parents or relatives (item 8). Additionally, the State did not meet the national standard for data Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification.
- DFS, the courts, and/or district/county attorneys did not make consistent, diligent efforts to achieve the permanency goal of adoption for children in a timely manner (item 9). However, the State met the national standards for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions.
- The State is not assisting youth consistently in achieving the goal of OPPLA (item 10).

Wyoming was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 in the 2002 CFSR; only item 5 pertaining to preventing multiple foster care reentries was rated as a Strength. All other items incorporated in the outcome were rated as ANIs. The following concerns were identified in the 2002 CFSR:

- Children were moved to different levels of care without adequate preparation.
- Children were placed in facilities that did not meet their needs because appropriate placements or support services were not available.

- The goal of adoption was utilized on a limited basis.
- Reviewers and stakeholders expressed concern about the willingness of DFS to pursue adoption as a goal for children and to file for TPR to facilitate this process.
- TPR petitions were not always filed in a timely manner due to reluctance to pursue TPR until an adoptive family became available.
- Compelling reasons were not documented when TPR petitions were not filed.

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

- Developed a family-centered service model
- Revised and improved risk and safety assessments
- Developed family partnerships
- Strengthened policy and procedures related to case planning and concurrent planning
- Improved monitoring and reporting from facilities and foster parents to obtain more timely and relevant information regarding the status of children in placement
- Increased recruiting efforts for foster parents
- Improved foster care training and certification procedures
- Created four regional foster care coordinator positions dedicated to recruiting, training, certifying, and addressing the needs of foster care providers
- Developed training materials for the court system, as well as DFS staff, in collaboration with the Children’s Justice Project regarding TPR, concurrent planning, and ASFA requirements
- Created a Children’s Permanency Unit within the attorney general’s office to handle TPR cases
- Strengthened policy and training regarding the importance of establishing timely and appropriate permanency goals and establishing concurrent plans when appropriate
- Collaborated with the Children’s Justice Project to improve court processes and provide the courts and DFS staff with specific guidelines and best practices regarding the timeliness of reunification, guardianship, and permanent placement with relatives
- Provided training regarding the availability of statewide Independent Living services and strengthened policy and training to establish an appropriate permanency goal

Wyoming met its goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP period.

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

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six items that assess State performance with regard to (1) placing children in foster care in close proximity to their parents and close relatives (item 11); (2) placing siblings together (item 12); (3) ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); (4) preserving connections of children in foster care with

extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); (5) seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and (6) promoting relationships among children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 67.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 80 percent of Sheridan County cases, 75 percent of Laramie County cases, and 40 percent of Sweetwater County cases.

Key findings for this outcome in the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- Children in the cases reviewed were not consistently in foster care placements that were in close proximity to parents or potential permanent caregivers unless specialized placements were necessary (item 11).
- The State is consistent in its efforts to place siblings together (item 12).
- Children's visitation with mothers, fathers, and siblings was not of sufficient quality or quantity to meet the needs of the families. Visits were more likely to occur with mothers than with siblings and fathers (item 13).
- Children's connections with extended family, school, and community were not being consistently maintained (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 generally inconsistent. Less attention was given to promoting children's bonds with fathers than mothers (item 16).

Wyoming was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2002 CFSR. The following concerns were identified in the 2002 CFSR:

- DFS was not consistently effective in placing siblings together.
- There were inconsistencies in practice with regard to facilitating or promoting visitation with parents and siblings in foster care and preserving children's connections.
- A child's possible Native American background was not routinely explored at entry into foster care, although DFS notified Tribes when a child with a known Tribal affiliation was placed in care.
- Relatives were not being sought as potential placement resources.
- Agency practice was not consistent in promoting or maintaining relationships among children and their parents.

To address these concerns, Wyoming implemented the following PIP strategies:

- Developed policy to allow for larger sibling groups to reside in one-family foster homes with approval from a district manager
- Strengthened policy regarding parent visitation with children and required a visitation plan be developed as part of the case plan and documented in the case file
- Developed an intake assessment process that gathered information about cultural and diversity issues to develop case plans and to provide culturally competent services

- Incorporated relative search into the intake process
- Engaged in efforts to recruit African-American, Native American, and Hispanic foster parents
- Strengthened policy and training on the importance of relative placement
- Developed visitation policy that prescribed a process for creating an environment conducive to strengthening the relationships among children and parents

Wyoming met the goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP period.

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

Well-Being Outcome 1 incorporates four items. One item pertains to State 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 item examines State efforts to actively involve parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two remaining items examine the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in only 49.2 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. This outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 59 percent of Sheridan County cases, 52 percent of Laramie County cases, and 35 percent of Sweetwater County cases. The outcome was found to be substantially achieved in 55 percent (22 cases) of the 40 foster care cases and in 40 percent (10 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases. All items incorporated into this outcome were rated as ANIs.

Key findings for this outcome in the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- DFS was not consistent in assessing and addressing the needs of children, parents, or foster parents. DFS was more effective in assessing the needs of children placed in foster care than those children receiving services in their homes (item 17).
- DFS was not consistent in involving parents and children in the case planning process. Mothers were more likely to be involved in case planning than children and fathers (item 18).
- DFS was not consistently effective in ensuring both the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children (item 19).
- DFS was not consistently effective in ensuring both the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with parents, particularly visits with fathers (item 20).

In the 2002 CFSR, all items incorporated in this outcome were rated as ANIs. Key findings from the 2002 CFSR were the following:

- DFS was not effective in meeting the assessment and service needs of parents, children, and foster parents. Additionally, according to stakeholders, DFS was not adequately addressing the treatment or placement needs of older children entering foster care through child-in-need-of-supervision petitions or through juvenile justice.

- DFS was not consistent in involving parents or children in the case planning process.
- The frequency and quality of DFS caseworker contacts with children and parents were not sufficient to ensure children's safety or well-being or promote attainment of case goals.

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

- Developed a comprehensive intake procedure
- Implemented family partnerships
- Implemented a family assessment tool
- Developed policy describing requirements for frequency and quality of contacts with children and parents
- Developed processes to monitor frequency and quality of contacts

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

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

Only one item is assessed under Well-Being Outcome 2. It pertains to State efforts to address and meet the educational needs of children in foster care and, when relevant, children in the in-home services cases (item 21).

Wyoming achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 97.9 percent of the cases reviewed. This exceeds the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of applicable Sheridan and Sweetwater County cases and in 95 percent of applicable Laramie County cases. The outcome was substantially achieved in 100 percent of the 37 applicable foster care cases and in 91 percent of the 11 applicable in-home services cases.

In the 2008 CFSR, DFS was consistently ensuring that educational needs of children were assessed and met.

Wyoming was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 in its 2002 CFSR. The key concern identified in the 2002 CFSR was that DFS was not consistent in assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs.

To address these concerns in its PIP, Wyoming developed an educational assessment that was integrated into WYCAPS.

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

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

This outcome incorporates two items that assess State efforts to meet the physical health (item 22) and mental health (item 23) needs of children in foster care and children in the in-home services cases, if relevant.

Wyoming did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 78.7 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 94 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 78.5 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 62.5 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 79 percent of the 39 applicable foster care cases and in 77 percent of the 22 applicable in-home services cases.

In the 2008 CFSR, the physical and dental health of children (item 22) and the mental health of children (item 23) were rated as ANIs. Key findings from the 2008 review were the following:

- There was inconsistency in practice in providing health assessments and obtaining health records.
- There were inconsistencies in practice in assessing and addressing the mental health needs of children.
- More consistencies occurred in meeting medical and mental health needs of children in foster care cases than of children in the in-home cases.

The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome for the 2002 CFSR; both items incorporated in this outcome were rated as ANIs. The 2002 CFSR findings indicated the following:

- DFS was not consistently effective in assessing and meeting children's physical or mental health needs.
- Some children in foster care were not receiving health screenings on a routine basis.
- Mental health and substance abuse services for children were limited across the State.

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

- Strengthened policy regarding addressing physical health needs of children
- Developed a standardized process for monitoring the health needs of children in out-of-home care
- Created an assessment process that includes mental health domains and process of referral when further evaluation is needed

Wyoming met the goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP period.

II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Statewide Information System

Substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System is determined by whether the State is operating an information system that can provide accurate and timely information pertaining to the status, demographic characteristics, location, and case goals for the placement of every child in foster care.

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System in the 2008 CFSR. The State is operating a statewide information system, WYCAPS, that can readily identify the legal status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for every child who is in foster care in the State. WYCAPS functions as a case management system for placement and in-home services cases, and it is accessible to the two Federally recognized Tribes in the State.

Wyoming was in substantial conformity with this factor in the 2002 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its PIP.

Case Review System

Five items are included in the assessment of State performance for the systemic factor of Case Review System. The items examine 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), implementation of procedures to seek TPR in accordance with the timeframes established in ASFA (item 28), and notification of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers about the schedule for case reviews and hearings and about their right to be heard in those proceedings (item 29).

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Key findings of the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- The State does not consistently involve parents, particularly noncustodial parents, in the development of the child's case plan and in other case planning activities (item 25).
- Periodic reviews are not occurring in a timely manner for all foster care cases. Additionally, periodic reviews do not occur for all children in Juvenile Services (JS) foster care cases (item 26).
- There are substantive concerns about the timeliness of permanency hearings for all foster care cases, and permanency hearings do not occur for all children in foster care managed by JS (item 27).
- The Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicate TPR filing requirements do not consistently occur in accordance with the provisions of ASFA. For example, stakeholders reported reluctance and refusal of some district and county attorneys to file for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA, which resulted in backlogs of cases and negatively impacted the achievement of permanency for children in foster care (item 28).

- Foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children are consistently provided notification of reviews and hearings and have an opportunity to be heard in all legal proceedings with regard to children in their care (item 29).

The State was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in the 2002 CFSR. Key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were the following:

- DFS did not consistently involve parents in the case planning process.
- The 12-month permanency hearings were not consistently conducted in a timely manner.
- Certain judicial jurisdictions and county agencies in the State appeared reluctant to pursue TPR.
- There were delays at the county level in the filing for TPR and delays by the court in processing contested terminations.
- DFS did not provide a consistent notification to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers regarding reviews and hearings.

The State implemented the following PIP strategies to address concerns related to the Case Review System:

- DFS revised its case plan policy, redesigned the case plan structure, and implemented the family partnership model to ensure inclusion of families and their support groups in the case planning process.
- DFS, in collaboration with the Children's Justice Project, developed training materials for the courts and DFS staff on the TPR process.

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its PIP implementation period.

Quality Assurance System

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of QA System is based on whether the State has developed standards that 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).

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. Key findings of the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- Wyoming has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children (item 30).
- The State has in place a fully functioning statewide QA system. Wyoming has implemented a State CFSR, which is based on the Federal CFSR process, and conducts QA reviews in each region of the State on an annual basis. The State has standardized reports that allow for monitoring numerous processes and performance measures. Furthermore, the State utilizes an array of data from WYCAPS for statewide QA purposes (item 31).

Wyoming was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2002 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its PIP.

Staff and Provider Training

The systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training incorporates an assessment of the State's training provided to new caseworkers (item 32), the ongoing training provided to agency staff (item 33), and both initial and ongoing training provided to foster and adoptive parents (item 34).

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. Key findings for this systemic factor in the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- Wyoming provides a competency-based initial training curriculum for all DFS, Child Protective Services (CPS), and JS caseworkers. The CORE training, which is offered twice annually, targets basic skills requirements established by DFS. The successful completion of the CORE training is required for all CPS and JS staff and is monitored by the agency (item 32).
- The State does not require ongoing training for JS caseworkers. However, 20 hours of annual in-service training is required for CPS caseworkers to maintain certification. The State maintains a database to ensure that CPS staff have maintained certification each year. Stakeholders reported that budget constraints restrict training opportunities for staff (item 33).
- The State requires and provides initial training for prospective foster and adoptive parents through Parent Resource for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) training and supplemental modules. Additionally, the State requires 18 hours of ongoing training for these caregivers. All licensed and approved facilities that care for children also have training requirements (item 34).

The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in the 2002 CFSR. The key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were that the State did not have an effective, comprehensive, agencywide, initial training program or an ongoing training program for staff.

The State implemented the following PIP strategies to address concerns related to Staff and Provider Training:

- Developed an initial training program to be completed by new staff within 30 days of employment
- Developed a training program for supervisors to increase effective supervision for new caseworkers
- Developed a method to track completion of training
- Developed a training manual and a yearly training calendar of available training opportunities

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

Service Array and Resource Development

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

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. Key findings of the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- Wyoming offers an array of critical child welfare services that addresses the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children and families (item 35).
- Accessibility of services is a concern in many areas of the State. Residential treatment for children with multiple needs, substance abuse treatment for teenagers, and inpatient substance abuse treatment for parents that allows for children to be with them were among the services identified by stakeholders as having limited accessibility. Further, transportation across long distances was cited as a major barrier to services for children and families living in rural areas and on Indian reservations (item 36).
- The State does not have an effective statewide process of distributing available flexible funds that are needed by caseworkers to individualize services to children and families, particularly with respect to tailoring prevention services to meet the unique needs of families (item 37).

The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in the 2002 CFSR. Key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were the following:

- The arrays of services were not equal across the State, and services were particularly limited in rural areas.
- Stakeholders identified gaps in the statewide availability of mental health services, psychiatric providers for children who would accept Medicaid, and community-based treatment for youth.
- In many communities, there were insufficient services or limited services to meet identified needs, which resulted in families and children being placed on lengthy wait lists or having to travel great distances to access services.
- There was a lack of availability of appropriate placement resources, which resulted in children being placed in settings based on available bed space rather than in response to children's needs, being removed from their communities, or being placed in more restrictive environments than needed.
- DFS did not tailor services to meet the unique needs of children and families.

The State implemented the following PIP strategies to address concerns related to Service Array and Resource Development:

- DFS developed strategies to improve assessment and case planning processes.

- DFS trained on and implemented family partnerships to increase the efforts of providing community-based services to families at the beginning of the agency involvement.
- DFS increased statewide resource family recruitment efforts to improve foster care resources.

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

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

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Key findings for this factor in the 2008 CFSR were the following:

- The State is engaged in ongoing collaboration and consultation with key DFS stakeholders on the goals and objectives of the CFSP. DFS has effectively partnered with the Governor, an array of State and community agencies, Tribes, and Citizen Review Panels to develop and improve child welfare practice (item 38).
- DFS consults with community partners and uses their input when preparing the Annual Progress and Services Report, the State's 5-year plan, and other annual reports. The Citizen's Review Board is also a DFS advisory committee that evaluates how well DFS is achieving its desired outcomes (item 39).
- DFS collaborates and coordinates activities with Federal or Federally-assisted agencies to address the needs of the children and families they serve (item 40).

Wyoming was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2002 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its PIP.

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).

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention in the 2008 CFSR. Key findings were the following:

- The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards (item 41).
- The State applies the standards equally to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds (item 42).
- The State has a process in place for compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks before a prospective foster or adoptive home can be certified (item 43).
- 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 homes are needed. While some stakeholders reported that more statewide recruitment efforts are needed, Wyoming has made diligent efforts to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of foster and adoptive parents through coordinated activities with churches, targeted advertising campaigns, AdoptUsKids, and by hiring foster care coordinators for the State and the Tribes. The State has also trained staff on child specific recruitment (item 44).
- DFS utilizes cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for children (item 45).

The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in the 2002 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its PIP.

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

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings			Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved*	Met National Standards?	Rating**	Percent Strength
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	76.2	Met 1, did not meet 1		
Item 1: Timeliness of investigations				ANI	76
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment				Strength	100
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	67.7			
Item 3: Services to prevent removal				ANI	76
Item 4: Risk of harm				ANI	69
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	45.0	Met 2, did not meet 2		
Item 5: Foster care reentry				ANI	87
Item 6: Stability of foster care placements				ANI	77
Item 7: Permanency goal for child				ANI	60
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship and placement with relatives				ANI	77
Item 9: Adoption				ANI	31
Item 10: Other planned living arrangement				ANI	50
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	67.5			
Item 11: Proximity of placement				ANI	89
Item 12: Placement with siblings				Strength	100
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	67
Item 14: Preserving connections				ANI	87
Item 15: Relative placement				ANI	79
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	58

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

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings		Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved*	Rating**	Percent Strength
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children’s needs	No	49.2		
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents			ANI	55
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning			ANI	55
Item 19: Caseworker visits with child			ANI	69
Item 20: Caseworker visits with parents			ANI	52
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive services to meet their educational needs	Yes	97.9		
Item 21: Educational needs of child			Strength	98
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	No	78.7		
Item 22: Physical health of child			ANI	86
Item 23: Mental health of child			ANI	83

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

**Items may be rated as a Strength or an 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: Wyoming CFSR Ratings for Systemic Factors and Items

Systemic Factors and Items	Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Statewide Information System	Yes	4	
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			Strength
Case Review System	No	2	
Item 25: The State provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child’s parents that includes the required provisions			ANI
Item 26: The State 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			ANI
Item 27: The State 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			ANI
Item 28: The State provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act			ANI
Item 29: The State 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
Quality Assurance System	Yes	4	
Item 30: The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children			Strength
Item 31: The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identified strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluations program improvement measures implemented			Strength

Systemic Factors and Items	Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Staff and Provider Training	Yes	3	
Item 32: The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services			Strength
Item 33: The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP			ANI
Item 34: The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children			Strength
Service Array and Resource Development	No	2	
Item 35: The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency			Strength
Item 36: The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP			ANI
Item 37: The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency			ANI
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Yes	4	
Item 38: In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, services providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP			Strength
Item 40: The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally assisted programs serving the same population			Strength

Systemic Factors and Items	Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	Yes	4	
Item 41: The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards			Strength
Item 42: The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds			Strength
Item 43: The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children			Strength
Item 44: The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom adoptive homes are needed			Strength
Item 45: The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children			Strength

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

**Items may be rated as a Strength or as an ANI.

**Final Report
Wyoming Child and Family Services Review
May 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 Wyoming. 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 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 within HHS.

The Wyoming CFSR was conducted the week of June 9, 2008. The period under review was from April 1, 2007, to June 13, 2008. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB within HHS, which provides State child welfare data for fiscal year 2006 and the 12-month CFSR period ending March 31, 2007
- Reviews of 65 cases at three sites across the State (31 cases in the Laramie County office, 17 cases in the Sheridan County office, and 17 cases in the Sweetwater County office)
- 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.

