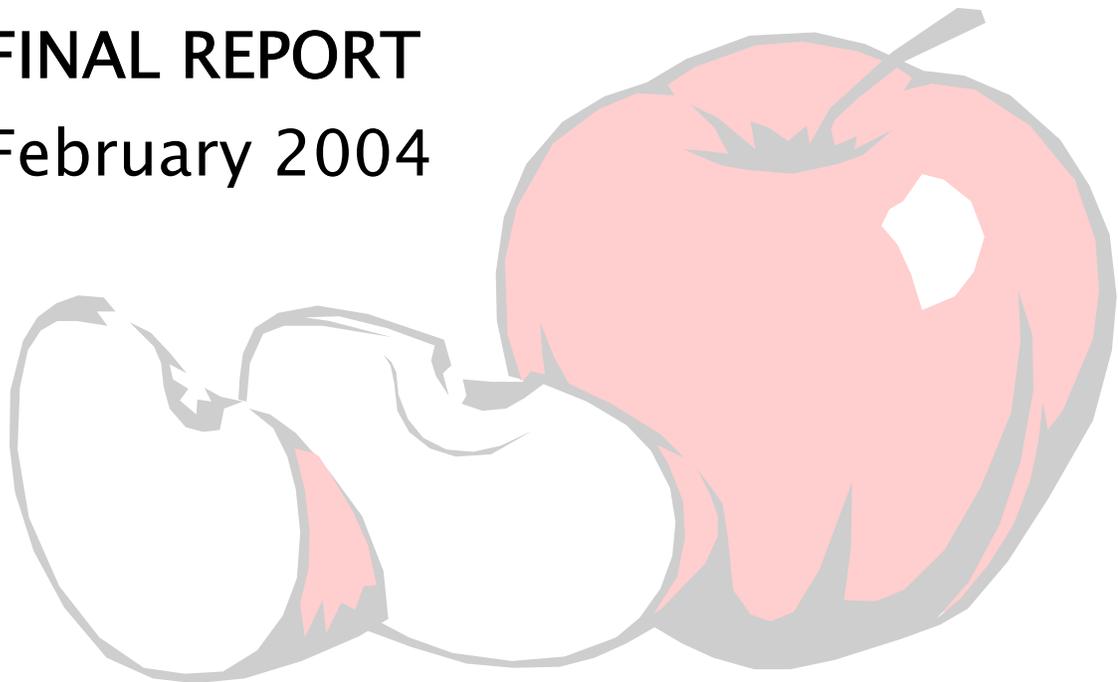


Washington

Child and Family Services Review

FINAL REPORT
February 2004



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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Report: Washington Child and Family Services Review

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Washington. The CFSR was conducted the week of November 3, 2003 (in Federal fiscal year [FY] 2004). The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Children’s Administration (CA);
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 2000 through 2002;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites in the State (Clark County, Grant and Adams Counties, and King County); and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, Tribal representatives, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The CFSR assesses State performance with regard to seven systemic factors and seven child outcomes. With regard to the outcomes, a key strength identified pertained to the indicator of maltreatment in foster care. For this indicator, the State’s percentage of children maltreated while in foster care in FY 2002 is less than the national standard for that measure. Another area of strength pertained to two indicators used to assess Permanency Outcome 2 (The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children in foster care); the State was found to be effective in placing children in foster care in close proximity to their biological families (item 11) and with their siblings, when appropriate (item 12).

CFSR findings, however, indicate that the State did not achieve substantial conformity with the seven outcomes assessed through the CFSR. With regard to Safety Outcome 1 (Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect), the CFSR found in the cases reviewed that the CA responded to the majority of maltreatment reports in accordance with State-established timeframes. However, a key concern identified is that there were delays in some cases in responding to reports of maltreatment, including delays in response to reports that were considered to be high risk as well as those classified as low risk.

The State also did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 (Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate). Although CFSR findings indicate that the State has developed comprehensive risk assessment tools, case reviewers determined that in some cases, safety assessments and/or service provision were not sufficiently comprehensive to ensure

children's safety, and/or social workers were not monitoring safety plans and service participation when children remain in their homes.

The State did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations). This outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 44 percent of the foster care cases reviewed and each indicator for the outcome was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. CFSR case review findings indicate that the CA is not consistent in preventing foster care re-entries, ensuring placement stability for children in foster care, establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner, achieving permanency for children (through adoption, reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner, or ensuring that older children in long-term foster care receive appropriate services to assist them in making the transition from foster care to independent living.

Both case reviewers and stakeholders identified the following court-related issues as potential barriers to achieving permanency for children in a timely manner: overburdened court dockets, a frequent practice of granting continuances for court hearings, and insufficient legal representation for parents and for the agency. However, stakeholders interviewed during the onsite review expressed the opinion that recent State efforts to improve legal representation and to increase in the number of judges who are more knowledgeable about child welfare issues have the potential to have a positive impact on permanency for children.

Well-being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs) was an area of particular concern because it was determined to be substantially achieved in 24.0 percent of the cases reviewed. Case review findings for this outcome indicate that the CA is not consistent in its efforts to (1) meet the services needs of children, parents, and foster parents (item 17); (2) involve children and parents in the case planning process (item 18); and (3) ensure that agency social workers have sufficient contact with the children (item 19) and parents (item 20) in their caseloads, particularly the children and parents in the in-home services cases. Stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR reported that the CA is in the process of addressing concerns about insufficient social worker contact and has proposed changes to agency policy.

The State did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-being Outcome 2 (Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs) or Well-being Outcome 3 (Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs). The CFSR case reviews found that the CA was more effective in meeting the educational and mental health needs of children in foster care than in meeting those needs for children in the in-home services cases.

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

The CFSR findings noted a long and positive history of consultation and collaboration between the State and Tribes. However, the CFSR identified a need for a more effective “government-to-government” relationship between the State and the Tribes that would include greater consultation, increased collaboration with regard to Tribal licensing, and improved monitoring of ICWA compliance.

The overall findings with regard to the State’s performance on the safety and permanency outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in table 2. Table 3 presents the State’s performance relative to the national standards and table 4 provides information pertaining to the State’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. A summary of major findings is presented below.

I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

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

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

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 85.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State’s rate of maltreatment recurrence (10.8%) did not meet the national standard (6.1% or less) for the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period.

The State’s incidence of maltreatment in foster care (0.32%) met the national standard (0.57% or less) for the percentage of children maltreated while in foster care.

A key CFSR finding was that the CA is not consistent in responding to maltreatment reports in accordance with State-established timeframes. Although the CA responded to the majority of reports within State timeframes, delays in responding occurred to some maltreatment reports that were considered to be high risk as well as to some reports classified as low risk.

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

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

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 69.8 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

The CFSR determined that in 81 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, the CA provided appropriate services to children and families to help children remain safely in their own homes (item 3). A concern identified, however, was that in 30 percent of the applicable cases, safety assessments and/or services were not sufficiently comprehensive to address the risk of harm.

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

There are six indicators incorporated in the assessment of permanency outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all children. The indicators pertain to the child welfare agency's efforts to prevent foster care re-entry (item 5), ensure placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establish appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining indicators focus on the child welfare agency's efforts to achieve permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9), or their effort to ensure that children who have "other planned living arrangements" as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 44.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that FY 2002, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the rate of children re-entering foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode, (2) the percent of children adopted who achieved a finalized adoption

within 24 months of entry into foster care, or (3) the percent of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced no more than 2 placements.

State Profile data indicate that the State met the national standard for the percentage of children reunified who were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care.

Ratings for this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 67 percent of cases in one site, compared to 50 percent of case in another site and 31 percent of cases in a third site.

A key finding of the CFSR case reviews was that all six indicators for Permanency Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviewers determined that the CA was not consistently effective in (1) preventing children’s re-entry into foster care, (2) ensuring children’s placement stability while in foster care, (3) establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner, and (4) making enough efforts to achieve children’s permanency goals in a timely manner. One issue raised by case reviewers pertained to the inappropriate use of the goal of “guardianship” as well as delays in establishing and achieving this goal when it was appropriate. Stakeholders noted that some key barriers to achieving permanency in a timely manner are (1) delays in the process of terminating parental rights; (2) delays in completing the necessary paperwork to finalize an adoption; and (3) a shortage of attorneys and judges that results in frequent continuances and delays in scheduling hearings.

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

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

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 64.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of cases in one site, compared to 54 percent of cases in another site and 50 percent of cases in a third site.

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

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

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

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 24.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 42.0 percent of cases in one site, 28.0 percent of cases in another site, and 0 percent of cases in a third site.

A key CFSR finding is that each indicator for Well-Being Outcome 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviews found that the CA was not consistent in its efforts to assess the service needs of children and families and provide necessary services, involve parents and children in the case planning process, and establish face-to-face contact between agency social workers and the children and parents in their caseloads. A particular concern identified in some cases was the lack of effort to incorporate fathers into any aspect of the case process.

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

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

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that the outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 77.4 percent of the applicable cases, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

A key CFSR finding was that the CA is not consistent in its efforts to meet children's educational needs, particularly the needs of children who receive services while they remain in their own homes. This item was rated a Strength in 95 percent of the foster care cases compared to 50 percent of the in-home services cases. Also, performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 88 percent of cases in one site, 67 percent cases in another site, and 62.5 percent of cases in a third site.

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

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

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 59.2 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

The CFSR case reviews found that the CA was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical and mental health needs, particularly for children in the in-home services cases. One concern identified was that in some of the in-home services cases, reviewers determined that a mental health assessment and/or mental health services were warranted, but the agency did not respond accordingly. Key concerns identified in some foster care cases pertained to delays in accessing mental health services and/or providing mental health services that did not meet the child's needs. Stakeholders expressed concern that there is a scarcity of mental health services for children throughout the State.

II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Statewide Information System

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

Washington achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The CFSR determined that the Statewide information system, known as the Case and Management Information System (CAMIS), can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care and is used extensively to track State performance on CFSR outcome measures.

Case Review System

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

The State of Washington is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The CFSR found that the State conducts 6-month and 12-month permanency reviews in a timely manner. However, the CFSR also found that foster parents and other caretakers are not informed about these hearings on a consistent basis, or when they are informed, are not routinely given the opportunity to be heard during the proceedings. In addition, the State does not have a process that ensures the consistent involvement of parents and children in the development of case plans. Finally, the CFSR determined that there are delays in completing the process of filing for termination of parental rights (TPR).

Quality Assurance System

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System is based on whether the State has developed standards to ensure the safety and health of children in foster care (item 30), and whether the State is operating a statewide quality assurance

system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement (item 31).

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

Training

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

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. The CFSR determined that all child welfare agency staff receive initial training that supports the goals and objectives of the agency and are required to complete the training before being assigned case-carrying responsibilities. However, the CFSR also found that although ongoing training opportunities are made available to staff, ongoing training is not mandated. Consequently, there are social workers and supervisors who do not participate in ongoing training. Similarly, although the CFSR found that there is good, mandatory initial training for foster parents, there is no requirement that foster parents participate in ongoing training. The CFSR found that many foster parents are not participating in ongoing training.

Service Array

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

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. The CFSR determined that the State has critical gaps in its service array, particularly in the areas of mental health services and substance abuse treatment, and has an insufficient pool of foster homes. In addition, services are not consistently accessible to children and families on a statewide basis. The Statewide Assessment reports that urban communities have a wider array of services than rural communities; rural areas lack

specialized services, have limited choices, and experience chronic shortages. Finally, the CFSR found that services are not consistently individualized to meet cultural, language, and other unique needs of families and children.

Agency Responsiveness to the Community

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

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The CFSR determined that the State engages in ongoing consultation with stakeholders and uses their input in developing the State's 5-year plan. However, the CFSR also found that some stakeholders, including Tribes, are not consulted on a consistent basis in the State's development of the Annual Progress and Services Report. The CFSR determined that the State child welfare agency has implemented, or is part of, various interagency efforts to coordinate and integrate services for children and families that are served by various agencies.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

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

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

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

| Outcomes and Indicators | Outcome Ratings | | | Item Ratings | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | <i>In Substantial Conformity?</i> | <i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i> | <i>Met National Standards?</i> | <i>Rating**</i> | <i>Percent Strength</i> | <i>Met National Standards</i> |
| Safety Outcome 1-Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect | No | 85.7 | One met, one not met | | | |
| Item 1: Timeliness of investigations | | | | ANI | 76 | |
| Item 2: Repeat maltreatment | | | | ANI | 97 | No |
| Safety Outcome 2 - Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate | No | 69.8 | | | | |
| Item 3: Services to prevent removal | | | | ANI | 81 | |
| Item 4: Risk of harm | | | | ANI | 70 | |
| Permanency Outcome 1- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations | No | 44.0 | 1 met, 3 not met | | | |
| Item 5: Foster care re-entry | | | | ANI | 71 | No |
| Item 6: Stability of foster care placements | | | | ANI | 68 | No |
| Item 7: Permanency goal for child | | | | ANI | 72 | |
| Item 8: Reunification, guardianship and placement with relatives | | | | ANI | 50 | Yes |
| Item 9: Adoption | | | | ANI | 40 | No |
| Item 10: Other planned living arrangement | | | | ANI | 50 | |
| Permanency Outcome 2 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved | No | 64.0 | | | | |
| Item 11: Proximity of placement | | | | Strength | 94 | |
| Item 12: Placement with siblings | | | | Strength | 94 | |
| Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care | | | | ANI | 56 | |
| Item 14: Preserving connections | | | | ANI | 76 | |
| Item 15: Relative placement | | | | ANI | 72 | |
| Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents | | | | ANI | 58 | |

