

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report: New Jersey Child and Family Services Review
September 2009

INTRODUCTION

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

The New Jersey CFSR was conducted the week of March 30, 2009. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from October 1, 2007, to April 3, 2009. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) in collaboration with child welfare system stakeholders
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR target period ending March 31, 2008
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 31 cases in Essex County, 17 cases in Gloucester County, and 17 cases in Somerset County
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, and attorneys

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 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. The evaluation options for these outcomes are "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 Area Needing Improvement 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 (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 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 performances 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

The 2009 CFSR identified several areas of high performance with regard to New Jersey's performance in achieving the outcomes assessed during the review. These were the following:

- Item 2 pertaining to repeat maltreatment, item 5 pertaining to foster care reentry, item 11 pertaining to proximity of foster care placement, and item 22 pertaining to the physical health of the child were rated as Strengths.
- The State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to the absence of maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff. The State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods and to placement stability.

Although the State's performance on Safety Outcome 1 and Well-Being Outcome 2 did not meet the required level for substantial conformity, performance on these outcomes was fairly high: 86.0 percent of cases were substantially achieved for Safety Outcome 1, and 83.3 percent were substantially achieved for Well-Being Outcome 2.

The 2009 CFSR also identified the following key concerns with regard to the State's performance in achieving the desired outcomes for children and families:

- The State was not in substantial conformity with any of the Outcomes.
- Permanency Outcome 1 was determined to be substantially achieved in 30.0 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Well-Being Outcome 1 was determined to be substantially achieved in 44.6 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Permanency Outcome 2 was determined to be substantially achieved in 50.0 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Item 9 pertaining to adoption was rated as a Strength in 28 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Item 20 pertaining to caseworker visits with parents was rated as a Strength in 31 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Item 16 pertaining to the relationship of the child in foster care with parents was rated as a Strength in 36 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Item 13 pertaining to visiting with parents and siblings in foster care was rated as a Strength in 45 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Item 18 pertaining to child/family involvement in case planning was rated as a Strength in 48 percent of the cases reviewed.
- The State did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification or to timeliness of adoption.

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:

- Although the State has decreased the rate of foster care placement and focused on maintaining children in their own homes, onsite case review findings show poorer performance for in-home cases on well-being items and continuing concerns with regard to providing services to prevent foster care placement or reentry. These findings indicate that increased attention is required to ensure quality casework and services for these children and families.
- There is an insufficient quantity of services for families, particularly in the areas of family preservation, substance abuse treatment, visitation services, transitional living services, independent living services, mental health services, physical health services, post-adoption services, domestic violence treatment, and transportation.
- Court-ordered extensions for reunification services are impacting adherence to Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) guidelines, resulting in a lack of timely permanency for children. Extensions may be due to a lack of concerted efforts by the agency to engage parents or provide necessary services, as well as disagreements between the court and agency over appropriate case direction.
- Concurrent planning has not been fully implemented into case practice across the State.
- The State does not consistently search for fathers or engage parents in case planning.
- The quantity and quality of caseworker visits with parents are inconsistent, and engagement of parents in case planning does not occur on a consistent basis.
- The State does not currently have a statewide quality assurance (QA) system to monitor the quality of casework practice and facilitate continuous quality improvement.

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Systemic Factors

With regard to systemic factors, New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Statewide Information System, Staff and Provider Training, Agency Responsiveness to the Community, and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The State is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Case Review System, QA System, and Service Array and Resource Development.

The specific findings regarding the State's performance on 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 fiscal year 2004 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 within a 6-month time period (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.

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 86.0 percent of applicable cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 92 percent of applicable Gloucester County cases, 91 percent of applicable Somerset County cases, and 80 percent of applicable Essex County cases. Item 2 was rated as a Strength, and item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. In addition to case review findings, New Jersey met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to absence of maltreatment recurrence and absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff. Key findings for this outcome in the 2009 CFSR were the following:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 86 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of applicable cases reviewed.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) was not consistent with regard to initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports or establishing face-to-face contact with children who were the subjects of reports in accordance with State-established timeframes.
- The State's rate of maltreatment recurrence for 2002 (6.9 percent), as reported in the State Data Profile, did not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent or less, which was established for the first round of the CFSR.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed and implemented the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Model
- Completed an automated system to track and transmit referrals
- Created units of child protection workers in each Local Office to focus on investigations and initial assessments
- Achieved caseload standards for child protective services (CPS) caseworkers

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan 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 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 (item 3). The other item assesses efforts to manage safety and reduce risk of harm to children in their own homes and in their foster care placements (item 4).

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 69.2 percent of cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 76 percent of Somerset County cases, 71 percent of Gloucester County cases, and 65 percent of Essex County cases. Items 3 and 4 were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. Key findings for this outcome in the 2009 CFSR were the following:

- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 72 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 71 percent of cases reviewed.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- DYFS was not consistent in providing services to ensure children's safety while they remain in their homes, particularly for in-home services cases.
- There was a lack of thorough and ongoing risk assessment as well as inadequate understanding of the multiple issues affecting a family's ability to ensure children's safety.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Established the Division of Prevention and Community Partnership
- Developed and implemented a flexible funding process
- Implemented the New Jersey Child Welfare Training Academy (the Academy)
- Developed and implemented a practice of family team meetings to develop an individualized plan of care for each family to address the family's needs and safety and risk factors

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan 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, although not all of them are relevant for all of the foster care cases reviewed. The 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 as well as seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the requirements of ASFA (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, or 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 are in stable long-term placements and are adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 30.0 percent of foster care cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 50 percent of Somerset County cases, 30 percent of Gloucester County cases, and 20 percent of Essex County cases. Item 5 was rated as a Strength; items 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. In addition to the case review findings, New Jersey met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods and placement stability, but the State did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification or timeliness of adoptions. Key findings for this outcome in the 2009 CFSR were the following:

- Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 77.5 percent of cases reviewed.
- Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 52.5 percent of cases reviewed.
- Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 58 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 28 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 10 was rated as a Strength in 85 percent of applicable cases reviewed.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The State did not consistently ensure children's placement stability while in foster care.
- The State did not consistently establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- The State did not consistently achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner.
- There was a lack of concurrent planning. In some cases, the goal of reunification was maintained for long periods of time, even when the prognosis for reunification was low.
- There was a lack of adequate services for families, including independent living services for youth and visitation services for children and parents to support reunification.
- The process for TPR was lengthy.
- There were high caseloads that impacted caseworkers' ability to complete their tasks in a timely manner.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Eliminated the goal of long-term foster care

- Initiated an annual cross-system training conference in partnership with and funded by the Children in Court Improvement Committee
- Developed a resource family recruitment plan to improve placement stability by recruiting families from communities from which children tended to enter foster care
- Eliminated voluntary placements in child abuse/neglect cases
- Implemented child-specific recruitment to improve placement stability
- Deployed adoption specialists to Local Offices
- Expanded post-adoption services
- Implemented concurrent planning
- Developed and implemented a practice of family team meetings to develop and review an individualized plan for each family with appropriate goals
- Implemented caseload standards for CPS caseworkers

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation 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 placing children in foster care near their parents and close relatives (item 11); placing siblings together (item 12); ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and promoting relationships between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 50.0 percent of foster care cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 60 percent of Somerset County cases, 50 percent of Gloucester County cases, and 45 percent of Essex County cases. Item 11 was rated as a Strength; items 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. Key findings for this outcome in the 2009 CFSR were the following:

- Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 84 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 45 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 77.5 percent of cases reviewed.
- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 76 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 36 percent of applicable cases reviewed.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 during its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The State did not consistently place siblings together in foster care when appropriate.
- The State did not consistently promote sufficient visitation between children and their parents and between children and their siblings in foster care.
- The State did not consistently seek and assess relatives as placement resources.
- The State did not consistently make concerted efforts to preserve children's connections to their families and heritage.
- The State did not consistently make concerted efforts to support or strengthen the parent-child relationship.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented a family resource recruitment plan with an emphasis on homes that can accept sibling groups
- Increased board rates for resource families
- Developed a workgroup to revise the case plan format to include visitation between children and their parents and between children and their siblings in foster care
- Developed and implemented a practice of family team meetings to develop an individualized plan for each family and strengthen children's connections and the parent-child relationship
- Developed and implemented 155 case aide positions to provide visitation services
- Deployed Resource Family Support Unit caseworkers in each Local Office responsible for conducting a thorough and ongoing search for relative caregivers
- Developed and implemented a protocol to transition relative caregivers to licensed resource families

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation 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).

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 44.6 percent of cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 53 percent of Somerset County cases, 45 percent of Essex County cases, and 35 percent of Gloucester County cases.

The outcome also was substantially achieved in 52.5 percent of foster care cases and 32 percent of in-home services cases. Items 17, 18, 19, and 20 were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. Key findings for this outcome in the 2009 CFSR were the following:

- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 57 percent of cases reviewed.
- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 48 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 74 percent of cases reviewed.
- Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 31 percent of applicable cases reviewed.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 during its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The State did not consistently assess children, parents, and foster parents for services and provide necessary services.
- There was a lack of comprehensive needs assessment.
- The State did not consistently involve parents and children in the case planning process.
- There was insufficient face-to-face contact between agency caseworkers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed and implemented SDM to improve accurate assessment and identify risk elements
- Developed and implemented a practice of family team meetings to develop an individualized plan for each family
- Developed and implemented SafeMeasures data reporting to track visits and evaluate the quality of visits
- Established the Academy

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

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

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

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 83.3 percent of applicable cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 100 percent of applicable Somerset County cases, 78 percent of applicable Essex County cases, and 75 percent of applicable Gloucester County cases. Also, the outcome was substantially achieved in 85 percent of applicable foster care cases and 75 percent of applicable in-home services cases.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 during its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concern was identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- DYFS was not consistent in its efforts to address education-related needs of children in the in-home services cases, even when an education-related intervention was warranted.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Incorporated educational needs into the case plan and assessment process
- Developed and distributed educational information on educational requirements and issues to staff and resource families

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

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

This outcome incorporates two items pertaining to State efforts to assess and 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.

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 71.7 percent of the applicable cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 79 percent of applicable Somerset County cases, 75 percent of applicable Gloucester cases, and 67 percent of applicable Essex County cases. Also, the outcome was substantially achieved in 80 percent of foster care cases and 55 percent of applicable in-home services cases. Item 22 was rated as a Strength; item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Key findings for this outcome in the 2009 CFSR were the following:

- Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 92 percent of applicable cases reviewed.
- Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 69 percent of applicable cases reviewed.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 during its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concern was identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The State was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical and mental health needs, particularly for children in the in-home cases reviewed.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Hired a nurse specialist for each Local Office
- Incorporated child health needs into a new case plan format

- Developed and implemented a comprehensive health evaluation for children, including a mental health screen, to be completed within 30 days of placement
- Created the Division of Child Behavioral Health Services (DCBHS) to ensure coordination of mental health services

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation 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. Only one item is incorporated under the systemic factor of Statewide Information System (item 24).

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. Item 24 is rated as a Strength in the 2009 CFSR. NJ SPIRIT (New Jersey Statewide Protective Investigation Reporting and Information Tool), which is New Jersey's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for every child in foster care.

New Jersey also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

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 case reviews and hearings to be held regarding the children in their care and about their right to be heard in those proceedings (item 29).

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The 2009 CFSR found the following strengths in the State's Case Review System:

- Item 26 is rated as a Strength. The State provides for the periodic review of each child in foster care through compliance reviews held by the court at a minimum of every 2 to 3 months. The Child Placement Review Board (CPRB) conducts a 45-day review and a permanency review. In addition, some CPRBs will conduct a paper review at the sixth month in the first year of the child's placement.
- Item 27 is rated as a Strength. The State provides a process to ensure that a permanency hearing is held within 1 year of the placement of a child in foster care and every 12 months thereafter. The permanency hearings are generally held in a timely manner and routinely address the permanent goal for the child. Court data reported in the Statewide Assessment show that 99.1 percent of cases have timely permanency hearings. Stakeholders noted that periodic reviews are held after the 12-month permanency hearing to ensure appropriate progress towards goals.
- Item 29 is rated as Strength. The State agency provides notice to caregivers of reviews and hearings held with respect to the child. In addition, caregivers are provided with the opportunity to be heard in reviews and in court hearings.

Despite these areas of strength, the 2009 CFSR noted the following concerns:

- Item 25 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State provides a process to ensure that each child has a written case plan that includes the required provisions, data provided in the Statewide Assessment and comments from stakeholders indicate that parents are not routinely involved in the development of case plans. During the onsite CFSR, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve mothers in the case planning process in 33 percent of the applicable cases and fathers in the case planning process in 14 percent of the applicable cases.
- Item 28 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although there is a process for filing a petition for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA, the Statewide Assessment and stakeholders acknowledge that there is a continued need to improve compliance with this process. Stakeholders noted that courts routinely provide parents with ongoing opportunities (extensions of time beyond the 15th month of placement) to continue to work towards reunification. Stakeholders reported that, in these cases, some courts do not accept TPR petitions until the extensions have expired and the court has ordered DYFS to file a TPR petition or changed the goal to adoption. During the onsite CFSR, reviewers determined that ASFA requirements with regard to filing for TPR were met in 77 percent of applicable cases.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- Case plans were not developed jointly with the child's parent on a consistent basis.
- DYFS was not consistent with regard to conducting a case review for all children in foster care at least once every 6 months.
- Permanency hearings were not consistently conducted every 12 months for children in foster care.
- Although the State had established a process for TPR in accordance with the provisions of the ASFA, there were delays in filing for and achieving TPR.

- DYFS and the courts were not consistent with regard to ensuring that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care were notified of, and had an opportunity to be heard in, all case reviews or hearings held with respect to the child.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed and implemented family team meetings to develop an individualized plan for each family
- Developed training for judges and attorneys on the importance of parental participation in permanency hearings
- Improved systems to support the timeliness of notification to caregivers by using reports to identify gaps
- Deployed adoption specialists to Local Offices, hired additional law guardians, and developed a strategy to increase the availability of experts in family court proceedings to expedite the filing of TPR petitions in accordance with ASFA
- Implemented child placement review standards
- Developed a case practice model to strengthen the engagement of parents in case planning

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan 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 areas needing improvement (item 31).

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. The 2009 CFSR found the following strength in the State's QA system:

- Item 30 is rated as a Strength. The State has standards in place to ensure the quality of services to protect the safety and health of children. The State monitors casework regularly and monitors contracted service providers through the use of performance-based contracts.

Despite this area of strength, the 2009 CFSR found the following concern:

- Item 31 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has a variety of State and local QA efforts in development specifically to monitor the implementation of the case practice model and elements of the Modified Settlement Agreement reached with the Federal court-appointed monitor, the State does not have a centralized comprehensive QA system to evaluate the quality of services, identify strengths and needs of the service delivery system, and evaluate program improvement measures at this time.

New Jersey was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The State had not implemented procedures to ensure that children in foster care were provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.
- The State did not have a comprehensive QA system that measures program strengths and areas needing improvement on a statewide basis.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented SDM tools and integrated the SDM training module into the training for new caseworkers
- Developed a qualitative review process, known as the Mini-CFSR
- Transitioned kin caregivers to fully licensed resource families

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

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).

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. The 2009 CFSR found the following strengths in the State's Staff and Provider Training system:

- Item 32 is rated as a Strength. The State provides comprehensive child welfare training to new caseworkers and ensures that caseworkers are fully trained on relevant issues prior to assuming a caseload. Caseworkers are required to pass competency exams.
- Item 33 is rated as Strength. The State requires ongoing training for all caseworkers and supervisors. Ongoing training is coordinated, provided, and tracked by the New Jersey Child Welfare Training Partnership.
- Item 34 is rated as a Strength. The State provides training for foster and adoptive parents, including licensed relative caregivers. The training is provided prior to the placement of a child in the home and is viewed by caregivers as relevant, accessible, and timely.

New Jersey was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The initial training for DYFS staff was insufficient to address the goals and objectives contained in the CFSP and the services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E. Training was not sufficient to link caseworker skills and competencies to key outcome measures.

- DYFS did not require ongoing training for staff to ensure continuous staff development. DYFS did not provide staff with sufficient opportunities to access ongoing training.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Established the Academy to provide ongoing caseworker training
- Developed a training evaluation component and competency testing for caseworkers
- Integrated cultural competency and diversity training into the pre-service training package for new caseworkers

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

Service Array and Resource Development

The assessment of the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development incorporates 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)?