Table of Key Characteristics

Case Characteristics	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Cases
	40	25
When case was opened/child entered foster care		
Open prior to the period under review	29 (72.5%)	11 (44%)
Open during the period under review	11 (27.5%)	14 (56%)
Child entered foster care during the period under review	16 (40%)	*
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than age 10	24 (60%)	*
At least 10 but younger than 13	1 (2.5%)	*
At least 13 but younger than 16	7 (17.5%)	*
16 and older	8 (20%)	*
Race/Ethnicity		
African American (Non-Hispanic)	1 (2.5%)	*
White (Non-Hispanic)	32 (80%)	*
Hispanic (of all races)	5 (12.5%)	*
Two or more races	1 (2.5%)	*
American Indian/Alaskan Native (Non-Hispanic)	1 (2.5%)	*
Primary reason for opening case		
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	12 (30%)	4 (16%)
Physical abuse	6 (15%)	4 (16%)
Sexual abuse	3 (7.5%)	0 (0%)
Medical neglect	0 (0%)	3 (12%)
Substance abuse by parent	5 (12.5%)	3 (12%)
Domestic violence in child's home	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Mental/physical health of parent	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Mental/physical health of child	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Child's behavior	1 (2.5%)	3 (12%)
Child in Juvenile Justice system	12 (30%)	3 (12%)
Other	1 (2.5%)	1 (4%)

*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 June 13, 2008.

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

In this section, Outcomes Section A of the CFSR Final Report, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement (ANI) is assigned to each of the 23 indicators (items) reviewed. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. The item ratings are used to determine the performance of a State on the seven outcomes, each of which incorporates one or more of the individual items. The evaluation options for these outcomes are Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, and Not Achieved. For a State to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. Two outcomes—Safety Outcome 1 and Permanency Outcome 1—also are evaluated based on State performance with regard to six national data indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, the national standards for each data indicator must be met as well as the case review requirements. A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of concern identified for that outcome.

CB has established a very high standard of performance for the CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our nation's most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable. The standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being. This is consistent with the goal of the CFSR to promote continuous improvement in performance on these outcomes.

It should be noted, however, that States are not required to attain either the 95-percent standard established for the CFSR Onsite Review or the national standards for the six data indicators by 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 take time 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 to determine specified activities for their PIP. That is, for each outcome that is not in substantial conformity 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 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 the 90-percent (for items) levels established for the CFSR.

The second round of the CFSR assesses a State's current level of performance by once more applying the high standards and a consistent, comprehensive, case review methodology. The results of this effort are intended to serve as the basis for continued PIPs addressing areas in which a State still needs to improve, even though prior PIP goals may have been achieved. The purpose is to ensure that program improvement is an ongoing process and does not end with the completion of a PIP.

In the following sections, information is provided pertaining to how the State performed on each outcome in the first round of the CFSR. If the outcome was not substantially achieved during the first round, the key concerns observed at that time are identified as well as the strategies implemented in the PIP to address those concerns.

Because many changes were made in the 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 data indicators or percentages regarding Strength and ANI ratings. Key changes in the CFSR process that make it difficult to compare performance across reviews include, but are not limited to, 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 enhance consistency and ensure an assessment of critical areas, such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents

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					
	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	6	8	2	16	76.2
Partially Achieved	0	0	2	2	9.5
Not Achieved or Addressed	0	1	2	3	14.3
Total Applicable Cases	6	9	6	21	
Not Applicable Cases	11	22	11	44	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards					
	National Standard (%)		State's Percentage	Meets Standard?	
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6+		96.1	Yes	
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68+		99.57	No	

Status of Safety Outcome 1

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 76.2 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity. Safety Outcome 1 was substantially achieved in 100 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 89 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 33 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. Wyoming 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. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its first CFSR, which was conducted in 2002, and was required to address the outcome in its PIP.

Key Concerns From the 2002 CFSR

In the 2002 CFSR, both items incorporated in this outcome were rated as ANIs. Additionally, the State did not meet the national standard for the measure assessing the absence of maltreatment recurrence. The key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were:

- DFS was not consistent in responding to child maltreatment reports timely nor in preventing maltreatment recurrence.
- There was a large number of maltreatment reports screened out for investigations.
- Maltreatment reports received on children in active cases were not investigated as new reports.

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

- Wyoming developed a standard report in the Wyoming Child Assistance and Protection System (WYCAPS), the State's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) system, to determine the length of time between intake and initiation of investigation.
- The State developed a quality assurance (QA) process to monitor compliance and provide consultation to underperforming offices. The State modified policy and provided training for field staff to ensure that all new maltreatment reports on existing cases are treated as new reports and investigated as directed in policy.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

During the 2008 review, item 2 (repeat maltreatment) was rated as a Strength, but item 1 (timeliness of initiating investigations) was rated as an ANI.

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 1 are presented below.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 21 (32 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.

Wyoming policy states that all investigations and assessments must be initiated within 24 hours of a completed intake report. There are two levels for the investigative track:

- Immediate Response
 - Includes major injuries, children under 6, bizarre punishment, abandoned child, and untreated medical conditions
 - Requires contact with alleged victim and/or family within 24 hours of an accepted report
- 24-Hour Response
 - This consists of cases not included in the Immediate Response category.
 - Face-to-face contact with the alleged victim is recommended within 24 hours of the accepted report. However, State policy requires face-to-face contact with the alleged victim within 7 days of the accepted report.

Assessment Track:

- A case is assigned as an assessment if the report includes an allegation of abuse or neglect but not rise to the level for which an investigation would be warranted.
- Face-to-face contact with the alleged victim is recommended within 24 hours of the accepted report, but State policy requires face-to-face contact with the alleged victim within 7 days of the accepted report.

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

Item 1	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	6	8	2	16	76
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	4	5	24
Total Applicable Cases	6	9	6	21	
Not Applicable	11	22	11	44	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 89 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 33 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 16 cases 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 five applicable cases when the investigation and/or face-to-face contact were not initiated within the required timeframes. In three cases, the alleged victims were not observed or interviewed by DFS staff during the investigation/assessment. In one case, the alleged child victim was not

interviewed by DFS staff for almost a month after the referral was received. In the final case rated as an ANI, the alleged victim was not seen during the first investigation but was interviewed, although not in a timely manner, in subsequent investigations.

Fifteen of the 65 cases reviewed during the onsite CFSR were Juvenile Services (JS) cases. Three of these 15 cases were in-home services JS cases, and 12 cases were foster care JS cases. Two cases of the 21 applicable cases for item 1 were JS cases, and both cases were rated as Strengths.

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 76 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 is less than the 90 percent required for an overall item rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

Wyoming has a multiple response system consisting of three tracks: investigation, assessment, and prevention. Reports classified as prevention were not subject to a rating on item 1. DFS policy allows the transfer of cases from assessment to investigation or from investigation to assessment with supervisory approval.

Reports are assigned to the investigation track when:

- Criminal charges appear likely.
- Children appear to be in imminent danger.
- The allegations include major injury, sexual abuse, or a child fatality.
- It is likely that children will need to be removed from their home.

Reports are assigned to the assessment track when they do not meet the criteria for the investigation track. Additionally, there is no formal finding of abuse or neglect in assessment cases. DFS policy requires that face-to-face contact be made with the alleged victim within 7 days of the report.

A family is eligible for preventive services when a report does not contain allegations of abuse or neglect, but there are risk factors that indicate the need for intervention. There is no formal finding of abuse or neglect, and prevention services are voluntary. DFS policy requires that the caseworker attempt to contact the family within 7 days of receiving the report.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS, in partnership with the Wyoming Citizens Review Panel (WYCRP), has developed and implemented a CFSR review process that is based on the Federal CFSR model, and it includes case reviews; interviews with the

family, child, and caseworker; interviews with stakeholders; case debriefings; two levels of QA; and an exit conference. The process combines trained citizen reviewers with DFS staff for the Onsite Review. The State CFSR review, according to the Statewide Assessment, uses the Federal CFSR Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) to obtain the ratings for the State CFSR items and outcomes. Data from the State CFSRs were referenced in the Statewide Assessment and will be referenced in this final report.

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from round 4 of the State CFSR indicate that timeliness of initiating assessments of reports of child maltreatment was rated at 93.3 percent.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that investigations are generally initiated in a timely manner. Stakeholders in Sweetwater County indicated that law enforcement can be a barrier as they are not always available to assist with removals.

According to stakeholders at the State level, the multiple response system is not clearly understood by caseworkers or service providers. The lack of understanding about the multiple response system has led to the inappropriate handling of cases. Stakeholders indicate that training on the multiple response system is needed.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

 X **Strength** **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 12 (18 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 for this item is provided below.

Item 2	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	5	4	3	12	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Cases	5	4	3	12	
Not Applicable	12	27	14	53	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases in the three counties reviewed during the onsite CFSR.

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. In 51 cases, reviewers found that there were multiple maltreatment reports on the family during the life of the case; however, not all of these cases were applicable to the item given the specific timeframes subject to the review.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 100 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that there was no recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period. This item was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that in 100 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, there was no recurrence of maltreatment within a 6-month period.

The State did not achieve the national standard that measures the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care. According to the Statewide Assessment, the substantiated maltreatment of numerous children in foster care residing at a single facility involving one perpetrator is a key factor that substantively and negatively impacted the State’s ability to achieve the national standard for absence of maltreatment of children in foster care.

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the State CFSR process indicated that DFS is effective at preventing repeat maltreatment. Caseworkers and supervisors stated that the formal risk and safety assessments in WYCAPS do not always reflect the ongoing informal safety and risk assessments. Caseworkers and supervisors reported that the safety and risk assessment tools required by policy are helpful, but that the informal assessments of child safety are more important in determining risk to the child.

Stakeholder Interview Information

According to stakeholders in Laramie County and at the State level, an incident at a residential care facility kept the State from achieving the national standard for the measure assessing absence of maltreatment of children in foster care. Child welfare children at the facility were intermingled with JS children and maltreatment occurred. According to stakeholders, the facility has changed management and will no longer allow child welfare children to be placed with JS children. Additionally, DFS will not allow the two populations to be placed in the same facility. Stakeholders reported that there are no other concerns related to risk of harm in foster care.

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					
	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	13	22	9	44	67.7
Partially Achieved	2	2	3	7	10.8
Not Achieved or Addressed	2	7	5	14	21.5
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

Status of Safety Outcome 2

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 67.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 76 percent of Sheridan County cases, 71 percent of Laramie County Cases, and 53 percent of Sweetwater County cases. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its first CFSR, which was conducted in 2002, and was required to address the outcome in its PIP.

Key Concerns From the 2002 CFSR

In the 2002 CFSR, both items incorporated into this outcome were rated as ANIs. The key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were:

- DFS was not consistent in efforts to maintain children safely in their homes and reduce risk of harm to children.
- DFS conducted safety and risk assessments that focused only on the target child rather than conducting comprehensive assessments of the family, including the potential risk of harm to other children.

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

- A family-centered practice services model was implemented.
- A system of easily accessible flexible funding was developed to provide immediate and individualized services to families at risk of having a child removed from the home.
- Policy was developed to require assessment of safety and risk at the time of key events such as placement changes and reunification.
- Group homes and residential treatment providers were required to address safety issues in each child's service plan.
- A standardized monthly report form for all service providers was implemented. This form includes information related to the child's progress, health services provided, educational progress, cultural connections, visitation with family members, life skills development, and emotional health. Development and implementation of the monthly report form provides timely feedback on the child's progress and other issues related to the placement.

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

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

In the 2008 CFSR, both items incorporated in Safety Outcome 2 continued to be rated as ANIs.

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

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 37 (57 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded from this assessment if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and there were no other children in the home or if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or identified risk of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent placement of children in foster care while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 3	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	8	14	6	28	76
Area Needing Improvement	2	5	2	9	24
Total Applicable Cases	10	19	8	37	
Not Applicable	7	12	9	28	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 80 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 75 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases, and 74 percent of applicable Laramie 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 (19 cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home to ensure their safety (six cases).
- Services were provided after the child was reunified with his/her parents to prevent reentry (four cases)

Case review information indicates that a broad range of services was offered or provided to families. The services were provided by agency staff and included the following:

- Behavioral management
- Parenting skills training
- Counseling
- Grief counseling
- Substance abuse assessment and treatment
- Intensive in-home services

- Individual therapy
- Family therapy
- Parent aide services
- Domestic violence education and advocacy
- Child care services
- Transportation services
- Inpatient mental health services
- Medical coverage
- Day treatment services
- Medication management
- Early intervention services
- Employment services
- Intensive supervised probation
- Referrals for community food resources
- Psychological evaluations

Item 3 was rated as an ANI in nine cases when reviewers determined the following:

- Services were not provided and children remained at risk in the home (two cases).
- Some services were provided in the home but did not adequately address the safety and risk factors (one case).
- Services were not provided to a sibling who remained in the home (one case).
- Inadequate services were provided, and the children were subsequently removed (three cases).
- Services were not provided prior to removal (one case).
- Services to prevent reentry into foster care were not being provided (one case).

Four of the 37 applicable cases for item 3 were JS cases. Of these four cases, three cases (75 percent) were rated as Strengths.

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 76 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percent is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy emphasizes that children should be maintained in their homes when possible. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that protective and preventive services were considered Strengths in 91 percent of the applicable cases reviewed.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS has improved on this item due to the implementation of a family assessment process and policy and training modifications that emphasize service provision to the entire family. According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders reported that DFS and the community do a good job of providing services to prevent removal.

Wyoming has a placement rate that is higher than other States and the national average. According to the Statewide Assessment, the risk factors associated with the use and manufacturing of methamphetamine have increased the number of children placed in foster care and has decreased the ability of DFS to provide services to prevent removal. According to the Statewide Assessment, of the cases that had confirmed methamphetamine involvement, 93 percent of the cases had children removed, compared to 59 percent of the cases that did not involve methamphetamines.

Stakeholders indicated during the State CFSR process that, in addition to methamphetamine use, high placement rates also can be contributed to the lack of service availability in some communities. Furthermore, stakeholders reported that flexible funding for immediate services to families at risk is limited.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in Sweetwater County and Campbell County, services provided to children involved in JS cases are the responsibility of the county juvenile probation system, which limits the ability of DFS to provide services to prevent removal of these children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that there are a large number of children placed in foster care for a short period of time and that services could be provided to prevent the removals. Additionally, Laramie County stakeholders indicated that children involved in children in need of supervision (CHINS) cases are removed from their homes instead of having services provided to prevent their removal. These stakeholders expressed the opinion that attorneys and judges, who make the removal decisions, believe children are better served if they are removed from their communities. Additionally, Laramie County stakeholders voiced concerns that the services children need can only be accessed when placed in foster care, which results in increased CHINS petitions and placements.

Item 4. Risk assessment and safety management

 Strength **X** 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.

Item 4	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	13	22	10	45	69
Area Needing Improvement	4	9	7	20	31
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 76 percent of Sheridan County cases, 71 percent of Laramie County cases, and 59 percent of Sweetwater County cases.

Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 45 cases when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by the agency through conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children’s home or in children’s foster home and addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment.

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

- There was a lack of adequate initial and ongoing safety and risk assessments during the period under review (15 cases), and:
 - Three cases lacked initial safety and risk assessments.
 - Ten cases lacked ongoing safety and risk assessments.
 - Two cases lacked both initial and ongoing assessments.
- There was risk of harm in the foster care setting, and safety and risk were not assessed (two cases).
- Risk was not assessed prior to or following reunification (three cases).
- Risk was not assessed prior to a trial home visit (one case).
- Risk was not assessed prior to case closure (one case).

Fifteen of the 65 cases reviewed for item 4 were JS cases. Eleven cases (73 percent) of the 15 JS cases were rated as Strengths.

Findings of the onsite CFSR indicated that in some cases, the risk and safety assessment tools were being completed prior to children being seen. Thus, the assessments were not reflecting the true risk or safety issues. Additionally, reviewers noted that some prevention and assessment track cases were inappropriately assigned to these tracks and should have been assigned as a higher priority case.

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had appropriately addressed the risk of harm to children in 69 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires risk assessments and a safety assessments be completed at the initial contact with the family and throughout the life of a Child Protection Services (CPS) case. Both assessment tools are completed on the entire family for cases assigned to the investigations and assessment track. A formal risk reassessment is required at a minimum of every 6 months and/or when factors or events in the case would create a potential for increased risk, such as case closure, change in family composition, or reunification.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS CPS staff are of the opinion that the risk and safety assessment tools are adequate to assess risk and safety and are used appropriately. Staff indicated that risk and safety assessment is an integral part of effective casework and that it occurs throughout the life of the case. However, staff reported that it is difficult to document informal ongoing risk and safety assessments.

The Statewide Assessment reports that DFS staff struggle with an effective process for formally assessing and documenting risk and safety issues for children involved in the JS system. Currently, JS assesses for previous child protection involvement as part of the intake process.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, State CFSR round 4 data indicate that in 82 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that there was evidence of agency effectiveness in ongoing risk and safety assessment and reducing the risk of harm to children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that each county has a Child Protection Team that reviews cases and makes recommendations on how the agency should proceed with the case. Additionally, stakeholders at the

State level also reported that the two-track system, investigation and assessment, is not clearly understood by DFS staff and other service providers. According to these stakeholders, caseworkers cannot explain what constitutes an assessment track case or an investigation track case. Stakeholders reported that there is a need for training on the two-track system.

Stakeholders reported that the assessment of safety of children in the home should be improved. However, barriers to increasing safety include:

- Limited accessibility to services
- Lack of follow through by parents
- A family’s decision not to accept services

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	6	9	3	18	45.0
Partially Achieved	4	10	6	20	50.0
Not Achieved or Addressed	0	1	1	2	5.0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards					
National Data Indicators	National Standard (Scaled Score)		State’s Composite Score	Meets Standard (Yes/No)	
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	122.6 +		117.2	No	
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	106.4 +		134.4	Yes	
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods	121.7 +		145.3	Yes	
Composite 4: Placement stability	101.5 +		96.2	No	

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in only 45.0 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 for the data indicators, 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.

The outcome was substantially achieved in 60 percent of Sheridan County cases, 45 percent of Laramie County cases, and 30 percent of Sweetwater County cases.

Wyoming was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its first CFSR, which was conducted in 2002, and was required to address the outcome in its PIP.

Key Concerns From the 2002 CFSR

In the 2002 CFSR, item 5 pertaining to multiple entries into foster care was rated as a Strength. All other items incorporated in the outcome were rated as ANIs. Key concerns from the 2002 CFSR were:

- Children were moved to different levels of care without adequate preparation.
- Children were placed in facilities that did not meet their needs because more appropriate placements or support services were not available.
- The goal of adoption was utilized on a limited basis.
- Reviewers and stakeholders expressed concern about the willingness of DFS to pursue adoption as a goal for children and to file for termination of parental rights (TPR) to facilitate this process.
- TPR filings were not always timely due to reluctance to pursue TPR until there is an adoptive family available.
- Compelling reasons were not documented when TPR was not filed.