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

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

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

| Outcomes and Indicators | Outcome Ratings | | Item Ratings | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | <i>In Substantial Conformity?</i> | <i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i> | <i>Met National Standards</i> | <i>Rating**</i> | <i>Percent Strength</i> | <i>Met National Standards</i> |
| Well Being Outcome 1 - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs | No | 24.0 | | | | |
| Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents | | | | ANI | 46 | |
| Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning | | | | ANI | 48 | |
| Item 19: Worker visits with child | | | | ANI | 36 | |
| Item 20: Worker visits with parents | | | | ANI | 28 | |
| Well Being Outcome 2 - Children receive services to meet their educational needs | No | 77.4 | | | | |
| Item 21: Educational needs of child | | | | ANI | 77 | |
| Well Being Outcome 3 - Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs are met | No | 59.2 | | | | |
| Item 22: Physical health of child | | | | ANI | 83 | |
| Item 23: Mental health of child | | | | ANI | 64 | |

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

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

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

| Outcome Measure | National Standard | Washington Data FY 2002 |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report in the first 6 months of CY 2001, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period? | 6.1% or less | 10.8% |
| Of all children who were in foster care in the first 9 months of CY 2001, what percent experienced maltreatment from foster parents or facility staff members? | 0.57% or less | 0.32% |
| Of all children who entered foster care in FY 2001, what percent were re-entering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode? | 8.6% or less | 14.8% |
| Of all children reunified from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care? | 76.2% or more | 81.6% |
| Of all children who were adopted from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were adopted within 24 months of their entry into foster care? | 32.0% or more | 26.7% |
| Of all children in foster care during FY 2001 for less than 12 months, what percent experienced no more than 2 placement settings? | 86.7% or more | 83.7% |

Table 4: Washington CFSR Ratings for the Seven Systemic Factors

| Systemic Factors | In Substantial Conformity?* | Rating** |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| IV. Statewide Information System | Yes (3) | |
| Item 24: System can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals of children in foster care | | Strength |
| V. Case Review System | No (2) | |
| Item 25: Process for developing a case plan and for joint case planning with parents | | ANI |
| Item 26: Process for 6-month case reviews | | Strength |
| Item 27: Process for 12-month permanency hearings | | Strength |
| Item 28: Process for seeking TPR in accordance with ASFA | | ANI |
| Item 29: Process for notifying caregivers of reviews and hearings and for opportunity for them to be heard | | ANI |
| VI. Quality Assurance System | Yes (3) | |
| Item 30: Standards to ensure quality services and ensure children’s safety and health | | Strength |
| Item 31: Identifiable QA system that evaluates the quality of services and improvements | | Strength |
| VII. Training | No (2) | |
| Item 32: Provision of initial staff training | | Strength |
| Item 33: Provision of ongoing staff training that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge. | | ANI |
| Item 34: Provision of training for caregivers and adoptive parents that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge | | ANI |
| VIII. Service Array | No (2) | |
| Item 35: Availability of array of critical services | | ANI |
| Item 36: Accessibility of services across all jurisdictions | | ANI |
| Item 37: Ability to individualize services to meet unique needs | | ANI |
| IX. Agency Responsiveness to the Community | Yes (3) | |
| Item 38: Engages in ongoing consultation with critical stakeholders in developing the CFSP | | Strength |
| Item 39: Develops annual progress reports in consultation with stakeholders | | ANI |
| Item 40: Coordinates services with other Federal programs | | Strength |
| X. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention | Yes (3) | |
| Item 41: Standards for foster family and child care institutions | | Strength |
| Item 42: Standards are applied equally to all foster family and child care institutions | | Strength |
| Item 43: Conducts necessary criminal background checks | | Strength |
| Item 44: Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect children’s racial and ethnic diversity | | ANI |
| Item 45: Uses cross-jurisdictional resources to find placements | | Strength |

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

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

FINAL REPORT WASHINGTON CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Washington. The CFSR was conducted the week of November 3, 2003 (in Federal fiscal year 2004). The Period Under Review (PUR) for the onsite review was October 1, 2002 through November 7, 2003. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Children’s Administration (CA);
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 2000 through 2002;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites in the State (Clark County [Vancouver], Grant and Adams Counties [Moses Lake], and King County [Seattle]); and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, Tribal representatives, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

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

- Twenty-five cases were reviewed in King County, 13 in Clark County, and 12 in Grant and Adams Counties.
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- 25 cases were “foster care cases” (cases in which children were in the care and custody of the State child welfare agency and in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 25 were “in-home services cases” (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained with their families and no child in the family was in out-of-home care during the period under review).
- Eleven of the cases reviewed (eight in-home cases and three foster care cases) were Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) cases. FRS cases are voluntary cases designed to prevent the out-of-home placement of adolescents. FRS cases are opened by the agency at the request of the family.
- Of the 25 foster care cases, 16 children (64%) were younger than age 10 at the start of the period under review; 3 children (12%) were at least 10 years old, but not yet 13 years old; and 6 children (24%) were 13 years of age or older at the start of the period under review.

- Of the 25 foster care cases, 10 children were male and 15 were female.
- Of the 25 foster care cases, there were 11 cases (44%) in which the target child was White (non-Hispanic), 6 cases (24%) in which the target child was Black (non-Hispanic), 5 cases (20%) in which the target child was of two or more races, 2 cases (8%) in which the target child was Hispanic, and 1 case (4%) in which the target child was Native American. There were five children in foster care who were identified as having Native American heritage: four of these children were of two or more races.
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the **primary** reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case was the following:
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 15 cases (30%)
 - Physical abuse – 9 cases (18%)
 - Child’s behavior – 9 cases (18%)
 - Sexual abuse – 5 cases (10%)
 - Substance abuse by parents – 5 cases (10%)
 - Medical neglect – 3 cases (6%)
 - Abandonment – 2 cases (4%)
 - Domestic violence in the home – 1 case (2%)
 - Parent incarcerated – 1 case (2%)
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the most frequently cited of all reasons for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency were the following:
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 29 cases (58% of cases)
 - Physical abuse – 21 cases (42% of cases).
 - Substance abuse by parents – 17 cases (34% of cases)
 - Child’s behavior – 12 cases (24% of cases)
- In 16 (64%) of the 25 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in care during the entire period under review.

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

SECTION 1: OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

| Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement: | | | | | |
| | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | Total | Total Percentage |
| Substantially Achieved: | 11 | 8 | 17 | 36 | 85.7 |
| Partially Achieved: | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 11.9 |
| Not Achieved or Addressed: | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2.4 |
| Not Applicable: | 1 | 3 | 4 | | |
| Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards: | | | | | |
| | National Standard | State's Percentage | Meets Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | |
| Repeat maltreatment | 6.1 | 10.8 | | X | |
| Maltreatment of children in foster care | 0.57 | 0.32 | X | | |

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 85.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period.

However, the State did meet the national standard for the percentage of children maltreated while in foster care.

A key CFSR finding was that the CA is not consistent in responding to maltreatment reports in accordance with State-established timeframes. Although the CA responded to most maltreatment reports within State-established timeframes, delays in responding occurred to some maltreatment reports that were considered to be high risk as well as to some reports classified as low risk.

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

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 21 of the 50 cases. Twenty-nine cases were not applicable because they did not involve reports of child maltreatment during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with the State child welfare agency requirements. The CA policy is that a child protective services (CPS) investigator is to respond to reports classified as “emergent response” no later than 24 hours from the time of the referral. For these reports, face-to-face contact is to be established within 10 working days. A CPS investigator is to respond to a report classified as “non-emergent response” within 10 calendar days from the date and time of the referral. The face-to-face contact must occur within 10 working days from the date of the referral. Reports considered to involve low risk of harm to the child can be referred to the Alternative Response System (ARS) rather than being assigned for investigation. Agency policy requires that contact for ARS cases must occur within 10 working days of the date the ARS provider receives the referral from intake. The results of the case review assessments were the following:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 16 (76%) of the 21 applicable cases (5 of the 16 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (24%) of the 21 applicable cases (3 of the 5 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for the item varied across the CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 87.5 percent of the 8 applicable Team 1 cases, 70 percent of the 10 applicable Team 3 cases, and 67 percent of the 3 applicable Team 2 cases.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when face-to-face contact was established with the child within required State timeframes. In addition, although CA policy does not require face-to-face contact with the child within 24 hours of receipt of a report, face-to-face contact with the child was made within 24 hours in 66 percent of the reports reviewed in one site and 64 percent of the reports reviewed in another site.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when face-to-face contact was not established within required timeframes. Of the five cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, two involved reports that were classified as “emergent response.” Also, in two of the five cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, there were delays in assignment of the referral for investigation as well as in responding to the referral.

Most stakeholders commenting on the issue of timeliness of investigations expressed the opinion that the centralization of intake for maltreatment reports (which occurred in August 2002) was not effective in ensuring timely response to maltreatment reports. They reported that responsiveness to reports is improving now that the State is reinstating the decentralized intake process. In general, stakeholders suggested that the CA tends to respond in a timely manner to maltreatment reports classified as “emergent,” but that responses are less likely to meet required timeframes when the reports are considered to involve a low risk of harm (i.e., non-emergent reports).

State-level stakeholders voiced concern about the CA policy requiring face-to-face contact within 10 days. They questioned whether an effective decision about risk of harm can be made 10 days after an incident is reported. Some stakeholders indicated that many referrals are responded to within 24 hours, regardless of the mandated timeframes.

Determination and Discussion: Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 24 percent (5 cases) of the applicable cases, the CA had not established face-to-face contact with the child subject of a maltreatment report in accordance with the State’s required time frames. In two of these cases, the report was considered to be “high-risk” (i.e., classified as “emergent response”).

According to the Statewide Assessment, the number of accepted CPS referrals has declined over a 3-year period and the percent of “founded” referrals has continued to decline from 40 percent in 1999 (when Washington implemented the CAPTA third-party review requirement) to a recent low of 16 percent. Approximately 13 percent of accepted referrals were assigned to ARS in 2002.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that the Division of Licensed Resources’ (DLR) procedures for responding to reports of child abuse and neglect in foster care require the same method of making findings as for other reports, but also require that all screened-in referrals are considered high investigation standard referrals and must be investigated. Timely face-to-face contact was made in over 95 percent of recent DLR child abuse and neglect referrals.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

___ Strength __X__ Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 36 of the 50 cases. Fourteen cases were not applicable because there was never a substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report on any of the children in the family. Seven of these cases were opened as Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) cases. Five cases were opened for services because the social worker determined that there was a potential risk of harm to the child, although the maltreatment allegation had not been substantiated, and two cases were opened because the child was in need of services. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had ever been a substantiated report on the family. Reviewers also were to determine if there was at least one substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, if another substantiated or indicated report occurred within 6 months of that report. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 35 (97%) of the 36 applicable cases (24 of the 35 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (3%) of the 36 applicable cases (the one case was not a foster care case).

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

- There was a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report involving the family prior to the period under review, but no substantiated or indicated report during the period under review (27 cases).
- There was a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report involving the family during the period under review, but there was no substantiated or indicated report within 6 months of that report (8 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 case in which 2 substantiated reports occurred within 6 months of one another. In this case, the perpetrator of the maltreatment was the same and the maltreatment involved similar circumstances.

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

- In 4 cases, there was never a maltreatment report on the family.
- In 8 cases, there was 1 maltreatment report.
- In 16 cases, there were between 2 and 5 maltreatment reports.
- In 6 cases, there were between 6 and 10 maltreatment reports.
- In 16 cases, there were more than 10 maltreatment reports.

Although in 22 cases (44%) there were more than 6 maltreatment reports on the family, it is not known how many of these reports were substantiated. Thirteen of the 25 foster care cases reviewed had 10 or more reports of maltreatment on the family over the life of the case.

Stakeholders commenting on this item provided differing opinions. Stakeholders in one site suggested that maltreatment recurrence was not a problem in that site. However, stakeholders in the two other sites expressed the opinion that maltreatment recurrence is an issue in their localities. Stakeholders attributed maltreatment recurrences to one or more of the following factors: (1) the refusal of many families to participate in services, (2) the lack of comprehensive safety assessments at the time of case closure, (3) an increase in chronic neglect cases, and (4) families initially referred to the alternative response system (ARS) coming back into the system within a year, even after receiving services.

Determination and Discussion: Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although in 97 percent of the applicable cases, the item was rated as a Strength, the State's rate of maltreatment recurrence for 2002 (10.8%), as reported in the State Data Profile, did not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent or less. The criteria and standard for both indicators must be met for the item to be rated as a Strength.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the data pertaining to maltreatment recurrence within 6 months may not reflect the actual rate of recurrence because this percentage may include (1) multiple findings of the same incident reported by different sources, (2) reports of incidents that occurred in the past making it look as though a recurrence occurred at the time of the finding, and (3) reports of new allegations identified during the CPS investigation. However, the Statewide Assessment notes that even when a variety of adjustments to the data are made, the calculated recurrence rate remains higher than the national standard.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following information pertaining to the State's analyses of their maltreatment recurrence cases:

- Recurrence is more likely in non-emergent response cases (requiring an initiation of an investigation within 10 calendar days of receipt of the allegation) than in emergent response cases (requiring an initiation of an investigation within 24 hours of receiving the allegation). The Statewide Assessment suggests that "non-emergent" response times may be impacting recurrence or that there are different intervention strategies for emergent and non-emergent responses that impact recurrence.
- The highest recurrence rate statewide was for short-term placements (children in foster care for 30 days or less). The rate for these children was higher than for children placed longer than 30 days and higher than for children not placed at all.
- Washington's higher recurrence rate cannot be solely attributed to neglect. Seventy-five percent of the neglect re-referrals are also for neglect, but 25 percent are for reasons other than neglect.

- A recent CA study on effectiveness of services found that in a given year, there were re-referrals in 41 percent of the Intensive Family Preservation Services cases, 38 percent of the Family Preservation Services cases, 26 percent of the alternative response services cases, and 17 percent of the child protective services cases.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the State is attempting to address current issues relevant to maltreatment recurrence, such as the difficulties in substantiating neglect allegations, the barriers encountered in attempting to engage families in voluntary services, and the need for a stronger legal basis for intervening in cumulative harm cases (cases where there have been multiple reports of neglect, but no substantiated reports).