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. The 2009 CFSR found the following strength in the State's Service Array and Resource Development:

- Item 35 is rated as a Strength. The State has in place a comprehensive array of services to address the needs of children and families for safety, permanency, and well-being. New Jersey has significantly expanded both public and privately delivered services, particularly in the areas of assessment, prevention, and behavioral health. Although reviewers determined during the onsite CFSR in item 17 that caseworkers did not make concerted efforts to assess and provide services to parents in foster care cases or to families receiving in-home services, assessment tools and services are available in the State.

Despite this area of strength, the 2009 CFSR found the following concerns:

- Item 36 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although services have expanded significantly, services provided by the State are not accessible to families and children in all jurisdictions. There are waiting lists for key services such as psychiatric evaluation and treatment, substance abuse treatment, youth services, and post-adoption services.
- Item 37 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has a variety of methods for individualizing services and service planning to meet the unique needs of children and families, such as family team meetings, the case practice model, specialized caseworkers in local offices, and flexible funds, these methods are not consistently utilized across cases throughout the State.

New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The State did not have in place a sufficient array of services that would enable children to remain safely with their parents when appropriate or would help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. Critical gaps in the service array were bilingual services, therapeutic foster care services, insufficient family preservation services, substance abuse treatment services (particularly for women with children), and mental health services for children and parents.
- Services were not available to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP, and where services were available, long waiting lists often impeded accessibility of those services.
- DYFS did not provide staff with the tools to permit them to individualize services for all children and families served by the agency. Stakeholders reported that inadequate and/or infrequent communication between DYFS and contracted service providers was an additional impediment to ensuring that services were tailored to meet the unique needs of children and families.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed a process to implement flexible funding
- DCBHS, as it is now known, became a component under what is now DCF
- Increased services and funding in domestic violence treatment, housing, adolescent and youth programming, post-adoption support, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services
- Provided a contract to place a substance abuse specialist in DYFS offices

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan 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).

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The 2009 CFSR found the following strengths in the State Agency's Responsiveness to the Community:

- Item 39 is rated as a Strength. The State engages key stakeholders including parents, service providers, and the courts in ongoing planning and consultation. The State's preparation of the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) includes the results of a variety of surveys that reflect the level of engagement of key stakeholders.

- Item 40 is rated as Strength. The State provides a single governmental organizing structure to ensure that services and benefits of various Federal programs are coordinated. DYFS works in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) divisions of Addiction Services, Developmental Disabilities, Family Development, and Medical Assistance and Health Services.

Despite these areas of strength, the 2009 CFSR found the following concern:

- Item 38 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has worked cooperatively with many stakeholders to implement the goals and objectives of the CFSP, stakeholders surveyed in the preparation of the Statewide Assessment and during the onsite CFSR indicated that there is a low level of input from key stakeholders into the strategic planning that occurs within the child welfare system.

New Jersey was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concern was identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- The agency does not make sufficient efforts to engage external and internal stakeholders in developing the CFSP or in preparing the APSRs.

To address this concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Restructured the CFSR/CFSP committee
- Designed and distributed an informational handout of the CFSP
- Conducted an annual staff survey to develop information on CFSP service needs

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

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).

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The 2009 CFSR found the following strengths in the State's Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention system:

- Item 41 is rated as a Strength. The State has standards for resource family homes and placement facilities that comply with all Federal requirements, are updated routinely, and are reflected in foster and adoptive home licensing procedures.

- Item 42 is rated as a Strength. The State applies safety standards to all licensed residential facilities and foster and adoptive homes, including relative homes. Although presumptive eligibility for a license is issued for some relative placements and waivers are approved in certain circumstances, safety and health standards are maintained.
- Item 43 is rated as a Strength. The State provides for comprehensive background checks as a component of licensing for all foster and adoptive placements, including relative and residential treatment facility placements.
- Item 44 is rated as a Strength. The State uses data to inform and plan for the recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom placements are needed.
- Item 45 is rated as a Strength. The State effectively uses cross-jurisdictional adoption exchanges including **AdoptUsKids** and the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children to support permanent placements for children.

New Jersey was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2004 CFSR:

- Although New Jersey had implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that were reasonably in accord with recommended national standards, the standards were not equally applied to relative caregiver homes.
- The State did not have a comprehensive process to ensure the adequate recruitment of potential foster and adoptive homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom homes were needed.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Adopted uniform licensing standards for adoptive, foster, and kinship homes
- Hired additional licensing staff
- Developed a protocol to transition relative caregivers to full license status
- Developed recruitment targets

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

Table 1. New Jersey 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	86.0	Met 2 of 2		
Item 1. Timeliness of investigations				ANI	86
Item 2. Repeat maltreatment				Strength	100
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	69.2			
Item 3. Services to protect children in home				ANI	72
Item 4. Risk of harm				ANI	71
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	30.0	Met 2 of 4		
Item 5. Foster care reentry				Strength	100
Item 6. Stability of foster care placements				ANI	77.5
Item 7. Permanency goal for child				ANI	52.5
Item 8. Reunification, guardianship, and placement with relatives				ANI	58
Item 9. Adoption				ANI	28
Item 10. Other planned living arrangement				ANI	85
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	50.0			
Item 11. Proximity of placement				Strength	100
Item 12. Placement with siblings				ANI	84
Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	45
Item 14. Preserving connections				ANI	77.5
Item 15. Relative placement				ANI	76
Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	36

*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 Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANIs). For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases must be rated as a Strength.

Table 2. New Jersey 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	44.6		
Item 17. Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents			ANI	57
Item 18. Child/family involvement in case planning			ANI	48
Item 19. Caseworker visits with child			ANI	74
Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents			ANI	31
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive services to meet their educational needs	No	83.3		
Item 21. Educational needs of the child			ANI	83
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	No	71.7		
Item 22. Physical health of the child			Strength	92
Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of the child			ANI	69

*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 Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANIs). 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: New Jersey 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 parent(s) 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			Strength
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
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	No	2	
Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children			Strength
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, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented			ANI
Staff and Provider Training	Yes	4	
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			Strength
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

Systemic Factors and Items	Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
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	3	
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			ANI
Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, Annual Progress and Services Reports delivered pursuant to the CFSP			Strength
Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population			Strength
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	Yes	4	
Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards			Strength
Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds			Strength
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 foster and 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 Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANIs).

Final Report
New Jersey Child and Family Services Review
August 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 New Jersey. 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 of the Administration for Children and Families within HHS.

The New Jersey CFSR was conducted the week of March 30, 2009. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from October 1, 2007, to April 3, 2009. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) in collaboration with child welfare system stakeholders
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR data period ending March 31, 2008
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 31 cases in Essex County, 17 cases in Gloucester County, and 17 cases in Somerset County
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, and attorneys

All 65 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review. The key characteristics of the children in the cases reviewed are presented in the table at the end of this section. For this table, and for other tables in the report, figures displayed may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

According to New Jersey's Statewide Assessment, in July 2006, the State entered into a Modified Settlement Agreement (MSA) in response to class-action litigation and is currently being monitored by an appointed Federal monitor. The MSA aligned with the action steps outlined in the State's Program Improvement Plan.

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

Key Characteristics of Cases Reviewed

Case Characteristics	Foster Care	In-Home Services
Total Number of Cases	40	25
Date case was opened		
Opened prior to the period under review	35 (87.5%)	7 (28%)
Opened during the period under review	5 (12.5%)	18 (72%)
Child entered foster care during the period under review	12 (30%)	N/A
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than 10	22 (55%)	*
At least 10 but younger than 13	1 (2.5%)	*
At least 13 but younger than 16	8 (20%)	*
16 and older	9 (22.5%)	*
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-Hispanic	0	*
Asian Non-Hispanic	0	*
Black Non-Hispanic	24 (60%)	*
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic	0	*
Hispanic (of any race)	4 (10%)	*
White Non-Hispanic	12 (30%)	*
Unknown/Unable to Determine	0	*
Two or More Races Non-Hispanic	0	*
Primary reason for opening case		
Physical abuse	6 (15%)	4 (16%)
Sexual abuse	2 (5%)	3 (12%)
Emotional maltreatment	0	0
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	15 (37.5%)	8 (32%)
Medical neglect	2 (5%)	1 (4%)
Abandonment	0	0
Mental/physical health of parent	3 (7.5%)	1 (4%)
Mental/physical health of child	0	1 (4%)
Substance abuse by parent	10 (25%)	5 (20%)
Child's behavior	0	1 (4%)
Domestic violence in child's home	2 (5%)	1 (4%)
Child in juvenile justice system	0	0
Other	0	0

*Information on in-home services cases is not available for these characteristics.

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

In the Outcomes Section of the CFSR Final Report, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement is assigned to each of the 23 items reviewed. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent or more 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 or more 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, both the national standards for each data indicator and the case review requirements must be met. A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan to address the areas of concern identified for that outcome.

The Children’s Bureau has established very high standards 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 the 95-percent standard established for the CFSR Onsite Review or the national standards for the six data indicators by the end of their Program Improvement Plan implementations. The Children’s Bureau 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 the Children’s Bureau to establish a specified amount of improvement or to determine specified activities for their Program Improvement Plans. That is, for each outcome that is not in substantial conformity or item that is rated as an Area Needing Improvement, each State (working in conjunction with the Children’s Bureau) specifies the following: (1) how much improvement the State will demonstrate and/or the activities that it will implement to address the Areas Needing Improvement and (2) 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 Program Improvement Plan 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 CFSRs 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 Program Improvement Plans addressing areas in which a State still needs to improve, even though prior Program Improvement Plan 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 Program Improvement Plan.

The following sections provide information on how New Jersey performed on each outcome in the first round of the CFSR as well as the current CFSR. If the outcome was not substantially achieved during the first round, the key concerns observed at that time and the strategies implemented in the Program Improvement Plan to address those concerns are discussed.

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 Area Needing Improvement ratings. Key changes in the CFSR case review 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 in planning for their children

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 New Jersey’s status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State’s first CFSR report, which was held in fiscal year (FY) 2004, the State’s status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Performance data for individual sites included in the Onsite Review are presented in the tables. 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.

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					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	16	11	10	37	86.0
Partially Achieved	1	0	1	2	4.7
Not Achieved	3	1	0	4	9.3
Total Applicable Cases	20	12	11	43	
Not Applicable Cases	11	5	6	22	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	80%	92%	91%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (%)	State's Percent	Meets Standards?
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6 +	95.9	Yes
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68 +	99.70	Yes

Status of Safety Outcome 1

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 86.0 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. In addition to the case review findings, the State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to absence of maltreatment recurrence and absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) was not consistent with regard to initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports or establishing face-to-face contact with the child who was the subject of the report in accordance with State-established timeframes.
- The State's rate of maltreatment recurrence for 2002 (6.9%), as reported in the State Data Profile, did not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent or less which was established for the first round of the CFSR.

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

- Developed and initiated the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Model
- Completed an automated system to track and transmit referrals and reports
- Created units of Child Protection Workers in each Local Office to focus on investigations and initial assessments
- Achieved caseload standards for CPS caseworkers

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

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

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 43 (66 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable when 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.

In New Jersey, referrals are received by the State Central Registry (SCR) and classified as either Child Protective Services (CPS) reports or Child Welfare Services (CWS) referrals. State policy regarding the investigation of reports for CPS is the following:

- Immediate Response: in-person contact shall be made with the child victim/subject child no later than the end of the workday in which the report was assigned from SCR.
- Within 24 hours: in-person contact with the child victim/subject child shall be made within 24 hours of assignment of the report from SCR.

State policy regarding the investigation of referrals for CWS is the following:

- Within 72 hours: in-person contact must be made with the child and his/her family within 72 hours of assignment of the referral from SCR.
- Within 5 days: in-person contact must be made with the child and his/her family within 5 workdays of assignment of the referral from SCR.

The results of the assessment of item 1 are presented in the table below.

Item 1 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	16	11	10	37	86
Area Needing Improvement	4	1	1	6	14
Total Applicable Cases	20	12	11	43	
Not Applicable	11	5	6	22	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	80%	92%	91%		

Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 37 cases when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was made within the timeframes required by State policy. Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in six cases when the investigation was not initiated within the required timeframes.

Additional case review findings regarding the 80 reports accepted during the period under review on the 43 applicable cases are as follows:

- All 21 CPS reports assigned for immediate response were investigated in a timely manner.
- 90 percent (43 reports) of the 48 CPS reports assigned for response within 24 hours were investigated in a timely manner.
- 91 percent (10 referrals) of the 11 CWS referrals assigned for response within 72 hours were investigated in a timely manner.
- There were no CWS referrals assigned for response within 5 days.

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 86 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 1 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the SCR is the single entry point to receive referrals for CPS reports and CWS referrals. The SCR provides intake and screening services for all reports received before forwarding to the appropriate local office for investigation. CPS reports are categorized, or classified, according to an Allegation-Based System, as various types of abuse and/or neglect. CPS cases then are assigned one of two timeframes for response: immediate or within 24 hours.

For CWS referrals, the Statewide Assessment notes that referrals are linked, as appropriate, to the local responding agency. CWS referrals are assigned one of two timeframes for response: within 72 hours or within 5 days. The Statewide Assessment reports that, beginning in September 2007, the State piloted the Differential Response (DR) program in four counties (Gloucester, Cumberland, Salem, and Camden). The Statewide Assessment notes that DR is designed to allow access to support services to strengthen families and help prevent child abuse and neglect when stressors are present that can give rise to conditions in which children may be at risk. The Statewide Assessment reports that, in the first year of the DR program, 962 families were served by DR case caseworkers who met with the family within 72 hours of the referral and held family team meetings within 10 days of the referral.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that when a report is received in the local office, the intake supervisor holds a pre-investigation conference to review the case, develop a plan for investigation, and determine whether a joint investigation is needed with the county prosecutor's office, local police, human services police, regional diagnostic and treatment center, or the nurse consultant. The Statewide Assessment reports that when an assigned caseworker is unable to make in-person contact with each subject child, he or she is required to make a minimum of three attempts to contact the child in person within the assigned timeframe. According to the Statewide Assessment, SCR fields approximately 17,000 phone calls per month and in State fiscal year (SFY) 2008, SCR referred approximately 60,000 calls to local offices for investigation or follow-up.

The Statewide Assessment notes that strategies implemented to improve the timely response to reports of abuse and neglect included the following:

- Designated investigators are specially trained to respond to reports.
- Caseload Management allows offices to maintain staffing levels sufficient to address peak referrals.
- The SCR was created.
- New Jersey Statewide Protective Investigation Reporting and Information Tool (NJ SPIRIT) was modified to capture timestamps for response events.

The Statewide Assessment reports that SafeMeasures, a monitoring component of NJ SPIRIT, shows that 60-68 percent of CPS reports received in 2008 were responded to in a timely manner.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally responds to reports of abuse and neglect in a timely manner. Several stakeholders noted that law enforcement agencies are responsive to investigative caseworkers and provide information regarding families as well as personnel to accompany caseworkers in particularly dangerous situations. Some stakeholders noted that the SCR facilitates effective and consistent screening of calls and the timely referral to local offices for investigation. However, some Somerset County stakeholders noted that SCR screening is not consistent across jurisdictions and that local offices spend time investigating reports about children who are not at risk.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 20 (31 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 if 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. The results of the assessment of item 2 are presented in the table below.

Item 2 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	8	6	6	20	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Cases	8	6	6	20	
Not Applicable	23	11	11	45	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	100%		

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in all 20 applicable cases when there was only one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family within a 6-month period. Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when there were at least two substantiated maltreatment reports on the family within a 6-month period.

In addition to the recurrence of substantiated maltreatment reports, reviewers reported the following findings with regard to the number of maltreatment reports on the family during the life of the case (“life of the case” refers to the time from the date of the first allegation of abuse or neglect to the time of the onsite CFSR):

- In 32 cases, there was at least one report but fewer than five reports.
- In 24 cases, there were at least 5 reports but fewer than 15 reports.
- In five cases, there were at least 15 reports but fewer than 25 reports.
- In four cases, there were 25 or more reports.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of a Strength. In 100 percent of the applicable cases, there was no recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment within a 6-month period. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 2 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the two available dispositions for allegations of child abuse/neglect are “substantiated” and “unfounded.” The Statewide Assessment notes that the SDM safety assessment, which is completed during an investigation, and risk assessments, which are completed every 6 months, assist in the protection of children from repeat maltreatment. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that NJ SPIRIT includes ticklers and safeguards to focus attention on families that continue to need support.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the incidence of maltreatment reports and substantiation of maltreatment reports of children in out-of-home care have declined. In 2007, 3.7 percent of 4,544 incidents were substantiated, and in 2006, 4.3 percent of 4,222 incidents were substantiated.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in preventing repeat maltreatment.