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

- Developed a family-centered service model
- Revised and improved risk and safety assessments
- Developed family partnerships
- Strengthened policy and procedures related to case planning and concurrent planning
- Improved the monitoring and reporting from facilities and foster parents in order to attain more timely and relevant information regarding the status of children in placement
- Increased recruiting efforts for foster parents
- Improved foster care training and certification procedures
- Created four regional foster care coordinator positions dedicated to recruiting, training, certifying, and addressing the needs of foster care providers
- In collaboration with the Children's Justice Project, developed training materials for the court system as well as DFS staff regarding TPR, concurrent planning, and Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requirements
- Supported the creation of a Children's Permanency Unit within the attorney general's office designed for the specific purpose of handling TPR cases
- Strengthened policy and training regarding the importance of establishing timely and appropriate permanency goals and establishing concurrent plans when appropriate
- Collaborated with the Children's Justice Project to improve court processes and provide the courts and DFS staff with specific guidelines and best practices regarding the timeliness of reunification, guardianship, and permanent placement with relatives
- Provided training regarding the availability of statewide independent living (IL) services and strengthened policy and training regarding the establishment of an appropriate permanency goal

Wyoming met the goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

In the 2008 CFSR, all items included in this outcome were rated as ANIs. Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 are presented below.

Item 5. Foster care reentries

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 16 (40 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 were to determine whether entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 5	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	5	7	2	14	87.5
Area Needing Improvement	1	0	1	2	12.5
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	7	3	16	
Not Applicable	4	13	7	24	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

This item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Laramie County cases, 83 percent of Sheridan County cases, and 67 percent of Sweetwater County cases.

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 14 of the 16 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. Item 5 was rated as an ANI in the two applicable cases when the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of the child's discharge from a prior foster care episode. In one case, the child reentered foster care through juvenile justice services within 11 months of being placed in an adoptive placement. In the other case, the child was discharged from a juvenile justice facility and then reentered foster care, again through the juvenile justice system, 2 months later.

Seven of the 16 applicable cases for item 5 were JS cases. Of these seven cases, five cases (71 percent) were rated as Strengths.

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. The item was rated as a Strength in 87.5 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which is lower than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Performance on Composite 1: Measure relevant to the permanency of reunification

The data below are presented to provide additional information about foster care reentry. There is no national standard for the measure of foster care reentry. National standards with regard to permanency have been established only for the scaled composite scores. The measure of foster care reentry is part of Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification. The State’s performance on Composite 1 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

State performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry included in Composite 1 for the 12-month period ending March 31, 2007, was as follows: 17.6 percent of the children exiting foster care to reunification in the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period reentered foster care less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage exceeds the median of 15.0 percent. For this measure, lower percentages are associated with higher levels of performance.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires that services be provided to prevent placement and that aftercare services be provided to children when they return home or attain other permanent placement. DFS policy also requires that risk and safety assessments be conducted when reunification or other permanent placements occur. Additionally, services are to be provided until any identified risk, safety, or community issue is resolved.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that 100 percent of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as Strengths for the item addressing reentry into foster care. The Statewide Assessment also reports that, historically, reentry rates have been higher for JS cases compared to protective services cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders indicated that DFS and the community do good jobs providing services to prevent removal and during reunification.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the court and law enforcement are not family-focused, which results in children, especially in CHINS cases, being removed from their homes when services are available within the community. Additionally, stakeholders in Sheridan County and at the State level indicated that reentries into foster care for protective services occur most frequently due to recurrence of substance abuse by the parents.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Strength 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	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	7	17	7	31	77.5
Area Needing Improvement	3	3	3	9	22.5
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 85 percent of Laramie County cases and in 70 percent of Sheridan County and Sweetwater 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 (25 cases).
- The placement changes experienced were in the child's best interests and were intended to further achievement of the child's permanency goal or to provide specialized services to the child (six 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 in the best interests of the child (eight cases). In one case, an adoptive resource requested a child be moved due to the court allowing the mother to continue with reunification services although she had not met any case plan goals.
- 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 26 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in six cases experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Children in eight cases experienced three or more placements during the period under review.

Twelve of the 40 cases rated for item 6 were JS foster care cases. Nine of the 12 cases (75 percent) were rated as Strengths.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 77.5 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability or that changes in placements were in the best interests of the child. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 4: Placement stability

The data below are presented to provide additional information about placement stability. There are no national standards for the individual measures of placement stability. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite scores for Composite 4: Placement stability. The State's performance on Composite 4 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

Wyoming's performance on the individual measures of placement stability for the period ending March 31, 2007, included in Composite 4: Placement stability is reported below:

- 84.6 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 exceeds the national median for this measure of 83.3 percent but is less than the national 75th percentile of 86.0.
- 61.2 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 exceeds the national median for this measure of 59.9 percent but is less than the national 75th percentile of 65.4.
- 39.2 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 less than the national 75th percentile of 41.8.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires a court order for changes to a more restrictive placement setting. A move to a less restrictive or similar setting is initiated with a 10 day written notice delivered personally or by certified mail to the child, parents, county attorney, guardian *ad litem* (GAL), and foster care provider. Additionally, the appropriateness of the placement setting is reviewed during the 3-month, 6-month, and 12-month permanency review/hearing.

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that placement stability was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of the applicable cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS has increased the number of certified foster homes over the last 2 years, which has improved the ability of caseworkers to effectively identify foster parents who will best meet the child's needs. Additionally, DFS created foster care coordinator positions. These positions enable the agency to better recruit, train, and meet the specific needs of foster care providers. Communication between the foster care coordinators and the foster parents provides valuable information regarding issues that could create a placement disruption and allows DFS to provide intervention prior to the occurrence of a crisis. Additionally, foster parents are required to complete a monthly report form on each child in their home.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there was variation among stakeholders on the efforts and abilities of DFS to maintain the stability of foster care placements. Many foster parents indicated that they feel supported and have good communication with DFS. Additionally, these foster parents reported that DFS is successful at matching the child's needs with the foster family. However, other foster parents indicated that they did not feel supported and that they have limited contact with caseworkers.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders in Laramie County and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that placement stability is a concern in the State. Stakeholders in Laramie County and at the State level indicated that placements are generally based on the availability of a bed rather than on the skills and training of foster parents. Additionally, stakeholders referenced limited placement resources, including therapeutic resources, as contributing to unplanned moves. Stakeholders in Laramie County reported that because DFS does not want another placement move for the child, therapeutic foster homes are not used as a transition from residential treatment even when this will assist in the preparation for family reunification. Stakeholders in Sweetwater County reported that placements in their county, except for emergency placements, are generally well planned.

Sheridan County stakeholders did not comment on this item.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

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. In addition, reviewers determined whether TPR was sought in accordance with ASFA requirements. The results of this assessment are shown below.

Item 7	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	6	12	6	24	60
Area Needing Improvement	4	8	4	16	40
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 60 percent of the cases in Sheridan County, Laramie County, and Sweetwater County.

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 and that, where applicable, ASFA requirements with regard to seeking TPR had been met. The item was rated as an ANI in 16 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child’s current permanency goal was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (four cases).
- The child’s permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (12 cases).
- A TPR petition was not filed in accordance with ASFA guidelines, and no compelling reasons were documented (nine cases).

Twelve of the 40 cases rated for item 7 were JS cases. Of the 12 JS foster care cases, 9 cases (75 percent) were rated as Strengths.

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

- Two children had a single goal of other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA).
- Twelve children had a single goal of adoption.
- Sixteen children had a single goal of reunification (including reunification with relatives).
- One child had a goal of guardianship.
- Four children had concurrent goals of reunification with parents and adoption.
- Two children had concurrent goals of reunification with parents and OPPLA.
- One child had concurrent goals of guardianship and reunification with relatives.
- Two children had concurrent goals of guardianship and reunification with parents.

At the time of the onsite CFSR, 21 of the 40 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. ASFA requirements with regard to seeking TPR and documenting compelling reasons when TPR was not sought were

applicable for 19 of these foster care cases. In two cases, ASFA requirements were not applicable because the child was in a foster care placement with a relative. ASFA requirements were met in 53 percent (10 cases) of the 19 cases for which the requirements were applicable.

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and met ASFA requirements in 60 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 3:

Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods

The data below are presented to provide additional information about achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. There are no national standards for the individual measures included in Composite 3. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite scores for Composite 3. The State's performance on Composite 3 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

Wyoming's performance on the individual measures included in Permanency Composite 3 for the period ending March 31, 2007, is as follows:

- 26.1 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the 12-month CFSR target period for the data indicators were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (i.e., adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage exceeds the national median of 25.0 percent for this measure but is less than the national 75th percentile of 29.1 percent.
- 100 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 75th percentile of 98 percent.
- 17.7 percent of the children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month target period with a discharge reason of emancipation had been in foster care for 3 years or longer at the time of discharge. This percentage is less than the national 25th percentile of 37.5. For this measure, lower scores indicate more positive performance.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires that permanency goals be established for every child that enters foster care within 60 days of placement. The Statewide Assessment reports that DFS has made minimal improvement since the 2002 CFSR in determining appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care.

The lack of improvement is contributed to:

- Lack of active concurrent planning
- Lack of adequate and early diligent searches for appropriate relatives
- “Unrealistic goals” of reunification with incarcerated parents
- “Unrealistic goals” of reunification of parents with severe and long-term treatment needs
- The difficulties in establishing appropriate permanency goals for JS children
- The difficulties in establishing appropriate permanency goals for children with serious and persistent mental health and behavioral issues

DFS has provided training to caseworkers on ASFA and the TPR process. However, according to the Statewide Assessment, there continue to be issues with documenting compelling reasons and filing timely TPR petitions.

During the State CFSR round 4, establishing permanency goals in a timely manner was rated as a Strength in 57 percent of the applicable cases reviewed. Observations from the State CFSR round 4 contributed the low performance to the lack of compliance with ASFA provisions and cases that did not have an initial permanency goal established within a timeframe consistent with the Federal requirement.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, a point in time measure taken in October 2007, of children in foster care revealed that of the 1,243 children in foster care, 40 percent (503 children) had been in foster care at least 15 of the past 22 months, and 35 percent (176 children) did not have a valid ASFA exception documented in WYCAPS.

Stakeholder feedback regarding the appropriateness of permanency and timeliness goals and filing TPR petitions varied according to the Statewide Assessment. Some of their comments and concerns are the following:

- Foster parents and providers questioned the rationale of reunifying children with families that had maltreated the children.
- Foster parents and providers expressed the opinion that children are often returned to homes that could not adequately meet their needs.
- Representatives from the court system expressed the opinion that ASFA timelines are too stringent.
- DFS staff and court system representatives cited full court dockets and scheduling issues as barriers to establishing timely permanency goals.
- County attorneys and judges suggested DFS staff receive detailed training regarding the legal aspects of child welfare, including the TPR process.

- Caseworkers and administrators stated that overall they are establishing the appropriate permanency goals.
- Caseworkers and administrators expressed the opinion that they were not consistent in developing and formally documenting concurrent plans.

According to the Statewide Assessment, concurrent planning has not been fully integrated into practice in the State.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders did not comment during the onsite CFSR on the timely establishment of initial permanency goals. However, a few stakeholders in Sweetwater County reported that DFS is not consistent in reassessing permanency goals.

Stakeholders at all sites indicated that the practice of concurrent planning is inconsistently applied across cases. Stakeholders in Laramie County and Sweetwater County reported that some families are unwilling to discuss or sign case plans if the plan is concurrent. A few stakeholders in Sweetwater County indicated that caseworkers are not effectively working concurrent goals.

Additional information about the State practice of filing timely TPR petitions and the State performance in achieving the Federal requirements for filing these petitions can be found under item 28 in this report.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 26 (65 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, concerted efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 8	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	7	8	5	20	77
Area Needing Improvement	0	4	2	6	23
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	12	7	26	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	3	8	3	14	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 71 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases, and 67 percent of applicable Laramie 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 (20 cases). Item 8 was rated as an ANI in six cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner.

Eleven of the 26 applicable cases were JS foster care cases. Of the 11 cases, 10 cases (91 percent) were rated as Strengths.

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. 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 in 77 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength.

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

The data below are presented to provide additional information about the timeliness of reunification. There are no national standards for the individual measures included in Composite 1. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite scores for Composite 1. The State's performance on Composite 1 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

Wyoming's performance for the 12-month CFSR target period on the three "timeliness" measures included in Permanency Composite 1 (Timeliness and permanency of reunification) is presented below.

- 73.6 percent of the reunifications occurred in at least 8 days but less than 12 months of the child's entry into foster care. This percentage is higher than the national median of 69.9 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 75.2 percent.

- The median length of stay in Wyoming foster care for children discharged to reunification who were in foster care for at least 8 days was 6.4 months. This length of stay is below the national median of 6.5 months but not as low as the national 25th percentile of 5.4 months. For this measure, lower scores indicate more positive performance.
- 55.4 percent of children entering foster care in the last 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage is higher than the 75th percentile of 48.4 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, reunification is the preferred outcome for children in foster care. However, when reunification is not possible, DFS policy requires that another permanent placement be developed. DFS policy emphasizes the importance of placement with relatives and developing guardianship with relatives. Policy emphasizes the need to achieve permanency in a timely manner but does not include specific timeframes for achieving reunification.

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that in 81 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the State was effective in reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives. The Statewide Assessment reports that the State has decreased in performance on this item since the 2002 CFSR and contributes the decline to the large number of methamphetamine-related placements, the high rate of incarceration for parents involved with methamphetamines, and the extensive, prolonged treatment needs of methamphetamine-addicted parents.

Stakeholder feedback on this item reported in the Statewide Assessment includes:

- Supervisors and caseworkers indicated the State has limited resources for conducting diligent searches for family members, including absent parents.
- Supervisors, caseworkers, and court representatives reported that the lack of treatment providers, especially inpatient substance abuse treatment, is a barrier to achieving reunification in rural areas.
- Stakeholders identified the lack of the therapeutic foster care homes in some areas as a barrier to achieving timely permanency.
- Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the length of time for parental substance abuse treatment, specifically methamphetamine treatment, affects the time the child is in foster care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few stakeholders commenting about reunification during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DFS is generally providing services to families for reunification and that guardianship is being explored when appropriate.

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 of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 9	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	2	3	0	5	31
Area Needing Improvement	1	6	4	11	69
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	3	9	4	16	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	11	6	24	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of the three applicable Sheridan County cases, 33 percent of the nine applicable Laramie County cases, and zero percent of the four applicable Sweetwater County cases.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in five 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 11 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The adoption was delayed because of frequent continuances granted by the courts, delays in scheduling TPR hearings, or due to other commitments, the court was unable to hear the case (two cases).
- The adoption was delayed due to the agency not filing TPR timely or not requesting a court hearing to finalize the adoption (seven cases).
- The adoption was delayed due to the necessary paperwork not being completed (one case).
- The adoption was delayed because the county/district attorney refused to file for TPR (one case).
- Adoption was the concurrent plan and was not pursued (one case).

Additional findings relevant to this item were the following:

- Adoption was finalized during the period under review in 7 of the 16 applicable cases.
- The adoption was finalized in less than 24 months from the child’s entry into foster care in two cases.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 31 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Performance on Individual Measures Included in Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions

The data below are presented to provide additional information about the timeliness of adoptions. There are no national standards for the individual measures included in Composite 2. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score for Composite 2. The State's performance on Composite 2 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

Wyoming's performance during the CFSR 12-month target period ending March 31, 2007, on the individual measures included in Permanency Composite 2 (Timeliness of adoptions) is as follows:

- 41.3 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 26.2 months. This length of stay is less than the national 25th percentile of 27.3 months. For this measure, a lower number of months equates to a higher level of performance.
- 15.2 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.
- 10.9 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 equal to the national 75th percentile of 10.9 percent.
- 78.3 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percent exceeds the national 75th percentile of 53.7 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS has specific policy for TPR, voluntary relinquishment, and for processing adoptions. DFS requires that requests for adoptive homes be made to adoption agencies and adoption exchanges for children not adopted by relatives or foster parents. Policy emphasizes the need to achieve permanency in a timely manner but does not provide specific timeframes for achieving adoption. State statute requires children be in a pre-adoptive placement for a minimum of 6 months. Additionally, children over the age of 14 are required to provide written consent to the adoption.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the number of finalized adoptions has increased over the last several years. Data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that timeliness of adoptions was rated as a Strength in 37.5 percent of applicable cases. According to the Statewide Assessment, cases were rated as an ANI during the State CFSR when:

- Delayed adoptions due to delays in court proceedings
- TPR petitions not filed in a timely manner
- Inadequate permanency planning
- Inadequate concurrent planning
- Failure to identify relatives for potential adoptive placements

According to the Statewide Assessment, the performance on the individual measure pertaining to children in foster care for 17 months who are discharged to adoption was impacted negatively by data on JS children being included in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) reporting.

According to the Statewide Assessment, field staff and representatives from the court indicated they are encouraged by the focus and progress made in achieving timely adoptions. Additionally, most stakeholders spoke favorably of the Children's Permanency Unit within the attorney general's office and believe the unit has had a positive impact on processing TPR cases.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported problems with the timely filing of TPR petitions. However, according to stakeholders, once relinquishment of parental rights or TPR has occurred, the adoption is accomplished expeditiously.

Stakeholders in Laramie County reported that in some cases, the agency waits for voluntary relinquishments rather than filing for TPR. According to stakeholders, children have not had permanency for an extended amount of time due to this practice.

According to stakeholders in Sweetwater County commenting on this item during the Onsite Review, although there have been some improvements, there are challenges to achieving timely adoptions. These challenges include:

- Continuances
- Lack of family law attorneys
- The court unwilling to consider TPR until an adoptive placement is located

According to Sweetwater County stakeholders, there is a backlog of cases in need of TPR. The State attorney general offered to assist the county attorney, but the offer was declined.

Additional information about the State practice of filing timely TPR petitions and the State performance in achieving the Federal requirements for filing these petitions can be found under item 28 in this report.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 4 (10 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining the permanency goal of OPPLA. The results are presented in the table below.

Item 10	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	2	0	0	2	50
Area Needing Improvement	0	2	0	2	50
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	2	0	4	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	8	18	10	36	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

This item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the two applicable Sheridan County cases and in 0 percent of the two applicable Laramie County cases. Sweetwater County did not have any applicable cases.

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in two 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 one case when reviewers determined the agency was not providing the child with sufficient services to assist in transitioning to independent living. Another case was rated as an ANI when the child was not in a long-term placement and reviewers determined that concerted efforts were not made to secure such a placement.

Three of the four cases reviewed for item 10 were JS foster care cases. Of the three cases, two cases (67 percent) were rated as Strengths.

Rating Determination

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 50 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 required for a rating of Strength. The item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS contracts with private providers to provide IL services. Independent and transitional living services are available to any child between the ages of 12 and 21 that has been in an out-of-home placement. Additionally, DFS provides services and support in accordance with the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act for youth at the time of emancipation. Policy requires that children in foster care over the age of 16 have an Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment and an independent/transitional living plan component to their case plan. DFS provides IL placements, financial assistance, and transitional services for children in IL arrangements.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, State CFSR round 4 data indicate that providing services, assessments, and planning for children with the permanency goal of OPPLA was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases. The Statewide Assessment reports improvement in this area and contributes the increase in performance to improved training on IL services.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS staff reported a better understanding of the needs of this population and an improvement in providing IL services. Some staff indicated that there is a need for more specialization in providing IL services. According to the Statewide Assessment, foster care youth and alumni reported issues with transitional services and educational services. However, the Statewide Assessment did not elaborate on these issues. The majority of the children interviewed who are receiving services through the JS Division reported that their educational and transitional needs have been addressed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders did not comment during the onsite CFSR on the effectiveness of the agency in assisting children achieve the goal of OPPLA.