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: | | | | | |
| | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | Total | Total Percentage |
| Substantially Achieved: | 10 | 6 | 14 | 30 | 69.8 |
| Partially Achieved: | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 7.0 |
| Not Achieved or Addressed: | 1 | 1 | 8 | 10 | 23.2 |
| Not Applicable: | 0 | 4 | 3 | | |

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 69.8 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

CFSR findings indicate that the State has developed comprehensive risk assessment tools. However, a key concern identified during the CFSR pertained to an inconsistency in the quality of safety assessments. Case reviewers and stakeholders noted that in some cases the services provided to families are not sufficiently comprehensive to ensure children's safety while in their homes. They also noted that in some cases when children remain in their homes, safety plans and service participation are not consistently monitored on an ongoing basis. In two in-home services cases, case reviewers noted that the social workers closed the cases without conducting a safety assessment.

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

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

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: There were 26 cases for which an assessment of item 3 was applicable. Cases were excluded from this assessment if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and/or there were no substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to any children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made enough efforts to provide services to families to prevent removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 21 (81%) of the 26 applicable cases (7 of these 21 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (19%) of the 26 applicable cases (2 of these 5 cases were foster care cases).

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

- Appropriate services were provided to parents and children to prevent removal (16 cases).
- The family received appropriate post-reunification services to prevent re-entry into foster care (2 cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home to ensure their safety (3 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency did not provide services (1 case) or that the services provided by the agency were insufficient to maintain the child safely in the home (4 cases). In four cases the agency failed to follow-up with the families to ensure that services continued to be appropriate and/or that families were participating in the identified services.

Services provided to the families included, but were not limited to, victim advocacy services, child abuse intervention services, individual and family counseling, day care, assistance in obtaining welfare and housing, medication management services, homemaker services, medical treatment and public health nurse services, anger management classes, parenting classes, summer camps, parent support groups, family preservation services, in-home parenting instruction services, in-home therapy, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence services, financial support, psychological evaluations, case management for medical services, behavioral therapy, and sexual abuse services.

Stakeholders commenting on this item reported that the CA is making efforts to enhance its ability to provide services to children while they remain in their homes, particularly through the ARS. However, stakeholders were in agreement that the agency is not consistent in its efforts to provide sufficient services to families after reunification or to conduct safety planning at the time of reunification. In addition, although some stakeholders expressed the opinion that ARS services and family preservation services are effective in keeping children safely in their homes, other stakeholders questioned the effectiveness of these services. Still other stakeholders reported that there are not enough placement prevention services to meet the need. Finally, State-level stakeholders expressed concern about the substantial number of children who are reunified within 30 or 60 days who may have been able to remain at home if services had been provided.

Determination and Discussion: Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 19 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not made enough efforts to provide the necessary services to maintain children safely in their own homes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA policies require social workers to assess the services available to maintain the child in the home. The social worker is not expected to place any child unless the child is at risk of imminent harm and/or there are no alternative services available to keep the child safely at home. The Statewide Assessment also notes that families are referred for services based on the determination of risk, not on whether the report was substantiated.

The Statewide Assessment reports that approximately 50 percent of the families with a founded (substantiated) report receive services purchased by the agency. However, the Statewide Assessment also estimates that 90-95 percent of families with a founded (substantiated) report receive services when both purchased services and services provided directly by the CA staff are counted. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, although the agency is expected to keep in-home services cases open for no more than 90 days after the investigation is completed, policy permits the CA social workers to continue to provide services to these families if the family signs a voluntary services agreement or if there is a court order.

Finally, the Statewide Assessment notes that there has been a decline in the numbers of children placed for less than 60 days. This was attributed in part to agency efforts to provide services to keep children from entering foster care. The Statewide Assessment indicates that 79 percent of the 2,400 families that were referred to the ARS during the 1999-2000 report period were offered services, although some families were referred back to child protective services as not appropriate for ARS (4,500 families were referred to ARS in 2002).

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

___ Strength __X__ Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 4 was applicable for 43 cases. Seven cases were not applicable for assessment because they were not opened due to child maltreatment and there was no risk of harm to the child. In assessing item 4, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 30 (70%) of the 43 applicable cases (17 of the 30 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 (30%) of the 43 applicable cases (8 of the 13 cases were foster care cases).

Item 4 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from the home either prior to or during the period under review and providing services to the parents (10 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from the home either prior to or during the period under review and seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) (7 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remained in the home (13 cases).

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

- Either no services were provided or the services provided were not adequate to reduce the risk of harm for all children in the family (4 cases).
- The agency did not monitor service participation or conduct a safety assessment before closing the case, thus a risk of harm remained (2 cases).
- The safety assessment conducted was not sufficient to capture all of the risk issues in the home (2 cases).
- There was insufficient assessment of risk of harm to children in their foster homes and risk issues were not addressed (4 cases)).
- Children were returned home to their parents by a relative foster care provider without the agency's knowledge because the agency did not maintain contact with either the relative or the children. After learning of this, the agency did not visit the children in the parent's home for 30 days (1 case).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed concern about the lack of routine, ongoing safety planning and questioned the effectiveness of safety planning. They noted that although the number of cases that have safety plans is increasing, these plans are not always sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that child safety issues are adequately addressed. Stakeholders also voiced concern about the lack of consistent monitoring of safety plans on an ongoing basis. Finally, stakeholders reported that although the new risk assessment tool is comprehensive, the safety plans developed do not always address the identified risks.

Determination and Discussion: Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 30 percent of the applicable cases reviewers determined that the CA had not made enough effort to address the risk of harm to the children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA has a risk assessment practice guide and an array of tools developed to help social workers assess child safety at specific decision-making points over the life of a case. These tools include: safety assessments and safety plans for children in their own homes; an investigative risk assessment to differentiate children who are at low, moderate and high risk of abuse or neglect; reassessment of risk throughout the course of a case; and development of reunification assessments and transition and safety plans for reunification. The Statewide Assessment notes that some families referred to ARS are sent back to CPS as high-risk cases and more information is needed to assess whether these cases received an adequate risk assessment at the point of referral to ARS.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that a child abuse and neglect section within DLR investigates reports of abuse and neglect in licensed foster care. This section was established to avoid conflicts of interest between placement social workers, licensing social workers, and investigation social workers. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, there has been a reduction in referrals of abuse or neglect in licensed care of nearly 45 percent over the 5 year period from 1997 through 2001, and a reduction in founded child abuse and neglect referrals in licensed care of nearly 75 percent. These declines are attributed to (1) increased training for investigators, (2) facility reviews by licensors, (3) health and safety visits by social workers which are required to be conducted every 90 days, and (4) Kids Come First safety assessments and safety planning.

The Statewide Assessment reports that maltreatment reports in unlicensed relative care are investigated by the Division of Child and Family Services within the CA and not by DLR. The CAMIS system does not separately track maltreatment in unlicensed relative homes. However, Washington has included both licensed and unlicensed homes in its calculation of maltreatment in foster care and meets the national standard. The Statewide Assessment indicates that 83 percent of relative foster care homes are unlicensed.

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: | | | | | |
| | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | Total | Total Percentage |
| Substantially Achieved: | 3 | 4 | 4 | 11 | 44.0 |
| Partially Achieved: | 3 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 36.0 |
| Not Achieved or Addressed: | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 20.0 |
| Not Applicable: | 7 | 6 | 12 | | |
| Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards: | | | | | |
| | National Standard | State's Percentage | Meets Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | |
| Foster care re-entries | 8.6 or less | 14.8 | | X | |
| Length of time to achieve reunification | 76.2 or more | 81.6 | X | | |
| Length of time to achieve adoption | 32.0 or more | 26.7 | | X | |
| Stability of foster care placements | 86.7 or more | 83.7 | | X | |

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 44.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year (FY) 2002, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the rate of foster care re-entries, (2) the percent of children adopted who achieved a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care, or (3) the percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced no more than 2 placements.

However, the State Date Profile indicates that for FY 2002 the State did meet the national standard for the percentage of children reunified who were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care.

Ratings for this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 67 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 50 percent of Team 1 cases and 31 percent of Team 3 cases.

A key finding of the CFSR case reviews was that all six indicators for Permanency Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviewers determined that the CA was not consistently effective in (1) preventing children’s re-entry into foster care, (2) ensuring children’s placement stability while in foster care, (3) establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner, and (4) making enough efforts to achieve children’s permanency goals in a timely manner.

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

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Seven of the 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of foster care re-entries because they involved children who entered foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 5 (71%) of the 7 applicable cases.
- Item 5 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (29%) of the 7 applicable cases.

Item 5 was rated as a Strength when a child’s entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 cases because the child had one or more entries into foster care during the period under review that occurred within 12 months of a previous foster care episode. In one case, the child was 16 years old at the time of the onsite CFSR and the re-entry was due to conflict with the mother. In the other case, the child was 8 years old at the time of the onsite CFSR. The re-entry was due to neglect and occurred 3 months after reunification.

Stakeholders commenting on the issue of foster care re-entry were in general agreement that the CA does not provide sufficient services to families after reunification. Some stakeholders reported that there is a lack of sufficient safety assessment at the time of reunification. However, stakeholders in one site expressed the opinion that family team meetings help prevent re-entries into foster care because relatives become more involved in supporting the families.

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

- In 2 (29%) of the applicable cases reviewed, children entering foster care were re-entering within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode.
- The data from the State Data Profile indicate that Washington's re-entry rate (the percentage of children entering care who were entering within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode) for FY 2002 (14.8%) did not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent or less.

According to the Statewide Assessment, many of the re-entries in the Washington data for the Federal measure are related to re-entries of adolescents receiving intermittent respite foster care and of children who were discharged from foster care and re-entered foster care within 6 months. Over half of the children who re-enter foster care in Washington do so within 6 months following reunification. As of March 2003, 7 percent of children placed for longer than 72 hours for child abuse and neglect reasons re-entered care for longer than 72 hours for child abuse and neglect reasons. (The Federal data includes children placed less than 72 hours, as well as children placed for behavioral concerns rather than child abuse and neglect; both of these are excluded from the State figure.) The Statewide Assessment also notes that the CA has implemented new reunification assessment and safety planning tools that are designed to assist social workers with reunification decision-making.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 25 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. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 17 (68%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (32%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 67 percent of Team 1 cases and 62 percent of Team 3 cases.

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 14 cases experienced only 1 placement during the period under review (no placement changes).
- Children in 5 cases experienced 2 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 2 cases experienced 3 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 4 cases experienced 4 or more placements during the period under review. (During the period under review, one of these children experienced seven placement changes and another child had nine placement changes.)

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (14 cases), or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest (3 cases), such as moving a child from a foster home to a pre-adoptive placement or relative home.

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

- The child experienced multiple placement changes that were not for the purpose of meeting the child's needs or attaining the child's goals (4 cases).
- The child's current placement is not stable (7 cases).

Six of the eight children in the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were adolescents (i.e., age 13 or older). In the remaining two cases, the children were young (3 and 4 years old) and the item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that the placement was not stable.

Several stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that there is a lack of placement stability among children in foster care, particularly adolescents and children with behavior problems. Placement instability was attributed to the following factors: (1) a lack of appropriate matching of foster parents and children; (2) poor relationships between foster parents and the agency; (3) a lack of adequate resources, particularly for children with behavioral or emotional problems; (4) lack of adequate training of foster parents; (5) insufficient respite care in some areas of the State; and (6) lack of support for unlicensed relative foster care providers. Placement stability was attributed to use of foster/adopt homes and conducting relative searches early on in a case.

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

- In 32 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that children's placements were unstable or that children experienced placement changes that were not consistent with their needs.
- Data from the State Data Profile for FY 2002 indicate that the percentage of children experiencing no more than 2 placements in their first 12 months in foster care (83.7%) does not meet the national standard of 86.7 percent or more.

According to the Statewide Assessment, placement stability was identified as an issue by numerous stakeholders during the State’s planning process conducted in 2002. The Statewide Assessment reports that the CA has studied placement instability through workgroups, research, and quality assurance reviews, and has assembled workgroups to recommend improvements. In addition, the CA provides supportive services (e.g. family preservation services, childcare) to foster parents when there is a threat of a placement disruption.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that children between 12 and 17 years old represent nearly 50 percent of the children who have been in 5 or more placements. These children typically have mental health problems and a history of aggressive behavior; their placement histories usually include juvenile detention and psychiatric hospitalization.

The Statewide Assessment notes that some of the key reasons for placement changes are child behavior, foster parent request, child abuse or neglect in foster care, and licensing issues. The Statewide Assessment also notes that children with multiple moves tend to be from chronically maltreating families and tend to have experienced cumulative emotional and/or developmental harm, indicating that earlier intervention was needed.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 7 was rated Strength in 18 (72%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (28%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Ratings for item 7 varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Team 1 cases and 83 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 54 percent of Team 3 cases.

The case review found that the children in the 25 foster care cases had the following primary permanency goals:

- 9 children had a goal of adoption.

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

At the time of the onsite review, 16 of the 25 children had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. The agency had filed for termination of parental rights (TPR) in 11 of these 16 cases, and had attained TPR in 10 cases. For the five cases for which TPR had not been filed, a reason for not filing had been entered in two of the case files; in three case files, no reason was provided.

Item 7 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The goal is/was appropriate but was not established in a timely manner (4 cases).
- The goal is not appropriate given the needs of the child and the circumstances of the case (3 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the agency is aware of the timelines established by the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), and that efforts are being made to establish permanency goals in a timely manner, particularly for children younger than age 12. Stakeholders in one site reported that CA social workers in that site implement concurrent planning on a frequent basis. However, stakeholders in another site noted that social workers in that site tend to engage in linear planning because it is easier to work on one goal at a time. Stakeholders identified the following barriers to timely establishment of permanency goals: (1) a practice of some social workers, attorneys, and judges to extend the time allowed for families to achieve goals beyond the timeframes established by ASFA; (2) the fact that sometimes parents do not receive services in a timely manner; (3) a lack of sufficient parent-child visits, and (4) a lack of consistency in setting time limits for families at the onset of a case. Stakeholders had different perceptions regarding the timely filing of TPR petitions. While several stakeholders reported that the CA makes efforts to seek TPR when appropriate, other stakeholders voiced concern that TPR petitions are not being filed in a timely manner.