Safety Outcome 2

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	20	12	13	45	69.2
Partially Achieved	3	1	1	5	7.7
Not Achieved	8	4	3	15	23.1
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	65%	71%	76%		

Status of Safety Outcome 2

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 69.2 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- DYFS was not consistent in providing services to ensure children’s safety while they remain in their homes, particularly for in-home services cases.
- There was a lack of thorough and ongoing risk assessment and inadequate understanding of the multiple issues affecting a family’s ability to ensure children’s safety.

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

- Established the Division of Prevention and Community Partnership (DPCP)
- Developed and initiated a flexible funding process
- Established the New Jersey Child Welfare Training Academy (the Academy)
- Developed and initiated the practice of family team meetings to create an individualized plan of care for each family to address the family’s needs and safety and risk factors

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 36 (55 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded 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 applicable cases, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families that would prevent placement of children in foster care and at the same time ensure their safety. The results of the assessment of item 3 are presented in the table below.

Item 3 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	10	8	8	26	72
Area Needing Improvement	5	3	2	10	28
Total Applicable Cases	15	11	10	36	
Not Applicable	16	6	7	29	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	67%	73%	80%		

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

- Although no services were provided when the child was removed from the home, the removal was necessary to ensure the safety of the child (five cases).
- Services were provided to the family to ensure the safety of the child and prevent removal (21 cases).

Case review information indicates that a range of services was offered or provided to families. This included (but was not limited to) the following: counseling, family therapy, psychological evaluation and treatment, substance abuse treatment, anger management, medical evaluation and treatment, family team meetings, parenting education, supervised visitation, and domestic violence treatment.

Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Services were not provided to the family, and the children remained at risk in the home (five cases).
- Services were provided, but they did not target the key safety concern in the family, leaving the children at risk in the home (five cases).

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 72 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 3 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, investigative caseworkers complete the SDM safety assessment to ensure the safety of all children and to implement a safety protection plan, if needed. The safety protection plan, which is developed with the parents' consent, is intended to mitigate the need for out-of-home placement of the child and identifies those actions and services that are necessary to prevent removal. The Statewide Assessment notes that the following strategies have resulted in improvement in the State's efforts to prevent removal into foster care:

- Implementation of managed caseloads that cap the number of cases per caseworker
- Targeting and classification of responses to reports of abuse and neglect
- The use of validated tools to assess families
- An increased array of services and/or supports to alleviate stress and manage risk for families

The Statewide Assessment notes that voluntary foster care placement has been discontinued and that all cases of children who enter out-of-home care are monitored by the courts.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data:

- NJ SPIRIT data analyzed by Chapin Hall showed that the placement rate declined overall from 2.4 per 1,000 reports in 2004 to 2.0 per 1,000 reports in 2007.
- NJ SPIRIT data showed that, as of June 2008, 81 percent of the children under DYFS supervision were being served in their own homes.
- Point-in-time data showed that, as of December 31, 2008, DYFS served four times the number of children in the home (38,317) as in out-of-home care (8,846).

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that an annual survey of caseworkers identified a lack of sufficient family preservation program slots for the number of families that could potentially benefit from family preservation services. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that in-home safety plans are in effect for only 10 days before the agency is required to either bring the case to court or close the case. However, many action steps take more than 10 days to complete.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State’s effectiveness in protecting children in their homes and preventing removal or reentry into foster care. Several Essex County and Gloucester County stakeholders expressed the opinion that the agency generally is effective in providing effective and comprehensive services to prevent removal. However, several Somerset County stakeholders expressed the opinion that comprehensive services are not available to a family until the child has already been removed.

Item 4. Risk assessment and safety management

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 4 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	21	12	13	46	71
Area Needing Improvement	10	5	4	19	29
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	68%	71%	76%		

Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 46 cases when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by the agency through the following: conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children’s home or in the children’s foster home and addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment. In addition, reviewers noted that risk was formally assessed using SDM tools in 18 cases. The use of SDM was not noted in the remainder of cases.

Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 19 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was no initial safety or risk assessment (two cases).
- There was no ongoing safety and risk assessment in the child’s home during the period under review (10 cases).
- There was no ongoing safety and risk assessment in the foster home during the period under review (two cases).
- There were continued risk concerns in the home that were not addressed and/or monitored by the agency (seven cases). Examples of unaddressed risk concerns include: substance abuse, child’s mental and behavioral health, child’s gang involvement, runaway behavior, sexual abuse, and parent’s mental health.
- Safety and risk were assessed for one child in the home but not for all children in the home (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 71 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to assess and address the risk of harm to the child. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 4 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, investigative caseworkers use SDM during the investigation to assess the safety of all children. An SDM risk assessment also is completed prior to the closing of the investigation to determine whether to open a case for services, to specify contact requirements, and to inform the case planning process. The Statewide Assessment notes that the risk reassessment is to be completed within 6 months from receipt of the initial referral, every 6 months thereafter, and whenever new circumstances or information that affect risk become available. In the case of maltreatment reports that result in placement outside of the home, the family reunification assessment is used until the child returns home.

The Statewide Assessment attributes successful risk and safety assessment outcomes to State efforts to manage caseloads. However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that further data analysis of repeat maltreatment is necessary to improve the effectiveness of risk and safety management.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State's effectiveness in assessing risk and safety for children. Several stakeholders noted that the SDM tools provide caseworkers with a comprehensive method for regularly assessing risk and safety and for designing effective safety plans. However, other stakeholders noted that there is inconsistency in the use of the SDM tools due in part to the level of experience of the caseworker.

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					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	4	3	5	12	30.0
Partially Achieved	15	7	5	27	67.5
Not Achieved	1	0	0	1	2.5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	20%	30%	50%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (Scaled Score)	State Score (Scaled Score)	Meets Standards?
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	122.6 +	117.7	No
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	106.4 +	95.5	No
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods	121.7 +	133.6	Yes
Composite 4: Placement stability	101.5 +	105.5	Yes

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 30.0 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. In addition to case review findings, New Jersey met the national standard for the data indicators pertaining to permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods and to placement stability but did not meet the national standard for the data indicators pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification or to timeliness of adoptions. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State did not consistently ensure children’s placement stability while in foster care.
- The State did not consistently establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- The State did not consistently achieve children’s permanency goals in a timely manner.
- There was a lack of concurrent planning. In some cases, the goal of reunification was maintained for long periods of time, even when the prognosis for reunification was low.
- There was a lack of adequate services for families, including Independent Living (IL) services for youth and visitation services for children and parents to support reunification.
- The process for termination of parental rights (TPR) was lengthy.
- High caseloads affect caseworkers’ ability to complete their tasks in a timely manner.

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

- Eliminated the goal of long-term foster care
- Initiated an annual cross-system training conference in partnership with and funded by the Children in Court Improvement Committee (CICIC)

- Developed a resource family recruitment plan to improve placement stability by recruiting families from communities in which children tend to enter foster care
- Eliminated voluntary placements in child abuse/neglect cases
- Initiated child-specific recruitment to improve placement stability
- Deployed adoption specialists to Local Offices
- Expanded post-adoption services
- Initiated concurrent planning
- Developed and established the practice of family team meetings to create and review an individualized plan with appropriate goals for each family
- Created caseload standards for CPS caseworkers

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 are presented and discussed below.

Item 5. Foster care reentries

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 12 (30 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not enter foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of the assessment of item 5 are presented in the table below.

Item 5 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	6	4	2	12	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	4	2	12	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	6	8	28	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	100%		

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in all 12 applicable cases when 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 (nine cases), or when the child had reentered foster care but reviewers determined that concerted efforts had been made to prevent reentry (three cases).

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases reviewed. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 5 also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Performance on the 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.

New Jersey's performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was the following: In the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period for the data indicators, 10.2 percent of children exiting foster care to reunification reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage is less than the national median of 15.0 percent but greater than the national 25th percentile of 9.9 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS works to prevent reentry by providing post-reunification services to assure stabilization of the family. If a return to foster care is necessary, the resource family placement facilitator, in conjunction with the child's caseworker, determines if the child can return to his or her previous caregiver to minimize trauma to the child. The Statewide Assessment notes that in Salem County, family team meetings are held post-reunification to assure that goals are on track.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the difficulties families face, including mental health and substance abuse issues, can present continuing concerns for permanency for children. The Statewide Assessment notes that DYFS will continue to focus on post-reunification services to support family stability.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders did not comment on this item during the onsite CFSR.

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 most recent placement setting. The results of the assessment of item 6 are presented in the table below.

Item 6 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	13	9	9	31	77.5
Area Needing Improvement	7	1	1	9	22.5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	65%	90%	90%		

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child’s current placement was stable and one of the following:

- The child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (23 cases).
- The placement changes experienced were in the child’s best interests (i.e., they were intended to further achievement of the child’s permanency goal or to provide specialized services for the child) (eight cases).

Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in nine cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The child was in multiple placement settings during the period under review, and at least one placement change was not planned by the agency to attain the child’s permanency goal (eight cases).
- The child’s placement setting at the time of the onsite CFSR was not stable (four cases).

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 24 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in 11 cases experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Children in five cases experienced three or more placements during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77.5 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 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 performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 4 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, New Jersey's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 4: Placement stability was the following:

- C4.1: 86.6 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 is greater than the national 75th percentile of 86.0 percent.
- C4.2: 70.6 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the 75th percentile of 65.4 percent.
- C4.3: 45.3 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the 75th percentile of 41.8 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, a resource home is selected for a child based on the ability of the resource family to understand, accept, and provide for the individual needs of a specific child. The Statewide Assessment notes that, to minimize trauma and find the most appropriate setting, DYFS must first consider relatives and close family friends who may be willing and able to provide substitute care. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that flexible funds are available to support relative caregivers in providing permanent homes for children. The Statewide Assessment reports that foster care placement stability has improved due to the following practices:

- The increase in licensed relative caregivers and in resource homes
- The implementation of family team meetings
- The implementation of the case practice model
- The development of Resource Family Support Units (RFSU) to ensure local placements and facilitate placement with relatives

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State's effectiveness in providing stable foster care placements for children. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that the agency is able to provide stable placements for children due in part to the increase in resource families and the increase in the use of relative placements. However, other stakeholders noted that relative placements are not stable in some cases because the agency does not consistently provide support to relative resource families to assist them in meeting the particular needs of the children placed in their homes.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

 Strength X 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. Reviewers also were to determine whether the agency had sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The results of the assessment of item 7 are presented in the table below.

Item 7 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	8	6	7	21	52.5
Area Needing Improvement	12	4	3	19	47.5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	40%	60%	70%		

Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 21 cases when reviewers determined that the child’s permanency goal was appropriate, had been established in a timely manner, and, if relevant, that the agency had filed for TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA.

Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 19 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child’s permanency goal at the time of the onsite CFSR was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (six cases). In three of these cases the goal was other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA), and in three cases the goal was reunification or reunification with a relative.
- The child’s permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (15 cases).
- The agency had not filed for TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA (six cases).

ASFA requirements with regard to filing for TPR were met in 77 percent (20 cases) of 26 applicable cases.

The following case goals were identified for the 40 foster care cases:

- Adoption only (15 cases)
- Reunification only (including reunification with relatives) (six cases)
- Guardianship only (one case)
- OPPLA only (13 cases) (also called independent living or other long term supportive care [OLTSC])
- Concurrent goals of adoption and reunification (three cases)
- Concurrent goals of guardianship and reunification (two cases)

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 52.5 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and had met ASFA requirements when

relevant. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 7 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 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 permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards were established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 3 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, New Jersey's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods was the following:

- C3.1: 37.8 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the 12-month CFSR target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 29.1 percent.
- C3.2: 93.2 percent of the children exiting foster care during the target period who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home. This percentage is less than the national median of 96.8 percent.
- C3.3: 40.2 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 median of 47.8 percent but greater than the national 25th percentile of 37.5 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, New Jersey has the following case goals for permanency: maintenance in own home/family stabilization, reunification, adoption, kinship legal guardianship (KLG), independent living, OLTSC, and individual stabilization (for young adults age 18 to 21). The Statewide Assessment notes that caseload management and the case practice model are key elements in the development of timely and appropriate goals for children in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that DYFS eliminated the practice of voluntary placement and the goal of long-term foster care.

The Statewide Assessment reports that concurrent planning is in its second year of phase-in. Within 30 days of placement, a primary and secondary goal for the child must be established. The Statewide Assessment notes that, when children are placed in out-of-home care, caseworkers commence the concurrent planning process immediately upon placement to ensure the child's permanency and well-being. The Statewide Assessment notes that, when the primary goal is reunification, the caseworker is required to select a secondary case goal. The caseworker makes diligent efforts to achieve reunification while simultaneously developing a back-up plan.

The Statewide Assessment reports that concurrent planning includes internal reviews held at 30 and 90 days from the time of placement, a review at 5 months, and another at 10 months. At the 10-month review, caseworkers prepare for the 12-month permanency hearing. The following tools support concurrent planning:

- DYFS's *Concurrent Planning Handbook: A Caseworker's Desk Guide*
- SDM
- Full disclosure
- Family engagement/family team meetings
- Case plans
- DCF's *Guide for Parents: When Your Child Is in Foster Care*
- Data systems

The Statewide Assessment reports that a NJ SPIRIT in-house report in December 2008 revealed that 95 percent of children in placement had a case goal.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The key concerns addressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were whether a goal was appropriate to the needs of the child and whether a petition for TPR was filed in a timely manner.

With regard to the appropriateness of goals, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in establishing an appropriate goal for each child in foster care. However, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that goals for older children are not consistently appropriate to their needs. In addition, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the goal of KLG is established for some children inappropriately.

With regard to the timeliness of filing petitions for TPR, stakeholders expressed different opinions. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that TPR is routinely considered at the 12-month permanency hearing. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that the goal of KLG is designated in order to avoid filing a petition for TPR regardless of the circumstances of the case.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 12 (30 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, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of the assessment of item 8 are presented in the table below.

Item 8 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	2	2	3	7	58
Area Needing Improvement	2	2	1	5	42
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	4	4	12	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	16	6	6	28	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	50%	50%	75%		

Item 8 was rated as a Strength in seven cases when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. In all three cases with a goal of KLG, item 8 was rated as a Strength.

Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in five cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to achieve reunification or guardianship in a timely manner. Some of the concerns identified pertained to delays in service provision and a lack of effort to engage the parent in services.

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 58 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 8 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

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 performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State’s performance on Composite 1 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, New Jersey’s performance on the individual timeliness measures included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was the following:

- C1.1: 64.9 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 less than the national median of 69.9 percent.
- C1.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children discharged to reunification was 8.0 months. This length of stay is longer than the national median of 6.5 months. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)

- C1.3: 41.7 percent of children entering foster care in the 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in more than 7 days but less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage is greater than the national median of 39.4 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 48.4 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the agency’s case practice model sets a foundation to enhance reunification prospects through the engagement of families and natural supports. The Statewide Assessment notes that flexible funds and services, such as the Division of Child Behavioral Health Services (DCBHS) Mobile Response and Stabilization Services, and Family Success Centers increase the family’s capacity to secure support when needed. New Jersey policy provides for payment to support KLG. DYFS reports that KLG grew from 3 in 2002 to 2,515 in 2007.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that New Jersey continues to face challenges in getting children to reunification in a timely manner including the following:

- The difficulty of obtaining appropriate services
- The difficulty of maintaining timely service availability
- The extension of reunification opportunities beyond 15 months
- The lack of sufficient visitation services that are available when families need them
- The differing opinions among professionals as to whether KLG provides children with permanency

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in providing reunification services to families. However, regarding the timeliness of reunification, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that courts often grant continuances beyond 12 months, against the recommendations of the agency, in order to provide parents with more time to work toward reunification. In addition, some stakeholders expressed concern that there is a high rate of KLG placement disruption.

Item 9. Adoption

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 9 was applicable for 18 (45 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 a finalized adoption in a timely manner. The results of the assessment of item 9 are presented in the table below.