Stakeholders in Laramie County reported that referral to and provision of IL services is inconsistent. Stakeholders reported that children with JS cases are not referred to IL services if their goal is reunification. Additionally, often IL services in child protection cases are not initiated until the youth is 17 and then services end when the youth exits foster care (item 35 and item 36 contain additional information about IL services in Wyoming).

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					
	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	8	15	4	27	67.5
Partially Achieved	2	5	6	13	32.5
Not Achieved or Addressed	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0	

Status of Permanency Outcome 2

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 67.5 percent of cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 80 percent of Sheridan County cases, 75 percent of Laramie County cases, and 40 percent of Sweetwater County cases. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its first CFSR, which was conducted in 2002, and was required to address the outcome in its PIP.

Key Concerns From the 2002 CFSR

In the 2002 CFSR, the item pertaining to proximity of foster care placement (item 11) was rated as a Strength. All other items incorporated in this outcome were rated as ANIs. Key concerns identified in the 2002 CFSR were:

- DFS was not consistent in placing sibling together.
- DFS was not consistent in seeking relatives for placement.
- Visitation of children in foster care with parents and siblings was not consistent.
- Although DFS notified Tribes when a Native American child with a known Tribal affiliation was placed in foster care, the question of a child's possible Native American background was not routinely explored at entry into foster care.

To address these concerns, Wyoming implemented the following PIP strategies:

- Developed policy to allow for larger sibling groups to reside in one family foster home with approval from a district manager
- Strengthened policy regarding parent visitation with children and required a visitation plan be developed as part of the case plan and documented in the case file
- Developed an intake assessment process that gathered information regarding cultural and diversity issues in order to develop case plans and to provide culturally competent services
- Incorporated relative search into the intake process
- Engaged in efforts to recruit African American, Native American, and Hispanic foster parents
- Strengthened policy and training on the importance of relative placement
- Developed visitation policy that prescribed a process for creating an environment conducive to strengthening the relationship between child and parents

Wyoming met the goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

In the 2008 CFSR, the item pertaining to placement with siblings (item 12) was rated as a Strength. All other items incorporated into this outcome were rated as ANIs.

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

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 11 was applicable for 35 (87.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, contact with parents was not considered to be in the child’s best interests, and/or parents were deceased or their whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child’s most current foster care setting was in close proximity to the child’s parents or close relatives. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 11	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	9	18	4	31	89
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	4	4	11
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	9	18	8	35	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	2	2	5	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of applicable Sheridan County and Laramie County cases and 50 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases.

Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 28 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 (three cases).

This item was rated as an ANI in four cases when the distance between the child's family and the foster care placement were a barrier to reunification efforts and was not necessary to meet the child's needs. In one of these cases, DFS determined that a child's needs could be met within a placement facility in the community from which the child was removed and where the parents resided. However, the court overruled recommendation of DFS and required the agency to place the child in a facility several hours away from the county in which the parents resided.

Twelve of the 35 applicable cases for item 11 were JS foster care cases. Nine of these cases (75 percent) were rated as Strengths.

Rating Determination

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 89 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that DFS had made diligent efforts to ensure that children were placed in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives or that were necessary to meet special needs. This percentage is lower than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires that counties exhaust all county resources prior to placing children outside the county. State CFSR results indicate that children placed in out-of-home care via JS are more likely to be placed outside of their community than protective services children.

Data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that children were placed in close proximity to their parents in 100 percent of the applicable cases reviewed.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the lack of placement resources limits the State’s ability to maintain children within some communities. Additionally, the lack of specialized treatment services in many rural communities also limits the ability to maintain children with specialized mental health and/or substance abuse treatment needs in their community.

According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders reported that DFS does “a good job” of maintaining children within their communities and in close proximity to their families. DFS staff acknowledged that placing children within their communities allows for effective case management. Stakeholders in rural communities reported that children are sometimes placed outside of the community in order to receive specialized care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that caseworkers attempt to place children in close proximity to their families.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

 X Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 12 was applicable for 20 (50 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not have a sibling in foster care at any time during the period under review. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether the separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 12	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	4	11	5	20	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	11	5	20	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	9	5	20	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases reviewed.

Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 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 interests of the child or was necessary because the child or one of the siblings had special placement needs.

Rating Determination

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 100 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever possible and appropriate. This exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires that sibling groups be placed together unless it is not in the best interests of the children. State CFSR round 4 reviewers rated this area as a Strength in 95 percent of the applicable cases. The Statewide Assessment indicates the State has made improvements in this area. The improvements are credited to training on the importance of placing sibling together and changes in policy that allow large sibling groups to remain together.

According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders reported that DFS makes every effort to place siblings together when appropriate. When siblings are not placed together, DFS makes concerted efforts to maintain frequent visitation and contact between the siblings. DFS staff indicated that it continues to be difficult, at times, to located foster parents that can/will accept large sibling groups. However, recruitment strategies and improved foster parent training and support are diminishing this barrier.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that concerted efforts are made to place siblings together.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 13 was applicable for 36 (90 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: 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 visitation with a parent was considered to not be in the best interests of the child. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine 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 whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 13	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	8	12	4	24	67
Area Needing Improvement	2	5	5	12	33
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	17	9	36	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	3	1	4	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

The item was rated as a Strength in 80 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 71 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 44 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases.

Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 24 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 12 cases when reviewers determined the agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with mothers, siblings, and/or fathers.

Twelve of the 36 applicable cases for item 13 were JS foster care cases. Six of the 12 cases (50 percent) were rated as Strengths for this item.

The Onsite Review findings indicate that DFS is inconsistent in providing travel reimbursement to families when the children are placed out of their community. Additionally, there were not always written or formal visitation plans, children placed in facilities outside of their home community did not always have visits with their parents, and there were no supervised visitation services with flexible hours for families. Reviewers reported that in a number of cases, 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.

Visitation Frequency for Children in Foster Care (during the period under review)	Mother	Father	Siblings in Foster Care
Visits occurred at least once a week	12 (37.5%)	2 (10%)	1 (17%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	6 (19%)	1 (5%)	2 (33%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	5 (16%)	3 (15%)	1 (17%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	6 (19%)	7 (35%)	2 (33%)
Visits did not occur	3 (9%)	7 (35%)	0 (0%)
Total Cases	32	20	6

Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 67 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the family. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires that a written visitation plan be developed for every child in foster care. The visitation plan is to be developed with the family during a family partnership meeting, when appropriate, and updated throughout the life of the case. The preferred location of visitation, according to policy, is the home of the parent. Policy also requires DFS to assist with transportation issues when appropriate. According to the Statewide Assessment, visitation can only be denied when ordered by the court or when safety risks are present.

Barriers to visitation with parents and siblings are:

- Staff shortages
- Children not placed in close proximity to parents
- Not engaging absent parents in case planning and visitation
- The relatively high percentage of children in placement with at least one incarcerated parent

Data from the State CFSR round 4 rated visitation with parents and siblings as a Strength in 79.5 percent of the applicable cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, some external stakeholders questioned the necessity of frequent visitation between children and the parents that had abused them. DFS staff in counties with high caseloads reported that it is often difficult to find the time to arrange, supervise, and transport families for visitation. These staff members stated that it would be beneficial if the State employed additional family assistance caseworkers for the purpose of transporting and supervising family visitation.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DFS tries to ensure parental visitation. Sweetwater County stakeholders reported that visitation does not occur with incarcerated parents.

Item 14. Preserving connections

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 14 was applicable in 39 (97.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. One case was not applicable for this item because the child entered foster care as a newborn and the whereabouts of the parents were unknown. 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 his or her neighborhood, community, heritage, extended family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care. The results of the assessment are provided in the table below.

Item 14	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	10	18	6	34	87
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	4	5	13
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	19	10	39	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	1	0	1	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 95 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 60 percent of the applicable Sweetwater 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 contacts, visits, and/or placements with relatives) (29 cases).
- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with the child’s religious or cultural heritage (five 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.) (17 cases).
- The agency explored connections, but none were found (three cases).
- The agency ensured that the child’s connection with critical service providers was preserved (three cases).

Item 14 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to extended family (two cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections to school (one case).
- The agency did not explore connections (one case).
- There was no evidence that an inquiry had ever been made with the family about whether the child had Native American ancestry to determine whether the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) apply (one case).

Twelve of the 39 applicable cases for item 14 were JS foster care cases. Ten of the 12 cases (83 percent) were rated as Strengths for this item.

Rating Determination

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 87 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 percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in Wyoming’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, policy requires DFS to meet the spiritual, cultural, and emotional needs of children in out-of-home placements and includes specific guidance for placement providers. Policy also includes procedural requirements for ICWA cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS requires caseworkers, administrators, managers, and supervisors to participate in either the “Undoing Racism” training developed by the Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond or the “Knowing Who You Are” training developed by Casey Family Programs. These training programs are designed to raise awareness regarding the influence of racial issues in decision-making and service provision.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, State CFSR round 4 data indicate that preserving connections was rated as a Strength in 93 percent of the applicable cases. Issues identified during the State CFSR process include identifying Native American children and exploring Tribal affiliations at the time of placement and maintaining children’s connections with extended family members.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the WYCRP 2006 Annual Report stated that ICWA requirements were not met in all cases reviewed and recommended that DFS caseworkers receive training on ICWA.

External stakeholders stated that ICWA cases, although infrequent, are handled properly. DFS staff acknowledged that they do not always conduct thorough assessments of Native American heritage or Tribal affiliation. Stakeholders stated that DFS is effective in maintaining important connections for children in placement. However, stakeholders report that due to the transient nature of many families, it is often difficult to identify children’s important connections.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that DFS attempts to preserve connections for children. Additionally, stakeholders reported that generally caseworkers inquire about Native American heritage for each child. According to Laramie County caseworkers, ICWA inquiries are on most forms completed for children in foster care.

Item 15. Relative placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 15 was applicable for 28 (70 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period or the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 15	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	5	11	6	22	79
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	4	6	21
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	12	10	28	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	8	0	12	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 92 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, 83 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, and 60 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases.

Item 15 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed with relatives (six cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives when applicable (16 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 (three cases).
- The agency made diligent efforts to search for maternal relatives but not paternal relatives (two cases).
- The agency had not made diligent efforts to search for known maternal relatives and a diligent search for paternal relatives was not required (one case).

Three of the 28 applicable cases for item 15 were JS foster care cases. One of the three cases (33 percent) was rated as a Strength for this item.

Rating Determination

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 79 percent of cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires that caseworkers conduct a diligent search for relatives for children in the custody of DFS. DFS must make diligent efforts to identify and contact relatives within 60 days of the initial placement and continue the search until permanency for the child is achieved. Furthermore, policy requires that relative placements be given priority when a child is removed from the home. Policy allows for placement with close family friends or non-blood relatives when it is in the best interests of the child. DFS considers relative/kinship families as temporary and permanent resources. Policy states that, when appropriate, biological parents should be active participants in placement decisions for their children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State CFSR round 4 data indicate that relative placements were rated a Strength in 89 percent of applicable cases.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders reported that DFS makes placement with relatives a priority when making placement decisions. DFS staff reported that conducting ongoing diligent searches consumes a substantial amount of time. Therefore, processing intakes and completing investigations often take priority.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few stakeholders at the three sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DFS makes concerted efforts to seek relatives as potential placement resources. According to Laramie County stakeholders, child support resources are utilized for relative and absent parent searches. Additionally, Laramie County stakeholders reported that the county has access to Accurant, a family locator service, but it is not used.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 16 was applicable for 33 (82.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child’s best interests throughout the period under review, or both parents were deceased. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers through efforts other than arranging visitation. The results of this assessment are provided in the table below.

Item 16	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	7	11	1	19	58
Area Needing Improvement	2	5	7	14	42
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	9	16	8	33	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	4	2	7	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	

This item was rated as a Strength in 78 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 69 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 12.5 percent of the applicable Sweetwater 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	With Mother	With Father	Total
Encourage the parent's participation in school activities and case conferences, attendance at doctors' appointments with the child, or engagement in the child's after school or sports activities	18	9	27
Provide or arrange for transportation or provide funds for transportation so that the parent could attend the child's special activities and doctors' appointments	11	3	14
Provide opportunities for therapeutic situations to help the parent and child strengthen their relationship	21	8	29
Encourage the foster parents to provide mentoring or serve as role models to the parent to assist her/him in appropriate parenting	9	5	14
Encourage and facilitate contact with incarcerated parents (when appropriate) or with parents not living in close proximity to the child	5	4	9

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

- The agency made concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with the mother but did not make concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with the father (five cases).
- The agency made concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with the father or the father was not applicable for assessment, and the agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with the mother (four cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with either parent (five cases).

Twelve of the 33 applicable cases for item 16 were JS foster care cases. Five of the 12 cases (42 percent) were rated as Strengths for this item.

Rating Determination

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 58 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires staff to encourage parents to participate in activities and events that are important to the child and family, such as school-related activities, medical appointments, and counseling appointments. Additionally, policy requires staff to encourage parents, when appropriate, to assume responsibility for managing these activities. Policy also

requires that caseworkers create opportunities for parents (including absent parents), siblings, and children to bond and have meaningful interaction during visitation. Contact also may be maintained through letters, phone calls, and other forms of communication with family members and other people who are important to the child.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State CFSR round 4 data indicate that maintaining the parent and child relationship was rated as a Strength in 81 percent of applicable cases. Cases reviewed during the State CFSR indicated that caseworkers are not engaging and involving absent parents, especially fathers; are having difficulties facilitating communication with incarcerated parents; and are not providing transportation to parents.

According to the Statewide Assessment, external stakeholders stated that funding is needed for:

- Intensive visitation between children and their families
- Mentoring programs for parents and children
- Providing transportation for parents

Internal stakeholders reported that in some areas there are not enough family assistance caseworkers to provide transportation to families for participation in activities. Additionally, internal stakeholders indicated that it is often difficult to engage incarcerated parents, especially if the parent is incarcerated a long distance from the child.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders in Sweetwater County commenting on this item during the onsite review reported that parents can attend doctor's appointments and school events. There were no other stakeholder comments pertaining to this item during the onsite CFSR.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well-Being Outcome 1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	10	16	6	32	49.2
Partially Achieved	6	9	4	19	29.2
Not Achieved or Addressed	1	6	7	14	21.5
Total Applicable Cases	17	31	17	65	

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in only 49.2 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. This outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 59 percent of Sheridan County cases, 52 percent of Laramie County cases, and 35 percent of Sweetwater County cases. The outcome was found to be substantially achieved in 55 percent (22 cases) of the 40 foster care cases and in 40 percent (10 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its first CFSR, which was conducted in 2002, and was required to address the outcome in its PIP.

Key Concerns From the 2002 CFSR

In the 2002 CFSR, all items incorporated in this outcome were rated as ANIs. Key findings from the 2002 CFSR were:

- DFS was not effective in meeting the assessment and service needs of parents, children, and foster parents. Additionally, according to stakeholders, DFS was not adequately addressing the treatment or placement needs of older children entering foster care as CHINS petitions or through juvenile justice.
- DFS was not consistent in involving parents or children in the case planning process.
- The frequency and quality of DFS caseworker contacts with children and parents were not sufficient to ensure children’s safety or well-being or promote attainment of case goals.

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

- Developed a comprehensive intake procedure
- Implemented family partnerships
- Implemented a family assessment tool
- Developed policy describing requirements for frequency and quality of contacts with child and parents
- Developed processes to monitor frequency and quality of contacts

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

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

Similar to the 2002 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 and discussed below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 17 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents and 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. These needs are addressed in later items. The results of this assessment are provided in the table below.

Item 17	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	12	17	7	36	55
Area Needing Improvement	5	14	10	29	45
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

The item was rated as a Strength in 71 percent of Sheridan County cases, 55 percent of Laramie County cases, and 41 percent of Sweetwater County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 55 percent (22 cases) of the 40 foster care cases and in 56 percent (14 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases.

Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 36 cases when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met. Item 17 was rated as an ANI in 29 cases when reviewers determined that there was either inadequate assessment of needs or inadequate services to meet identified needs. Additionally, in four in-home cases rated as an ANI, reviewers reported that assessments were not completed on all of the children in the home but focused generally on the child who was the subject of the abuse report

Fifteen of the 65 cases reviewed for this item were JS cases. Seven of the 15 cases (47 percent) were rated as Strengths. The three JS in-home services cases were all rated as Strengths, and 4 of the 12 JS foster care cases (33 percent) were rated as Strengths.

Specific case review findings for item 17 are shown in the table below.

Target Person for Needs Assessment and Services	Foster Care		In-Home Services	
	Yes	Total	Yes	Total
Mother's needs assessed and met?	21 (62%)	34	21 (84%)	25
Father's needs assessed and met?	18 (55%)	33	10 (53%)	19
Child's needs assessed and met?	35 (87.5%)	40	18 (72%)	25
Foster parents' needs assessed and met?	21 (81%)	26		

Rating Determination

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 55 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the State had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the needs and services of families are assessed through formal and informal processes. Information assessments occur through interviews and contacts with the family during the intake, investigation, and case planning processes. Formal assessments of a family's strengths and needs are completed via the required family assessment and family partnership meetings.

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 show that needs assessment and the provision of appropriate services to meet those needs was rated as a Strength in 57 percent of applicable cases. Reports from the State CFSR suggest that the majority of the cases rated as an ANI were due to caseworkers not assessing the needs of absent parents, primarily fathers. Additionally, State CFSR findings indicate children in out of home placement receive better assessments and services than those remaining in their homes.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, external stakeholders expressed the opinion that DFS uses a family-centered, strengths-based approach to identifying needs and providing services to families. Additionally, stakeholders stated DFS has improved the way it assesses the needs of families. However, according to stakeholders, there are still wait lists for some services and gaps in the availability of services in some communities, including outpatient and residential substance abuse treatment.

DFS staff indicated that DFS has become more family-centered. Additionally, staff expressed the opinion that the agency has become more effective in assessing family's needs. Some caseworkers reported that informal assessments provide better information for developing case plans than the formal family assessment tool.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders in Sheridan County and Sweetwater County commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the needs of parents, children, and foster parents are assessed by the caseworkers on a regular basis. Additionally, some stakeholders reported that the foster care coordinators assess needs of and provide support to foster parents in their areas. However, Laramie County stakeholders commenting on this item indicated that the needs of foster parents are not assessed nor are foster parents supported by DFS. Additionally, some Sweetwater County stakeholders reported that DFS does not assess the needs or provide services to incarcerated parents. Stakeholders also commented on the availability of services. These comments are included under item 35 and item 36 in the systemic factors section.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 18 was applicable for 60 (92 percent) of the cases. A case was not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were not involved with the child in any way and the child was too young or had cognitive delays or other conditions that were barriers to participation in case planning. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents and children (when age appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process and if not, whether their involvement was

contrary to the child’s best interests. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent or child had participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 18	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	11	14	8	33	55
Area Needing Improvement	6	13	8	27	45
Total Applicable Cases	17	27	16	60	
Not Applicable Cases	0	4	1	5	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 65 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 52 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 50 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 61 percent (22 cases) of the 36 applicable foster care cases and in only 46 percent (11 cases) of the 24 applicable in-home services cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in the case planning process. The item was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process. In some cases, there were no case plans completed during the period under review. In other cases, case plans were completed by the case manager, but there was no parent signature.