Determination and Discussion: Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 28 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CA permanency plans include return home, adoption, guardianship, or permanent custody with someone other than the parent. If the social worker identifies a compelling reason why one of these plans is not in the child's

best interest, the social worker may select another permanent plan such as long-term relative placement, long-term foster care placement, or independent living. The Statewide Assessment notes that to increase the attainment of permanency, the CA is planning to target services to support relative foster parents and caregivers. The CA also plans to clarify for social workers when to pursue each type of plan and to develop policy on the minimum agency services to be provided for each type of permanent plan. The Statewide Assessment also reports that the CA plans to educate caregivers and birth parents on their roles in making permanent plan choices and to target services toward achieving permanency for adolescents.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Item 8 was applicable for 14 of the 25 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives for children in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, enough efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 7 (50%) of the 14 applicable cases.
- Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (50%) of the 14 applicable cases.

Nine of the 14 cases reviewed for this item had a goal of reunification, 4 had a goal of guardianship, and one had equal concurrent goals of guardianship and adoption. All five of the cases in which reunification was not the goal were located in the same CFSR site and all were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item.

Of the 14 applicable cases, the permanency goal was achieved in 6 cases (5 reunifications and 1 guardianship); in 5 of those cases, the goal was achieved within 12 months. In 5 of the 8 cases in which the child's goal had not yet been achieved, the child had been in foster care for longer than 12 months.

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

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that most reunifications take place very quickly, within 1 or 2 months of the child's entry into foster care. Stakeholders also reported that there is a lack of consistent effort to achieve reunification for children who remain in foster care for longer periods of time. In addition, some stakeholders voiced concern that it often takes longer than 12 months to address parental deficits, particularly if substance abuse is a major issue in the family.

Determination and Discussion: Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Data from the State Data Profile indicate that for FY 2002, the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (81.6%) meets the national standard of 76.2 percent or more. However, in 50 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made enough efforts to attain the goals of reunification or guardianship in a timely manner. The criteria and standards for both indicators must be met for the item to be rated as a Strength.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the number of children reunified with their parents or guardians has continued to decrease over the past 6 years from 7,880 in 1997 to 5,500 in 2002. The majority of these children, particularly infants and adolescents, are reunified with their families within the first 60 days of placement. The Statewide Assessment notes that anecdotal evidence suggests that the decline in reunifications may be related to an increasing number of parents who are allowing relatives to care for their children and an increasing number of children moving into adoptive placements.

Item 9. Adoption

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Ten of the 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 9. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether enough efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. The results were the following:

- Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 4 (40%) of the 10 applicable cases.
- Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (60%) of the 10 applicable cases.

During the CFSR period under review, adoption was finalized in 6 of the 10 applicable cases, and in 3 of these cases, the adoption was finalized within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care. All of the four remaining children were in adoptive placements during the period under review.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's adoption had been finalized in a timely manner. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when the adoption had not been finalized within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care (3 cases in which time in foster care ranged from 34 months to 48 months before a finalized adoption), or when an adoption had not yet been finalized and reviewers determined that there were unnecessary delays in the process (3 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed differing opinions. Stakeholders in one site were in general agreement that adoptions are routinely finalized within 24 months. They attributed this to the local agency's emphasis on permanency planning, relative searches, supervisory oversight, and on the use of open adoptions. Stakeholders in the other two sites indicated that the process of finalizing adoptions is frequently delayed by a variety of factors, such as a shortage of attorneys and judges, staff turnover, delays in completing paperwork and home studies, and TPR appeals. Some stakeholders voiced concern about the long time span from a final TPR to a finalized adoption.

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

- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's percentage of finalized adoptions in FY 2002 occurring within 24 months of entry into foster care (26.7%) does not meet the national standard of 32.0 percent or more.
- In 60 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the State had not made enough effort to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the number of adoptions in the State has increased over 80 percent from 1996 to 2002. The Statewide Assessment provides the following information regarding the timeliness of adoptions:

- In 2001, the average length of time from placement (entry into foster care) to adoption was 37 months.
- The average length of time from placement to TPR has stayed fairly constant at 22 months since 1999, but the average time from TPR to adoption has decreased from 17 months in 2000 to 15 months in 2001.
- In 2001, half of the adoptions were completed within 11 months of TPR.
- Time from TPR to adoption for African American children has decreased 3 months, but still is 8 months longer than for Caucasian children. Time from TPR to adoption for Native American children is 6 months longer than for Caucasian children.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that barriers to timely adoptions include (1) insufficient number of public defenders to represent parents, (2) insufficient court time, (3) lack of adoptive homes for older children, and (4) adoption support payments that are frozen in time (i.e., an adoptive family signs an agreement with a set payment and that payment remains the same over time unless the family requests renegotiating the agreement).

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Two of the foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 10. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements. The results were the following:

- Item 10 was rated as a Strength in 1 (50%) of the 2 applicable cases.
- Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (50%) of the 2 applicable cases.

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in the one case when reviewers determined that the child was successfully transitioned to the community when she turned 18 during the CFSR period under review. The child had received independent living services from the foster parents, social worker, and therapist on the case. Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case because reviewers noted that a long-term foster care placement had not been found for the child.

Determination and Discussion: Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in one (50%) of the two applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made enough efforts to ensure that the child’s placement was long-term and stable and that the child was receiving appropriate services.

The Washington data profile indicates that in FY 2002, 4.2 percent of children in foster care had a permanency goal of long-term foster care and 1 percent of children had a goal of emancipation.

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: | | | | | |
| | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | Total | Total Percentage |
| Substantially Achieved: | 3 | 6 | 7 | 16 | 64.0 |
| Partially Achieved: | 3 | 0 | 6 | 9 | 36.0 |
| Not Achieved or Addressed: | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Not Applicable: | 7 | 6 | 12 | | |

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 64.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 54 percent of Team 3 cases and 50 percent of Team 1 cases.

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

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

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Of the 25 foster care cases, 18 were applicable for an assessment of item 11. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which (1) TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, (2) contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest, and/or (3) parents were deceased or whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's most recent foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. This assessment resulted in the following results:

- Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 17 (94%) of the 18 applicable cases.
- Item 11 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (6%) of the 18 applicable cases.

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

- The child was placed in the same community as parents or relatives (14 cases).
- The child's out-of-county placement was necessary to meet the child's needs (3 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case because reviewers determined that although the child was placed in the same county, the placement was in a different city in the county, which resulted in the child being separated from her community of origin.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the CA social workers make enough efforts to place children in close proximity to parents. However, some stakeholders suggested that there are situations in which children are placed out of county. In one site, stakeholders said that out-of-county placements were due mostly to the need to access services for the child that were not available in the county. In another site, stakeholders reported that there has been a grant to the county from the Stuart Foundation to recruit foster parents within specific communities in which many foster children live.

Determination and Discussion: Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 94 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the CA had made sufficient efforts to ensure that children were placed in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives, or were necessary to meet special needs.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CA policy requires children to be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting that meets the child's needs. The Statewide Assessment also notes that, when possible, placements are to be chosen near a child's family

in order to aid in reunification. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, regionally-based contracting and placement decision-making encourages children to be placed close to their families. Statewide coordination of the contracts and placement resources ensures that children's needs are met within the State when they cannot be met within the Region. According to the Statewide Assessment, only two children in foster care are placed out-of-State because their service needs cannot be met in Washington State.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Sixteen of the 25 foster care cases involved a child with siblings who were in foster care. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether the separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 15 (94%) of the 16 applicable cases.
- Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (6%) of the 16 applicable cases.

In 11 of the 16 applicable cases, the child was in a placement with at least one other sibling, and in 8 of those cases, the child was in a placement with all siblings. There were five cases in which the child was placed separately from all siblings.

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

Most stakeholders commenting on the issue of placement with siblings expressed the opinion that the CA makes sufficient efforts to place children with their siblings. However, several stakeholders suggested that there is a need for more foster homes that can accommodate sibling groups.

Determination and Discussion: Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 94 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the CA places siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State requires that siblings be placed together unless there is evidence that doing so would be detrimental to one of the children.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 13 was applicable for 18 of the 25 foster care cases. Seven cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item because TPR had been established prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the children’s lives (or parental visitation was terminated by court order), and the child had no siblings in foster care (or visitation between siblings was considered to be not in the child’s best interest). In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine (1) whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care and (2) whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 10 (56%) of the 18 applicable cases.
- Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (44%) of the 18 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across the CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of applicable Team 2 cases, compared to 40 percent of applicable Team 1 cases and 37.5 percent of applicable Team 3 cases.

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

- Weekly visits – 7 cases.
- Monthly visits – 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits – 5 cases.
- No visits – 2 cases.

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

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

- Weekly visits – 2 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 1 case.
- Monthly visits – 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits – 2 cases.

- No visits – 9 cases.

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

An assessment of visitation among siblings was applicable in 4 cases. Typical visitation between siblings was the following:

- Monthly visits – 1 case.
- Twice a month visits – 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits - 1 case.
- No visit – 1 case.

For the two cases in which visitation between siblings was less than monthly, reviewers determined that the agency had not made enough efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Item 13 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency of visitation met the needs of the child and parent, or that, when visitation was less frequent than needed, the CA attempted to promote more frequent visitation. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the CA did not promote frequent visitation between parents and children or between siblings.

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed differing opinions. Stakeholders in one site were in general agreement that in that site, the agency makes efforts to ensure that there is sufficient visitation between children and their parents, although there was less consensus regarding agency efforts to ensure adequate sibling visitation. Stakeholders in the other sites had differing opinions regarding this issue. While some of these stakeholders expressed the opinion that the CA promotes frequent visitation, other stakeholders voiced concern about the frequency and the quality of the visits. These latter stakeholders indicated that most visits take place in the agency office, are scheduled during business hours only, and are always supervised, even when the family is close to reunification. These stakeholders also expressed concern about the fact that there is no gradual change in visitation frequency or quality as the family moves toward reunification.

Determination and Discussion: Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 44 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not made enough efforts to ensure that visitation between parents and children and between siblings was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the child.

According to the Statewide Assessment, visitation agreements are established in the first court order and are reviewed at least every 6 months.

Item 14. Preserving connections

_____ Strength ___X___ Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 14. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child's connections to neighborhood, community, heritage, family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 19 (76%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (24%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Team 2 cases and 83 percent of Team 1 cases, compared to 62 percent of Team 3 cases.

Reviewers indicated that in 18 of the 25 cases, children's primary connections had been “significantly” preserved while they were in foster care; in 6 of the 25 cases, children’s primary connections had been “partially” preserved; and in 1 case, children’s primary connections had been “not at all” preserved. In five cases, the child was of Native American heritage. Reviewers determined that the Tribe had been appropriately notified and involved in four of these cases.

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

- Preservation of child’s primary connections with extended family members (20 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with school and community (5 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with religion and ethnic/racial heritage (8 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with former foster parents (1 case).

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

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

Stakeholders in two CFSR sites were in general agreement that the agency makes sufficient efforts to preserve the connections of children in foster care and complies with the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). However, stakeholders in the third CFSR site identified ICWA compliance as a problem in that locality. These stakeholders voiced concern that a case is not treated as an ICWA case until the Tribal affiliation is verified. State-level stakeholders also agreed that ICWA compliance can be problematic in some instances. They reported that the CA is not always consistent in its efforts to notify Tribes and to support and maintain a Native American child's heritage. Several stakeholders suggested that CPS social workers are not routinely asking families about their Native American heritage and that Native American heritage is not routinely identified early in the case.

Determination and Discussion: Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 24 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not made enough efforts to preserve children's connections. A key concern identified by case reviewers was that the CA is not consistent in its efforts to promote or maintain children's connections with extended family members.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA has requirements, procedures, and forms for ICWA compliance. However, it was noted in the Statewide Assessment that an April 2003 case review of 293 Central Intake Referrals did not contain documentation that the required checklist of Native American status had been completed. The Statewide Assessment also reports that although each Tribe receives a monthly listing of Indian families receiving services from the CA, not all Tribal families are included on the list due a lack of correct entry of these data into the State's information system (CAMIS).

The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that Tribal representatives interviewed during the State's self-assessment process, expressed appreciation for the fact that the Washington Administrative Code considers Canadian and State-recognized Indian children as Indian (not only federally-recognized Tribes), and acknowledged that their experience with Washington often was better than with other States. However, significant concern was expressed by Tribal representatives that identification of Indian children continues to be a problem and that there is a need for CPS social workers, CASAs, and judges to have more knowledge about ICWA, an awareness of the human consequences of not complying, and better skills for engaging with Indian families and communities.

Item 15. Relative placement

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 15. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made enough efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 18 (72%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (28%) of the 22 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 67 percent of Team 1 cases and 62 percent of Team 3 cases.

Item 15 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children were placed with relatives (7 cases) or that the CA had made sufficient efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives (11 cases). Relatives were “ruled out” as potential placement resources when they were unable or unwilling to care for the children, had a criminal record, or had a history of substantiated child maltreatment.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the CA had not made enough efforts to search for either paternal or maternal relatives (3 cases), or had searched for maternal but not paternal relatives (3 cases). One case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that the CA did not make enough efforts to support a relative who could have provided care for the child if she had been able to find adequate housing.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the CA is making sufficient efforts to search for and identify relatives as potential placement providers early on in a case. However, stakeholders in two of the CFSR sites said that the agency is more likely to search for maternal relatives than for paternal relatives. At the State level, several stakeholders voiced concern that the CA is not making enough efforts to search for relatives in cases involving a Native American child.