Item 9 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	2	2	1	5	28
Area Needing Improvement	8	3	2	13	72
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	5	3	18	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	5	7	22	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	20%	40%	33%		

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 Area Needing Improvement in 13 cases when reviewers identified one or more of the following:

- Delays in obtaining TPR (six cases)
- Delays in the identification of an adoptive home (four cases)
- Delays in finalizing the adoptive placement (two cases)
- Delays in completing or approving home studies (three cases)
- Delays in searching for absent parents (two cases)

Additional findings relevant to this item were the following:

- Of the 18 children with a goal of adoption, 6 achieved the goal during the period under review.
- One of the six children who had a finalized adoption during the period under review had been in foster care for less than 24 months.
- Of the 12 children with a goal of adoption who were not adopted during the period under review, 5 had been in foster care for at least 24 months.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 28 percent of the applicable 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. Item 9 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Performance on the 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 performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State’s performance on Composite 2 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, New Jersey's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions was the following:

- C2.1: 22.6 percent of the children exiting to adoption were discharged in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 26.8 percent.
- C2.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 34.3 months. This median length of stay is longer than the national median of 32.4 months. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)
- C2.3: 30.9 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the year. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 22.7 percent.
- C2.4: 9.9 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within the first 6 months of the year. This percentage is greater than the national median of 8.8 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 10.9 percent.
- C2.5: 35.0 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percentage is less than the national median of 45.8 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, specialized adoption caseworkers are located in local offices and additional staff positions have been created to assist with legal processing of adoption proceedings. The Statewide Assessment notes that concurrent planning provides adoption caseworkers with the ability to begin to plan for adoption earlier. The Statewide Assessment notes that, in certain locations, courts have initiated the practice of conducting post-termination hearings for legally freed children on a regular basis to maintain a focus on activities that must be completed to achieve permanency.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that adoption caseworker tasks include the filing of TPR complaints, adoption home recruitment, adoptive placement, and adoption supervision. The Statewide Assessment notes that the 12-month permanency hearing is used to identify and link children likely to require a TPR with an adoption caseworker, a paralegal to file the TPR petition within 6 weeks of the permanency hearing, and a child-specific recruiter to identify a permanent adoptive family. The Statewide Assessment notes that adoption services include a statewide network of post-adoption counseling providers, the New Jersey Adoption Resource Clearing House, post-adoption child care slots, flexible funds, and adoption subsidies.

For children who will be adopted by their caregivers, finalization of adoption is expected to occur within 90 days of TPR. For children for whom an adoptive placement must be located, the agency goal is to achieve adoption finalization within 9 months of TPR.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data:

- 50 percent of the cases were transferred to an adoption caseworker in a timely manner from January to June 2008 in 16 local offices reviewed.
- The number of children legally free and waiting to be adopted has declined 44 percent, from 2,260 in January 2006 to 1,295 in December 2007.

- NJ SPIRIT data report that, from 2006–2008, New Jersey achieved more than 4,000 adoptions. In 2007, DYFS finalized 1,540 adoptions of foster children.
- NJ SPIRIT data report that, for children whose adoption was finalized in November 2008, 94.6 percent had their adoption finalized within 9 months of placement in the adoptive home.
- In 2008, DYFS finalized adoptions for more than 120 teens and nearly 400 children were adopted with their biological siblings.
- New Jersey’s focus on the “100 Longest Waiting Teens” resulted in several adoptions in 2008.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the State continues to struggle to achieve timely adoptions and to reduce the time required to address TPR petitions and appeals.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is not effective in finalizing adoptions in a timely manner. Various stakeholders identified the following barriers to the agency’s timeliness with regard to finalizing adoptions:

- Courts routinely provide parents with ongoing opportunities (extensions) to continue to work toward reunification against the recommendations of the agency.
- Courts routinely permit continuances to hear TPR appeals.
- Adoptive home approvals can take an extensive amount of time.
- On occasion, adoptive home approvals expire due to lengthy court appeals, and fingerprints and background checks must be completed again.

Item 10. Other planned permanent living arrangement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 13 (32.5 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 their goals related to OPPLA. The results of the assessment of item 10 are presented in the table below.

Item 10 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	5	2	4	11	85
Area Needing Improvement	2	0	0	2	15
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	2	4	13	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	13	8	6	27	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	71%	100%	100%		

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in 11 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a long-term placement for the child and/or to provide the necessary service to prepare the child for independent living. Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in two cases when reviewers determined that there were no formal agreements to provide a home for the child until the age of majority.

The table below provides the ages of the children when the goal of OPPLA was established

Age of Child When OPPLA Was Established	Number of Children
Ages 0–12	1
Ages 13–15	6
Ages 16 and older	6
Total	13

Rating Determination

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 85 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 10 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, New Jersey no longer offers a goal of long-term foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that three permanency goal options pertain to this item: independent living; individual stabilization; and OLTSC, which is established for children whose disability and/or medical needs are so extensive that they require intensive treatment provided typically in a congregate residential facility.

The Statewide Assessment notes that New Jersey uses the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment to determine the service needs for youth in foster care who are age 16 and older. An adolescent who is 16 to 21 years old and for whom all viable placement alternatives have been exhausted may be eligible to access an IL placement. The Statewide Assessment articulates the four essential aspects of

planning for a successful transition to adulthood: (1) assessment, support system, and transition plan; (2) life skills training; (3) aftercare services; and (4) termination of DYFS involvement.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in December 2008, only 9 percent (50 children) of 549 children in foster care with the goal of OLTSC were 12 or younger.

The Statewide Assessment highlights collaboration with community agencies as a key to assisting youth in the transition to independent living. In addition, Adolescent Specialists in the Adolescent Unit focus on services to this population and on working with youth directly. However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that caseworkers report that the waiting list for transitional living services is 6 to 8 months.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State is providing increased services to youth to assist in the transition to independence. For example, stakeholders noted the use of transitional living accommodations, financial assistance with college, and the continued foster care payments through the age of 21. Some stakeholders noted that caseworkers try to develop a meaningful connection for each youth with a relative, another adult, or a family even if the goal is independent living. However, other stakeholders noted that there are not enough resources to assist youth transitioning to adulthood.

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					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	9	5	6	20	50.0
Partially Achieved	8	5	3	16	40.0
Not Achieved	3	0	1	4	10.0
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	45%	50%	60%		

Status of Permanency Outcome 2

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 50.0 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State did not consistently place siblings together in foster care when appropriate.
- The State did not consistently promote sufficient visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care.
- The State did not consistently seek and assess relatives as placement resources.
- The State did not consistently make concerted efforts to preserve children’s connections to their families and heritage.
- The State did not consistently make concerted efforts to support or strengthen the parent-child relationship.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented a family resource recruitment plan with an emphasis on homes that can accept sibling groups
- Increased board rates for resource families
- Developed a workgroup to revise the case plan format to include visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care
- Developed and implemented a practice of family team meetings to develop an individualized plan for each family and strengthen children’s connections and the parent-child relationship
- Developed and implemented 155 case aide positions to provide visitation services
- Deployed RFSU caseworkers in each Local Office to conduct thorough and ongoing searches for relative caregivers
- Developed and implemented a protocol to transition relative caregivers to licensed resource families

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of the Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 11 was applicable for 29 (72.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if TPR was 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 near the child’s parents or close relatives. The results of the assessment of item 11 are presented in the table below.

Item 11 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	13	9	7	29	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	13	9	7	29	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	1	3	11	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	100%		

Item 11 was rated as a Strength in all 29 applicable cases when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed in the same community as the parents or in close proximity (11 cases).
- Even though the child was placed out of his or her community, the placement was necessary to meet the needs of the child and/or support attainment of the permanency goal (18 cases).

Rating Determination

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 100 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed children in locations close to their parents or relatives when appropriate. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 11 also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, after all special needs and interests are considered, the following sequence generally is applied when looking for a resource home: finding one in the same municipality, neighboring municipalities within the same county, elsewhere in the same county, adjacent counties, and finally, other counties statewide. The Statewide Assessment notes that the creation of the RFSUs, the increase in resource homes, and the availability of flexible funding have improved the ability of DYFS to place children in close proximity to their own homes.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data:

- The percentage of children placed within 10 miles of their own home increased from 62 percent in 2002 to 67 percent in 2006.
- The number of children placed out-of-State decreased from 307 in March 2007 to 103 in November 2008.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in placing children in close proximity to their families.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 12 was applicable for 19 (47.5 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 currently, or had been, placed together, and if separated, whether the separation was necessary to meet the service or safety needs of one or more of the children. The results of the assessment of item 12 are presented in the table below.

Item 12 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	10	2	4	16	84
Area Needing Improvement	2	1	0	3	16
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	12	3	4	19	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	8	7	6	21	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	83%	67%	100%		

Item 12 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child was placed with siblings (six cases), or that the separation of siblings was necessary because one of the siblings had special placement needs or because placement with siblings was not in the child's best interests (10 cases).

Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to place siblings together.

Rating Determination

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 84 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 12 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS is required to make diligent efforts to place siblings together in foster homes. Upon receiving a request for a resource home, the RFSU facilitator searches the database to locate and identify any of the child's siblings in a foster or adoptive home. The Statewide Assessment notes that caseworkers use the case practice model to prioritize the placement of siblings together in foster care and that the increase in resource homes provides DYFS with a greater opportunity to find placements for sibling groups. If a sibling is located in a resource home that is at its approved capacity, the protocol for requesting an exception to population limits is followed.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data:

- In 2007, sibling groups of two to three children were placed together 66 percent of the time, which represents an increase from 56 percent in 2003.
- In 2007, groups of four or more siblings were placed together 32 percent of the time, which represents an increase from 27 percent in 2003.
- In 2007, 62 percent of 873 sibling groups were placed intact, which represents an increase from 60 percent of 991 sibling groups placed intact in 2006.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State’s effectiveness in keeping siblings together in foster care. Some Gloucester County stakeholders expressed the opinion that the agency develops the capacity of resource families to manage sibling groups and tries to place siblings together in foster care when possible. However, other stakeholders in Essex County and Somerset County expressed the opinion that the agency does not maintain a consistent focus on keeping siblings together or reuniting siblings, especially once a placement has been made.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 13 was applicable for 29 (72.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item if the child had no siblings in foster care and if one of the following conditions was met with regard to the parents: TPR was established prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the child’s life or were deceased; or visitation with a parent was not considered 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 sufficient visitation between children in foster care and their parents and between children in foster care and their siblings also in foster care, and whether the visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The results of the assessment of item 13 are presented in the table below.

Item 13 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	5	4	4	13	45
Area Needing Improvement	9	5	2	16	55
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	9	6	29	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	1	4	11	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	36%	44%	67%		

Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 13 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 Area Needing Improvement in 16 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the mother that was of sufficient quantity and quality (six cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the father that was of sufficient quantity and quality (10 cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with siblings in foster care that was of sufficient quantity and quality (four cases).

Additional information about visitation frequency is provided in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Child’s Visits During the Period Under Review	With Mother	With Father	With Siblings in Foster Care
Visits occurred at least once a week	12 (46%)	4 (24%)	3 (30%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	4 (15%)	2 (12%)	2 (20%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	1 (4%)	0	1 (10%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	7 (27%)	2 (12%)	1 (10%)
There were no visits during the period under review	2 (8%)	9 (53%)	3 (30%)
Total Applicable Cases	26	17	10

The data indicate that children visited at least once a month with mothers in 65 percent of the applicable cases, with fathers in 35 percent of the applicable cases, and with siblings in foster care in 60 percent of the applicable cases.

Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 45 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had 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. Item 13 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, applicable law requires that children in foster care placement have regular visitation with parents and siblings. The goal is for family and sibling visits to occur on a weekly basis. The Statewide Assessment notes that a written visitation plan must be completed within 5 working days of the initial date of placement, and preferably be developed with the parents during the initial family team meeting that is held before the child has been in foster care placement for 72 hours.

The Statewide Assessment notes that caseworkers surveyed reported that consistent visitation is supported by the ability to place siblings together and to have relatives supervise visits. However, stakeholders surveyed during the Program Improvement Plan non-overlapping data year ending September 30, 2007, reported that there is a need for increased and improved visitation services.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the frequency and quality of family visitation has improved due to training, reduced caseloads, the use of the case practice model, and an increase in visitation service programs. The Statewide Assessment also notes that assistant family service caseworkers assist with transportation and visit supervision, increasing the frequency of family visitation.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data:

- A targeted review of item 13 from the Program Improvement Plan non-overlapping data year ending September 30, 2007, showed that 66 percent of 50 cases were rated as a Strength.

Surveys of various stakeholders were conducted as an element of the Statewide Assessment development process. These surveys revealed:

- 39 percent of 84 resource family respondents reported that visitation with siblings occurred at least biweekly, and 13 percent reported that visitation occurred less than monthly.
- 48 percent of 84 resource family respondents reported that visitation with birth mothers occurred at least biweekly, and 7 percent reported that visitation occurred less than monthly.
- 18 percent of 84 resource family respondents reported that visitation with birth fathers occurred at least biweekly, and 10 percent reported that visitation occurred less than monthly.
- 89 percent of 18 judicial respondents reported that children in placements were having visits with parents and siblings. However, 69 percent reported that visitation services are not adequate.
- 50 percent of court-related respondents reported that children were having regular visits with parents and siblings. However, 57 percent reported that there are insufficient visitation services.
- 94 percent of 17 family respondents reported that visits were occurring at least weekly.
- 50 percent of 180–184 caseworker respondents reported that both parents were involved in creating a visitation plan.
- 47 percent of 180–184 caseworker respondents reported that visitation was of sufficient frequency and quality to maintain connections between child and parent.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges, and stakeholders surveyed suggested, that additional efforts are required to achieve consistency in visitation, including increasing resources and improving tracking of the visitation experience.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in promoting and supporting visitation for children in foster care with their parents and siblings in foster care. For example, some stakeholders noted that therapeutic visitation services are available. One stakeholder noted that there is an effective visitation service

providing supervised overnight visitation in North and South Jersey and that this program has been helpful in facilitating reunification. However, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the frequency of visitation is not sufficient to meet the needs of children and families due to limited visitation resources.

Item 14. Preserving connections

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 14 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	14	8	9	31	77.5
Area Needing Improvement	6	2	1	9	22.5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	70%	80%	90%		

Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 31 cases when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with extended family members, religious or cultural heritage, schools, community, and friends.

Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in nine cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to extended family (eight cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to his or her community or neighborhood (four cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to his or her religious heritage (three cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to friends (two cases)
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to school (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77.5 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. Item 14 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, preserving connections for children in foster care begins at the time of placement when the parent is assisted in understanding the impact of placement on the child and the family. Policy provides for preparation of the Life Book that includes information about the child’s identity and background as well as ongoing highlights of life in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that the resource parents are given information about the child’s background and family traditions so that he or she may be nurtured in accordance with his or her background, religious heritage, ethnicity, and culture. The Statewide Assessment also notes that birth parents must be informed of their rights and responsibilities regarding involvement in the child’s education.

The Statewide Assessment reports that 79.5 percent (66 families) of 83 resource families responded “yes” on whether the child in their care had a Life Book in a survey conducted for the Program Improvement Plan non-overlapping data year ending September 30, 2007.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that DYFS is working to improve methods of monitoring how connections are being maintained for children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders did not comment on this item during the onsite CFSR.

Item 15. Relative placement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 15 was applicable for 34 (85 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 made diligent efforts to locate and assess both maternal and paternal relatives as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of the assessment of item 15 are presented in the table below.

Item 15 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	13	7	6	26	76
Area Needing Improvement	4	2	2	8	24
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	17	9	8	34	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	3	1	2	6	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	76%	78%	75%		

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

- The child was placed with relatives (17 cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives, but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives when applicable (nine cases).

Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in nine cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency had not made efforts to search for maternal relatives (four cases).
- The agency had not made efforts to search for paternal relatives (seven cases).

Rating Determination

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 76 percent of applicable 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. Item 15 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, New Jersey statute and regulations require DYFS to search for relatives within 30 days of foster care placement. When it appears that placement may be warranted, DYFS meets with the family, whenever possible, to engage family members and their support before the child is placed or within 72 hours of placement. The Statewide Assessment notes that regulation provides for an ongoing consideration of relative placements for situations in which permanency cannot be achieved by reunification with parents.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the RFSU works with caseworkers to identify, evaluate, and license relative resource homes. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that KLG is available to relative caregivers in addition to flexible funding and expedited waivers.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data:

- Children in first time placements were placed with relatives in 38 percent of cases in 2003 and 51 percent of cases in 2007.
- In 2008, 37 percent of all children in placement were in kinship homes.
- Of the homes licensed in 2007 and 2008 (3,558), 34 percent (1,193) were homes of relative kin providers.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in searching for relatives when children enter foster care and in placing children with relatives whenever possible.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 16 was applicable for 28 (70 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if parental rights had been terminated before the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, a relationship with the parents was not considered 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 the assessment of item 16 are presented in the table below.