Fifteen of the 60 applicable cases for item 18 were JS cases. Eight of the 15 cases (53 percent) were rated as Strengths for this item. The three JS in-home services cases were all rated as Strengths. Five of the 12 JS foster care cases (42 percent) were rated as Strengths.

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 was inconsistent. However, mothers (79 percent) and children (67 percent) were more likely to be involved in case planning than were fathers (56 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.

Involvement in Case Planning	Foster Care		In-Home Services	
	Yes	Total	Yes	Total
Mother involved in case planning?	24 (73%)	33	21 (87.5%)	24
Father involved in case planning?	20 (61%)	33	9 (47%)	19
Child (when age appropriate) involved in case planning?	20 (83%)	24	9 (47%)	19

Rating Determination

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 55 percent of 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 also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires that a family-centered, strength-based case plan be developed with the family and their selected support team during a family partnership meeting or prior to the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State CFSR round 4 reviewers determined that the involvement of children and their families in the case planning process was a Strength in 57 percent of applicable cases. Observations from the State CFSR review indicate that not involving absent parents in the case planning process has had a significant impact on lack of improvement in performance on this item. Findings from the State CFSR process indicate that families that have a child in an out-of-home placement are more involved and engaged in the case planning process.

According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders reported that generally families participate in the case planning process. External stakeholders in most communities were of the opinion that family partnerships, when used, are effective in engaging families in the case planning process. However, not all communities believe that family partnerships and MDTs are compatible.

DFS staff report that their ability to engage families in case planning has improved. Additionally, staff stated that family partnership meetings are an effective way to engage families. However, according to staff, the meetings are resource intensive and are duplicative if not integrated into existing processes.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that CPS and JS caseworkers are generally consistent in inviting parents to family partnership/case planning meetings. Additionally, parents and community partners are being invited to MDT meetings. A few stakeholders reported that absent, noncustodial parents are not always included in the case planning process.

Reports on the involvement of children in case planning varied among stakeholders. The majority of the stakeholders indicated that children are not involved in case planning in CPS cases but are involved in case planning for JS cases. A few stakeholders reported that children are involved in the case planning process in both program areas.

Stakeholders reported that case plans are to be completed within 60 days of a child being placed in foster care. In-home services cases are to be completed within 30 days of opening the case for services. The family assessment, family partnership meetings, MDT meetings, and the JS PDRs are processes by which strengths and needs of the family are assessed. Case plans are then created in the family partnership meetings and revised, at times, in subsequent MDT meetings.

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

Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 19	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	13	24	8	45	69
Area Needing Improvement	4	7	9	20	31
Not Applicable	0	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

The item was rated as a Strength in 77 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, 76 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, and 47 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 82.5 percent (33 cases) of the 40 foster care cases and in 48 percent (12 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 (11 cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits with children was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, although when visits did occur, they were substantive (two 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 (five cases).
- Caseworker visits did not occur during the period under review (two cases).

In addition, case reviewers noted that in two of the cases rated as an ANI, there was a long period of time when the agency caseworker did not visit the child:

- Caseworkers visited the child once during the 6 months the case was open (one case).
- The caseworker did not visit the child for the first 3 months the case was opened (one case).

Fifteen of the 65 cases reviewed for this item were JS cases. Eleven of the 15 JS cases (73 percent) were rated as Strengths. The three JS in-home services cases were rated as Strengths. Of the 12 JS foster care cases, 8 (67 percent) were rated as Strengths.

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

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits with Child (during the period under review)	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Services Cases
Visits occurred at least once a week	5 (12.5%)	3 (12%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	11 (27.5%)	4 (16%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	19 (47.5%)	9 (36%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	5 (12.5%)	7 (28%)
Visits did not occur	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Total Cases	40	25

Rating Determination

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 69 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and quality. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy states that a caseworker will visit children in their residence at least monthly. The caseworker is to address case planning with the family and issues pertaining to safety, permanency, and the well-being of the children. Additionally, policy requires that the caseworker and the child meet privately in order to address the child's safety and address any other needs.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that caseworker visits with children was determined to be a Strength in 85 percent of the applicable cases. State CFSR data indicate that children in foster care receive more visits of higher quality from caseworkers than children served in their homes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS has seen improvements in the frequency of visitation with children. The improvement is attributed to new policy requirements, routine monitoring, and an increase in the number of caseworkers. However, the rate of children in foster care visited every month during Federal FY 2007 was 72 percent and only 42 percent of these children were visited in their residence.

According to the Statewide Assessment, external stakeholders reported that the frequency of face-to-face contact was adequate in most cases. Stakeholders in Cheyenne indicated that more intensive visitation for CPS cases is needed, especially in-home services cases. DFS staff stated that the focus on face-to-face contacts has been positive; however, the resources involved in maintaining high levels of visitation, especially for out-of-county placements, has limited the time that is available for other tasks such as conducting diligent searches and organizing and conducting family partnership meetings.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item indicated that quality and quantity of caseworker contacts with children varies based on the caseworker. Barriers to face-to-face contacts included distance to placements and inclement weather.

Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 20 was applicable for 60 (92 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.

Item 20	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	12	16	3	31	52
Area Needing Improvement	5	12	12	29	48
Total Applicable Cases	17	28	15	60	
Not Applicable Cases	0	3	2	5	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

This item was rated as a Strength in 71 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 57 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 20 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 51 percent (18 cases) of the 35 applicable foster care cases compared to 52 percent (13 cases) of the 25 in-home services cases.

Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 31 cases when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. Item 20 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:

- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency or quality (10 cases).
- Visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency, but not quality (3 cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency or quality (10 cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency, although when they did occur they were of sufficient quality (1 case).
- Visits with the father were of sufficient frequency, but not quality (1 case).
- There were no visits with father (14 cases).
- There were no visits with mother (4 cases).

Fifteen of the 60 applicable cases reviewed for item 20 were JS cases. Eight of the 15 cases (53 percent) were rated as Strengths. The three JS in-home services cases were all rated as Strengths. Five of the 12 JS foster care cases (42 percent) were rated as Strengths for this item.

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

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits with Parents	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Visits occurred at least once a week	4 (12 %)	1 (4%)	3 (12%)	1 (6%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	4 (12 %)	0 (0%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	16 (48%)	7 (27%)	11 (44%)	3 (17%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	6 (18 %)	12 (46%)	7 (28%)	6 (33%)
Visits did not occur	3 (9%)	6 (23%)	1 (4%)	8 (44%)
Not Applicable	7	14	0	7
Total Applicable Cases	33	26	25	18

Additional findings were the following:

- For the 33 foster care cases and the 25 in-home cases for which visits with mothers were applicable, there were 17 cases (29 percent) in which these visits occurred less than once a month or not at all.
- For the 26 foster care cases and the 18 in-home cases for which visits with fathers were applicable, there were 32 cases (73 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 ANI. In 52 percent of the 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 required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires at least monthly face-to-face visits with the biological parents in the family home to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency, and the well-being of the child, and case planning, service delivery, and goal achievement for the family/parents. If, due to unusual circumstances, monthly face-to-face contact is not possible, monthly telephone contact is made.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 show that caseworker visits with parents was rated as a Strength in 62 percent of the applicable cases. Reports from the State CFSR suggest that the majority of cases that were rated an ANI during the State CFSR round 4 were due to lack of caseworker visits with noncustodial parents. Additionally, State CFSR data

indicate that contacts with parents whose children are in foster care are significantly higher (83 percent), compared to parents receiving in-home services (68 percent).

External stakeholders, according to the Statewide Assessment, reported that DFS makes concerted efforts to contact parents and that in most cases the frequency and quality of contacts is adequate to address case plan goals. Stakeholders in Cheyenne expressed the opinion that more intensive visitation is needed for child protection cases, especially in-home services cases.

DFS staff reported that the frequency and quality of parental contact has improved. However, staff did indicate that there are difficulties in contacting and involving absent parents.

Stakeholder Interview Information

According to stakeholders in Laramie County commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR, parents are not always seen monthly. Additionally, stakeholders reported that travel during the winter is difficult in some areas of the State.

Well-Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	14	20	13	47	97.9
Partially Achieved	0	1	0	1	2.1
Not Achieved	0	0	0	0	
Total Applicable Cases	14	21	13	48	
Not Applicable Cases	3	10	4	17	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

Status of Well-Being Outcome 2

Wyoming achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 97.9 percent of the cases reviewed. This exceeds the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of applicable Sheridan and Sweetwater County cases and in 95 percent of applicable Laramie County cases. The outcome was substantially achieved in 100 percent of the 37 applicable foster care cases and in 91 percent (10 cases) of the 11

applicable in-home services cases. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its first CFSR, conducted in 2002 and was required to address the outcome in its PIP.

Key Concerns From the 2002 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2002 CFSR was that DFS was not consistent in assessing children’s educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs. To address these concerns in the PIP, Wyoming developed an educational assessment that was integrated into WYCAPS. Wyoming met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

The key findings of the 2008 CFSR indicate that DFS adequately addressed the educational needs of children.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 21 was applicable for 48 (74 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if any of the following applied: (1) children were not of school age; or (2) children in in-home cases did not have service needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of this assessment are provided below.

Item 21	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	14	20	13	47	98
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	0	1	2
Total Applicable Cases	14	21	13	48	
Not Applicable	3	10	4	17	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

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 one in-home case due to the lack of ongoing assessments of

educational needs or services to address educational needs even when there was clear evidence that the children were experiencing school-related problems.

Fifteen of the 48 applicable cases reviewed for Item 21 were JS cases. The 15 cases (100 percent) were rated as a Strength for this item.

Rating Determination

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of a Strength. In 98 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children. This percentage exceeds 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, educational needs of children are identified through the family strengths and needs assessment process and addressed in the case plan. Data from the State CFSR round 4 indicate that DFS's effectiveness in providing children in its care with appropriate educational services was rated as a Strength in 92 percent of the applicable cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the majority of stakeholders indicated that educational needs of children are assessed and addressed. External stakeholders expressed the opinion that educational needs are addressed during MDT meetings and the case planning process. Additionally, stakeholders reported that the relationship between DFS and the school system is generally effective. However, some DFS staff reported that DFS and the school system do not always have effective communication.

New caseworkers are provided training on the importance of assessing and addressing educational needs.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders in Sheridan County and Sweetwater County and at the State level commenting on this item during the Onsite Review indicated that the majority of caseworkers are responsive to children's educational needs. Additionally, stakeholders in Sheridan County reported that foster parents participate in school activities.

Stakeholders in Laramie County reported that educational representatives need to be more involved with the planning process for children in out-of-home placement, including participating in MDTs, having input into the case plan, and being notified of placement disruptions.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	16	22	10	48	78.7
Partially Achieved	1	4	3	8	13.1
Not Achieved or Addressed	0	2	3	5	8.2
Total Applicable Cases	17	28	16	61	
Not Applicable	0	3	1	4	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3

Wyoming did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 78.7 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 94 percent of applicable Sheridan County cases, 79 percent of applicable Laramie County cases and 62.5 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 79 percent (31 cases) of the 39 applicable foster care cases and in 77 percent (17 cases) of the 22 applicable in-home services cases. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its first CFSR, conducted in 2002 and was required to address the outcome in its PIP.

Key Concerns From the 2002 CFSR

In the 2002 CFSR both items incorporated in this outcome were rated as ANIs. The 2002 CFSR findings indicated the following:

- DFS was not consistently effective in assessing and meeting children’s physical or mental health needs.
- Some children in foster care were not receiving health screenings on a routine basis.
- Mental health and substance abuse services for children were limited across the State.

To address these concerns, Wyoming implemented the following PIP strategies:

- Strengthened policy regarding addressing physical health needs of children
- Developed a standardized process for monitoring the health needs of children in out-of-home care
- Created an assessment process that includes mental health domains and process of referral when further evaluation is needed

Wyoming met the goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP period.

Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR

Similar to the 2002 CFSR, the physical and dental health of children (item 22) and the mental health of children (item 23) were rated as ANIs 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

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 22 was applicable for 49 (75 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.

Item 22	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	12	22	8	42	86
Area Needing Improvement	1	2	4	7	14
Total Applicable Cases	13	24	12	49	
Not Applicable Cases	4	7	5	16	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

This item was rated as a Strength in 92 percent of applicable Sheridan and Laramie County cases, compared to 67 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. The item was rated as a strength in 90 percent (35 cases) of the 39 applicable foster care cases and 70 percent (7 cases) of the 10 applicable in-home cases.

Item 22 was rated as a Strength 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 reviewers determined one of the following:

- There was no indication in the case record of any medical assessments or services even when a case came to the agency because of medical concerns (one case).
- There was no documentation of physical or dental health needs being addressed or met (four cases).
- Medical needs were assessed and identified, but services were not provided (one case).
- Medical needs were assessed and addressed, but dental needs were neither assessed nor addressed (one case).

Fourteen of the 49 applicable cases for this item were JS cases. Twelve of the 14 JS cases (86 percent) were rated as Strengths. The item was rated as a Strength in the two applicable JS in-home service cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 10 (83 percent) of the 12 JS foster care cases.

Rating Determination

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency was effective in assessing and meeting the physical health needs of children in 86 percent of the cases. This percentage is lower than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires an Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) assessment be completed within 30 days of a child's placement unless there is documentation that an EPSDT has been completed within the previous 12 months. Furthermore, policy requires that dental exams be conducted at least every 6 months and eye examinations and routine medical care be obtained as frequently as needed. Caseworkers are required to notify parents of their children's medical needs and obtain consent for medical care from parents when possible.

State CFSR reviewers during round 4 rated DFS's performance in the area of physical health to be a Strength in 91 percent of the applicable cases reviewed. Additionally, findings from the State CFSR process indicate that children in foster care are more likely to have their medical needs assessed than children who remain in their homes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, observations from the State CFSR indicated that the number of health-care providers, especially dentists, who will accept Medicaid, has increased in recent years, thus improving the availability of services in many communities.

Stakeholders, according to the Statewide Assessment, reported that although there continue to be gaps in medical services in some communities, overall service availability has improved. Specific gaps, according to these stakeholders, include the lack of health-care providers in some communities, especially dentists, who accept Medicaid.

DFS staff expressed the opinion that documentation of health needs and services has improved.

Foster parents, especially those with large numbers of children, commented that it is often difficult to transport children to multiple appointments with multiple providers and that streamlining of the process regarding transportation and scheduling would be helpful.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion the DFS is effective in assessing and meeting the physical and medical needs, including dental, of children receiving foster care services.

Stakeholders reported that dental and medical services are available. However, stakeholders reported that finding medical and dental providers that accept Medicaid is limited in some areas.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 23 was applicable for 52 (80 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs, or if there were no mental health concerns. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 23	Sheridan County	Laramie County	Sweetwater County	Total	Percent
Strength	17	16	10	43	83
Area Needing Improvement	0	5	4	9	17
Total Applicable Cases	17	21	14	52	
Not Applicable Cases	0	10	3	13	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	

The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Sheridan County cases, 76 percent of applicable Laramie County cases, and 71 percent of applicable Sweetwater County cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 85 percent (28 cases) of the 33 applicable foster care cases and in 79 percent (15 cases) of the 19 applicable in-home services cases.

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

- Mental health needs were not assessed or addressed in four in-home cases and two foster care cases.
- Mental health needs were assessed but were not met in three foster care cases.

Fifteen of the 52 applicable cases were JS service cases. Thirteen of the 15 JS cases (87 percent) were rated as Strengths. The 3 JS in-home services cases were rated as Strengths, and 10 of the 12 JS foster care cases (83 percent) were rated as Strengths.

Ratings Determination

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of an ANI. In 83 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 Wyoming's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from the State CFSR round 4 on DFS's effectiveness in assessing the mental health needs of children and providing appropriate services was rated as a Strength in 91 percent of the applicable cases.

Wyoming was awarded a Systems of Care grant in 2005 that, according to the State CFSR findings, has increased communication and coordination of services between DFS and other agencies, including mental health, and increased the use of wraparound services to prevent out-of-home placement.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the most recent WYCRP annual reports identified the need to evaluate the use of the CHINS statutes. The report indicates that CHINS statutes are not uniformly applied, which results in some children not receiving appropriate mental health treatment. According to the Statewide Assessment, some children with significant mental health and behavioral issues enter the child welfare system, either through CPS or JS, but would be better served through an entry into the State's mental health system which utilizes a mental health case management model.

According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders reported that the availability of mental health services, even in rural communities, has improved in the last several years. However, the availability of substance abuse treatment for adolescents continues to be an issue in some communities.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The majority of the stakeholders who commented on this item during the Onsite Review indicated a shortage of mental health services available for children across the State. Stakeholders reported a shortage of mental health providers, including child psychologists and child psychiatrists. The quality of the services available, according to stakeholders, varies.

SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

This section of the CFSR Final Report provides information regarding the State’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors examined during the CFSR. Information on the items included under each systemic factor comes from the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders held during the onsite CFSR. Additional information may come from other Federal reports or assessments.

Each item included in a systemic factor reflects a key Federal program requirement relevant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) for that systemic factor. The overall rating for the systemic factors is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor. For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” with that factor (i.e., a score of 3 or 4) or “not in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 1 or 2). Specific requirements for each rating are shown in the table below.

Rating the Systemic Factor

Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
1	2	3	4
None of the CFSP or program requirements is in place.	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.	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.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

It should be noted that ratings for the items included in each systemic factor are not based on single comments from an individual stakeholder; however, these comments are included in the report when they provide important insights or clarification on the State’s performance on a particular systemic factor.

If a State is not in substantial conformity with a particular systemic factor, then that factor must be addressed in the State’s PIP. For each systemic factor, information is provided about the State’s performance in its first CFSR as well as in the current 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.

I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	<u>4X</u>

Status of Statewide Information System

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2002 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its PIP.

Specific findings in the 2008 CFSR for the item included in this systemic factor and the reason for the item rating are presented below.

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

 X **Strength** _____ **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 24 is rated as a Strength because the State is operating a statewide information system, WYCAPS, that can readily identify the legal status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for every child who is in foster care in the State or was in foster care within the immediately preceding 12 months. WYCAPS functions as a case management system for placement and in-home services cases and is accessible to the two Federally-recognized Tribes in the State.