Determination and Discussion: Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 28 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not made enough efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources.

According to the Statewide Assessment, over the past 6 years, the CA has implemented strategies that have resulted in an increase in relative placements to 32 percent of placements in Federal FY 2002. The focus of this effort has been on early identification of appropriate relatives by using specifically assigned staff to search for relatives and complete relative home studies. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that the 2001 Statewide Summary Report on Peer Case Reviews found that relative searches were documented in 63 percent of the cases reviewed.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, 17 percent of the approximately 2,600 relative placements are licensed and receive foster care payments. The Statewide Assessment notes that financial support for relative caregivers is available through TANF and that the CA provides some childcare assistance and some concrete services to support these relative placements. However, according to the Statewide Assessment, relative caregivers report that the child-only TANF grant is inadequate to meet their needs and that they continue to need help providing basic necessities for the children as well as accessing medical care, affordable housing, and adequate transportation. The Statewide Assessment reports that increasing kinship placements is a CA goal for the next 3 years and that some proposals being considered include enhancing support for relative caregivers and increasing the emphasis on searching for relatives as placement resources.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 16 was applicable for 19 of the 28 foster care cases. A case was considered not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, or if a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child's best interests. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care with their mothers and fathers. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 11 (58%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (42%) of the 19 applicable cases.

Item 16 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had made sufficient efforts to promote the parent-child bond of children in foster care. These efforts included fostering contact between the child and birth parent even after TPR, facilitating children's visits with parents, promoting parental involvement in the child's school activities or medical appointments, and facilitating weekly phone calls between a child and a parent who lives in another State.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency did not promote parental involvement with the child or attempt to strengthen the parent-child relationship through visitation or participation in other activities.

Determination and Discussion: Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 42 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not made enough efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care.

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: | | | | | |
| | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | Total | Total Percentage |
| Substantially Achieved: | 0 | 5 | 7 | 12 | 24.0 |
| Partially Achieved: | 6 | 5 | 10 | 21 | 42.0 |
| Not Achieved or Addressed: | 7 | 2 | 8 | 17 | 34.0 |
| Not Applicable: | 0 | 0 | 0 | | |

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 24.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 42.0 percent of the Team 2 cases, 28.0 percent of the Team 3 cases, and in 0 percent of Team 1 cases.

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

and parents in their caseloads. A particular concern identified pertained to the lack of effort to incorporate fathers into any aspect of the case process.

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

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had (1) adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents; and (2) provided the services necessary to meet those needs. The results were the following:

- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 23 (46%) of the 50 applicable cases (14 of the 23 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 27 (54%) of the 50 applicable cases (11 of the 27 cases were foster care cases).

Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 56 percent of the foster care cases, compared to 36 percent of the in-home services cases. In addition, the item was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 48 percent of Team 3 cases and 23 percent of Team 1 cases.

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

- Children's needs were not assessed (5 of 50 applicable cases, 2 of which were foster care cases).
- Mother's needs were not assessed (7 of 44 applicable cases, 4 of which were foster care cases).
- Father's needs were not assessed (15 of 39 applicable cases, 5 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to children (9 of 50 applicable cases, 3 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to mothers (12 of 44 applicable cases, 4 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to fathers (16 of 39 applicable cases, 6 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to foster parents (5 of 21 applicable cases).
- Services provided to the child/children were not appropriate (3 in-home services cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed differing opinions regarding the CA's efforts to meet the service needs of children and parents, including foster parents. A few stakeholders suggested that needs assessments are comprehensive and that the agency is effective in meeting identified services needs. However, most stakeholders expressed concern about both the quality of assessments and the lack of availability of services. Stakeholders were particularly concerned about the reduction in funds for family preservation services and expressed the opinion that this would reduce the ability of the agency to provide adequate placement-prevention services. Stakeholders also voiced concern about the lack of respite care services available for foster parents and the lack of services in general available for relative caregivers.

With regard to the assessment process for children and families, State-level stakeholders indicated that although the CA has a risk and safety assessment tools and procedures, the agency is currently piloting a new family assessment model. This new model is designed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the family, including strengths as well as areas of risk.

Determination and Discussion: Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 54 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not adequately assessed and/or addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. A key concern identified pertained to the lack of assessment and service provision to fathers, although in several cases, mothers also did not receive needed services.

According to the Statewide Assessment, on September 15, 2001, Washington implemented the Kidscreen program on a statewide basis. Kidscreen uses standardized, validated tools to assess children in five domains: physical/medical, family/social, educational, emotional/behavioral, and developmental. Children are to be assessed within the first 30 days of placement and a staffing is to be held to develop action plans to meet the identified needs. The action plan is to be incorporated into the Individual Service and Safety Plan ISSP (case plan). The Statewide Assessment reports that a June 2003 Quality Improvement review found that Kidscreen recommendations were incorporated into case plans in 72 percent of the cases. The Statewide Assessment also notes that in 2001 a peer review of 1,389 case records found appropriate assessments of children in 89 percent of the cases, and appropriate assessments of the family in 92 percent of the cases.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, a Foster Care Assessment Program (FCAP) provides assessments for children who have been in out-of-home care for more than 90 days and who are in need of intensive planning in order to achieve permanency. One of the goals of this program is to identify and help resolve obstacles to adoption or other permanent plans.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 18 was applicable for all 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents (including pre-adoptive parents or permanent caregivers) and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in the case planning, and if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interest. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent or child had actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. This assessment produced the following findings:

- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 24 (48%) of the 50 applicable cases (14 of the 24 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 26 (52%) of the 50 applicable cases (11 of the 26 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item did not differ substantively as a function of type of case. A rating of Strength was assigned to 56 percent of the foster care cases and to 40 percent of the in-home services cases. However, there was considerable variation in ratings across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 75 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 48 percent of Team 3 cases and 23 percent of Team 1 cases.

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

- Fathers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (19 [51%] of 37 applicable cases).
- Mothers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (14 [30%] of 47 applicable cases).
- Children who were old enough to have been involved in case planning were not involved (13 [36%] of 36 applicable cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed differing opinions. Some stakeholders suggested that the CA is effective in involving families in the case planning process, while others voiced concern that parent and child involvement in case planning does not occur on a routine basis. State-level stakeholders reported that the University of Washington has received a grant to focus on the issue of engaging families. Stakeholders also suggested that Family Group Conferencing or Family Team Meetings are an effective way to involve families in the case planning process. However, several stakeholders expressed the opinion that some social workers have not embraced this approach.

Determination and Discussion: Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 52 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the CA was not consistent in its efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. A key concern pertained to the lack of involvement of fathers, although about one-third of the mothers and eligible children also were not involved in the case planning process.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CA policy requires that “whenever possible” the social worker is to solicit the parents’ active participation in the development of the case plan. Social workers are encouraged to develop the plan in a family conference. The Statewide Assessment also notes, however, that there are no internal mechanisms currently to track parental involvement in case planning, and that Family Group Conferencing is not used as frequently as it should be and in some Regions it is not being used at all. The Statewide Assessment reports that, when appropriate, parents are to be invited to participate in internal staffings such as permanency planning and prognostic staffings, CPT staffings, and Kidscreen staffings. However, policy does not require participation and the actual frequency of parental participation is unknown.

Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 50 cases were applicable for an assessment of item 19. In conducting this assessment, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the social workers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 18 (36%) of the 50 applicable cases (14 of the 18 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 32 (64%) of the 50 applicable cases (11 of the 32 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item differed substantively as a function of type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 56 percent of the foster care cases compared to 16 percent of the in-home services cases. Ratings also differed across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 58 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 36 percent of Team 3 cases and 15 percent of Team 1 cases.

Although the State requires a health and safety visit of all children in foster care every 90 days, CFSR reviewers did not rate individual cases on the basis of whether this 90-day requirement was met, but instead focused on whether the frequency of the visitation was

sufficient to ensure the child's safety and well-being. Consequently, there were cases in which the health and safety visits were being conducted according to the agency policy but case reviewers did not believe this level of contact was sufficient.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of social workers' face-to-face contacts with children in the 25 foster care cases:

- In 3 cases, visits typically occurred once a week.
- In 5 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 6 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 11 cases, visits typically occurred less than monthly.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of social workers' visits with children in the 25 in-home services cases:

- In 4 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 20 cases, visits typically occurred less than monthly.
- In 1 case, no visits were made.

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

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

- The social worker did not visit the child during the period under review (1 case).
- The frequency of social worker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child and when visits did occur, they did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (13 cases).
- The frequency of social worker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, but when visits did occur, they focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (17 cases).
- The frequency of social worker visits was sufficient to meet the needs of the child, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed differing opinions regarding the frequency of social worker contact with children. Most stakeholders reported that social workers are making the 90-day health and safety visits with foster children that are required by agency policy. However, stakeholders in one CFSR site suggested that social workers sometimes have difficulty meeting this requirement because of large caseloads. Stakeholders also noted that there are no policies regarding social worker contacts with children who are not dependent children and are receiving in-home services.

In contrast to the other CFSR sites, stakeholders in one site reported that social workers in that county go far beyond the 90-day policy requirement and establish frequent contact with children in foster care. However, the case reviews indicate that in this site social workers had infrequent contact with children in the in-home services cases.

Determination and Discussion: Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 64 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that social worker visits with children were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality to ensure children’s safety and attainment of case goals.

According to the Statewide Assessment, social workers are required to visit children in out-of-home care at least once every 90 days. The Statewide Assessment notes that a FY 2001 hand-count shows that statewide performance on quarterly social worker visits with children (health and safety visits) was over 90 percent. Service Episode Record (SER) data from CAMIS in FY 2002 show documented compliance with regard to quarterly visits in 34.3 percent of the cases. Peer review data show 57 percent compliance in Child Protective Services cases and 66 percent compliance in Child Welfare cases. The Statewide Assessment reports that the CA is moving towards requiring visits every 30 days, with one visit in the child’s home every 90 days.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that the CA also requires visits to dependent children remaining in their own homes. Frequency of visits depends on the age of child and length of time the CA has served the family. State policy indicates contacts may be done by a social worker, a paraprofessional, or a contract provider. The CA does not have contact standards for children served in their own homes who are not dependent children.

Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 20 was applicable for all 50 cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the worker’s face-to-face contact with the children’s mothers and fathers (including pre-adoptive mothers and fathers) was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and/or ensure the children’s safety and well being. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 14 (28%) of the 50 cases (10 of the 14 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 36 (72%) of the 50 cases (15 of the 36 cases were foster care cases).

The item was rated as a Strength in 40 percent of the foster care cases compared to 16 percent of the in-home services cases. Ratings for the item also varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 50 percent of Team 2 cases, compared to 32 percent of Team 3 cases, and 0 percent of Team 1 cases.

Typical patterns of social worker visits with mothers (including pre-adoptive mothers) were the following (50 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits – 2 cases (both of which were foster care cases)
- Twice a month visits - 2 cases (one of which was a foster care case).
- Monthly visits – 13 cases (6 of which were foster care cases).
- Less than monthly visits – 29 cases (15 of which were foster care cases).
- No visits – 4 cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

Typical patterns of social worker visits with fathers (including pre-adoptive fathers) were the following (35 applicable cases):

- Monthly visits - 4 cases (none of which was a foster care cases).
- Less than monthly visits - 22 cases (10 of which were foster care cases).
- No visits – 9 cases (4 of which were foster care cases).

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

- Social worker visits with parents were not occurring with sufficient frequency, but when they did occur, they focused on substantive issues pertaining to the case (18 cases).
- Social worker visits with parents were not occurring with sufficient frequency, nor did they focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (18 cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that CA social workers are not consistent in their efforts to establish face-to-face contact with parents on a routine basis. They noted that there are many cases in which social workers tend to rely on collateral contacts by service providers instead of making contacts themselves. Some stakeholders in one site, however, noted that social workers are consistent in making face-to-face contacts with parents.

Determination and Discussion: Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 72 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of social worker visits with parents were not sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA does not have a policy to guide social workers in the frequency of contact with families. The CA is taking steps to implement such a policy.

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: | | | | | |
| | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | Total | Total Percentage |
| Substantially Achieved: | 4 | 5 | 15 | 24 | 77.4 |
| Partially Achieved: | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 6.5 |
| Not Achieved or Addressed: | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 16.1 |
| Not Applicable: | 7 | 4 | 8 | | |

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that 77.4 percent of the cases reviewed were determined to have substantially achieved this outcome, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

A key CFSR finding was that the CA is not making enough effort to meet the educational needs of children in the in-home services cases.

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

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 21 was applicable for 31 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for assessment were those in which the children were not of school age or were in their own homes and educational needs were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's educational needs were assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 24 (77%) of the 31 applicable cases (18 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (23%) of the 31 applicable cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

The item was rated as a Strength in 95 percent of the foster care cases compared to 50 percent of the in-home services cases. In addition, item ratings varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 88 percent of Team 3 cases, compared to 67 percent of Team 1 cases and 62.5 percent of Team 2 cases.

Item 21 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all potential educational needs were assessed and addressed as appropriate. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that there was clear evidence that the child had education-related service needs that were not being addressed by the agency.

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed differing opinions. Several stakeholders reported that children experience multiple school changes and social workers have too little time to advocate for children's educational needs. Other stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State makes concerted efforts to keep children in the same schools and works with the schools to ensure that the educational needs of children in foster care are being addressed. Many stakeholders also noted that foster parents advocate with the schools on behalf of the children in their care. State-level stakeholders identified the Treehouse educational mentoring program for children in foster care as an exemplary program.

Determination and Discussion: Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 23 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not made enough efforts to meet children's educational needs.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Kidscreens that are completed on children who are in foster care for more than 30 days include education assessments and information on individual educational plans (IEPs). Of the Kidscreens conducted between 9-15-2001 and 12-19-2002, 51 percent of case files did not have educational records; in one-half of those cases, the CA had requested the records but had not yet received them. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that in August 2001, 14 percent of foster care passports included educational information. The Statewide Assessment suggests that high caseloads and difficulty obtaining records from schools prevent the vast majority of social workers from updating passport educational information. Finally, a survey of youth exiting foster care at age 18 showed that 47 percent had either graduated from high school or obtained a GED.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that Washington has a number of collaborative efforts to meet the educational needs of children in foster care including:

- Team Child, which has published an educational advocacy manual.