Item 16 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	4	3	3	10	36
Area Needing Improvement	10	5	3	18	64
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	8	6	28	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	2	4	12	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	29%	37.5%	50%		

Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 10 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children through various activities.

Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 18 cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the mother (13 cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the father (13 cases).

Specific findings pertaining to this item are shown in the table below.

Efforts Made	With Mother Number of Cases	With Father Number of Cases
Encouraging the parent's participation in school or after-school activities and attendance at medical appointments and special events	10	5
Providing transportation so that parents can participate in these events, activities, or appointments	3	0
Providing opportunities for family therapeutic situations	11	4
Encouraging foster parents to mentor biological parents and serve as parenting role models for them	8	2
Encouraging and facilitating contact with incarcerated parents (when appropriate) or with parents living far away from the child	0	0
Total Applicable Cases	26	18

Rating Determination

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 36 percent of the applicable 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. Item 16 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, policy requires that the resource parent accept that the birth family is important to the child and has a legitimate right to maintain involvement in the child's life. In addition, resource parents are to encourage the child's involvement with his or her family and help the child and family maintain ties. Birth parents are to be included in all aspects of the child's life when appropriate, including medical appointments, school conferences, and celebrations.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the parent/child relationship is supported by visitation, family team meetings that take place at least every 6 months, resource families, and the case practice model.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data from surveys conducted as an element of the Statewide Assessment Development process:

- 26 percent of 19 family respondents reported having attended medical appointments, 21 percent reported having attended educational events, and 74 percent reported having attended court hearings or meetings about the children in foster care.
- 31 percent of 83 resource family respondents reported that they sometimes or frequently facilitate or participate in contact between the child and parents or siblings.
- 60 percent of 52 provider respondents reported that they sometimes or frequently facilitate or participate in contact between the child and parents or siblings.
- 61 percent of 18 judicial respondents reported that DYFS is making greater efforts to promote family connections.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the agency needs to develop a means for evaluating the consistency of practice in this area, assuring that both fathers and mothers are included in casework. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that there is a need for additional services and resources to coordinate events, provide transportation, and support contact to promote the parent/child relationship.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders did not comment on 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					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	14	6	9	29	44.6
Partially Achieved	11	7	6	24	36.9
Not Achieved	6	4	2	12	18.5
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	45%	35%	53%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 44.6 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 52.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 32 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State did not consistently assess children, parents, and foster parents for services and provide necessary services.
- There was a lack of comprehensive needs assessment.
- The State did not consistently involve parents and children in the case planning process.
- There was insufficient face-to-face contact between agency caseworkers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

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

- Developed and initiated SDM to improve accurate assessment and identify risk elements
- Developed and initiated a practice of family team meetings to develop an individualized plan for each family
- Developed and initiated SafeMeasures data reporting to track visits and evaluate the quality of visits
- Established the Academy

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of the Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X 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 education, physical health, and mental health. These areas are addressed in later items. The results of the assessment of item 17 are presented in the table below.

Item 17 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	15	10	12	37	57
Area Needing Improvement	16	7	5	28	43
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	48%	59%	71%		

Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 55 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 60 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 37 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. In addition, reviewers noted that a formal SDM assessment was conducted in 19 cases.

Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 28 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was an inadequate assessment of children’s needs (nine cases).
- There was an inadequate assessment of mothers’ needs (nine cases).

- There was an inadequate assessment of fathers’ needs (19 cases).
- There was an inadequate assessment of foster parents’ needs (seven cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address children’s needs (10 cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address mothers’ needs (13 cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address fathers’ needs (18 cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address foster parents’ needs (eight cases).

Additional case review findings pertaining to needs assessments and service provision are shown in the table below.

Target Person for Needs Assessment and Services	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable	Yes	Applicable
Child’s needs assessed and met	36 (90%)	40	19 (76%)	25
Mothers’ needs assessed and met	18 (72%)	25	17 (68%)	25
Fathers’ needs assessed and met	7 (37%)	19	10 (56%)	18
Foster parents’ needs assessed and met	25 (74%)	34	N/A	N/A

Rating Determination

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 57 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency 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. Item 17 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, New Jersey uses SDM tools to guide assessment and planning. Policy requires that, in preparation for developing an effective case plan, the caseworker must complete the SDM Caregiver and Child strengths and needs assessments. For in-home cases, the safety, family risk assessment, and family risk re-assessment must be completed. For out-of-home cases, the out-of-home placement assessment and reunification assessment are completed. For youth in foster care, the agency uses the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment to identify service needs.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the following strategies improve the ability of the State to assess and address the needs of families:

- Caseload management provides more time for caseworkers to address child and family needs using the new tools, including SDM and the case practice model.
- DYFS relies upon the case practice model to guide case planning and monitor service delivery.
- The State has invested substantially in services to meet the needs of children, families, and caregivers.
- Specialist positions in the local offices such as resource family support caseworkers, adoption caseworkers, and nurses allow case managers to develop individualized service plans.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data from surveys conducted as an element of the Statewide Assessment Development process:

- 64 percent of 29 family respondents reported that they were receiving services that would help their family reach its goal.
- 83 percent of 70 family respondents felt that they were helped to get services they needed.
- 70 percent of 219 caseworker respondents reported that they usually or frequently used SDM tools.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that DYFS caseworkers do not consistently engage fathers in the process of assessing and planning. The Statewide Assessment notes that stakeholders expressed a need for increased professionalism in assessment; an increase in assessment availability; the need to have a “big picture” understanding of the family; and a need for more providers, especially of health and mental health evaluations/treatment.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State’s effectiveness in both assessing and addressing the needs of children and families. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that family needs are assessed appropriately and that services are provided according to family needs. Some stakeholders noted that family team meetings are used to identify and coordinate appropriate services for families. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that the services offered to families do not meet their needs and that there are insufficient services available for youth and to provide stable housing for families.

Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers and RFSU caseworkers generally address the needs of foster parents. However, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers and RFSU caseworkers are not responsive to the needs of foster parents.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 18 was applicable for 60 (92 percent) of the 65 cases. A case was not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review, parents were not involved with the child in any way, and/or 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 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 actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. The results of the assessment of item 18 are presented in the table below.

Item 18 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	15	7	7	29	48
Area Needing Improvement	13	9	9	31	52
Total Applicable Cases	28	16	16	60	
Not Applicable Cases	3	1	1	5	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	54%	44%	44%		

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 57 percent of the 35 applicable foster care cases and 36 percent of the 25 applicable in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 29 cases when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in the case planning process. In addition, reviewers noted that in 10 cases, family team meetings were used to engage parents in case planning. Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 31 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process.

Specific information about involving mothers, fathers, and children in case planning is shown in the table below.

Person Involved in Case Planning	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable Cases	Yes	Applicable Cases
Mother involved in case planning?	16 (64%)	25	17 (68%)	25
Father involved in case planning?	7 (37%)	19	7 (37%)	19
Children involved in case planning?	19 (79%)	24	11 (50%)	22

Rating Determination

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 48 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 18 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, if DYFS provides any service to the family, a plan must be developed by the caseworker in conjunction with the family and service providers. The case practice model is used to engage family members and encourage them to identify a team to collaborate with in developing a case plan. The Statewide Assessment notes that the case plan is completed within 60 days of a CPS report or within 30 days of a child entering placement, and it is reviewed every 6 months. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that a transitional plan is required for adolescents over the age of 14 to assist in their move to self-sufficiency. The Statewide Assessment notes that a caseworker meets with family members, when possible, to engage them before the child is placed or within 72 hours of placement.

The Statewide Assessment notes that, whenever it is safe and appropriate, youth and parents will be included in decision-making about the services and supports they need and be active participants in finding solutions to family issues and concerns about child safety. For example, the Statewide Assessment notes that a visitation plan is to be developed with input from the parents.

The Statewide Assessment describes the development of the family team, convened by DYFS and including everyone important in the life of the child: interested family members, foster/adoptive parents, neighbors, friends, representatives from the child’s school, therapists, and substance abuse treatment providers. Family teams are utilized even when parents refuse to participate in them. A pilot survey conducted in late 2008 of 71 family respondents participating in family teams in four Case Practice Model Local Office immersion sites as well as Camden County Local Offices indicated that 86 percent felt that they were involved in decision-making. The Statewide Assessment notes that the court encourages families to participate in case plan activities, and offers a pilot mediation program in 15 of 21 counties.

The Statewide Assessment attributes the ability of caseworkers to appropriately engage families in case planning to managed caseloads and an increase in the use of the case practice model. In addition, Adolescent Specialists focus on services to this population and on working with youth directly. However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that keeping plans current, and tracking and adjusting them to adapt to changing situations remains a challenge.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data from surveys conducted as an element of the Statewide Assessment Development process:

- 65 percent of 29 biological family respondents knew their permanency goal.
- 68.9 percent of 61 youth respondents knew their permanency goal.
- 96 percent of 70 family respondents felt that staff listened to them.
- 86 percent of 70 family respondents felt that they were involved in decision-making.
- 65 percent of 904 caseworker respondents reported that case planning is typically done with families.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in engaging parents and youth in case planning due in large part to the use of family team meetings.

Additional information on stakeholder perceptions of parent engagement in the case planning process is provided under item 25 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 assessing 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 of item 19 are presented in the table below.

Item 19 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	25	11	12	48	74
Area Needing Improvement	6	6	5	17	26
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	81%	65%	71%		

Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 87.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 52 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 48 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child’s well-being and promote attainment of case goals. Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, and if visits did occur, they did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (six 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 (five 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 (six cases).

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

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Child During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases (Number and Percent)	In-Home Services Cases (Number and Percent)
Visits occurred at least once a week	1 (2.5%)	0
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	5 (12.5%)	2 (8%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	29 (72.5%)	13 (52%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	5 (12.5%)	10 (40%)
There were no visits during the period under review	0	0
Total Cases	40	25

These data indicate that caseworkers visited with children at least monthly in 87.5 percent of the foster care cases and 60 percent of the in-home services cases.

Rating Determination

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 74 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. Item 19 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the requirements pertaining to caseworker visits with children are based on the level of risk determined by the SDM risk assessment and family risk reassessment modules. Regardless of risk, for in-home and foster care cases, caseworkers must visit with children, including children with the goal of independent living, at least once per month. The Statewide Assessment notes that visitation requirements can be set as often as three times per month.

The Statewide Assessment notes that strategies to improve the quality of visits and family interaction include the following:

- The case practice model training module family engagement and Making Visits Matter
- Supervisor practice in accompanying caseworkers on field visits to evaluate and support casework
- Managed caseloads
- The use of SafeMeasures to monitor and track visits

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data from SafeMeasures in December 2008:

- For children receiving in-home services, compliance with monthly visits was 69.2 percent.
- For children in foster care placement, compliance with monthly visits was 81 percent.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that more consistent visitation is needed, particularly for children receiving in-home services.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions on whether the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with children is sufficient to meet the needs of children. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers visit regularly with children due to lower caseloads. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers do not visit regularly with children and that, when they do visit, those visits are perfunctory and do not address issues pertinent to case planning and goal attainment.

Item 20. Caseworker visits with parent(s)

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 20 was applicable for 51 (78 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 are 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 ensure the children’s safety and well-being. The results of the assessment of item 20 are presented in the table below.

Item 20 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	9	3	4	16	31
Area Needing Improvement	15	12	8	35	69
Total Applicable Cases	24	15	12	51	
Not Applicable Cases	7	2	5	14	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	37.5%	20%	33%		

Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 31 percent of the 26 applicable foster care cases and 32 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 16 cases when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 35 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency (19 cases).
- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient quality (16 cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency (26 cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient quality (nine cases).

Additional information from the case reviews is provided in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Parents During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Visits occurred at least once a week	2 (8%)	1 (5%)	0	0
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	0	0	3 (12%)	1 (6%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	11 (44%)	3 (16%)	12 (48%)	5 (28%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	9 (36%)	5 (26%)	10 (40%)	6 (33%)
There were no visits during the period under review	3 (12%)	10 (53%)	0	6 (33%)
Total Applicable Cases	25	19	25	18

The data indicate that caseworkers visited at least once a month with mothers in 52 percent of the foster care cases and 60 percent of the in-home services cases; and with fathers in 21 percent of the foster care cases and 33 percent of the in-home services cases.

Rating Determination

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 31 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and 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. Item 20 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the requirements pertaining to the frequency of caseworker visitation with parents is based on the level of risk presented, as determined by the SDM risk assessment and family risk reassessment modules. Regardless of risk, for in-home and foster care cases with the goal of reunification, caseworkers must visit with parents at least once per month. The Statewide Assessment notes that visitation requirements can be set as often as three times per month.

The Statewide Assessment notes that strategies to improve the quality of visits and family interaction include the following:

- The case practice model training module on family engagement and Making Visits Matter
- Supervisor practice in accompanying caseworkers on field visits to evaluate and support casework
- Managed caseloads
- The use of SafeMeasures to monitor and track visits

The Statewide Assessment reports that 80 percent of 220 caseworker respondents surveyed during the Statewide Assessment development process indicated that they visit parents once per month. In addition, SafeMeasures reports that compliance with monthly visits to parents of children receiving in-home services was 69.2 percent in December 2008.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that more consistent face-to-face contact between caseworkers and parents is needed, particularly for in-home services cases.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders did not comment on this item during the onsite CFSR.

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					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	18	6	11	35	83.3
Partially Achieved	1	1	0	2	4.8
Not Achieved	4	1	0	5	11.9
Total Applicable Cases	23	8	11	42	
Not Applicable Cases	8	9	6	23	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	78%	75%	100%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 2

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 83.3 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 85 percent of the 34 applicable foster care cases and 75 percent of the 8 applicable in-home services cases. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2004 review was that DYFS was not consistent in its efforts to address education-related needs of children in the in-home services cases, even when an education-related intervention was warranted.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Incorporated educational needs into the case plan and assessment process
- Developed and distributed educational information on educational requirements and issues to staff and resource families

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

Findings pertaining to the single item assessed under Well-Being Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 21 was applicable for 42 (65 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if either of the following applied: Children were not of school age, or children in the in-home services 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 the assessment of item 21 are presented in the table below.

Item 21 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	18	6	11	35	83
Area Needing Improvement	5	2	0	7	17
Total Applicable Cases	23	8	11	42	
Not Applicable	8	9	6	23	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	78%	75%	100%		

Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 35 cases when reviewers determined that the child’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and services were provided, if necessary. Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The child’s educational needs were neither assessed nor addressed (five cases).
- The child had identified educational needs that were not addressed (two cases).

Reviewers noted the following information regarding the cases reviewed:

- Individual Education Plans were in place in 14 cases.
- Early intervention screening was conducted in five cases.

Rating Determination

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 83 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a rating of Strength. A 95 percent standard is established for this item because it is the only item assessed for this outcome. Item 21 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS policy requires the following education-related activities:

- Each child must receive an appropriate education.
- Resource parents must register children in school without undue delay.
- Birth parents must be informed of their rights and responsibilities regarding involvement in the child's education.
- Placement decisions must be made in consideration of the proximity to the child's current school.
- Educational records must be provided to resource families.
- DYFS must provide support for educational services and identified needs.

The Statewide Assessment highlights partnerships that address the educational needs of children:

- The Office of School-Linked Services provides school-sited and preventive programs that are community-based, research validated, and data-driven.
- An Educational Access and Stability Work Group developed a brochure entitled "How to Register a Child in Out-of-Home Care for School."
- The New Jersey Child Welfare Citizen Review Panel is developing a Memorandum of Understanding between DCF and the Department of Education (DOE) to promote mutual educational goals for youth.
- The CICIC developed a resource guide for the court and for families of children with special education needs.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data from surveys conducted as part of the Statewide Assessment development process:

- 50 percent of 118 stakeholder respondents reported that assessment of children's educational needs was timely.
- 52 percent of youth respondents reported that they had three or more school changes as a result of changes in placement.
- 50 percent of caseworker, provider, and court representative respondents reported difficulties in communicating with school personnel about the child's educational needs.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that DYFS continues to experience delays in enrolling children in school within 72 hours of initial placement or a change of placement. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that foster care placement or re-placement can often result in a change of school, leading to instability in education. The Statewide Assessment further notes that there is a lack of sufficient expertise in special education among caseworkers, parents, and resource families. The Statewide Assessment reports that difficulties continue to present regarding information-sharing and communication between DYFS and school representatives. The

Statewide Assessment notes that there is a need to examine the educational needs of children served in their homes to assure that they are receiving the educational assessments and services they require.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions about the agency’s effectiveness in meeting children’s educational needs. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that there are school districts and counties where communication between DYFS and the schools is open and productive. In these districts, caseworkers, foster parents, and schools work together to ensure that children are enrolled and that assessments and records are transferred in a timely manner.