This item also was rated as a Strength in the 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State maintains an automated child welfare information system known as WYCAPS. DFS policy provides specific guidelines and timeframes for data entry.

WYCAPS, according to the Statewide Assessment, contains a functioning case management system for both placement and in-home services cases that is available by office managers, supervisors, and caseworkers for both CPS and JS within DFS.

The Statewide Assessment describes WYCAPS as a longitudinal database that can readily identify the demographics, location, and goals for every child in foster care. Additional information collected and entered into WYCAPS includes the following:

- Demographics
- Allegations of child abuse and neglect
- Assessments
- Placement resource information
- Fiscal data related to service provision
- Foster parent certification
- Staff visits with the children in placement

WYCAPS has the ability to produce case-specific and aggregate reports by county, region/district, and program affiliation.

Longitudinal reports available to field managers, supervisors, State office staff, and DFS administrators include:

- Placement trends
- Title IV-E penetration rates
- Face-to-face contacts with children in placement
- Lengths of time in stay
- Length to adoption
- Case contacts
- Fiscal data
- Intake flow

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the three review sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that WYCAPS captures important information related to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children who are in foster care or in-home, including their location, demographic information, legal status, and case goals. Most stakeholders identified the reports generated by WYCAPS as beneficial.

Stakeholders in Sweetwater County referenced the caseload report, the placement report, and the face-to-face visit report as the most helpful. Additionally, stakeholders in Sweetwater County commented on the usefulness of Citrix which pulls information from

WYCAPS and provides multiple useful management reports. All reports can be generated for both the child welfare and juvenile services populations.

Stakeholders at the State level reported also that WYCAPS is used to report required data to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System and AFCARS. Additionally, stakeholders at the State level reported that the State has created a SACWIS warehouse that collects the data. From these data a longitudinal data report that covers a 4-year period is produced.

Stakeholders at the State level reported that WYCAPS has the capability to produce over 70 preplanned reports to which all users have access. These preplanned reports can provide aggregate data reports specific to a county and can provide case-specific information. In addition, WYCAPS has the capability to produce ad hoc reports.

WYCAPS has the capacity to report on certification of foster parents and on re-certification requirements. Additionally, WYCAPS has a tickler system that notifies the caseworker when it is time to re-certify a foster home.

Although no stakeholders questioned the reliability of the WYCAPS data concerning the location, demographic information, legal status, and case goals for foster children, stakeholders made the following comments:

- Laramie County and State-level stakeholders reported that WYCAPS is user-friendly and efficient.
- Sheridan County stakeholders expressed the opinion that WYCAPS is slow, not user-friendly, unreliable, outdated, and adds stress to caseworker’s jobs.
- Stakeholders at the three review sites questioned the accuracy and timeliness of data input into WYCAPS.
- Sweetwater County stakeholders reported that frequently the system does not accurately reflect the dates of the case reviews.

II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
		1	<u>2X</u>	3

Status of Case Review System

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in the 2002 CFSR and was required to address it in the PIP.

Key Concerns From the 2002 CFSR

Key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were the following:

- DFS did not consistently involve parents in the case planning process.
- The 12-month permanency hearings were not consistently conducted in a timely manner.
- Certain judicial jurisdictions and county agencies in the State appeared reluctant to pursue TPR.
- There were delays at the county level in the filing for TPR and delays by the court in processing contested terminations.
- DFS did not provide consistent notification to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers regarding reviews and hearings.

The State implemented the following PIP strategies to address concerns related to Case Review System:

- DFS revised its case plan policy, redesigned the case plan structure, and implemented the family partnership model to ensure inclusion of families and their support groups in the case planning process.
- DFS, in collaboration with the Children's Justice Project, developed training materials for the courts and DFS staff on the TPR process.

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Specific findings from the 2008 CFSR 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 Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an ANI because the State does not consistently involve parents, particularly noncustodial parents, in the development of the child's case plan and in other case planning activities. The findings of the Onsite Review, with regard to child and

family involvement in case planning (item 18), indicate that mothers were involved in case planning in 79 percent of the 57 applicable cases and fathers were involved in 56 percent of the 52 applicable cases.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy requires that a written case plan be developed for all cases opened for services and has policy in place that establish timeframes for case plan development. According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS believes that family partnerships have increased the involvement of families in the case planning process. However, DFS does not believe that the family partnership process has been fully implemented statewide or has been fully integrated into practice.

DFS utilizes the family partnership model for case planning to ensure families are included in the process. Case plans for both in-home services and foster care cases are, by policy, to be developed through this process. However, stakeholders interviewed during the State CFSR round 4 reported that family partnership meetings have not been fully implemented due to the opinion that the meetings appear duplicative of existing meetings such as the MDT meetings, case planning meetings, and treatment team meetings. Another barrier to the implementation of family partnership meetings is that organizing and scheduling the meetings is time consuming. Stakeholders also reported that revisions to the case plan form were redundant and cumbersome.

According to the Statewide Assessment, results from the State CFSR and available SACWIS data suggest that, although DFS has not fully implemented the family partnerships model across the State, written case plans are completed for all applicable cases. However, according to the Statewide Assessment, State CFSR round 4 reviewers determined that the involvement of children and their families in the case planning process was a Strength in 57 percent of applicable cases. Observations from the State CFSR review indicate that not involving absent parents in the case planning process has had a significant impact on lack of improvement in performance on this item. Findings from the State CFSR process indicate that families that have a child in out-of-home placement are more involved and engaged in the case planning process than in-home cases.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR suggested that DFS prepares case plans for children in foster care and receiving in-home services and that case plans are usually developed in a timely manner. Furthermore, case plans are reviewed during the quarterly MDT meeting. According to stakeholders in Laramie County, case plans are not always updated after MDTs; therefore, case plans may remain the same for a considerable length of time.

Most stakeholders across the sites reported family involvement in case planning through the family partnership process. However, a few stakeholders indicated that although parents sign the case plans this is not always an indication of active participation in the planning process. A few stakeholders also reported that absent, noncustodial parents are frequently not engaged in the planning process. Additionally, according to stakeholders at the State level, when the family partnership model is used appropriately, they see more engagement with and greater involvement of parents and better outcomes in identification of needs and services.

According to some stakeholders in Laramie County and Sweetwater County and at the State level, case plans are individualized to the family's specific circumstances. However, other stakeholders in Laramie County reported that the quality of some case plans is questionable, that the case plans do not include measurable goals required to be met by parents to ensure a safe home for their children, and that needs that arise during the life of the case are not always addressed. As a result, according to these stakeholders, the case plan may be completed, but the home is still not safe.

Stakeholders at the State level reported that a Pre-Dispositional Report (PDR) is completed for children entering foster care through the Juvenile Justice system. This report, according to State-level stakeholders, assists the court in determining the best course of action for the child. The caseworker includes the family when completing this report. Additionally, JS also utilizes the MDT process to develop plans with the family. In addition to the PDR, three other assessments are completed on children in the JS system. Any significant change in the family's dynamics requires the utilization of the assessment tools to identify any new needs.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as an ANI because the information provided by the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that:

- Periodic reviews are not occurring timely for all foster care cases.
- There are substantive concerns that periodic reviews do not occur for some children in JS foster care cases.
- Stakeholders noted improvement in timely periodic reviews; however, the State did not provide data to support that periodic reviews are occurring consistently throughout the State.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS requires periodic reviews at 3 months, 6 months, and 9 months. The first 6-month review is required to be reviewed in court. However, 3-month and 9-month reviews are conducted by the MDT. The 6-month review, according to the Statewide Assessment, determines:

- The continuing necessity for and appropriateness of the placement
- The extent of compliance with the case plan
- Progress toward alleviating the causes necessitating the placement
- Projected date of reunification or other permanent placement
- Progress made toward the permanency goal
- Review of the timeframes (e.g., 15 of the most recent 22 months in placement)

Additionally, a quarterly progress report is required in all out-of-home placement cases to ensure services are provided to families and children. Reports are submitted to the court, family, GAL, public defender, and county attorney/district attorney. According to the Statewide Assessment, family partnership team meetings may be used to gather the information necessary for these reports and serve as a guide for the quarterly MDT meeting.

According to the Statewide Assessment, WYCAPS data indicate that only 66 percent of children who entered care in 2007 had either a 3-month or 6-month periodic review documented in WYCAPS within 180 days of their first placement. DFS, according to the Statewide Assessment, believes that this is a data entry and documentation error and that these data do not accurately reflect practice.

Stakeholders interviewed during the State CFSR round 4 indicated that periodic reviews are consistently completed, but not always documented in WYCAPS. Stakeholders also reported that overcrowding of court dockets may present a barrier to timely completion of periodic reviews. However, stakeholders stated that courts make efforts to prioritize juvenile cases and often rearrange court schedules to accommodate reviews.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that cases are being reviewed administratively through the MDT process at a minimum of every 3 months and by the court every 6 months. Reviews occur more frequently when warranted by the circumstances of the case. Most stakeholders indicated that the 6-month judicial review hearings are productive and informative.

Additionally, stakeholders indicated there have been improvements in the timeliness and effectiveness of the periodic reviews. Stakeholders emphasized improvements are recent, and the results will not be seen during the Onsite Review. According to Sheridan

County stakeholders, although there have been improvements, reviews continue to be delayed due to the lack of staff and lack of expertise in the County Attorney’s Office. Laramie County stakeholders reported that the review hearing is scheduled when the court report is submitted by the caseworker. Therefore, if the report is not submitted timely, the hearing may be delayed. Additionally, delays also occur when there are continuances due to parents or attorneys not appearing for hearings.

There are differing opinions on the effectiveness of the MDT process. According to some stakeholders, the MDT meetings are beneficial and assist the family in maintaining focus on the primary issues. MDTs also allow open conversation about the progress of the case. Some Sweetwater County stakeholders, however, are of the opinion that the MDT process for CPS cases is not structured and is ineffective. Laramie County stakeholders reported that case plans are not always updated after MDTs, and that may negatively impact the effectiveness of the 6-month reviews in promoting timely achievement of permanency.

According to stakeholders in Laramie County, the timeliness of juvenile justice hearings is not currently assessed.

Item 27. The State 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 X Area Needing Improvement

Item 27 is rated as an ANI because the information in the Statewide Assessment and provided by stakeholders indicates:

- There is uncertainty and substantive concerns about the timeliness of permanency hearings on all foster care cases.
- There are substantive concerns that permanency hearings do not occur for some children in foster care cases managed by JS.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State law and DFS policy require that 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 than every 12 months. Additionally, if the court determines that reasonable efforts to reunify are inconsistent with the permanency plan for the child or reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify the family are not required, a permanency hearing will be held for the child within 30 days.

According to the Statewide Assessment, WYCAPS data indicate that 53 percent of the 678 children who entered care during calendar years 2005 and 2006 and remained in foster care for at least 365 days had a permanency hearing date entered into WYCAPS between

the date of entry and their year anniversary. Of these children, 83.6 percent had a permanency hearing date within their placement episode. DFS, according to the Statewide Assessment, is of the opinion that the low percentage of timely permanency hearings is the result of data entry errors and documentation errors and that these figures do not accurately reflect practice.

Stakeholders interviewed during the State CFSR round 4 reported that periodic reviews were routinely completed, but not always documented in WYCAPS. Additionally, stakeholders indicated that court personnel prioritize juvenile cases; however, “docket time” and court calendars are limited in many jurisdictions.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has recently begun to place emphasis on the timeliness of permanency. The Children’s Justice Project has worked with the courts to recognize the importance of timeliness. Additionally, the creation of the Permanency Unit within the attorney general’s office has assisted in raising the awareness of permanency issues. Sheridan and Laramie County stakeholders reported that permanency hearings are frequently delayed while some stakeholders at the State level indicated that permanency hearings are consistently timely. Stakeholders in Sweetwater County reported that the attorneys became aware of the requirement for permanency hearings in December 2007. However, these stakeholders also reported that permanency hearings did not begin until April 2008. As a result, according to stakeholders in Sweetwater County, county staff members have a large backlog of permanency hearings they are attempting to schedule.

The effectiveness of permanency hearings, according to stakeholders across the sites, depends on the judicial jurisdiction. Some stakeholders at the State level and in Laramie County indicated that the rationale for the hearings is not completely understood. Additionally, some stakeholders in Laramie County reported that the purpose of permanency hearings is not clear nor do the hearings perpetuate TPR or permanency for the child. A few stakeholders at the State level expressed the opinion that the permanency hearings are productive, informative, and are effective in moving children to timely permanency outcomes. Stakeholders in Sweetwater County indicated that, although the permanency hearing process is new to them, they believe it can move a case toward reunification as some parents have become more engaged as a result of the hearings.

Stakeholders at the State level reported that the American Bar Association Permanency Barrier project was piloted in Natrona County and the results indicated that children moved to permanency quicker as a result of efforts of the initiative.

According to Laramie County and Sweetwater County stakeholders, JS foster care cases do not have permanency hearings. However, the cases are reviewed every 3 months with the 6- and 12-month reviews being formal MDTs with the results being filed with the court. Additionally, stakeholders in Laramie County reported that children may stay in foster care for over 12 months in order to maintain them in the same school or to continue with services that would not be available outside of foster care placement.

Item 28. The State provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated as an ANI because according to the Statewide Assessment, a point-in-time measure taken in October 2007 of children in foster care revealed that of the 1243 children in foster care, 40 percent (503 children) had been in foster care at least 15 of the last 22 months and that 35 percent (176 children) did not have a valid ASFA exception documented in WYCAPS. Stakeholder interviews indicated that TPRs are not consistently filed in accordance with the provisions of ASFA. Additionally, during the Onsite Review, ASFA requirements were met in 53 percent (10 cases) of the 19 cases for which the requirements were applicable.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State statute mandates that the State is to file a petition for TPR or seek to be joined as a party to the petition if a petition has been filed by another party for children who have been in foster care under the responsibility of the State 15 of the most recent 22 months, unless the child is in the care of a relative. The State is to document in the case plan a compelling reason for determining that filing the petition is not in the best interests of the child. Additionally, a petition for TPR is to be filed within 60 days of the judicial determination that reasonable efforts to reunify the child and parent are not required due to certain criminal behavior. A TPR hearing is to be held within 90 days of the filing of a termination petition unless continued by the court.

The county or district attorney represents DFS in filing a petition for TPR. The attorney general's office may assist the county or district attorney when requested by the respective attorney. Additionally, the attorney general's office created a Children's Permanency Unit which, according to stakeholders, has:

- Resulted in the completion of more TPRs
- Helped to standardize the process
- Improved timeliness of completing TPRs
- Alleviated the some responsibility of local county attorneys for pursuing TPRs

WYCAPS data create a report that monitors ASFA compliance. The report lists children who have been in foster care 15 of the last 22 months that do not have any applicable ASFA exceptions. DFS also provides a list of children who have a compelling reason

documented in WYCAPS, which allows field staff the opportunity to review the compelling reason and determine its appropriateness. This report is updated weekly and is available to field staff. According to the Statewide Assessment, providing this list has improved the data quality of termination and relinquishment dates, dates of termination filings, compelling reasons, and dates of death for parents.

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the State CFSR process indicated that there is still reluctance in some jurisdictions to pursue TPR unless an adoptive family has been identified. Additionally, stakeholders reported that the Children's Justice Project has provided beneficial training on the TPR process, which has resulted in an improved court process related to TPR.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, a point-in-time measure taken in October 2007 of children in foster care revealed that of the 1,243 children in foster care, 40 percent (503 children) had been in foster care at least 15 of the past 22 months and that 35 percent (176 children) did not have a valid ASFA exception documented in WYCAPS.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that jurisdictions across the State are inconsistent in filing for TPR. The clear and convincing evidence needed for TPR is not understood by all parties involved. There have been improvements in the timely filing and hearings for TPR, but the State, according to stakeholders across the sites, still needs to make improvements in the timely achievement of permanency outcomes. Stakeholders in Laramie County and Sheridan County and at the State level reported compelling reasons are documented in the majority of the cases when TPR is not filed.

Stakeholders at the review sites reported that delays and continuances in TPR cases occur when attempts to locate absent parents have not been made and parents are working, even minimally, on their case plan goals. Additionally, Laramie County stakeholders reported that delays and continuances frequently occur on cases involving incarcerated parents and parents with substance use issues.

DFS, according to stakeholders at the three sites and the State level, submits a request to the district/county attorney to file for TPR. Many stakeholders at the review sites and at the State level indicated that there is reluctance by district/county attorneys across the State to file for TPR due to previous decisions by the State Supreme Court. Additionally, there are courts that are reluctant to grant TPR due to these decisions.

There are counties in the State that historically do not file for TPR. According to stakeholders in Laramie County, the previous district attorney would not file for TPR even when the cases met the Federal requirements for termination. The refusal to file for TPR created a backlog of more than 50 cases. The new district attorney has accepted all cases DFS has referred for TPR. Additionally, stakeholders

in Sweetwater County reported that the current county attorney is in the process of completing the TPR cases not filed by the previous county attorney.

The Permanency Unit from the attorney general's office assisted with the filing of the backlogged TPRs in several counties; however, stakeholders indicated that this appears to have been an isolated situation as the attorney general's office is currently referring DFS to the respective county/district attorney for assistance with filing for TPR. Stakeholders indicated that there is concern that, due to the continued reluctance to file for TPR in some areas, another backlog of cases will be created.

According to the stakeholders at the State level, the Children's Justice Project has provided training to the judges on ASFA and the TPR process. The training is credited for improvement in the timely filing of TPRs. However, stakeholders indicated that more training is needed across the State on the TPR process.

Item 29. The State 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

 X Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated a Strength because DFS has a policy that requires that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers be given notice of and an opportunity and right to be heard in court hearings. Stakeholders reported that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers are receiving notices of court hearings and have an opportunity to be heard in all legal proceedings with regard to children in their care.

This item also was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, effective July 1, 2007, the State Supreme Court adopted rules pertaining to notice, opportunity, and right to be heard for caregivers/foster parents of children in DFS custody. DFS is responsible for notifying the child's foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relatives providing care for the child when any legal proceeding pertaining to the child is held. Additionally, these caregivers have the right to be heard in all legal proceedings in regard to the child. According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS policy says that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers should be expected to participate in court hearings and meetings regarding the children in the care including MDT meetings, Family Partnership Meetings, and Individual Education Plan meetings.

The majority of the foster parents interviewed during the State CFSR round 4 reported that they are usually informed of court hearings and reviews by DFS caseworkers, are encouraged to participate, and felt their input was valued.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the three review sites and the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the caseworkers generally are notifying relatives, foster parents, and adoptive parents of hearings and MDTs on a rather consistent basis. In some jurisdictions, the district/county attorney’s office or the court is responsible for notifying the caregiver. The method of notification generally is verbal notice and/or written notice. Although many stakeholders in Laramie County reported that caregivers are being notified, others reported that there is not a formal process in place to provide notification of hearings to foster parents and that notification does not always occur.

Stakeholders at the three review sites expressed the opinion that foster parents, relative caregivers, and pre-adoptive parents are provided the opportunity to participate in and be heard in MDTs and hearings.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
Rating	1	2	3	<u>4X</u>

Status of Quality Assurance System

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2002 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its PIP.