- A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Stuart Foundation grant to explore how CASAs can be involved in educational advocacy.
- A Region IV partnership between DCFS, Casey, and Treehouse for tutoring, school supplies, and placement of an educational advocate in the King South office.
- Governor’s scholarship program which provided 18 scholarships in 2002 and 24 this year.
- Numerous independent living projects focusing on education including advocacy, tutoring, and summer programs.
- A Casey Family Program training for school personnel regarding 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: | | | | | |
| | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | Total | Total Percentage |
| Substantially Achieved: | 6 | 7 | 16 | 29 | 59.2 |
| Partially Achieved: | 5 | 1 | 5 | 11 | 22.4 |
| Not Achieved or Addressed: | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 18.4 |
| Not Applicable: | 0 | 1 | 0 | | |

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 59.2 percent of the 49 applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

The CFSR case reviews found that the CA was not consistent in its efforts to meet children’s physical and mental health needs. A particular concern identified pertained to the mental health needs of children in the in-home services cases. In several of those cases, reviewers determined that a mental health assessment and/or mental health services were warranted, but the agency did not respond appropriately.

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

Item 22. Physical health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 22 was applicable for 36 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for this assessment were in-home services cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) children's physical health needs had been appropriately assessed; and (2) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 30 (83%) of the 36 applicable cases (21 of the 30 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (17%) of the 36 applicable cases (4 of the 6 cases were foster care cases).

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

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the physical health needs of children in foster care are met, although they noted that accessing dental services, particularly orthodontics, is difficult in some areas of the State because there are not enough dentists who will accept the State's medical coupons. Stakeholders in one site noted that foster children are unable to access specialized medical care in Oregon because the Washington medical card is accepted by Oregon providers. Stakeholders did not comment on physical health care of children in the in-home services cases.

Determination and Discussion: Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 17 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the CA had not adequately addressed the health needs of children in either the foster care or in-home services cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA uses EPSDT, Kidscreen, Passport, and Foster Care Assessment Programs to assist in the identification of medical needs. The Statewide Assessment notes that 72 percent of foster children have had completed EPSDT exams, the majority within 30 days of placement. Among the children who did not receive their EPDST prior to completion of Kidscreen, 36 percent were noted as being due to "no caregiver follow through" and 7 percent were noted as "having difficulty with their medical coupon payment."

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the Foster Care Passport Program is a collaborative effort between the CA and the local Public Health jurisdictions to gather and share health information on foster children. Contracted Public Health Nurses provide consultation to social work staff and foster parents. Due to funding limitations, priority is given to children ages 1-12 who remain in out-of-home care for 90 days or longer. Legally free children, as well as youth aging out of foster care, have been given priority for creation of a passport through a special contract to address backlogged cases. Passports have been completed on 71 percent of the eligible children.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 23 was applicable for 42 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were those in which the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or in-home services cases in which children’s mental health needs were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) mental health needs had been assessed, and (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 27 (64%) of the 42 applicable cases (18 of the 27 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 15 (36%) of the 42 applicable cases (4 of the 15 cases were foster care cases).

Item ratings differed as a function of case type. The item was rated as a Strength in 82 percent of the foster care cases compared to 45 percent of the in-home services cases. Ratings did not differ substantively across CFSR sites.

Reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were “significantly” assessed in 28 cases, “partially” assessed in 6 cases, and “not at all” assessed in 8 cases. Reviewers determined that identified mental health service needs were “significantly met” in 18 cases, “partially met” in 12 cases, and “not at all met” in 4 cases, and there were no identified mental health needs in 8 cases.

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

- Mental health needs were not fully assessed, although a mental health assessment was warranted (11 cases).

- Mental health needs were assessed but needed services were not provided (9 cases).

The lack of assessment and/or follow up were key issues identified in the in-home cases. In the foster care cases, key issues pertained to delays in obtaining mental health services and matching available mental health services to the needs of children.

Stakeholders commenting on this item reported that there is a lack of mental health services in the State, particularly services that meet the needs of children in the child welfare system. This results in long waiting lists for services in some communities. A few stakeholders noted that services are more accessible for children who have severe mental health problems, but that trying to intervene before problems become severe is difficult. Stakeholders in one CFSR site, however, noted that mental health is a major focus of the agency in that location and that mental health evaluations are routinely conducted on all foster care cases and are part of the case record for all children in foster care. This observation was supported by the finding that all six foster care cases reviewed in this site were rated as a Strength for this item.

Determination and Discussion: Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 36 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the mental health needs of children were not assessed and/or met.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Kidscreen and the Foster Care Assessment Program (FCAP) provide assessment of mental health needs for foster children. The Statewide Assessment also notes that mental health services are delivered by county-based Regional Support Networks (RSNs) under a pre-paid health plan (PHP) and provided through a licensed pool of community mental health centers.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the existing mental health system is structured to provide short-term care that does not meet the long-term mental health needs of children in foster care. Emotional issues of children in foster care often do not meet the medical necessity standard for mental health services.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the CA is working on a protocol for referral for treatment of children who have borderline clinical ranges on the assessment. The FCAP annual report describes a significant level of unmet need for mental health services among the population it serves.

SECTION 2: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

Washington achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. Information pertaining to the item assessed for this factor is provided below.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item is rated as a Strength because the Statewide information system, CAMIS, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care and is used extensively to track state performance on CFSR outcome measures.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Case and Management Information System (CAMIS) is the Children’s Administration’s comprehensive information system for both case management and program management and is available Statewide. CAMIS provides information on location, goals, legal status, and demographics for each child in foster care. Field staff utilize CAMIS for multiple purposes, including intake and screening, case recording (Service Episode Reports), assessing risk and needs, determining title IV-E eligibility, finding available qualified providers, and authorizing services. CAMIS includes modules for documenting required plans related to safety, health, education, family preservation, and permanency. However, the case plan (i.e., Individual Service and Safety Plan) is not yet fully automated, and the legal and placement module is complex and cumbersome.

CAMIS is used for program management, performance measurement, quality assurance, resource management, and tracking case statistics and demographic information. However, hand counts are still used for some performance measures (e.g., child fatalities). CAMIS provides limited secure access to CAMIS information to other department systems and other agencies that serve the CA children and families, such as county public health nurses, child support, the Attorney General’s Office, and various Tribes. The Statewide Assessment indicates that there are some concerns about the accuracy and currency of the data, which raises questions about the viability of CAMIS data for decision-making purposes.

Stakeholders commenting on CAMIS during the onsite CFSR reported that it can track the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals of children in foster care. Stakeholders reported that information in CAMIS is used extensively for reports that improve agency decision-making, oversight, and performance including tracking statewide and local performance on federal outcome measures. Some stakeholders indicated that CAMIS is easy to navigate and that data are easily retrievable. However, other stakeholders expressed concern that information in the system is not always entered in a timely manner, and cited high social worker caseloads and inadequate clerical support as barriers to timely data entry. Stakeholders also expressed concerns that social workers are not consistently entering case activity documentation into CAMIS, resulting in unreliable counts of social worker activity in areas such as CPS referral face-to-face contact and social worker/foster child face-to-face contact. As a result, the agency has used some hand counts to get more accurate information on social worker activity. Despite these limitations, stakeholders noted that the agency makes a concerted effort to monitor the quality of data and to make useful data available at all levels of the agency.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

The State of Washington is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State does not have a process that ensures that families are consistently involved in the development of case plans.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Individual Service and Safety Plan (ISSP) is to be completed for all children in out of home care. An ISSP must be completed within 60 days of the child’s removal from the parent and must be updated at least once every 6 months. The CA policy requires that “whenever possible” the social worker must solicit the parents’ active participation in the development of the case plan, along with engaging age-appropriate children in its development. The Statewide Assessment notes that social workers are encouraged to develop the ISSP in an “in-person” family conference and the plan is to be reviewed and signed by parents and provided to all parents whose location is known.

In non-placement cases, a written case plan is required for all cases that have been opened longer than 90 days following the completion of the investigative risk assessment. Written case plans are also required in Alternative Response Cases where services will be provided to address CPS allegations.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, a peer review of 1,389 foster care cases in 2001 found clear, comprehensive case plans in 88 percent of cases reviewed, and current case plans in 91 percent of the cases reviewed. Although social workers are encouraged to engage parents and children in Family Group Conferences, use of this forum is sporadic and Family Group Conferences are not available in all Regions.

The Statewide Assessment also indicates that parents are to be invited, when appropriate, to participate in internal staffings such as permanency planning, prognostic, Child Protection Team (CPT), and Kidscreen staffings. However, the CA policy does not require parents’ participation and the actual frequency of parental participation is unknown.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that foster children have case plans, and that the plans are developed in a timely manner, usually meeting the 60-day timeframe. Stakeholders in the Team 2 site noted that in that location, case plans similar to foster care case plans are developed for in-home services cases. Stakeholders in the Team 1 and Team 3

sites indicated that in-home service plans are not consistently completed. The onsite case record review also found that a number of in-home cases reviewed by Teams 1 and 3 did not have written case plans.

Most stakeholders reported that case plans are well-suited to the family's needs, although some stakeholders described some plans as "cookie-cutter" plans.

Stakeholders suggested that involvement of parents in the case planning process depends to a large extent on the skill of the social worker to engage parents and the willingness of the parents to be engaged. Other stakeholders, however, expressed the opinion that parent involvement in case planning also depends on whether there are structures in place to facilitate their engagement, such as Family Team Meetings and Family Group Conferencing. They noted that these approaches are not routinely used across the State. Some Team 1 stakeholders identified the use of Kidscreen and wraparound planning as effective means for engaging families in developing case plans. Some stakeholders indicated that the Tribes are not always included as an integral partner in the case planning process.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 was rated as a Strength because periodic reviews are being held in a timely manner at least once every 6 months.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Washington statute and the CA policy require periodic reviews to be held every 6 months for every child in out-of-home care. (Although almost all reviews are conducted by the court, on occasion an administrative review is held.) The Statewide Assessment also notes, however, that there is no statewide system in place to track compliance with the 6-month review requirement.

Stakeholders participating in the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that the 6-month reviews conducted by the court are taking place in a timely manner. They noted that although there are some continuances, holding an initial review at 90 days and/or scheduling reviews at 5 months rather than 6 months help to ensure that reviews are timely. Some stakeholders in the Team 2 site reported that pre-trial roundtables (that include the social worker, a court representative, the guardian *ad litem*, parents, and foster parents) eliminate the need for continuances by addressing contested issues prior to the hearing.

Team 1 and Team 3 stakeholders attributed continuances to the following: (1) the failure of social workers to submit the case plan to the court within the mandatory 2-week timeframe, (2) a request from the Commissioner for more information on a case, (3) failure of parents to appear at the hearing, (4) lack of public defenders, and (5) increased demands on the court schedule caused when 90-day Initial Progress Reviews are held in addition to the 6 month reviews.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 27 was rated as a Strength because permanency hearings are held in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a permanency planning hearing is required to be held in all cases in which the child has remained in out-of-home care for at least 9 months. This hearing must take place no later than 12 months from the beginning date of the placement episode. Social workers are required to schedule a permanency staffing prior to the court hearing, submit a written plan (ISSP) to the court, and provide a copy of the plan to all parties and their legal counsel. Some courts create their own additional requirements.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, some permanency hearings are delayed due to the granting of continuances, which typically postpone hearings by about 2 weeks. The Statewide Assessment reports that continuances are granted due to a lack of adequate representation for parents and due to the practice of over-scheduling defense attorneys. According to the Statewide Assessment, a 3-year Defense Representation pilot project, conducted in three counties, has provided increased representation and reduced continuances in those counties.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the 12-month permanency hearings are held in a timely manner. Team 2 stakeholders noted that continuances rarely occur in that site, due in part to the pre-trial roundtables that are held to review issues and concerns prior to the hearings. State-level stakeholders noted that the Court Improvement Project has focused on reducing the number of continuances.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State is experiencing delays in completing the process of filing for termination of parental rights.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Washington policy requires a referral for termination of parental rights to be made to the Attorney General’s Office if a child has been in out-of-home care for 12 of the past 19 months, unless there are compelling reasons not to terminate parental rights. A petition to terminate parental rights may also be initiated when aggravated circumstances exist. The Statewide Assessment reports that the average length of time from the date of placement to TPR is 22 months and that this timeframe has remained fairly constant since 1999. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, one barrier to obtaining more timely TPRs is the lack of social worker training on using non-adversarial methods to facilitate voluntary relinquishments.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that the CA has established procedures for filing for termination of parental rights in accordance with ASFA timeframes. However, Team 1 and Team 3 stakeholders identified significant delays in preparing and filing a TPR petition due to a lack of Attorney General (AG) resources. In contrast, Team 2 stakeholders noted that delays in filing are not a concern and that the agency in those localities frequently works with parents to voluntarily relinquish their parental rights and uses concurrent planning effectively. Stakeholders also noted court-related delays in granting TPRs. Stakeholders identified the following barriers: continuances, overburdened court dockets, a lack of an adequate number of superior court judges, and the reluctance of some judges to terminate parental rights. However, state-level stakeholders indicated that that the agency and the courts have made recent improvements in parental representation and Attorney General’s Office staffing to improve the timeliness of TPRs.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because caregivers are not routinely notified of their opportunity to be heard in reviews and hearings.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Washington statute requires that foster parents, relative caretakers, and pre-adoptive parents receive notice of review hearings regarding a child in their care and that they are given the opportunity to be heard in any hearing. The standardized written notice to be sent by the social worker provides all pertinent information about the hearing, including the date, time, place, and purpose, along with notice that foster parents may attend or submit information in writing. A standardized caregiver report form has been developed for foster parents to provide input to the court.