However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that school districts and DYFS do not communicate effectively to ensure that children are enrolled in school and that educational records are maintained and transferred appropriately. In addition, some stakeholders noted that there are cases in which the special educational needs of a child are not identified in a timely manner. Some stakeholders also noted that it is not clear whether DYFS or schools are responsible for addressing the truancy of children in foster care.

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					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	20	12	11	43	71.7
Partially Achieved	6	1	3	10	16.7
Not Achieved	4	3	0	7	11.7
Total Applicable Cases	30	16	14	60	
Not Applicable Cases	1	1	3	5	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	67%	75%	79%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 71.7 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 80 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 55 percent of the 20 applicable in-home services cases. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2004 review was that the State was not consistently effective in meeting children’s physical and mental health needs, particularly for children in the in-home cases reviewed.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Hired a nurse specialist for each Local Office
- Incorporated child health needs into a new case plan format
- Developed and implemented a comprehensive health evaluation for children, including a mental health screen, to be completed within 30 days of placement
- Created the DCBHS to ensure coordination of mental health services

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

Item 22. Physical health of the child

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 22 was applicable for 50 (77 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 children’s physical health needs (including dental needs) had been appropriately assessed, and the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of the assessment of item 22 are presented in the table below.

Item 22 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	23	10	13	46	92
Area Needing Improvement	4	0	0	4	8
Total Applicable Cases	27	10	13	50	
Not Applicable Cases	4	7	4	15	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	85%	100%	100%		

Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 95 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 80 percent of the 10 applicable in-home services cases. Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 46 cases when reviewers determined that children's medical and dental needs were routinely assessed and necessary services were provided. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The child's physical and dental health needs were neither adequately assessed nor addressed (three cases).
- The child's physical health needs were assessed but not adequately addressed (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of a Strength. In 92 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was effective in assessing and meeting children's physical health needs. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS issued a Coordinated Healthcare Plan for Children in Out of Home Placement to establish child health units in each local office. DYFS uses nurses to coordinate the pre-placement comprehensive medical health assessments that are required by policy for children entering foster care. DYFS has contracted with a range of health-care sites to meet the requirement to provide comprehensive medical examinations within 30 days of entry into care. Nurses also develop a medical health passport for each child in placement to collect relevant medical information in a single place. NJ SPIRIT tracks the medical passport for children in out-of-home care including information regarding assessments.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data on health service outcomes for children:

- 27 percent of 1,282 children entering placement during the period January–April 2008 received comprehensive medical exams within 60 days of entry into foster care, and 92 percent received exams within 90 days.
- 81 percent of 95 children 3 years of age and older in foster care at least 6 months had semiannual dental examinations.
- 100 percent of children entering foster care from July 2007 to June 2008 had the required pre-placement health assessments.

In a survey conducted during the Statewide Assessment development that involved court-related representatives, 55 percent of 118 respondents reported that assessment of children's health needs was timely.

The Statewide Assessment notes that stakeholders expressed a need for more health-care providers. In addition, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the adequacy of health care for children served in in-home cases is not clear, particularly for cases in which DYFS involvement was not due to medical issues.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in routinely assessing and addressing the medical and dental needs of children. Many stakeholders noted that the child health unit nurses

in each office manage the health needs for children effectively and participate in family team meetings to ensure the coordination of services to a family. However, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that there are cases in which medical records are not shared with or transferred to resource families.

Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 23 was applicable for 45 (69 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 results of the assessment of item 23 are presented in the table below.

Item 23 Ratings	Essex County	Gloucester County	Somerset County	Total	Percent
Strength	17	7	7	31	69
Area Needing Improvement	7	4	3	14	31
Total Applicable Cases	24	11	10	45	
Not Applicable Cases	7	6	7	20	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	71%	64%	70%		

Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 73 percent of the 26 applicable foster care cases and 63 percent of the 19 applicable in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 31 cases when reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were appropriately assessed and the identified mental health needs were addressed.

Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Mental health needs were neither assessed nor addressed (seven cases).
- Mental health needs were assessed, but services were not provided to address identified needs (seven cases).

Rating Determination

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 69 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 required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, mental health indicators are assessed at intake and on an ongoing basis. Children are then referred to DCBHS within DCF to coordinate the mental health and behavioral health treatment needs of the child. Services through DCBHS can range from emergency stabilization, in-home counseling, and case management through residential care and hospitalization. Although there may be two plans when a child is receiving services from both DYFS and DCBHS, they are coordinated and the responsibilities of each agency are delineated in the case plan.

In a survey of court-related representatives conducted during the Statewide Assessment development 55 percent of 118 respondents reported that assessment of children's mental health needs was timely. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that the number of children sent out of State for child behavioral health services was reduced from 307 in June 2007 to 103 in November 2008.

The Statewide Assessment notes that stakeholders expressed a need for more mental health providers. The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the speed of access to behavioral and mental health services continues to present some challenges, particularly for emergency placements.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in assessing and addressing the mental health needs of children. Some stakeholders indicated that if a mental health need is identified for a child, services are available to meet that need. However, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that there are insufficient trauma treatment services available for children.

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 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 (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 Program Improvement Plan. 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 Program Improvement Plan, the key concerns addressed in the Program Improvement Plan 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		In Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Statewide Information System

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. New Jersey also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Statewide Information System are presented and discussed 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. NJ SPIRIT can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for every child in foster care. This item also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, NJ SPIRIT can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care. NJ SPIRIT captures information from the time of the initial report of abuse and neglect through case management to permanency. The Statewide Assessment notes that NJ SPIRIT is used to determine title IV-E eligibility, provide payment to foster parents and contracted service providers, and claim Federal funds.

The Statewide Assessment notes that NJ SPIRIT provides a simple, accessible, and easy-to-use case manager-driven system to handle all aspects of case management in a way that will improve child safety, child well-being, and staff productivity. The Statewide Assessment notes that NJ SPIRIT provides tickler reports to assist case management.

To support quality assurance (QA), outcome monitoring, and evaluation, the Statewide Assessment notes that NJ SPIRIT gives supervisors in various units opportunities to sample selected records for review. NJ SPIRIT provides data, outcome performance tracking, and the SafeMeasures dashboard profile. The SafeMeasures automated case tracking and reporting system allows staff at all levels to track agency performance and data, including caseload information. The Statewide Assessment notes that NJ SPIRIT is the DYFS system of record and is accessible to all DYFS staff through a secure intranet.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that, because NJ SPIRIT is a new system, there is still work to do in supporting staff to enter information completely in NJ SPIRIT to support its capture in SafeMeasures. The Statewide Assessment notes that the State uses the Adoption and Foster Care Reporting and Analysis System for reporting and internal data analysis, and uses the SafeMeasures reporting system to assess and improve the quality of data.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that NJ SPIRIT captures the current status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for all children receiving either CPS or CWS. Stakeholders indicated that SafeMeasures provides reports that are readily available to track case progress and aggregate outcomes. Stakeholders indicated that, for the most part, data are entered into NJ SPIRIT in a timely manner and that the information included in NJ SPIRIT triggers payment for resource families. However, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that, because NJ SPIRIT is a new system, caseworkers are still learning how to enter data correctly and data are not always entered reliably into NJ SPIRIT. In addition, some stakeholders indicated that technical assistance is not readily available to caseworkers resulting in minor delays in entering information into NJ SPIRIT. Therefore, these stakeholders indicated that SafeMeasures reports are limited by the quality and timeliness of the data entered into NJ SPIRIT. Some stakeholders noted that data quality is addressed through checks of key elements such as legal status and that SafeMeasures provides the State with a tool to improve the quality of data.

II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

Status of Case Review System

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- Case plans were not developed jointly with the child’s parent on a consistent basis.
- DYFS was not consistent with regard to conducting a case review for all children in foster care at least once every 6 months.
- Permanency hearings were not consistently conducted every 12 months for children in foster care.
- Although the State had established a process for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA, there were delays in filing for and achieving TPR.
- DYFS and the courts were not consistent with regard to ensuring that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care were notified of, and had an opportunity to be heard in, all case reviews or hearings held with respect to the child.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed and implemented family team meetings to develop an individualized plan for each family
- Developed training for judges and attorneys on the importance of parental participation in permanency hearings
- Improved systems to support the timeliness of notification to caregivers by using reports to identify gaps
- Formed the Interagency Council for Children and Families to ensure that children’s cases are brought before the court promptly
- Deployed adoption specialists to Local Offices, hired additional law guardians, and developed a strategy to increase the availability of experts in family court proceedings to expedite the filing of TPR petitions in accordance with ASFA
- Implemented child placement review standards
- Developed a case practice model to strengthen the engagement of parents in case planning

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

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Case Review System are presented and discussed below.

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 parent(s) that includes the required provisions

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State provides a process to ensure that each child has a written case plan that includes the required provisions, data provided in the Statewide Assessment and comments from stakeholders indicate that parents are not routinely involved in the development of case plans. During the onsite CFSR, reviewers determined that the agency

had made diligent efforts to involve mothers in the case planning process in 66 percent of the applicable cases and fathers in the case planning process in 37 percent of the applicable cases. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS policy requires that case plans be developed within 30 days of a child entering placement. The case practice model, currently being implemented in a phased process statewide, emphasizes the use of family team meetings to engage the family and collaborate in developing a case plan.

In a survey of caseworkers conducted during the Statewide Assessment development 65 percent of 904 respondents reported that case planning typically is done with families.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that case plans are routinely prepared for all families, including those receiving in-home services and out-of-home services. Some stakeholders noted that case plans are reviewed in court periodically and adjusted based on changes in circumstances and court input.

Stakeholders expressed different opinions regarding the State's effectiveness in engaging parents in case planning. Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that family team meetings and the case practice model facilitate routine and meaningful engagement of parents in case planning. Some stakeholders noted that the family determines the direction and content of family team meetings and that parents may invite anyone they feel is important to the meetings.

However, some stakeholders maintained that case plans are developed without the involvement of parents and that case plans are not individualized to the needs of the family. Some stakeholders noted that family team meetings are not held for all cases or are not held throughout the duration of the case.

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 **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 26 is rated as a Strength. The State provides for the periodic review of each child in foster care through compliance reviews held by the court at a minimum of every 2 to 3 months. The Child Placement Review Board (CPRB) conducts a 45-day review and an annual permanency review. In addition, some CPRBs will conduct a paper review at the sixth month in the first year of the child's placement. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, courts conduct compliance hearings when a child has been in foster care at a minimum of every 2 to 3 months. The case compliance review includes participation by the parents and the resource parent. In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that New Jersey meets the requirement to review a child every 6 months through administrative review and through the court's permanency hearing. The CPRB conducts a placement review on behalf of the court 45 days after the placement of a child in foster care and an annual permanency review.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions with regard to whether the State generally ensures that a periodic compliance review hearing of the status of each child is held in court every 3 months and with regard to whether these hearings address progress toward permanency.

Somerset County stakeholders expressed the opinion that limited court resources significantly and routinely delay compliance review hearings. For example, only one day per week is set aside for litigated DYFS cases, and this day is reduced routinely when a judge is absent or engaged in an ongoing trial.

Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the periodic reviews address progress toward permanency for the child. However, some Essex County stakeholders indicated that administrative reviews do not address progress toward permanency because guardians *ad litem*, court-appointed special advocates, and parents are not involved routinely in the periodic reviews.

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

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

Item 27 is rated as a Strength. The State provides a process to ensure that a permanency hearing is held within 1 year of the placement of a child in foster care and every 12 months thereafter. The permanency hearings are generally held in a timely manner and routinely address the permanent goal for the child. Court data reported in the Statewide Assessment show that 99.1 percent of cases have timely permanency hearings. Stakeholders noted that periodic reviews are held after the 12-month permanency hearing to ensure appropriate progress toward goals. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, courts conduct required reviews within 12 months of the child's entry into foster care. The court is required to evaluate the case plan and progress toward permanency in addition to the appropriateness of terminating parental rights. Court data show that nearly 100 percent (99.1 percent) of cases have timely permanency hearings.

The Statewide Assessment notes that, in voluntary cases, the CPRB conducts the annual permanency review in the twelfth month of placement and annually thereafter. In litigated cases, the CPRB holds an annual permanency review in the eleventh month of placement and annually thereafter, just prior to the court's permanency hearing.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the CICIC develops and delivers multidisciplinary training to improve the quality of case review and court-agency communication. In addition, the judiciary established and provides training for a child welfare mediation pilot program in 15 of the State's 21 counties. The Statewide Assessment notes that in certain locations, courts have initiated the practice of conducting post-termination hearings for legally freed children on a regular basis.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that permanency hearings are generally held timely and that the hearings focus on permanency for the child. Some stakeholders noted that mediation is used to resolve differences among parents and the agency with regard to changing a permanency plan from reunification to adoption. In addition, some stakeholders noted that continuing post-termination reviews are held after the 12-month permanency hearings to ensure appropriate progress toward goals.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although there is a process for filing a petition for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA, the Statewide Assessment and stakeholders acknowledge that there is a continued need to improve compliance with this process. Stakeholders noted that courts routinely provide parents with ongoing opportunities (extensions of time beyond the fifteenth month of placement) to continue to work toward reunification. Stakeholders reported that, in these cases, some courts do not accept TPR petitions until the extensions have expired and the court has ordered DYFS to file a TPR petition or to change the goal to adoption. During the onsite CFSR, reviewers determined that ASFA requirements with regard to filing for TPR were met in 77 percent of applicable cases. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, New Jersey has a process to address TPR that is in accordance with the provisions of ASFA. The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that, although progress has been noted in achieving TPR in a timely manner, there is continued work to be done to improve timeliness in this area. The Statewide Assessment reports that DYFS is required to file a petition for TPR when a child has been in placement for 15 of the most recent 22 months. If there is an exception, the caseworker will document that exception prior to 15 months. If DYFS does not pursue TPR, the caseworker must provide a compelling reason not to file the TPR complaint. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that, if the child has not been reunified, the judiciary requires a filing of TPR within 60 days of the permanency hearing.

The Statewide Assessment reports that child placements that are nearing the ASFA deadline are tracked by the concurrent planning specialist in the Area Office. However, SafeMeasures does not have the capacity to track the filing of TPR petitions. In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that the filing of TPR petitions may be delayed when there is no agreement among the agency, the courts, and the family regarding the preferred alternative between KLG and adoption.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency is required to file for TPR after the permanency hearing. However, stakeholders identified the following barriers to the agency's timeliness with regard to petitioning for TPR:

- Courts routinely provide parents with ongoing opportunities (extensions of time beyond the fifteenth month of placement) to continue to work toward reunification contrary to the recommendations of the agency. Agency caseworkers were not clear as to whether these extensions constituted exceptions to requirements to file TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA.
- It is reported that some courts do not accept TPR petitions until after it has issued an order to file the TPR petition or to change the goal to adoption.

Some stakeholders noted that mediation is used at the point in the case when TPR is under consideration and that mediation can result in voluntary relinquishment.

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 as a Strength. The State agency provides notice to caregivers of reviews and hearings held with respect to the child. In addition, caregivers are provided with the opportunity to be heard in reviews and in court hearings. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State law offers resource families the right to be heard at all court hearings involving the child's status. The Statewide Assessment reports that the judiciary's database, FACTS, is programmed to generate notices at the conclusion of the first hearing and that the notices are sent to all parties, including resource families. Although there are no data reports to record this information, the Statewide Assessment indicates that the judiciary reviewed court files for resource family notices and found that the counties consistently complied with the standard to provide notices to resource families.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the judiciary developed a Resource Family Information Form that is provided with all court notices. The form is sent to the caregiver to document the caregiver's information, particularly if the caregiver is unable to attend the

court proceeding. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that the CICIC developed a brochure entitled “What You Need to Know About the DYFS Court Process: A Guide for Resource Parents.”

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DYFS is responsible for providing notice to caregivers of hearings involving the children in their care. Many stakeholders confirmed that notice is provided routinely. In addition, some stakeholders noted that the court also provides notice of hearings to caregivers.

Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that caregivers have opportunities to be heard in hearings involving the children in their care, either in person or in writing. However, some of these stakeholders noted that caregivers are discouraged from participating in court hearings and that resource parents would benefit from encouragement to participate and increased training in the importance of providing input at court hearings.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Status of Quality Assurance System

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State had not implemented procedures to ensure that children in foster care were provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.
- The State did not have a comprehensive QA system that measures programs’ Strengths and Areas Needing Improvement on a statewide basis.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented SDM tools and integrated the SDM training module into the training for new caseworkers
- Developed a qualitative review process, known as the Mini-CFSR
- Transitioned kin caregivers to fully licensed resource families

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

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under QA System are presented and discussed 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. The State has standards in place to ensure the quality of services to protect the safety and health of children. The State monitors casework regularly and monitors contracted service providers through the use of performance-based contracts. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the DCF Office of Licensing (OOL) conducts comprehensive program and life/safety inspections of residential facilities and homes every 2 years, interim monitoring, re-inspections, and safety assessments. Inspections focus on a range of health and safety requirements including behavior management and staff qualifications. The Statewide Assessment reports that the OOL reviews reports of child abuse and neglect that occur in all regulated programs and takes appropriate complaint investigation action when necessary. The Statewide Assessment notes that licensing regulations have been adapted to remain consistent with current needs and best practices for safety. The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the OOL is experiencing staffing shortages, and there are data concerns that affect ongoing efforts to monitor licenses.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that local office specialists, such as the RFSU caseworkers and child health unit nurses, assist caseworkers in assuring that children's needs are met. The Statewide Assessment notes that contracts are performance-based and are reviewed periodically for effectiveness and utilization. The Statewide Assessment also notes that SDM provides caseworkers with a validated tool for evaluating the safety of children in foster care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has standards in place to address the quality of services provided to families and children. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that standards regarding the quality of services, qualifications of staff, and performance expectations are comprehensive and are applied to contracted services through regular monitoring and utilization tracking by DYFS and DCBHS. Some stakeholders noted that the quality of casework is evaluated using SafeMeasures and through periodic review of case practice model documentation.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 31 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has a variety of State and local QA efforts in development, specifically to monitor the implementation of the case practice model and elements of the MSA, the State does not have a centralized comprehensive QA system to evaluate the quality of services, identify strengths and needs of the service delivery system, and evaluate program improvement measures at this time. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the DYFS Office on Quality developed a performance measurement system focused on data, measurement, and results. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the performance measurement system is currently being piloted across the State and focuses on the implementation of the case practice model in compliance with the MSA. Practice element grids have been developed to monitor the following areas of the case practice model: engagement, investigation, teaming, assessment, case planning, plan implementation, tracking, living arrangement, child status, and caseworker contact.

The Statewide Assessment notes that New Jersey uses data to inform performance review and support strategic thinking. NJ SPIRIT provides reports to local offices and supervisors to support QA, outcome monitoring, and evaluation. NJ SPIRIT gives supervisors in various units opportunities to sample selected records for review. NJ SPIRIT provides data and outcome performance tracking and informs the SafeMeasures dashboard profile. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that each Area Office has its own area quality coordinator.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that Quality Services Reviews and Mini-CFSRs, consisting of 120 cases reviewed annually, were conducted through 2006 but discontinued thereafter. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the integration of quality efforts across all DYFS units is an area for potential development.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State’s QA efforts. Several stakeholders noted that the MSA contains a range of quality measures currently being monitored by the Federal monitor. Some stakeholders noted that SafeMeasures presents data to track select outcomes, statewide and at the local level, related to the case practice model and the MSA. Stakeholders from all three sites indicated that localized, targeted QA case reviews were completed to examine and improve the effectiveness of the case practice model and SDM.

Several stakeholders indicated that local QA efforts are not consistent across the State and that the State’s QA efforts do not currently go beyond the terms of the MSA. Several stakeholders noted that QA efforts are still in development and that new approaches to measuring quality are being developed, piloted, and adjusted continually.

IV. STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

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

Status of Staff and Provider Training

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. New Jersey was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- Initial training for DYFS staff was insufficient to address the goals and objectives in the CFSP and the services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E. Training was not sufficient to link caseworker skills and competencies to key outcome measures.
- DYFS did not require ongoing training for staff to ensure continuous staff development. DYFS did not provide staff with sufficient opportunities to access ongoing training.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Established the Academy to provide ongoing caseworker training

- Developed a training evaluation component and competency testing for caseworkers
- Integrated cultural competency and diversity training into the pre-service training package for new caseworkers

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

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Staff and Provider Training are presented and discussed 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. The State provides comprehensive child welfare training to new caseworkers and ensures that caseworkers are fully trained on relevant issues before assuming a caseload. Caseworkers are required to pass competency exams. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, new caseworkers are required to enroll in pre-service training within 2 weeks of their hire date and complete pre-service training and pass competency exams before assuming a full caseload. New Jersey’s pre-service training consists of 186 classroom hours of training over 31 days and 24 field days. The Academy provides and tracks training.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the pre-service curriculum is designed to provide a broad understanding of child welfare in the State, caseworker safety, NJ SPIRIT, work management, family focus, child development, and child abuse and neglect.

The Statewide Assessment notes that 40 hours of training is provided to new supervisors in management skills.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data:

- From June 2006 to June 2008, 1,381 new caseworkers completed at least 160 hours of pre-service training and passed competency exams.
- The Trainee Caseload Readiness Assessment showed that only 8 of 210 trainees were reported as “not ready” to assume a full caseload.
- In surveys of between 436 and 445 caseworkers conducted during the Statewide Assessment development, 90.6 percent agreed that training was relevant to their role; 80.1 percent agreed that training prepared them to perform their function effectively; and 85.9 percent agreed that training enhanced their skills.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that there is a need for an expanded pre-service program to include instruction on the State Department of Health's Early Intervention System and on the functions of the SCR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in providing comprehensive competency-based training for new caseworkers. Various stakeholders identified the following facilitating factors of the State's training effort:

- New caseworkers are required to complete a caseload-readiness evaluation tool prior to assuming a caseload.
- Caseworkers initially receive a graduated caseload.
- New caseworkers are placed in a training unit with a training supervisor.
- Supervisors coordinate field training and model appropriate casework.
- The Academy provides and tracks training.

Although the majority of stakeholders commenting on this item indicated that initial training is relevant to caseworkers' job performance, a few stakeholders indicated that sometimes the subjects addressed in field training and in classroom training are not coordinated.

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

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

Item 33 is rated as a Strength. The State requires ongoing training for all caseworkers and supervisors. Ongoing training is coordinated, provided, and tracked by the New Jersey Child Welfare Training Partnership. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, caseload-carrying staff must obtain a minimum annual requirement of 40 hours of in-service training. The Academy tracks compliance with training requirements in a database for 5,000 DYFS employees. The Statewide Assessment reports that the Academy is part of the New Jersey Child Welfare Training Partnership (NJCWTP), consisting of four universities and provides in-service training to all local offices. For example, the NJCWTP provides foundation training in four areas: substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, and concurrent planning.

The Statewide Assessment notes that “refresher” training courses on special issues are routinely offered at the local office level. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that DYFS supports bachelor’s and master’s child welfare social work degree programs in partnership with local universities.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, since January 2008, more than 2,900 caseload-carrying staff received 40 or more hours of in-service training. The Statewide Assessment reports that staff noted that local trainings are conveniently arranged, valuable, and pertinent to current practice or local needs.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in providing relevant ongoing training for caseworkers and supervisors. Several stakeholders noted that ongoing training is mandated by the MSA and centers around the case practice model. Some stakeholders indicated that ongoing training is available on a number of relevant topics including sexual abuse, substance abuse, family engagement, domestic violence, and family team meeting facilitation. Some stakeholders indicated that supervisors are offered training in modeling good case practice for caseworkers. A few stakeholders noted that specialized training is provided in response to local needs.

Despite these positive comments, a few Somerset County stakeholders noted that, while they meet ongoing training requirements, there is not enough time for caseworkers to take full advantage of available training opportunities or that training is not presented in sufficient depth. In addition, some Essex County stakeholders noted that there is a need for training to assist caseworkers with identifying and accessing community resources for families.

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. The State provides training for foster and adoptive parents, including licensed relative caregivers. The training is provided prior to the placement of a child in the home and is viewed by caregivers as relevant, accessible, and timely. This item also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, resource parents must receive pre-service training and in-service training to obtain and maintain licensure. Pre-service training is provided by the RFSU in each local office. The Statewide Assessment notes that two training models are available: 27 hours of Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) training and 18 hours of Traditions of Caring training geared for relative caregivers. For kinship placements, it was noted that a child may be placed in the home before training has been completed, but only after a physical check of the home by DCF and background checks have been

completed. Additionally, resource families seeking to be Special Home Service Providers must complete the Special Home Service Provider training. The Statewide Assessment reports that 7 hours annually of in-service training are required and that the vast majority of in-service training is provided through a contract with Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS). The Statewide Assessment notes that both PRIDE and Traditions of Caring are offered in Spanish as well as English.

The Statewide Assessment notes that DYFS contracts for placement services in group homes and facilities that are licensed by the OOL. Licensing requirements mandate that facilities develop a training plan and ensure that all staff members are trained in specific areas. Residential staff members are required to complete 12 hours of training annually.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data:

- Resource parents surveyed overwhelmingly feel that the training has helped them strengthen their knowledge and skills and that the information presented was useful to them.
- In 2008, 1,818 resource parents completed PRIDE and 807 completed Traditions of Caring training.
- During SFY 2008, 1,595 resource families completed 5,220 trainings offered to existing resource families; 2,857 out of 2,860 evaluations demonstrated satisfactory ratings.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State provides both initial and ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents using PRIDE and Traditions of Caring curricula. Several stakeholders noted that the training is readily available across the State and that training hours are tracked by FAFS and by the Licensing Information System (LIS). Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that the training is relevant and comprehensive. However, some stakeholders noted that PRIDE training does not prepare foster parents sufficiently to care for children who have experienced the trauma of separation and abuse.

V. SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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

Status of Service Array and Resource Development

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. New Jersey also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State did not have in place a sufficient array of services that would enable children to remain safely with their parents when appropriate or would help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. Critical gaps in the service array were bilingual services, therapeutic foster care services, insufficient family preservation services, substance abuse treatment services (particularly for women with children), and mental health services for children and parents.
- Services were not available to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP, and where services were available, long waiting lists often impeded accessibility of those services.
- DYFS did not provide staff with the tools they needed to individualize services for all children and families served by the agency. Stakeholders reported that inadequate and/or infrequent communication between DYFS and contracted service providers was an additional impediment to ensuring that services were tailored to meet the unique needs of children and families.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed a process to implement flexible funding
- DCBHS, as it is now known, became a component under what is now DCF
- Increased services and funding in the following areas: domestic violence treatment, housing, adolescent and youth programming, post-adoption support, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services
- Provided a contract to place a substance abuse specialist in DYFS offices

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

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Service Array and Resource Development are presented and discussed 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. The State has in place a comprehensive array of services to address the needs of children and families for safety, permanency, and well-being. New Jersey has significantly expanded both public and privately delivered services, particularly in the areas of assessment, prevention, and behavioral health. Although reviewers determined during the onsite CFSR in item 17 that caseworkers did not make concerted efforts to assess and provide services to parents in foster care cases or to families receiving in-home services, assessment tools and services are available in the State. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS provides for the flexible delivery of a full range of services statewide to address the continuum in child welfare including prevention, community support, family preservation and support, placement and reunification, transition, and permanency.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the ongoing development of specialist support positions in local offices includes nurses, child health specialists, domestic violence liaisons, and adolescent specialists. The Statewide Assessment notes that services are provided directly by DYFS, system partners and community service providers, and through contracts with private or public entities under Memoranda of Understanding or Memoranda of Agreement.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the case practice model and managed caseloads provide families with more and better services. In addition, the number of children placed out-of-State for treatment purposes has declined, indicating that local services are more widely available.

The Statewide Assessment reports that 64 percent of family respondents surveyed in late 2008, over half of whom had experienced family TEAM meetings, reported that they are receiving services that will help them reach their goals.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has in place a comprehensive array of services to assess and address the needs of children and families.

Various stakeholders identified the following factors as key to the agency's service array:

- The MSA mandates a wide range of services, including family assessment and local-level service identification and development.
- The specialist positions developed in local offices—especially nurses, youth, resource development specialists, and clinical consultants—assist in linking families to services.
- There has been an increase in many services, including specialized services such as fatherhood initiatives and substance abuse treatment.

Despite these positive comments, several stakeholders across the three sites noted the following concerns:

- The quality of psychiatric evaluations and assessments appears to be uneven.
- There is a lack of follow-up and ongoing communication after a caseworker has identified and referred a family to a contracted service. Therefore caseworkers do not always have sufficient information about the services provided to families to evaluate progress toward goals.

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 Area Needing Improvement. Although services have expanded significantly, services provided by the State are not accessible to families and children in all jurisdictions. There are waiting lists for key services such as psychiatric evaluation and treatment, substance abuse treatment, youth services, and post-adoption services. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, New Jersey has moved many services to the local level and provides a continuum of child welfare services statewide. The Statewide Assessment indicates that select services may be in pilot mode or limited to certain geographic regions, and may not be available statewide. The Statewide Assessment notes that there is a need for flexibility in the hours of service provision.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following results from surveys conducted during the development of the Statewide Assessment:

- Survey respondents indicated that there is a need for services to be more responsive to a family’s schedule, lifestyle, norms, and needs.
- Stakeholder respondents expressed a need for more service providers in substance abuse, health care, mental health, visitation, adolescent support, domestic violence, and for more bilingual providers.
- Caseworker respondents report that the waiting list for transitional living services is 6 to 8 months.
- Stakeholder respondents noted that there are waiting lists for Independent Living services.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State’s ability to provide access to services for all children and families across the State. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that no child goes without services that have been identified as a need and that the State finds a way to provide necessary services, however difficult they may be to obtain. A few stakeholders noted that differential response provides key preventive services to families to prevent foster care placement; however, differential response is not available in all jurisdictions. In addition, some stakeholders noted that services available in one location may not be available in another.

Various stakeholders indicated that many services are available but are insufficient in number to meet the needs in the State. Stakeholders identified the following services that are not available in sufficient quantity:

- Housing and transportation
- Psychiatric evaluation and treatment
- Family counseling and trauma counseling
- Transitional housing and youth services
- Post-adoption services
- Substance abuse treatment
- Evaluation and treatment for sex offenders and victims of sexual abuse
- Treatment for parents diagnosed with both mental health concerns and substance abuse
- Extended hours for visitation services
- Domestic violence treatment
- IL and youth residential 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 Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has a variety of methods for individualizing services and service planning to meet the unique needs of children and families, such as family team meetings, the case practice model, specialized caseworkers in local offices, and flexible funds, these methods are not used consistently across cases throughout the State. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the case practice model focuses on service flexibility to meet individualized goals that are behaviorally specific, realistic, time-limited, measurable, clearly understood, and agreed on by the family, the family team, and the court. Family team meetings are held to engage families in goal development and to select appropriate services. The Statewide Assessment notes that better methods of assessment, contained in the SDM and case practice model, lead to services that are tailored and responsive to the needs of individuals. The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that keeping plans current with changing situations will be a challenge as the State progresses using the case practice model.

The Statewide Assessment notes that New Jersey implemented flexible funding in 2004 to respond to needs for nontraditional services to stabilize families. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that periodic performance-based contract reviews identify new service needs and evaluate how to improve service responsiveness and effectiveness.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, in a survey conducted in late 2008 of 70 families regarding their experience with TEAM, 78 percent felt that the TEAM helped them secure services that were most important to their goals.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally has the capacity to individualize services to meet the unique needs of children and families. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that each child and each family receives an individual plan to meet their individual needs. Several stakeholders indicated that the use of family team meetings, the case practice model, and flexible funding programs assist the agency in designing and providing services to meet individual needs. For example, stakeholders in all three sites indicated that flexible funds are used to pay for housing, camp, music lessons, tutoring, tuition, specialized assessments and services, and household repairs. Some stakeholders indicated that language-specific services are available and that there are Spanish-speaking caseworkers in relevant local offices.