Specific findings from the 2008 CFSR 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 an array of quality service standards to ensure the health and safety of children in foster care, including a monthly report that documents child safety and health issues and a report that is completed by foster parents and reviewed by caseworkers who document the provision of health services.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS ensures that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children through the following policies and procedures:

- DFS has staff who monitor and provide services to foster parents.
- Foster homes are monitored to ensure they comply with certification standards.
- A monthly report is completed by foster parents, which includes information about safety and health issues.
- Foster parents are required to contact DFS immediately in the case of an emergency involving a foster child.
- Foster parents are required to report any suspected child abuse or neglect immediately to law enforcement or DFS.
- Children in foster care for more than 30 days receive a health check.
- Medical needs of a child are reviewed as part of the 6- and 12-month permanency reviews.
- Monthly face-to-face contacts are required with each foster child in their current placement.
- The caseworker is required to meet privately with the child and assess and address any safety issues.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the standardized monthly report form increased the communication between foster parents and DFS staff. The use of the form has enabled DFS to identify and mitigate potential health or safety problems. DFS, according to the Statewide Assessment, also believes that its increase in face-to-face contacts with children in foster care has improved the ability to ensure the health and safety of children in foster care. Observations from the State CFSR review process indicate that when caseworkers visit children, they interview them privately and ask specific questions regarding their safety and health. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the combined score from all 4 years of the State CFSRs for foster care cases where physical health of the child was rated as a Strength was 88 percent.

DFS, according to the Statewide Assessment, has limited resources and manpower to monitor private provider's compliance with standards to ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services that protect their health and safety. However, stakeholders interviewed as part of the Statewide Assessment process reported that the standards for foster homes certified by child-placing agencies are overly restrictive.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Based on information provided by stakeholders during the onsite CFSR, the State has developed and implemented various standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. According to stakeholders in Sweetwater County and at the State level, the State's primary standards for quality services that protect the safety and health of children in foster care are reviewed during the State's CFSR process under the safety and well-being items. Additionally, stakeholders in Sheridan County indicated that the implementation of the Child Welfare Protection Team ensures quality services are provided to foster children. Stakeholders also reported that the foster parent checklist assists in ensuring children are receiving the needed services.

Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable QA system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (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 in place a fully functioning statewide QA system. Wyoming has implemented a State CFSR, which is based on the Federal CFSR process, and conducts QA reviews in each region of the State on an annual basis. The State has standardized reports that allow for monitoring numerous processes and performance measures. Additionally, each supervisor is required to review a randomly selected case using the automated CFSR instrument in WYCAPS. Further, the State utilizes an array of data from WYCAPS for statewide QA purposes.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS, in partnership with the WYCRP, has developed and implemented a CFSR review process that closely replicates the Federal CFSR, including case reviews; interviews with the family, the child, and the caseworker; interviews with stakeholders; case debriefings; two levels of QA; and an exit conference. The process combines trained citizen reviewers with DFS staff for the Onsite Review. WYCRP is responsible for organizing the reviews, compiling and disseminating the Final Reports, and preparing recommendations based on the findings from each review and for the entire review cycle. DFS is responsible for co-managing the Onsite Review, and entering, managing, and distributing the State CFSR data.

The State CFSR review, according to the Statewide Assessment, uses the Federal CFSR OSRI to obtain the ratings for the State CFSR items and outcomes. The in-home services cases are randomly selected from WYCAPS data and foster care cases are randomly selected from a specified AFCARS submission for each office using the sampling parameters described in the CFSR procedures manual. During the State CFSR round 4, DFS changed its sampling process to replicate the Federal CFSR and included a stratified foster care sample based on the Federally-defined criteria, as well as a case selection process that selected similar proportions of in-home and foster care cases to those proportions found in the Federal CFSR.

Results and summaries from the State CFSRs are provided to DFS field staff, administrators, and State office staff, as well as the WYCRP. The reports generated for each office and the annual report generated by the WYCRP is provided to field Staff and administrators and is available to the public via the WYCRP website. DFS prepares written responses to the recommendations made in the WYCRP annual reports.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State CFSR contains similar critical elements and processes as the Federal CFSR and provides a close approximation.

Additionally, the QA unit has developed standardized reports for monitoring numerous processes and performance measures. The QA unit has also developed a set of web-accessible, case- and person-specific reports for defined populations that are available to field staff, supervisors, and managers. These reports include placement profiles, information about caseworker contacts and ASFA compliance, and foster parent certification monitoring. They contain longitudinal reports aggregated by DFS by region, office, and division and are provided to DFS managers, administrators, supervisors, and State office staff on a monthly basis.

Key reports include the following:

- Face-to-face contacts with children in foster care
- Case contacts
- Title IV-E penetration
- Incident count
- State CFSR scores
- Supervisor CFSR scores
- Staffing ratios
- Foster parent recruitment
- Family partnership meetings
- Intakes

- Services expenditures
- Reunification and adoption measures
- Longitudinal summaries of abuse rates
- Placement rates by placement type

In addition to the State CFSR process, each DFS supervisor in the CPS and JS divisions is required to review an in-home services or foster care case randomly selected from the automated CFSR instrument in WYCAPS. These monthly reviews serve as the main source of data for reporting progress for the State's PIP quarterly reports.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholder comments on this item during the onsite CFSR were consistent with the information provided in the Statewide Assessment. Stakeholders reported that DFS partners with the WYCRP to conduct reviews in each area annually. The State CFSR process is modeled after the Federal CFSR, including record reviews, stakeholder interviews, case debriefings, a review debrief, and an exit conference. At the request of DFS county staff, the exit conference is held two weeks after the review debrief. Findings from the State CFSR process are used to implement changes in practice. The county, according to stakeholders across the sites, is responsible for preparing a PIP and submitting it to the State office. Stakeholders reported that monitoring of the PIP has not been fully established.

Stakeholders view the State CFSR process as positive and beneficial to DFS and the families served. The State CFSR process, according to most Sweetwater County stakeholders, helps maintain the focus on safety, permanence, and well-being for children. The process has allowed citizen involvement that has helped establish agency transparency and credibility.

Additionally, every CPS and JS supervisor is required to review one case each month randomly chosen by the automated State CFSR instrument, WYCAPS. Feedback from this case review, according to stakeholders, is provided to the caseworker. The findings are entered into WYCAPS, and reports are generated from the data.

According to stakeholders, another QA tool is the Stat-Pack, developed by the QA unit to provide data on numerous processes and performance measures to all levels of DFS staff, and community and State stakeholders. Additionally, stakeholders in Sheridan County reported that supervisor meetings, MDT meetings, case conferencing, and management feedback all constitute as QA tools.

IV. STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	<u>3X</u>	4

Status of Staff and Provider Training

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training.

The State was found not to be in substantial conformity with this outcome in the 2002 CFSR and was required to address it in the PIP.

Key Findings From the 2002 CFSR

The key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were that the State did not have an effective, comprehensive, agencywide initial training program or an ongoing training program for staff.

The State developed and implemented the following PIP strategies to address concerns related to Staff and Provider Training:

- An initial training program to be completed by new staff within 30 days of employment
- A training program for supervisors to increase effective supervision for new caseworkers
- A method to track completion of training
- A training manual and a yearly training calendar of available training opportunities

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Specific findings from the 2008 CFSR 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 provides a competency-based initial training curriculum (CORE) for all DFS, CPS, and JS caseworkers. The CORE training, which is offered twice annually, targets basic skills requirements established by DFS. The successful completion of the CORE training is required for all CPS and JS staff and is monitored by the agency.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, new caseworkers must complete an initial new hire orientation packet within 30 days of employment. The packet was designed to:

- Provide training specific to child protection and juvenile services
- Provide an initial overview of many of the services provided by the agency
- Begin mentoring relationships with seasoned caseworkers
- Encourage a cooperative relationship with supervisors and other staff

In addition to the orientation packet, CORE training is offered twice annually. According to the Statewide Assessment, it is a comprehensive, competency-based curriculum adopted in 2003 from the Institute for Human Services in Ohio. The training is divided into four modules, with one module covered per month for 4 months. Topics include the following:

- The statutory authority of the agency
- The role of the caseworker
- Family-centered casework
- Intake
- Case planning
- Risk assessment and re-assessment
- Investigations
- Family partnerships
- Educational transitions
- Child development

- Separation
- Placement
- Permanency
- Racial and ethnic identity for youth in foster care

CPS and JS caseworkers receive training that covers the elements above in addition to training that is specific to their divisions. At the conclusion of each module, participants must score 80 percent or better on a written exam. If a caseworker does not score 80 percent or better, he/she is allowed to take the exam again. If the exam is not passed the second time, a work plan is developed with the participant and his/her supervisor to identify and overcome specific deficiencies. All four modules must be completed prior to managing cases independently.

DFS engages other agencies and organizations to provide new caseworker and ongoing training. According to the Statewide Assessment, these partnerships ensure that the material presented to caseworkers is current and accurate. The following partners currently provide training to DFS staff on a routine basis: C. Henry Kempe Center in Denver, Colorado; University of Colorado Health Science Center; Wyoming Attorney General's Office; Wyoming Highway Patrol; and Wyoming Forensic Crime Lab. Some examples of training topics include nonaccidental trauma trained by a pediatrician from the C. Henry Kempe Center; proper use of child restraint systems in vehicles by the Wyoming Highway Patrol; and urinalysis administration by the Wyoming Forensic Crime Lab.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that DFS has separate trainings for CPS caseworkers and JS caseworkers. Both are offered biannually, which often results in caseworkers waiting several months to attend classroom trainings. CPS and JS caseworkers are trained on the Family Partnership Model. Additionally, Sheridan County and Laramie County stakeholders reported that new caseworkers are provided an orientation packet that is to be completed within 30 days of employment. The packet, which is to be reviewed with the supervisor, provides an overview of DFS processes and policies. New caseworkers also shadow veteran staff and complete case reviews as part of their initial training.

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, particularly CPS training, is not well organized and that caseworkers learn more through shadowing veteran staff and performing the job responsibilities. Stakeholders also noted that generally CPS and JS caseworkers have assigned cases during training, although in some areas new caseworkers are not primary caseworkers.

The primary issues reported by stakeholders in respect to training were:

- Training is offered only twice a year, due to lack of funding, which results in training being delayed for several months or occurring too soon.
- The cycle in which CORE training is offered results in caseworkers having to wait long periods of time before they can carry a case load, or results in caseworkers having cases prior to attending training.
- CPS training is offered only in Cheyenne, which is difficult for caseworkers who live in other areas and have family obligations and travel restrictions.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 is rated as an ANI because JS caseworkers who manage cases subject to the CFSR do not have requirements for ongoing training. The State requires CPS caseworkers to obtain a minimum of 20 hours of continuing education credit to maintain CPS certification. The State also maintains a database to monitor that staff have maintained certification each year. However, stakeholders reported that budget constraints restrict training opportunities for all staff members.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all CPS caseworkers, supervisors, and managers are required to maintain CPS Certification annually. They are required to obtain a minimum of 20 hours annually of continuing education directly related to child protection issues to maintain their certification. Local supervisors and managers identify local training needs during supervision, case consultation meetings, and through the State CFSR process. Additionally, caseworkers can specialize in a particular area of CPS, including forensic interviewing, investigations, substance abuse, or domestic violence.

CPS staff are required to submit their CPS certification request annually, which includes a list of the continuing education training they received during the year, which is in turn verified by their supervisor. The Training Academy tracks annual certifications to ensure all staff have completed their training. According to the Statewide Assessment, since the inception and use of a database to track individual caseworker training 3 years ago, 100 percent of staff have maintained their yearly certification.

According to the Statewide Assessment, 2 years ago the entire DFS supervisory staff attended a 3-week supervisor training; however, there is not consistent training for beginning DFS supervisors.

According to the Statewide Assessment, funding is a barrier to providing ongoing training for DFS staff.

Stakeholder Interview Information

According to stakeholders responding to this item during the Onsite Review, CPS caseworkers and supervisors are required to complete 20 hours of ongoing training annually to maintain their certification. JS caseworkers who manage cases subject to the CFSR do not have a required number of ongoing training hours. Stakeholders indicated that funding for DFS ongoing training is very limited. Ongoing training hours are monitored by the supervisor and the State training unit.

Many stakeholders reported that there are limited nonagency sponsored training opportunities within their communities; however, opportunities to attend ongoing training outside their communities are very limited. Barriers to attending ongoing training include work assignments, funding for the training, and distance to training.

Stakeholders indicated that more and a greater variety of ongoing/advanced, skill-based training is needed across the State. In addition to improving the skills of caseworkers, stakeholders expressed the opinion that consistent ongoing training would improve caseworker morale. Stakeholders identified the following subjects for trainings:

- Preparing for TPR
- ICWA
- Sexual abuse
- Ongoing caseworker safety training

Additionally, according to stakeholders new supervisor training for child welfare supervisors is not currently offered.

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 requires and provides initial training for prospective foster and adoptive parents through Parent Resource for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) training and supplemental modules. Additionally, the

State requires 18 hours of ongoing training for these caregivers. All licensed or approved facilities that care for children also have training requirements. While monitoring mechanisms are in place, the State provided no quantitative data from such tracking systems. However, the 2007 title IV-E review found that the State was in compliance with training requirements for foster and adoptive parents, and the Onsite Review did not find evidence to the contrary.

This item was rated as a Strength in Wyoming's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS provides foster and adoptive parent training statewide using the 27-hour PRIDE foster/adopt parent pre-service training curriculum. However, the current PRIDE pre-service curriculum is outdated and a number of foster care coordinators augment sections of the curriculum with other resources. Prospective foster or adoptive parents must complete the training prior to placement of children in their home.

According to the Statewide Assessment, foster care coordinators cover large areas of the State and/or large populations of foster parents, which creates a challenge in scheduling trainings. Smaller communities often do not have the same training opportunities as larger areas of the State.

DFS requires 18 hours ongoing training annually for foster parents. DFS foster care coordinators work with the foster parents and kinship providers to identify and meet ongoing training needs. The foster care coordinators document training attended in the file and/or in WYCAPS.

Adoption agencies, child-placing agencies, group homes, and residential treatment facilities are certified by the DFS Early Childhood Division. The private agencies and organizations are responsible for providing pre-service and ongoing training for their staff, adoptive families, and/or foster families and to document the training received. Compliance with training requirements and other licensing standards are monitored through inspections by the Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technology (CASAT). All training is required to be documented in the personnel/foster parents file, and compliance is reviewed when CASAT completes its inspections. Child-placing agencies are not certified if standards are not met.

Foster parents certified by child-placing agencies to provide family foster home care or specialized foster care must complete a minimum of 16 hours of ongoing training annually. Therapeutic foster homes are required to complete a minimum of 20 hours specialized orientation training and 20 hours of ongoing training annually. While a specific curriculum is not required, many of the child-placing and adoption agencies utilize the PRIDE pre-service curriculum and do a combined training with prospective foster and adoptive homes being certified by DFS.

Stakeholders reported that pre-service training and CPR and first aid training are not always available, which causes delays in certifying and/or approving homes.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at all the sites commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that foster and adoptive parents complete PRIDE prior to being approved for placement of children. Relatives foster parents are required to complete PRIDE training within 90 days of a child being placed in their home. These caregivers also are required to complete CPR training. Stakeholders in Sweetwater County expressed the opinion that the initial training does not prepare foster parents for the reality of fostering.

DFS foster parents are required to complete 18 hours of ongoing training annually. Stakeholders reported that ongoing training is offered monthly.

DFS, child placing agencies, and other community partners frequently provide joint trainings and share training resources for foster parents. Stakeholders were in agreement that there are numerous ongoing training opportunities for foster parents. Stakeholders in Sweetwater County reported that foster parents are notified via e-mail of ongoing training opportunities.

V. SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
		1	<u>2X</u>	3

Status of Service Array and Resource Development

Wyoming is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development.

The State was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2002 CFSR and was required to address it in the PIP.

Key Findings From the 2002 CFSR

Key concerns identified during the 2002 CFSR were:

- The array of services was not equal across the State, and services were particularly limited in rural areas.
- Stakeholders identified gaps in the statewide availability of mental health, psychiatric providers for children who would accept Medicaid, and community-based treatment for youth.
- In many communities there were insufficient services or limited services to meet identified needs, which resulted in families/children being placed on lengthy wait lists or having to travel great distances to access services.
- There was a lack of availability of appropriate placement resources that resulted in children being placed in settings based on available bed space rather than in response to children's needs, being removed from their communities, or being placed in more restrictive environments than needed.
- DFS did not tailor services to meet the unique needs of children and families.

The State implemented the following PIP strategies to address concerns related to Service Array and Resource Development:

- DFS developed strategies to improve assessment and case planning processes.
- DFS trained on and implemented family partnerships to increase the efforts of providing community-based services to families at the beginning of the agency involvement.
- DFS increased statewide resource family recruitment efforts to improve foster care resources.

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as a Strength because Wyoming offers an array of critical child welfare services that addresses the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children and families.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Wyoming is a rural State comprised predominately of small and often isolated towns with large distances between them. The geography and population distribution of the State creates issues with providing a full array of services in each of its communities. Although gaps in specialized services exist in some communities, information from the State CFSR process indicates that the majority of cases reviewed did not have a significant lack of services and that smaller communities have developed innovative means to provide the required services to families. According to the Statewide Assessment, high-level residential treatment centers are not available in the State.

DFS provides direct case management services to and purchases services for children and families. These services include:

- Prevention
- Assessment
- Placement services
- Service referral
- Mental health services (individual, family, and group counseling)
- Mentoring programs
- Child care
- Substance abuse treatment
- Psychological evaluation
- Medical services
- Independent Living (IL) services
- Parenting classes
- Post-adoption services

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that Wyoming lacks the array of services available to assist families. However, stakeholders indicated that DFS strives to ensure families have the services they need. Additionally, community partners, service providers, and DFS are committed to families and are creative in identifying services and resources to meet the needs of children when there is a gap in services.

Stakeholders at the review sites and the State level identified the following strengths with regard to Service Array and Resource Development:

- The focus on community-based services
- The Children’s System of Care Grant/Initiative that has developed wraparound services to maintain children in their homes and communities (an initiative piloted in two counties)
- IL services that are available to youth throughout the State
- Medical services, although providers who accept Medicaid are limited in some communities
- Family partnership meetings

Stakeholders identified that there are no specialized residential treatment services for children with dual diagnosis.