The Statewide Assessment notes that although social workers are required to provide notice, the courts actually determine the nature of the foster parents' involvement. Some courts only allow written input by mail, even though the notice from the social worker indicates that the foster parents may attend and be heard. The Statewide Assessment reports that inconsistencies between court and agency practices have created confusion among foster parents.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers are not routinely notified of hearings. Stakeholders said that the timeliness of notification varies across social workers and Regions. Stakeholders also indicated that foster parents do not attend hearings regularly, and when they do, their involvement in court proceedings is limited. Stakeholders noted that a caregiver report form is used successfully in some offices but is not used consistently statewide.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided below.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as a Strength because the State has standards to protect the safety and health of children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) (a division of the CA) was created in 1996 to provide specialized staff to inspect facilities for health and safety, deliver foster care provider training, and investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect in licensed foster care homes and facilities. State law requires that DLR staff conduct health and safety inspections on 10 percent of licensed foster homes (including licensed kinship care foster homes) on an annual basis. Licensors use a risk tool to identify homes where there may be a concern about the quality of care and prioritize such homes for more frequent monitoring. In FY 2003, the DLR completed health and safety inspections on 16 percent of licensed foster homes.

With regard to residential facilities, the Statewide Assessment notes that the CA policy requires health and safety inspections of all residential facilities on an annual basis and that DLR met this goal in 2002. In addition, the CA requires quarterly onsite reviews of residential facilities and a comprehensive review of each facility every 2 years. However, as indicated in the Statewide Assessment, in 2002, 35 percent of quarterly reviews of facilities were completed and 65 percent of the required 2-year comprehensive facility reviews were completed.

Information in the Statewide Assessment also indicates that the CA has signed an agreement with the Council on Accreditation, indicating its intention that every office throughout the State will become fully accredited. This will require that each office and the CA headquarters meet administrative and practice standards regarding child protection and child welfare.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSP indicated that the State's policy, standards, and practices are effective in ensuring that children in foster care are provided with quality services to protect their health and safety. Stakeholders suggested that this process is facilitated by the use of risk assessment tools, 90-day health and safety checks in foster homes, DLR health and safety inspections, and a rigorous re-licensing process every 3 years.

Stakeholders noted that the State has established measurable outcomes and standards in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being that are used in strategic planning and quality assurance efforts to improve State performance. However, stakeholders expressed concern that the State standards for CPS referrals do not require face-to-face contact with children within 24 hours. Stakeholders also noted that the agency is planning to change the current policy, which requires social workers to conduct health and safety visits with children in care every 90 days, to one that requires social workers to visit with children at least once every 30 days.

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

 X Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 31 is rated as a Strength because the State has a statewide quality assurance system that focuses on outcomes and uses data and case reviews to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State has a multi-tiered quality improvement/quality assurance system that operates statewide. The two primary procedures used for quality assurance are case reviews and the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) teams. In addition, the CA has an internal research office that conducts research and evaluation on questions concerning public child welfare.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the State conducts case record reviews of a random sample of open and closed cases to assess the quality of social work practice and compliance with agency policy. The CA has two types of case review processes: (1) central case

record reviews, and (2) peer reviews. Central case reviews are completed annually in each local office. Peer reviews currently are not conducted in each office but it is anticipated that they will be fully implemented in all offices by 2006. Peer and case reviews use CAMIS data and information from case record reviews to assess the performance of individual offices and to develop an improvement plan.

Information in the Statewide Assessment also indicates that the case review process assesses agency compliance with requirements regarding identification of Native American ancestry and Tribal notification. However, Tribal representatives have expressed an interest in developing, in addition, a system using non-agency Native American reviewers to monitor compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the CA uses CQI teams to solve problems and improve services. Standing CQI teams operate in 19 local CA offices. These teams are comprised of agency staff, clients, stakeholders, and community partners. Eleven teams have completed annual improvement plans. In addition, since 1998, staff have initiated over 100 Special-Project CQI teams to resolve specific problems or to make service improvements.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the CA has a Statewide QA system that effectively assesses the quality of services and outcomes for children and families. Stakeholders reported that the peer review and central case record review processes are useful for monitoring social work practice and compliance with agency policy. Stakeholders also noted that case review findings are used to develop program improvement plans and are shared with the Training Unit.

Several stakeholders indicated that one of the strengths of the State QA process is the ability to develop local-level CQI teams to address specific issues and problems. However, some stakeholders suggested that the outcomes of the peer review process need to be shared more fully with social workers in order to promote effective practice. Finally, several stakeholders reported that there are inconsistencies in ICWA monitoring across Regions and among the local CA offices and expressed a need for monitoring of ICWA compliance by an outside entity.

VII. TRAINING

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

Washington did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as a Strength because all staff receive initial training that supports the goals and objectives of the agency and are required to complete the training before being assigned case-carrying responsibilities.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA instituted a competency-based Training Academy in January 2003. All new staff are required to complete this training before taking on a caseload. The 6-week program comprises an initial 2 weeks of classroom training, followed by 2 weeks of structured training in the field, and 2 additional weeks of classroom training. The training curriculum addresses the following: intake and investigation; risk assessment; child maltreatment; working with children, families, and caregivers; using the legal process; and engaging and interviewing adults and children.

The Statewide Assessment reports that new staff are required to complete additional courses during their first year of employment. This includes a 2-day training on the basics of ICWA, a training on substance-abuse, and a training on sexual abuse interviewing (for CPS investigators). The Statewide Assessment also indicates that specialized training tracks are being developed for social workers in particular field areas such as adoption, licensing, and family reconciliation.

Most, although not all, stakeholders commenting on the area of training expressed the opinion that the State provides effective competency-based training to new social workers. They reported that training prepares new social workers to perform their jobs effectively and addresses child safety, permanency, and adoption issues. They also indicated that the training offers a range of practical experience and exposure to the field. Several stakeholders commented positively on the effectiveness of the mentoring/job shadowing component of the training. In addition, all stakeholders reported that social workers complete training before assuming a caseload.

Stakeholders also identified areas where additional training is needed, including (1) training on concurrent planning, (2) training on how to work with other units within the agency, with the school system, or with CASAs, and (3) training on cultural competency. A few stakeholders suggested that the existing training is applicable to urban areas, but does not always address the needs of the rural communities. They suggested that there is a need to tailor training to local contexts. Tribal stakeholders noted that greater emphasis should be placed on developing cultural competency and on ICWA requirements.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the CA does not require staff to participate in training on an ongoing basis and although training is made available to staff, not all staff participate in training opportunities.

According to the Statewide Assessment, although ongoing training is offered on a regular basis to all staff that have completed the mandatory training, it is not required. The Office of Staff Development and Training conducts an online training needs assessment twice a year to obtain input from Directors, Program Managers, and Supervisors. This information is used to develop training in response to new legislation and emerging practice issues.

The Statewide Assessment reports that on-going training is offered on a regular basis in locations throughout the State and that it has been expanded to provide more opportunities for experienced staff. Thirteen post-academy classes were held in 2002-2003. Other venues for staff training include attending conferences.

Information in the Statewide Assessment also indicates that all supervisors are required to take the “Supervising for Excellence” course, which lasts for 3 weeks. Supervisory Practice forums are offered three times a year in five different locations in the State. Advanced 1-week training has been developed and a Supervisors’ Academy is being developed.

Finally, the Statewide Assessment reports that the CA has strong partnerships with all Schools of Social Work in the State (University of Washington, Eastern University, and Walla Walla College). The CA contracts for professional training services through the Northwest Institute, located at the University of Washington’s School of Social Work. The CA also has a title IV-E stipend program for Masters of Social Work education at the University of Washington and Eastern Washington University. As of the 2003 winter term, there were 161 stipend students, and more than half were current CA employees.

Stakeholders commenting on ongoing staff training during the onsite CFSR were in agreement that the CA makes ongoing training opportunities available for social workers and supervisors. Stakeholders also noted that the CA has established annual assessment procedures to identify training needs. However, stakeholders voiced concern that ongoing training is not required and there are a number of social workers who do not take advantage of the training opportunities. Stakeholders reported that social workers often do not make training a priority because of their workload demands, the distance that they may have to travel to the training, and a lack of agency funds to pay for their participation in training.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State does not mandate ongoing training for foster parents and there are foster parents who do not participate in ongoing training opportunities.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State of Washington has used the PRIDE curriculum since January 2002 to conduct pre-service and in-service training for foster and adoptive parents. All foster parents, including kinship caregivers seeking a license, are required to complete 18-20 hours of pre-service training offered by the CA prior to receiving a license. Private child-placing agencies are required to provide training that is equivalent to the agency’s training. Completion of the pre-service training may be postponed for up to 90 days on a case-by-case basis.

The State Assessment indicates that the agency offers an additional 60 hours of PRIDE in-service training as well as special topic training in classrooms and via web-cast. Each Region also has a training budget and develops additional training geared to the unique needs of their communities. Participation in in-service training is voluntary except for those foster parents who must take corrective action to maintain their license and foster parents caring for sexually aggressive youth.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that 3 hours of orientation and 16-20 hours of pre-service PRIDE training are provided to foster parents. Stakeholders also noted that the initial PRIDE training requirement recently has been increased to 28 hours. While some stakeholders expressed positive comments about the PRIDE curriculum, other stakeholders noted inconsistencies in the quality of the trainers and the need for more training on cross-cultural issues and youth issues. Stakeholders reported that because the Spanish-language version of PRIDE will not be released for another 6 months, the CA is still offering Spanish-language pre-service training using its previous curriculum. Some stakeholders also noted that pre-service training is not offered enough in rural areas, creating delays in the licensing process.

Stakeholders commenting on this item identified a number of exemplary ongoing training programs for foster parents including: (1) the award-winning Journey Through the Healing Circle training book and video, (2) the Pierce County Community College A.A. degree in foster care that is available by web statewide, (3) the annual statewide foster parent conference, (4) live web-casts, and (5) online training modules on a variety of topics. Stakeholders also noted that the State provides funding to each Region for special topic training and for child care for training participants. However, some stakeholders commented that the child care budget is too limited to meet the needs of training participants and that it is difficult to obtain child care for children with special behavioral needs while their foster parents receive training.

Several stakeholders expressed concern that although the CA offers numerous and exemplary ongoing training opportunities for foster parents, participation is no longer required. Stakeholders indicated that the requirement for ongoing foster parent training was eliminated several years ago. Consequently, there are a number of foster parents who do not participate in ongoing training opportunities. Some stakeholders attributed poor participation to the lack of training sessions in the evenings or on weekends, training in locations that are not easily accessible to foster parents, and to the slowness of the internet training. However, other stakeholders noted that training schedules are designed to accommodate the needs of foster parents.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

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

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

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State has critical gaps in its service array in the areas of mental health services and substance abuse treatment, and has an insufficient pool of foster homes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Washington has a broad array of services that are provided to children and families directly or through contracts and community organizations. These services include pre-placement preventive services including regular home visits, practical assistance with food and housing, child care, counseling, home support specialists, and coordinated efforts with public health nurses and substance abuse treatment. The CA also offers Family Reconciliation Services to serve adolescents and parents in conflict and refers low-risk, in-home cases to the Alternative Response System to receive community-based services. The CA also purchases individualized home-based services, family preservation, and intensive family preservation services.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the CA service array includes reunification services such as mental health, home support, substance abuse treatment, child care, visitation, parenting classes, home-based services, family preservation and intensive family

preservation. The CA service array also includes adoption support services, independent living services, and community-based family supports including family support centers and home-visiting programs.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that although the CA supports an array of services provided by State staff, contracted providers, and community organizations, there are critical gaps in service delivery and barriers to providing timely and appropriate services. For example, it is difficult to access mental health service for children and substance abuse treatment services for parents.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that multiple contracted and community-based services are available to meet a range of needs. Stakeholders commented favorably on the private sector services that are available for family preservation and support, independent living, and to support foster care and adoptive placement (e.g., visitation, respite and day care for foster parents, post-adoption subsidies). Stakeholders also indicated substance abuse assessments and out-patient treatment were accessible.

Team 2 stakeholders noted that that a wide array of high-quality services is available to promote safety and timely reunifications, but there are not enough services to meet the increasing demand. Team 1 and Team 3 stakeholders reported that the lack of resources in those sites mean that services to children and families are “rationed.”

Stakeholders identified the following service gaps in the State:

- Mental health services for children and families.
- In-patient and long-term (more than 21 day) substance abuse services and substance abuse aftercare.
- Foster homes, therapeutic foster homes, and adoptive resources.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because services are not consistently accessible statewide.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Washington has made extensive efforts to achieve consistency in service delivery across the six Regions. However, services are not consistently accessible to children and families on a statewide basis. The Statewide

Assessment reports that urban communities have a wider array of services than rural communities; rural areas lack specialized services, have limited choices, and experience chronic shortages.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that necessary services are not accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions in the State. State-level stakeholders reported that rural areas are underserved, particularly with regard to the availability of in-home services. Stakeholders noted that some Tribes experience difficulty accessing State services for the families they serve.

Stakeholders identified the following service accessibility issues:

- Independent living services are not available in sufficient supply and in sufficient locations.
- Sex offender treatment is needed in some locations.
- Licensed child care is not available in some rural locations.
- In-home services/family preservation services are insufficient in some rural areas.
- More transportation is needed, including more adequate rates of reimbursement.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because services are not consistently individualized to meet cultural, language and service needs of families and children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, services are tailored to meet each family’s individual needs through the use of wraparound services and through the Kidscreen assessment information. The Statewide Assessment also reports, however, that there are systemic barriers to tailoring services to meet the needs of children and families. Family Group Conferencing is not available in all the CA offices, which limits the ability to design case plans based on family assets, existing supports, and needs. Mental health services, when available, typically have a short-term focus, which inhibits the development of a longer-term, individualized treatment plan.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR reported that flexible funding is available within each Region to obtain unique services or to individualize services. They expressed the opinion that agency staff try to be creative and tailor services to meet individual needs. Several stakeholders also noted that the agency allows for flexibility in designing service plans, particularly for

home-based, wraparound, and independent living services. However, some stakeholders voiced concern that independent living services are not available on a consistent basis to meet the needs of youth with special psychological and behavioral needs. In addition, both State- and local-level stakeholders reported that there is a lack of culturally-appropriate services and a lack of services in the families' languages; Team 1 stakeholders said that accessing interpreters is difficult.