Despite these positive comments, various stakeholders expressed the following opinions:

- Case plans appear to be similar from family to family.
- Court orders contain identical requirements for families.
- Family team meetings are not used consistently.
- Access to specialized services varies among specialists and caseworkers in local offices and across the State. For example, services organized for a family by one RFSU caseworker may not be used by another RFSU caseworker in the same location.
- There are no services designed specifically to address the needs of youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning their sexuality.
- There is a limited number of culturally and linguistically competent services for children and parents from African-American, Hispanic (Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking), Asian, and Creole (Haitian) racial/ethnic groups.

VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. New Jersey was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2004 review was that the agency does not make sufficient efforts to engage external and internal stakeholders in developing the CFSP or in preparing Annual Progress and Service Reports (APSRs).

To address this concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Restructured the CFSR/CFSP committee
- Designed and distributed an informational handout of the CFSP
- Conducted an annual staff survey to develop information on CFSP service needs

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

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Agency Responsiveness to the Community are presented and discussed below.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has worked cooperatively with many stakeholders to implement the goals and objectives of the CFSP, stakeholders surveyed in the preparation of the Statewide Assessment and during the onsite CFSR indicated that there is a low level of input from key stakeholders into the strategic planning that occurs within the child welfare system. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, New Jersey engages collaboratively with stakeholders by using a network approach to implement the provisions of the CFSP. The Statewide Assessment notes that DYFS consults and collaborates with children and families, agencies, providers, courts, advocates, health and medical care providers, schools and universities, law enforcement, the New

Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs, the military, and other system stakeholders. For example, the Statewide Assessment reports that the CICIC is representative of the continuum of child welfare services and partnerships evident in the State. The CICIC, which works to review laws and procedures regarding foster care and adoption proceedings, supports research, curricula, and multidisciplinary training in its cross-system efforts.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that another example of key collaboration is the development and implementation of the case practice model. The case practice model was developed in partnership with several stakeholder groups, the courts, the Academy, and the Child Welfare Training Group. The case practice model was implemented in local offices in partnership with community stakeholders.

The Statewide Assessment reports that a survey, conducted during the development of the Statewide Assessment, of 75 system partners identified as service providers, county government agencies, human services advisory councils, and university and educational organizations, revealed the following:

- 47 percent disagreed that they had a voice in evaluating the child welfare system.
- 68 percent agreed they were kept abreast of developments in the child welfare system.
- 49 percent thought they did not have input into the planning that occurs within the child welfare system.

The Statewide Assessment reports that a survey, conducted during the development of the Statewide Assessment, of 95 providers in counseling, mental health, parenting, case management, information and referral, evaluation and assessment, and family support, revealed the following:

- 84 percent work collaboratively with DYFS and system partners.
- 77 percent coordinate their services with other agencies serving the family.
- 76 percent agreed that they had a voice in planning meaningful services for children and families.

The Statewide Assessment reports that a survey, conducted during the development of the Statewide Assessment of 262 caseworkers, revealed the following:

- 45 percent agreed they had a voice in evaluating the child welfare system.
- 77 percent agreed they were kept abreast of developments in the child welfare system.
- 46 percent thought they did not have input into the planning that occurs within the child welfare system.

The Statewide Assessment reports that 59 percent of 248 DYFS staff and 61 percent of 74 system partner respondents agreed that child welfare system partners collaborate effectively in planning programs and services to meet the needs of children and families

The Statewide Assessment indicates that several system partners reported that they experience difficulty in navigating the volume of activity that is linked with child welfare reform, and noted difficulties in obtaining information on developments and shifts within the

system in a timely manner. In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that a stronger communication infrastructure is needed to keep system partners and interested parties updated on opportunities for coordination.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions about the State’s effectiveness in engaging key partners in the development and implementation of the CFSP goals and objectives. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that DYFS works closely with the courts to identify strategies to address key problems. In addition, most stakeholders commenting on this item indicated that goals and objectives driving program improvement in child welfare are widely known and widely accepted by service providers and child welfare professionals.

Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the court oversight inherent in the MSA has led to prescribed and targeted system reform that has not consistently included the perspectives of key child and family advocates and experts in child welfare. These stakeholders also expressed frustration with the limited amount of data available to the public from DYFS regarding children in foster care.

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

 X Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength. The State engages key stakeholders including parents, service providers, and the courts in ongoing planning and consultation. The State’s preparation of the APSRs includes the results of a variety of surveys that reflect the level of engagement of key stakeholders. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the DYFS Office on Quality develops an APSR in consultation with its system partners, using both direct and indirect feedback from children, families, providers, and other parties.

The Statewide Assessment reports that surveys are disseminated regularly to DYFS staff to provide information for use in the development of the 2007 and 2008 APSRs. The Statewide Assessment notes that input is increasingly provided by a representative network of naturally occurring processes closer to the ground, such as court improvement committees, provider groups, youth advisory boards, and county interagency coordinating councils. The Statewide Assessment notes that the APSR uses a reporting format to capture the results of surveys and stakeholder input regarding goals, objectives, services, accomplishments, barriers, utilization, progress, and changes.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally develops APSRs that reflect the opinions of key stakeholders, including parents, service providers, and the courts. Several stakeholders indicated that local offices initiate and maintain consultation opportunities including surveys, standing committees, and workgroups to strengthen the linkages necessary to ensure that comprehensive services are available for children and families involved in the child welfare system.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength. The State provides a single governmental organizing structure to ensure that services and benefits of various Federal programs are coordinated. DYFS works in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) divisions of Addiction Services, Developmental Disabilities, Family Development, and Medical Assistance and Health Services. This item also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS coordinates services at case, agency, and community levels. DYFS works in partnership with DHS divisions of Addiction Services, Developmental Disabilities, Family Development, and Medical Assistance and Health Services. In addition, DYFS partners with DOE, Department of Community Affairs, the judiciary, and the Commission on American Indian Affairs.

This item also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS coordinates services at case, agency, and community levels. DYFS works in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) divisions of Addiction Services, Developmental Disabilities, Family Development, and Medical Assistance and Health Services. In addition, DYFS partners with DOE, the Department of Community Affairs, the judiciary, and the Commission on American Indian Affairs.

For example, the Statewide Assessment reports that the Office of County Welfare Services integrates services within and across counties to families receiving Temporary Assistance to Needing Families and low-income families to provide concrete supports and services in times of need. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that, as a result of collaboration between DCF and the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, children are automatically enrolled in Medicaid upon entry into out-of-home care. The Statewide Assessment also reports that NJ SPIRIT includes a title IV-E eligibility function and issues provider and resource family payments.

The Statewide Assessment reports that 61 percent of 254 DYFS staff and 65 percent of 74 system partner respondents surveyed during the development of the Statewide Assessment agreed that CWS partners collaborate effectively at the case level to coordinate benefits and services to children and families

The Statewide Assessment reports that system partners participating in two discussion groups to prepare the Statewide Assessment noted that the separation of DCF from DHS has resulted to some degree in a silo effect that has a negative impact on the ease of navigation and information sharing.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in coordinating services of Federal and federally assisted programs for children and families. Several stakeholders indicated that services are well coordinated and that communication among providers is fluid. For example, some stakeholders noted that caseworkers are able to link families with Medicaid and mental health services. Several stakeholders indicated that the lines dividing families by program are not solid and that families are linked with appropriate services without being limited by the parameters of any individual program.

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

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

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

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with this systemic factor. New Jersey was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- Although New Jersey had implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that were reasonably in accord with recommended national standards, the standards were not applied equally to relative caregiver homes.

- The State did not have a comprehensive process to ensure the adequate recruitment of potential foster and adoptive homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom homes were needed.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Adopted uniform licensing standards for adoptive, foster, and kinship homes
- Hired additional licensing staff
- Developed a protocol to transition relative caregivers to full license status
- Developed recruitment targets

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

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention are presented and discussed below.

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

 X Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength. The State has standards for resource family homes and placement facilities that comply with all Federal requirements, are updated routinely, and are reflected in foster and adoptive home licensing procedures. This item also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the OOL regulates and licenses child care centers, youth and residential programs, resource family homes, and adoption agencies. The Statewide Assessment notes that all resource families, including relative and adoptive families, must be licensed. There is a single resource home designation for both foster and adoptive families. The Statewide Assessment notes that to be licensed, applicants must meet all applicable State licensure requirements including successful completion of a State and Federal criminal background history investigation, a child abuse and registry investigation, pre-service training and continuing credit requirements for caregiver training, an onsite inspection to evaluate the life/safety of the physical plant and home environment, and programmatic requirements.

The Statewide Assessment reports that licenses are renewed every 3 years. The Statewide Assessment notes that the RFSU uses the Structured Assessment Family Evaluation (SAFE) to conduct a psychosocial evaluation of prospective adoptive families, foster

families, relative care providers, resource families, and concurrent planning families. The OOL conducts comprehensive program and life/safety inspections of prospective homes and licensed homes annually. Through the Licensing Information System (LIS), the licensing process can be managed and tracked, as LIS is designed to interface with NJ SPIRIT.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the OOL experiences staffing shortages, and there are data concerns that affect monitoring efforts. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that although the State has a policy to complete licensing within 150 days of initial application by the family, this accelerated timeframe presents continuing challenges due to delays on the part of applicants and system-based delays.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State's standards regarding safety in foster homes are in place and are reflected in licensing procedures. Several stakeholders indicated that the State's standards were developed based on Federal requirements, health codes, and a comparison of guidelines from other States and the Child Welfare League of America. Some stakeholders noted that standards are updated at least every 5 years and that new requirements are applicable to resource family homes at the time the license is renewed. A few stakeholders noted that the SAFE is used to evaluate a potential resource family during the required home study and house inspection conducted prior to the issuance of a license. Several stakeholders noted that the RFSU caseworkers in local offices monitor resource homes on an ongoing basis.

Several stakeholders noted that the pool of resource families and institutional placements available within the State has grown substantially.

Despite these positive comments, a few stakeholders noted that the licensing process often goes beyond the 150-day target period and that licensing standards are applied differently in different locations and by different caseworkers.

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

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength. The State applies safety standards to all licensed residential facilities and foster and adoptive homes, including relative homes. Although presumptive eligibility for a license is issued for some relative placements and waivers are approved in certain circumstances, safety and health standards are maintained. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment

According to the Statewide Assessment, the OOL applies licensing standards to all child care institutions and resource homes, including relative homes. The Statewide Assessment notes that consistent application of licensing standards is accomplished by

ensuring that licensing requirements are continually reviewed, evaluated, and improved for best practice, child safety, and to avoid conflicts of interest in the review and licensing process. The Statewide Assessment notes that title IV-E payments are provided only to licensed placements and that a title IV-E eligibility review conducted in September 2008 determined that New Jersey was in substantial compliance with Federal requirements.

The Statewide Assessment reports that regulations are separated into two levels: Level 1 requirements stipulate those items with which all resource family parents must be in full compliance, as they affect the safety, health, and rights of children in placement. Level 2 requirements are those that do not affect safety, health, and the rights of children. Waivers of Level 2 requirements are permitted for relatives and family friends who become caregivers when non-safety regulations are not in full compliance. The Statewide Assessment notes that capacity limitations for resource homes allow no more than four children in placement and no more than six children in total. Exceptions to these limitations are permitted to keep sibling groups intact or to serve the best interests of the children. If a sibling is located in a resource home that is at its approved capacity, the protocol for requesting an exception to population limits is followed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State's standards for foster homes and residential facilities are applied equally to all placements. Several stakeholders noted that both foster and adoptive families must comply with the same set of standards and that relative foster families must also comply with the same set of licensing standards, including training requirements.

Some stakeholders noted that presumptive eligibility is afforded to relative caregivers so that a child may be placed after an initial safety and house inspection and prior to the completion of training requirements. In addition, some stakeholders noted that waivers are negotiated in some cases for non-safety related standards, especially to increase the capacity limitations in a foster home to accommodate a sibling group.

Some Gloucester County stakeholders indicated that caseworkers are not well informed about licensing requirements and procedures, especially with regard to the issuance of presumptive eligibility approval for relatives.

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. The State provides for comprehensive background checks as a component of licensing for all foster and adoptive placements, including relative and residential treatment facility placements. This item also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DYFS requires criminal history background checks on all prospective foster and adoptive home applicants as well as personnel working in congregate child care residence settings. The following checks are required for each applicant and every adult household member over the age of 18 prior to licensing: State and Federal fingerprints, local policy checks, Department of Human Services police checks, Promis Gavel (an automated criminal case-tracking system). The Statewide Assessment notes that New Jersey complies with the requirements of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act in requesting out-of-State child abuse/neglect record information for all resource family applicants and adults residing within the home.

The Statewide Assessment notes that, in the case of a relative caregiver, the process for presumptive eligibility permits placement after all the checks except the State and Federal fingerprints have been completed. Although placement is permitted, a license and title IV-E payments are issued only after the completion of all checks, including fingerprints.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the OOL works closely with the DHS/DCF Fingerprinting Unit. From March 2008 to December 2008, almost 11,000 individuals were fingerprinted using LiveScan technology.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State requires background checks and fingerprinting for all adults over the age of 18 in any resource family home or residential facility. Several stakeholders noted that there are no delays associated with background checks and fingerprinting. Stakeholders noted the following facilitating factors associated with conducting background checks in a timely manner:

- LiveScan technology is used for fingerprinting.
- Local offices conduct fingerprinting onsite.
- Department of Human Services personnel in the police department are designated to conduct background checks.

Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who 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. The State uses data to inform and plan for the recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom placements are needed. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, recruitment efforts in New Jersey are data-driven and focus on needs that have been

identified statewide. The Office of Resource Families develops an annual State recruitment plan and works with local recruiters to develop plans for the upcoming year. The Statewide Assessment notes that the State has allocated a significant amount of funding for local events in the communities and neighborhoods that have been identified through data as in need of resource placements that reflect the race and ethnicity of children entering care. In addition, individuals who inquire about becoming resource placements are directed to a group engagement event in their community to listen to a presentation of more detailed information to make a well-informed decision.

The Statewide Assessment notes that DYFS has increased the pool of available resource homes and targeted recruitment efforts to individual counties. In the past 2 years, DYFS has gained over 800 new homes each year. DYFS develops recruitment plans to focus on specific needs, sibling placement resources, and the availability of resource homes for children with special needs. For example, a Teen Recruitment Impact Team was identified to work with adolescents on the 100 Longest Waiting Teens project. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that marketing materials are directed toward faith-based organizations and ethnic and culturally oriented organizations.

The Statewide Assessment reports that while the placement rate declined overall from 2.4 per 1,000 in 2004 to 2.0 per 1,000 in 2007, there has been a corresponding increase in resource families from 966 new homes in 2005 to 1,884 new homes in 2007 and 2,169 new homes in 2008. Of the homes licensed in 2007 and 2008 (3,558), 34 percent (1,193) were homes of relative kin providers.

The Statewide Assessment notes that DYFS works in partnership with FAFS to provide peer-to-peer support to effectively retain experienced foster and adoptive families, develop community connections for families, and improve outcomes for children in foster care. FAFS employs resource family advocates in each Area Office.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State's recruitment efforts have been generally successful in increasing the number of resource families available for children in the State. In addition, several stakeholders indicated that the development of RFSU caseworkers in local offices has increased the State's ability to target recruitment to local needs. Some stakeholders noted that each local office has a localized recruitment plan. A few stakeholders noted that local offices also conduct child-specific recruitment. A few stakeholders noted that there is a continuing need for specialized placements for sibling groups, medically fragile children, and youth.

Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 45 is rated as a Strength. The State effectively uses cross-jurisdictional adoption exchanges including **AdoptUsKids** and the Interstate Compact on Placement of Children (ICPC) to support permanent placements for children. This item also was rated as a Strength in New Jersey's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, New Jersey uses a variety of mechanisms to effectively develop cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements for children. For example, New Jersey joined the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA) and placed 13 children in nine other States in 2007 through the work of the Adoption Exchange Unit and the Interstate Exchange Unit. The Statewide Assessment notes that the New Jersey Adoption Resource Exchange registers legally free children. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that DYFS uses ICPC to supervise out-of-State placements.

The Statewide Assessment reports that 22 percent (79 children) of the 356 children served through the Adoption Resource Exchange achieved permanency in 2007.

Stakeholder Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in its use of cross-jurisdictional resources on behalf of children awaiting permanency. Several stakeholders noted that the use of ICPC and ICAMA facilitates placements across State lines, often for placement with relatives. Some stakeholders noted that the State uses the Adoption Resource Exchange, **AdoptUsKids**, and other national child-specific recruitment strategies to identify and support permanent homes for children.