IL services are funded by the State; however, they are provided by contractors. Caseworkers are responsible for referring children ages 16 to 21 to the program. If a child under age 16 has the permanency goal of OPPLA, the child is referred to the IL program. Services offered by the IL program include the following:

- Basic finances
- How to secure a job
- Driving lessons
- Grocery shopping
- Obtaining personal documents, including birth certificates and Social Security cards
- Substance abuse and mental health treatment
- GED services
- Educational vouchers for children seeking higher education
- Assisting youth in obtaining medical coverage after leaving foster care

Some stakeholders at the State level reported issues with DFS not reimbursing for services in a timely manner. Stakeholders indicated that some small, nonprofit organizations in rural communities have had to close because of the delay in payment. Additionally, the delay in reimbursement, according to stakeholders, has affected foster home retention.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an ANI because the accessibility of services is a concern in many areas of the State. Residential treatment for children with multiple needs; substance abuse treatment for teenagers; prevention, intensive in-home, and targeted aftercare/reunification services; and inpatient substance abuse treatment for parents that allows for children to be with them were

among the services identified by stakeholders as having limited accessibility statewide. Further, transportation across long distances was cited as a major barrier to access services for children and families living in rural areas and on Indian reservations.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, services provided to families through DFS are identified through the case planning and assessment process and specified within the written case plan. Services are either provided directly by agency staff or provided by community or private providers. DFS policy stresses the need to provide community-based services when available, as well as the need to maintain children within their community. Ratings on service provision items have improved in the State CFSR. According to the Statewide Assessment, ratings indicate that service accessibility has improved. However, DFS acknowledges that the rural and frontier nature of the State continues to create barriers to providing the quantity and accessibility of services in all areas, such as the following:

- Dental care in some communities and for children in placement
- Therapeutic foster care in some communities
- Inpatient substance abuse treatment that allows children to remain with parents
- Substance abuse treatment for teenagers
- Aftercare services

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders at the review sites and the State level commenting on this item reported that the ability to access the services that are available is an issue in both urban and rural areas. Additionally, many stakeholders across the sites expressed the opinion that services are limited in smaller and rural communities. Geography, lack of transportation, and gas prices, according to stakeholders, are barriers to families accessing services. Families frequently have to travel long distances to access the needed services.

Stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level identified the following services as having limited availability and accessibility:

- Mental health services for children and families
- Dental providers who accept Medicaid
- Outpatient and residential substance abuse treatment programs for children and adults
- Inpatient substance abuse programs that allow children to remain with their parents
- Placement resources, especially for older children
- Psychiatrists

- Transportation for families to access services
- Intensive in-home services
- Prevention services and funding for these services
- Services to assist youth in transitioning from foster care to emancipation
- Transitional services when children are returning home from foster care placement
- Aftercare services
- Affordable housing
- Post-adoption services
- Bilingual providers
- Services for children with developmental disabilities
- Physicians to perform sexual abuse examinations

Additionally, stakeholders reported that the geography of the State limits the availability of some IL activities.

The majority of the stakeholders interviewed indicated that consistent, timely mental health services are needed in the State. Stakeholders indicated that the Department of Health has recently implemented Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the mental health providers that require them to collaborate with DFS to ensure families are given priority in receiving mental health services.

Several stakeholders reported that services in neighboring States are more convenient to many rural areas; however, all options in Wyoming must be exhausted prior to utilizing services outside of the State.

Stakeholders at the State level reported that resources on reservations also are limited. There is a need for the following services:

- Mentoring for youth
- After-school programs
- Substance abuse treatment for children and adults
- Transportation services

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as an ANI because the State does not have an effective statewide process of distributing available flexible funds that are needed by caseworkers to individualize services to children and families, particularly with respect to tailoring prevention services to meet the unique needs of families. The use of flexible funds is a key process through which services are individualized to meet the needs of children and families.

This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2002.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS has improved its ability to identify and provide individualized services due to the improvement in the assessment process and the implementation of a family-centered approach.

The State receives funds from title IV-B Subpart 2 to improve family preservation and preventive services for children. Family preservation services and family support services are combined to promote safe and stable families in a community-based setting. This program encourages a holistic approach that includes the collaboration of families, community resources, and State agencies to utilize available resources to support the family and reduce the need for State intervention.

According to stakeholders interviewed during the State CFSR process, there are some cases where services focus on the target child instead of the family system. Additionally, in some cases there are referrals or provision of services that are not based on the individual needs of the client. However, stakeholders reported that generally services are individualized to meet the needs of clients and that DFS and service providers have improved the performance of individualizing assessments and services to children and families.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during expressed the opinion that DFS individualizes and tailors 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.

However, stakeholders indicated that flexible funding, which is used to individualize services to meet unique child and family needs, is not readily available in the counties. Stakeholders across the sites expressed frustration with obtaining approval for preventive services funding, in particular. According to stakeholders, the funding for nontraditional services (e.g., paying light bills, gas bills, or

rent) is managed by the State. Stakeholders also stated that unless the vendor is already in WYCAPS, the approval process is time-consuming, cumbersome, and a barrier to tailoring services to meet the needs of families and preventing children from entering foster care.

VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	<u>4X</u>

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Wyoming was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2002 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its 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 engaged in ongoing collaboration and consultation with key DFS stakeholders on the goals and objectives of the CFSP. DFS has effectively partnered with the Governor, an array of State, and community agencies, Tribes, and WYCRP to develop and improve child welfare practice.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS is mandated by State statute to consult with stakeholders. These include the following:

- The DFS Advisory Council
- The Juvenile Justice Advisory Council
- Reviews by the Legislative Service Office
- The Children and Families Initiative
- The Interagency Children’s Collaborative
- Wyoming Advocates for Youth
- The Adoption Council
- WYCRP
- Northern Arapahoe/Eastern Shoshone Tribes

Additionally, DFS and WYCRP interview community stakeholders during the State CFSR process. The results of the State CFSR process are used to refine policies, identify training needs, and provide information to law makers. The recommendations resulting from the State CFSR process are included in the CFSP.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS has fully integrated its CFSR/PIP and CFSP/Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) processes by using PIP quarterly reporting scores and QA scores to assess performance and progress in its CFSP. The Statewide Assessment reports that the collaboration with WYCRP on the QA process provides beneficial data and feedback that enhances the CFSP process.

Stakeholder Interview Information

According to stakeholders at the State level, DFS engages in ongoing collaboration with the DFS advisory committee, the Tribes, consultants from CPS and JS, field staff, the IL coordinator, the Wyoming Advocates for Youth, youth, the WYCRP, and Mental Health Services in implementing the provisions of the CFSP. Additionally, according to stakeholders, the 2002 PIP goals were the primary source for the State’s most recent CFSP.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because DFS consults with community partners and utilizes their input when preparing the APSR and in the development of the State's 5-year plan and annual reports. The Citizen's Review Board also is a DFS advisory committee that evaluates how well DFS does in achieving the desired outcomes.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment

According to the Statewide Assessment, feedback from the stakeholder interviews conducted by DFS and WYCRP as part of the State CFSR process are used to develop the State's annual reports. Additionally, information gathered from the State CFSR review process and stakeholder interviews are used to develop PIPs at the local level, which allows the field offices to focus on areas which are unique to their communities. The progress made by the field offices is reported in the APSR. The Statewide Assessment reports that the collaboration with WYCRP on the QA process provides beneficial data and feedback that enhances the APSR process.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State collaborates regularly with other agencies. Additionally, stakeholders reported providing feedback to DFS concerning the agency's goals, objectives, and ongoing performance. However, stakeholders did not comment specifically 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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because DFS collaborates and coordinates activities with Federal or Federally-assisted agencies to address the needs of the children and families they service.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS works collaboratively through a series of formal and informal relationships with other State agencies responsible for administering State programs, including:

- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division of the Department of Health
- Children's Justice Project (Court Improvement Project)

- Native American programs
- Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming
- Early Intervention

DFS is responsible for administering the Child Support Enforcement and Federal Parent Locator Service programs, the Juvenile Justice System, and the State's IV-B programs.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DFS's collaboration with the Children's Justice Project has strengthened the agency's ability to provide services to children and families through the implementation of court reform. Additionally, the relationship between DFS and the WYCRP has allowed for consistent, transparent, and objective feedback. The partnership with the Mental Health Division of the Department of Health created the Systems of Care and Children's Mental Health waiver that increased the level of family-centered wraparound services for children in the two pilot communities. State CFSR results in these two communities indicate a better working relationship between DFS and the families served.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item expressed the opinion that DFS has strong collaboration with key stakeholders. Stakeholders indicated DFS has a positive collaborative relationship with:

- The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division of the Department of Health
- The Department of Education
- The Department of Corrections
- Public health nurses from the Department of Health
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
- Food Stamps
- Medicaid
- The Children's Justice Project
- WYCRP

According to stakeholders at the State level, DFS and the Department of Health have monthly high-level management meetings to address pertinent issues relative to serving children and family. In addition to this collaboration at the State level, each community has a working agreement with the local Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division and other community partners to address how they will provide services to mutual clients.

Laramie County stakeholders reported that DFS works cooperatively with the Department of Corrections. When parents are returning home, parole officers are invited to family partnership meetings. Sweetwater County stakeholders reported that there is an Interagency Coordination Council attended by most community partners that meets to share information on the range of services each agency provides.

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

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
Rating	1	2	3	<u>4X</u>

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

Wyoming is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2002 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its PIP.

Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

 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. DFS is the foster home and child care institution certification agency and ensures that such standards are applied.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State has certification standards for family foster homes and approval standards for adoptive homes that are in accord with the recommended national standards. Family foster care, relative foster care, relative foster care/non-IV-E eligible (only training hours have not been met), and/or specialized family foster care are certified by the local DFS office when all requirements are met. DFS-approved adoptive homes are required to meet the same standards as foster parents.

A foster care coordinator has been assigned to each area of the State to ensure certification standards are applied equally to all DFS-certified homes. The coordinators are responsible for the recruitment, certification, and monitoring of foster homes. After a family has been certified, the local DFS office monitors the foster home to assure its compliance with certification and all applicable standards and regulations. The monitoring process includes, but is not limited to, onsite inspections and evaluations. The biennial re-certification of foster homes requires a home study update, review of placements, training records, and all other certification requirements. DFS staff notify the foster care coordinator of any compliance issues or concerns when they become aware of them and those concerns are investigated.

The State has implemented certification standards for all agencies and/or organizations certified by DFS. The standards, according to the Statewide Assessment, are in accord with the recommended national standards for the types of organizations and/or agencies certified. Types of certificates issued include the following:

- Child-placing agency
- Child-placing agency with therapeutic foster care
- Shelter/group home or crisis center
- Residential treatment facility
- Detention center
- Maternity home
- Adoption agency

Standards have been developed based on a level of care system beginning with the least restrictive, family foster care, to the most restrictive, detention center. Each level is required to meet the minimum standards of family foster care, with additional requirements based on the level of care/supervision provided.

The Early Childhood Division is the division within the DFS that is responsible for ensuring all standards are met for private providers, including child-placing agencies, child-placing agencies with therapeutic foster care, shelter/group homes or crisis centers, residential treatment facilities, detention centers, maternity homes, and adoption agencies. DFS contracts with the CASAT to complete

onsite certification reviews. Certificates are issued by the DFS Early Childhood Division once all certification or re-certification requirements are met for the placement types. The division also investigates all compliance complaints and concerns.

Stakeholders, according to the Statewide Assessment, reported that DFS-certified foster homes and DFS-certified facilities are held to high standards and that the licensing and certification process is thorough.

Certification dates, certification status, re-certification dates, and other basic data can be tracked in WYCAPS.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the three review sites and the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the State has consistent certification standards for all foster homes, group homes, child care institutions, and child-placing agencies. Additionally, WYCAPS maintains certification information on foster homes and notifies the caseworker when the biennial re-certification is due.

According to stakeholders at the State level, the Tribes are not subject to the State's certification standards and each Tribe has its own foster home approval process.

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

 X Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength because the licensing standards are applied uniformly to all foster family homes, including licensed relative homes and child care institutions. Although the State did not provide data regarding the extent to which standards are applied to licensed or approved foster family homes and child care institutions, the results of the 2007 title IV-E Secondary Eligibility Review found that standards are applied to all foster homes and facilities. No findings made during the Onsite Review contradict the above-referenced IV-E review.

This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment

According to the Statewide Assessment, county DFS offices issue certificates for State-certified foster homes that meet agency standards including family foster care, relative foster care, relative foster care/non-IV-E eligible (training hours have not been met), and/or specialized family foster care.

A foster care coordinator has been assigned to each area of the State to ensure certification standards are applied equally to all DFS-certified homes. The State foster care consultant also has begun reviewing foster care files for State-certified foster homes to ensure certification standards are applied equally across the State.

The DFS Early Childhood Division issues substitute care certifications, including child-placing agency, child-placing agency with therapeutic foster care, shelter/group home or crisis center, residential treatment facility, detention center, maternity home, and adoption agency. Certified child-placing agencies issue certificates for foster family home care and/or specialized foster care. Agencies certified as child-placing agencies with therapeutic foster care can issue certificates to foster homes that meet the standards for therapeutic foster care.

To ensure standards are applied equally to all approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds, CASAT makes onsite re-certification visits to child care institutions throughout the State using a standardized review document. Each visit consists of a physical site inspection, review of personnel files, policy and procedure review, child file review, and interviews with staff and residents.

The certifying authority determines whether a waiver of the standards can be allowed, which is generally only when it is in the best interests of a child. For example, a waiver may be granted to accommodate a large sibling group in a specific foster home.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the review sites and the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that certification standards are applied equally for all providers. However, relatives who will not receive IV-E payments do not have to attend PRIDE training. Stakeholders at the review sites advised that children can be placed in relative homes when relatives have an approved home study and a criminal background check that meets Federal requirements.

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 DFS has a process in place for compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks before a prospective foster or adoptive home can be certified. There are no provisional certifications issued. Although the State did not provide data regarding the extent to which criminal background clearances are conducted, the results of the 2007 title IV-E

Eligibility Secondary Review of 150 cases support stakeholder comments and Statewide Assessment indications that criminal background clearances are conducted appropriately to address the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children. There were no findings made during the CFSR Onsite Review that would contradict the above referenced IV-E review.

This item also was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and employees of facilities are required to provide fingerprints for an FBI background check. DFS conducts State, local, and Federal background checks in accordance with State and Federal law and policy. It often takes 3 weeks or longer to receive the results due to lack of resources within the State.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders at the three review sites and at the State level commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DFS completes criminal background clearances for all prospective foster homes and adoptive homes prior to certification.

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 homes are needed. While some stakeholders reported that more statewide recruitment efforts are needed, Wyoming has made diligent efforts to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of foster and adoptive parents through coordinated activities with churches, various targeted advertising campaigns, AdoptUsKids, and hiring foster care coordinators for the State and the Tribes. The State also has trained staff on child-specific recruitment.

The State did not provide substantial data to quantify recruitment efforts. However, the State provided the following supplemental information to its Statewide Assessment:

Percentage of Children in Family Foster Care Settings by Race and Ethnicity WY CFSR AFCARS Sampling Period (4/1/07–9/30/07)	
Race/Ethnicity	Percent
AMER IND-AK NATV	3.94
AMER IND-AK NATV / HISPANIC	0.30
ASIAN	0.10
BLACK-AFR AMER	3.54
BLACK-AFR AMER / HISPANIC	0.20
HISPANIC	1.08
UNABLE TO DTRMN	6.50
UNABLE TO DTRMN / HISPANIC	4.33
WHITE	73.23
WHITE / HISPANIC	6.79
Percentage of Foster Parents Providing Family Foster Care Services by Race and Ethnicity WY CFSR AFCARS Sampling Period (4/1/07–9/30/07)	
Race/Ethnicity	Percent
HISPANIC	0.82
AMER IND-AK NATV	1.09
AMER IND-AK NATV / HISPANIC	0.14
ASIAN	0.41
BLACK-AFR AMER	1.22
BLACK-AFR AMER / HISPANIC	0.14
UNABLE TO DTRMN	0.68
UNABLE TO DTRMN / HISPANIC	0.27
WHITE	92.11
WHITE / HISPANIC	3.13
Total	100.00
Description: Includes all children in placement types “FC RELATIVE” or “LG TERM FC REL” Or “SPCLZD FC RELATIVE” Or “THERAP FC RELATIVE” or “FC NONRELATIVE” Or “LG TERM FC NON-REL” Or “SPCLZD FC NON-REL” or “THERAP FC NON-REL” that were in out-of-home placement during any time in the sampling period. Includes all foster care providers with a valid date of certification during the sampling period. Tribal placements and Tribal foster care providers are not included.	

This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, each DFS district has at least one foster care coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for foster care recruitment, including recruitment of potential foster families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. Each coordinator is responsible for submitting an annual recruitment and retention plan for the area he/she covers. The coordinators have monthly conference calls to exchange ideas and develop strategies to increase the number of adoptive and foster homes in their district. Both Tribes in Wyoming have hired their own foster care coordinator in the past year.

DFS has engaged in statewide publicity campaigns to increase the recruitment and retention of foster homes, including:

- “Make a Difference.” The Governor of Wyoming partnered with DFS to recruit foster and adoptive homes through an intense publicity effort. Radio and TV ads were broadcast as both paid and public service announcements, and print ads were purchased in regional and local papers across the State.
- “Get in the Game.” This program, created in conjunction with the University of Wyoming Athletics Department, featured radio, live reads, and print ads during University of Wyoming men's and women's athletic events. The print ads reflect children, youth, and families of various races and ethnicities.
- “One Church, One Child.” Wyoming Faith Initiatives sent packets of information to more than 800 churches and organizations.

According to the Statewide Assessment, positive experiences with DFS and the foster care system have made word of mouth the most effective strategy in recruiting and retaining non-relative foster homes.

DFS has relied on the AdoptUsKids media campaigns and partnerships with the Adoption Exchange and Wyoming certified adoption agencies to recruit adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom adoptive homes are needed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders across the sites commenting on this item said that there are minimal recruitment activities. Although stakeholders did not provide data to support this, they indicated that the most successful recruitment activity is word of mouth.

Several stakeholders at the State level indicated that the improvements are needed in the recruitment of foster and adoptive parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that there is a limited number of racially diverse foster homes and homes that will accept teenagers.

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, although the State did not provide data regarding the number of children placed in other jurisdictions, Wyoming effectively utilizes diverse methods, including both State and national adoption exchanges and photo listings, to obtain placements for children across counties and outside the State.

This item also was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2002 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State is a member State of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), which allows for a smooth transfer of a child for the purposes of foster care, adoption, and/or other permanent placements to another State. ICPC training is held annually.

Once a child becomes free for adoption, DFS provides the child’s profile and photograph to the State adoption consultant. The child’s profile is then mailed to the certified adoption agencies in the State and to DFS foster care coordinators statewide. If the agencies and/or DFS foster care coordinators have no matches, the caseworker is encouraged to prepare the child’s profile for the Adoption Exchange in Denver.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders in Laramie County and at the State level commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the use of ICPC has been successful in placing children with relatives out of State. The problem with ICPC, according to Sweetwater County and State-level stakeholders, is that other States do not always accept Wyoming Medicaid.

Stakeholders at the State level indicated that the majority of the children free for adoption are adopted by relatives or foster parents. However, when needed, DFS used the Adoption Exchange in Denver, CO, and **AdoptUsKids** to recruit adoptive placements for children.