Finally, most stakeholders were in agreement that Family Group Conferencing provides a unique opportunity to individualize services to meet children's and family's needs but they noted that it is not widely available and is not fully utilized because some social workers have not yet embraced this approach to working with families.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item is rated as a Strength because the State engages in ongoing consultation with stakeholders and used this input in the development of the CFSP.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA engages in ongoing communication, coordination, and collaboration with its key stakeholders. The CA actively seeks stakeholder involvement in the 7-year strategic plan, which serves as the centerpiece of the five-year CFSP and the biennial budget document. As part of the planning process, the CA solicits stakeholder and community input through focus groups, questionnaires, and surveys. The CA provides stakeholders with current performance data and status reports. Stakeholders help to define the agency's mission and vision, set priorities and goals, and determine strategies to reach these goals. Some of the stakeholders with which the CA consults are the following: Statewide Children, Youth, and Family Services Advisory Committee; Indian Policy Advisory Committee; Foster Parent Advisory Committee; Foster Care Improvement Plan Team; Statewide Child Fatality Committee; independent living service providers and youth focus groups; Regional Advisory Committees; and Local Office Continuous Quality Improvement teams. The Families for Kids Partnership Oversight Committee and the Court Improvement Project Steering Committee also contribute to community coordination and consultation.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the Tribal/State Indian Child Welfare Agreement of 1987 and the Centennial Accord of 1989 provide the basis for the government-to-government partnership regarding Indian child welfare and affirms Tribal sovereignty. In support of the Accord, DSHS Administrative Policy 7.01 requires that each DSHS Administration develop biennial plans regarding collaboration and service provision with the 29 federally-recognized Tribes. Two major venues for ongoing Tribal/State consultation are the Regional "7.01" meetings, which are held on a quarterly basis, and the Indian Policy Advisory Committee, which has a Child Welfare Subcommittee. Although there is a history of Tribal/State consultation and participation in joint projects, Tribal representatives observed that relations could be improved, expressing the need to gain greater clarity regarding the purpose, roles, and responsibilities of this consultation.

Some State level stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite review reported they were involved in developing goals, objectives, and related strategies for the strategic plan based on performance measures and case review information that the agency shared with them. Some of these stakeholders noted that the CFSP reflected their input. This point of view was shared by Team 1 and Team 2 stakeholders who reported that the agency shares information and seeks input from community partners. However, Team 3 stakeholders indicated that the agency does not engage in ongoing consultation with community partners on a consistent basis. External stakeholders in Team 3 noted a lack of agency partnerships with the community, which has resulted in limited opportunities to develop a shared vision and to provide input on issues of mutual concern. However, stakeholders noted some recent improvements in the Team 3 site in this regard.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item is rated an Area Needing Improvement because some stakeholders are not consistently consulted in the State process for the development of the Annual Progress and Services Report.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA solicits stakeholder input for the biennial updates to the strategic plan and annual reports. This input is used in development of the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). However, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, Tribal representatives expressed concern that Tribes, Tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations are not adequately consulted in developing the APSR and do not receive copies of it.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSP provided mixed opinions on their involvement in the development of the APSR. Some stakeholders noted that the State engages in ongoing consultation through focus groups, surveys, and advisory committees and uses this information for multiple purposes, including development of the strategic plan and APSR. Some stakeholders indicated that they are involved in developing the APSR, receive information on key performance indicators, and develop strategies to meet goals.

Stakeholders in one site reported that the Tribe has opportunities to provide input at quarterly meetings and that the local agency is responsive to Tribal needs. However, other stakeholders expressed concern that ongoing Tribal consultation at the local-level occurs only on a case-by-case basis and not at a more systemic or institutional level. Some stakeholders noted State consultation with Tribes was an area of concern. They indicated that the “7.01” Planning meetings and other existing forums do not meet Tribal needs for a government-to-government relationship. In addition, stakeholders noted further that ideas or concerns expressed by Tribal representatives at Regional meetings are not reflected in the annual APSR. Some stakeholders also commented that notice of meetings to Tribes is not always provided in a timely manner.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because the State has a number of efforts to coordinate and integrate service programs.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Department of Social and Health Services has sought to improve service integration across State agencies, and the Governor has made this a top priority. The State also has created several initiatives in specific locales that support coordination of child welfare services across multiple entities. Examples include the following efforts:

- The Family and Communities Together Initiative is a services integration initiative led by the CA and Economic Services and is in the planning stages in two sites.
- “No Wrong Door” initiative brings together the resources of the CA and Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) to provide placements and wraparound services for youth who do not have families to return to when they are released from JRA institutions.
- Mental Health/CA coordination including RSN/agency protocols that are being developed in each Region.
- Tribal/Washington State title IV-E agreements that allow Tribes to access Federal reimbursement for a portion of foster care costs, administrative, and training expenditures. At present the Lummi, Makah, and Quinault Tribes have agreements.
- The CA and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction have a working group that is collaborating to meet foster children’s educational needs.
- The CA and Medical Assistance (Title XIX) coordinate efforts to provide behavioral rehabilitation services to meet the needs of foster children with significant needs for services.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that there have been significant cultural changes recently in how agencies are working together particularly since the implementation of the “No Wrong Door” policy. Local-level stakeholders cited examples of successful efforts among agencies to improve case coordination and maximize limited resources (e.g., interagency staffing teams, monthly meetings with partners, sharing bilingual resources). State-level stakeholders expressed praise for State collaborative efforts between the CA and Mental Health, Education, and the Court Improvement Project. Stakeholders at two sites also reported collaboration with Head Start.

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

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

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention.

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

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because Washington has implemented comprehensive standards for licensing foster family homes and child care institutions.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) licenses and enforces the standards for family foster homes (including kin caregivers licensed as foster homes), facilities, and child-placing agencies. Revised residential and child-placing agency standards were adopted in the Washington Administrative Code in September 2001. These standards address background clearance checks for all persons over the age of 16, inspection of the physical environment, and an evaluation of caregiver qualifications. Each home is required to have a home study completed and to participate in pre-service training. The standards are required to be reviewed every 2 years. Re-licensing of foster homes occurs every 3 years.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFPSR affirmed that good standards are in place for foster homes, facilities, and child-placing agencies and that DLR is completing the required annual review of 10 percent of foster homes. However, stakeholders also noted that DLR lacks the capacity to conduct quarterly reviews and bi-annual comprehensive reviews of residential

facilities. Stakeholders also noted some delays in completing the licensing process for foster homes and child-placing agencies, but indicated that timeliness has been improving.

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

X Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength because licensing standards are consistently applied to all foster homes and child care institutions receiving title IV-E and IV-B funds.

According to the Statewide Assessment, procedures for certification are standardized throughout the State. Licensors have new standardized checklists, evaluation tools, and standard forms for waivers and administrative approvals to assist in establishment of statewide consistency. Although kinship care providers do not have to be licensed to care for a relative, when they are licensed, they must meet the same requirements as non-relative foster parents. DLR strives to expedite licenses for placements with kin and to issue licenses to relatives within 60 days of receipt of an application.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR indicated that some of the CA Offices use initial licenses that do not meet the full licensing standards, particularly to allow kin or fictive kin to care for a child prior to receiving a full license. Stakeholders also noted that in some cases relatives may care for children for a limited period of time prior to completing the initial training; however, the training must be completed prior to receiving a full license. Stakeholders indicated that initial licenses are limited to a short period of time and are rarely used because the foster care payments come from State rather than from Federal IV-E funds. Similarly, stakeholders indicated waivers of a licensing standard are extremely rare and result in use of State funds, rather than Federal IV-E funds, for foster care payments.

Several stakeholders reported that the State does not accept Tribal licensing standards, does not recognize Tribal licenses, and does not recognize Tribal professional expertise in licensing Tribal homes. Similar to non-Tribal child-placing agencies, Tribes certify foster homes caring for children who are under State responsibility according to State standards, rather than Tribal standards. The State reviews the Tribal certification, and the State, not the Tribe, issues the license.

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

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 is rated as a Strength because the criminal background checks are consistently completed for prospective foster and adoptive parents.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the DSHS Background Check Central Unit (BCCU), which was created in March 2000, maintains a system to ensure that background checks are conducted and processed consistently for all foster and adoptive homes, residential facilities, and all private agency licensed foster homes. BCCU has a direct link to the Washington State Patrol (WSP) database. An FBI fingerprint check is required for applicants who have not lived in Washington State for the past 3 years. Conviction records and pending charges are evaluated by the Office of Foster Care Licensing. Both the ASFA requirements and additional disqualifying crimes, as noted in the CA regulations, are used to determine the suitability of child caregivers.

Verification that background checks have been completed is required prior to authorizing foster and adoptive homes to care for children. For group homes, all background checks must be processed prior to issuance of a license. An agency, however, can hire an employee and allow access to children for 120 days prior to the completion of the FBI fingerprint clearance.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that criminal background checks are conducted for all adults age 16 and older in licensed foster homes and for relative caregivers. While acknowledging that the process is thorough, local-level stakeholders reported that there have been delays of more than three months in obtaining FBI background checks required for families who have lived out of Washington in the past 3 years. Stakeholders noted that homes not meeting the ASFA requirements are not licensed. Stakeholders expressed concern that the State does not accept Tribal codes and Tribal background checks and noted the impact of background checks on the pool of potential Native foster homes.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State recruitment and retention efforts are not meeting the need for an adequate stable pool of foster and adoptive homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children in care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA has Regional and State-level recruitment plans and contracts. Regional contracts include Tribes and Native American organizations, and targeted recruitment of Hispanic and African American homes. The CA also has a statewide contract with Families for Kids Recruitment Resources for general recruitment and for the recruitment of African American, Hispanic, and Native American homes. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the CA recruiting strategies have met with some success. For example, over the past three years, the CA has licensed about 300 new minority foster homes, thus increasing the number of licensed minority homes to approximately 1,600 or 25 percent of all foster homes. Additionally, in 2003, the CA established and met a goal of increasing the number of Tribal homes by 10 percent in order to address ICWA preference categories for culturally appropriate placements.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that, despite these efforts, the recruitment of minority placement resources remains a major need. Numerous stakeholders in the 2002 strategic planning process identified recruitment and retention of foster parents as a major issue. In particular, Tribal representatives expressed concern that there are not enough Indian foster and adoptive homes available. They noted that this is exacerbated by the two-tiered licensing process, in which Tribally-approved foster homes are subject to a State-level review prior to certification.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the CA implemented the Foster Care Improvement Plan in 2002. This is a public/private effort that seeks to (1) increase the number of available foster and adoptive homes through effective recruitment and retention efforts, and (2) create an agency culture that promotes collaboration between foster families and social workers. It is noted that implementation has been slow and the potential benefits are yet to be realized.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR indicated that the agency has a number of successful recruitment efforts in place at the State, Regional, and local level (e.g., dedicated state-level staff, child-specific recruitment, stipends to foster parents for recruiting, funds for Tribal recruitment efforts, contracts for minority recruitment, community announcements and meetings). Despite these efforts, local-level stakeholders reported that the agency is not fully successful in recruiting and retaining

foster homes that reflect the ethnic diversity of the foster care population. Stakeholders reported a lack of Hispanic foster homes in Team 1 and Team 2 sites as well as a lack of African-American and Russian-speaking foster homes in the Team 1 site. In addition, Team 2 stakeholders noted a high drop-out rate of interested Hispanic families during the licensing process and that using a translator to license non-English speaking families was cumbersome. Some stakeholders in the Team 1 site praised local efforts to recruit Native homes while other stakeholders voiced concern that little effort was being made to recruit Native homes. Statewide stakeholders noted that despite an increase in new Native homes last year, there continues to be a serious need for additional Native foster homes.

Stakeholders noted that recruitment efforts are negatively impacted by retention issues. State-level and local-level stakeholders noted that foster parents do not feel valued. Some stakeholders expressed praise for recent retention efforts and noted that there have been improvements in efforts to develop social worker and foster parent teaming and information sharing. However, these stakeholders indicated that more efforts are needed.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because the State has a process in place that promotes use of cross-jurisdictional resources.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA has a process in place and uses multiple strategies to secure foster and adoptive homes across jurisdictions. Each region has an adoption consortium, which allows for a collaborative staffing process between the department and private agencies, and also increases awareness of available children and available homes. The CA has also developed additional strategies to promote the use of cross-jurisdictional resources. These include:

- Listing children in need of homes on the Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE) 30 days after TPR. After 90 days on WARE, a child is placed on the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE). However, not all children are placed on the NWAE website due to funding constraints.
- Individual purchase-of-service contracts that can be used to recruit placements and to facilitate finalization of an adoptive home for a specific child. Eleven of 18 contracts in 2002 were with out-of-state agencies.

- Specialized adoption recruitment contract that is used to secure adoptive resources for 40 children who have been waiting for permanent placements for extended periods of time. Twenty-six children were placed as a result of these efforts.
- Collaborating with NWAEE and six adoption agencies to recruit adoptive families for special needs children. During the first 2 years of operation, a total of 82 children were identified and 51 have been placed in permanent adoptive homes.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSSR noted that the agency is using multiple resources to achieve adoption placements, such as child-specific recruitment and listing on national registries. Stakeholders also noted that the agency is making efforts to increase social workers' acceptance of and use of cross-jurisdictional placements and to provide training concerning the Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC). Barriers to cross-state placements include lack of knowledge about the ICPC process and extensive delays in processing the compacts.