

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report: Washington Child and Family Services Review
April 2011

INTRODUCTION

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

The Washington CFSR was conducted the week of September 13, 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from April 1, 2009, to September 17, 2010. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Children's Administration (CA) of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR data period ending September 30, 2008. It should be noted that in the State Data Profile for FY 2009 or for 2009b-2010a, the State exceeded the following five of the six national data standards: absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff, timeliness and permanency of reunification, timeliness of adoptions, permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods, and placement stability.
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 31 cases in King County, 17 cases in Spokane County, and 17 cases in Whatcom County
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys

Background Information

The CFSR assesses State performance with regard to its substantial conformity with seven child and family outcomes and seven systemic factors. For the outcome assessments, each outcome incorporates one or more of the 23 items included in the review, and each item is rated as a Strength or Area Needing Improvement based on the results of the case reviews. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent or more of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as Strengths. The evaluation options for these outcomes are "substantially achieved," "partially achieved," or "not achieved." For a State to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent or more of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. Two

outcomes—Safety Outcome 1 and Permanency Outcome 1—also are evaluated based on State performance with regard to six national data indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, both the national standards for each data indicator and the case review requirements must be met.

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

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

Rating the Systemic Factor

Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
1	2	3	4
None of the CFSP or program requirements is in place.	Some or all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

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

Because many changes were made in the CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State’s performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the first round.

Key changes in the process that make comparing performance difficult across reviews are the following:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items

- Changes in criteria for specific items to increase consistency and to ensure an assessment of critical areas such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents

Specific findings regarding the State's performance on safety and permanency outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of this Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in table 2. Table 3 presents the State's performance with regard to the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. In the following sections, key findings are summarized for each outcome and systemic factor. Information also is provided about the State's performance on each outcome and systemic factor during the Federal fiscal year 2003 CFSR.

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes

The 2010 CFSR identified the following areas of high performance with regard to the State's performance in achieving the outcomes assessed during the review:

- Although the State's performance on Well-Being Outcome 2 (Children receive services to meet their educational needs) and Outcome 3 (Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs) did not meet the required 95-percent level for substantial conformity, performance on these outcomes was fairly high, with the outcomes being substantially achieved in 80.5 and 82.0 percent of the cases, respectively.
- Items pertaining to proximity of placement and physical health of the child were rated as Strengths for the State.
- Although the State's performance on the items pertaining to placement with siblings and preserving connections did not reach the level required for an overall rating of Strength, these items were rated as Strengths in more than 85 percent of the cases.

In addition to these positive CFSR findings, HHS acknowledges the efforts Washington has made to initiate a number of changes and improvements in its child welfare system since the 2003 CFSR. CA implemented the Child Protective Services (CPS)/Child and Family Welfare Services redesign in January 2007 and, according to Washington State data, responses to all accepted referrals were completed within required timeframes (either 24 hours or 72 hours) in 93 percent of the cases in February 2010. CA now requires a specialized assessment of cases at the time of intake involving chronic neglect and domestic violence. In addition, in 2005, CA adopted Solution-Based Casework as the new practice model to provide an overarching framework for child welfare practice in Washington State. This practice model includes the use of Structured Decision Making.

Since 2003, Washington has strengthened the collaborative relationship with Tribes by developing and conducting Indian Child Welfare Act compliance reviews. The CA also has a strong collaborative relationship with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) and together they are implementing several projects to improve permanency outcomes in the State. In addition, a legislatively formed Washington State Racial Disproportionality Committee has initiated research into child welfare practice. Across the State, veteran parent advocacy groups have been developed to provide support and guidance to families in the child welfare system.

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

- The State was not in substantial conformity with any of the seven outcomes.
- The State did not meet any of the national standards for the data indicators.
- Some of the lowest performing areas identified in the case reviews included achieving timely reunification, guardianship, and adoption, and ensuring caseworker visits with parents.

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

- There are areas of the State that do not have access to the full range of services.
- There is inconsistency in child welfare practice among practitioners.
- The State has not made consistent, concerted efforts statewide to locate and engage parents, especially fathers, in case planning, assessment, and service provision.

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Systemic Factors

With regard to systemic factors, Washington is in substantial conformity with five of the seven systemic factors: (1) Statewide Information System; (2) Quality Assurance System; (3) Staff and Provider Training; (4) Agency Responsiveness to the Community; and (5) Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. However, Washington is not in substantial conformity with the two systemic factors of Case Review System and Service Array and Resource Development.

I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

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

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two items. One pertains to the timeliness of initiating a response to a child maltreatment report (item 1), and the other relates to the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment within a 6-month time period (item 2). Safety Outcome 1 also incorporates two national data indicators for which national standards have been established. These data indicators measure the absence of maltreatment recurrence and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 67.7 percent of the applicable cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 53 percent of applicable King County cases, 67 percent of applicable Spokane County cases, and 100 percent of applicable Whatcom County cases. In addition, the State did not meet the national standards for the data indicators

pertaining to (1) the absence of maltreatment recurrence and (2) the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or residential facility staff. However, it should be noted that in the State Data Profile for FY 2009, the State exceeded the national data standard pertaining to the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

The 2010 CFSR case reviews identified the following concerns:

- In some cases, investigations of maltreatment reports were not initiated with face-to-face contact in a timely manner.
- Although the case reviews found that in 92 percent of the 12 applicable cases reviewed there was no maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period, the State did not meet the national standard for the data indicator pertaining to the absence of maltreatment recurrence. There was an absence of maltreatment recurrence in 93.9 percent of the cases reported. This percentage is less than the national standard of 94.6 percent established for this measure.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- There were delays in some cases in responding to reports of maltreatment, some of which were classified as high risk.
- The State did not meet the national standard for maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period.

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

- New response times for face-to-face contact with alleged child victims to provide a more immediate response to CPS reports: 24 hours for emergent situations and 72 hours for all other situations
- Guidelines outlining intake timelines for referral, review, and transfer to CPS
- Additional engagement training for staff and foster parents/relative caregivers statewide to prevent maltreatment recurrence
- Contract revisions with providers to require the use of assessment tools to better serve families with high referral rates

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

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

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

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 60.0 percent of the applicable cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The

outcome was substantially achieved in 52 percent of King County cases, 71 percent of Spokane County cases, and 65 percent of Whatcom County cases.

The 2010 CFSR case reviews identified the following concerns:

- In some cases, although some services were provided to the family to prevent removal from the home, the services did not target the key safety concern in the family.
- In some cases, there was no ongoing safety and/or risk assessment in the child's home.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- In some cases, safety assessments and/or service provision were not sufficiently comprehensive to ensure children's safety.
- In some cases, social workers were not monitoring safety plans and service participation when children remained in their homes.

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

- Refresher training on Safety and Risk Assessments for all agency staff and supervisors
- Family Team Decision Making (FTDM) meetings to engage families, relatives, and providers within 72 hours of a child's placement and to develop safety plans
- The Trial Home Visit Policy, which included a 6-month after-care support plan
- A new practice model for CPS/Child Welfare Services (CWS) to support child safety and the earlier engagement of families in services that included a framework for assessment, case planning, and service delivery
- A redesigned Individual Social Service Plan (ISSP), implemented in a pilot site and developed for statewide implementation
- A statewide case review model for assessing and improving practice related to safety, permanence, and well-being

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

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

Six items are incorporated in the assessment of Permanency Outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all of the foster care cases reviewed. The items pertain to State efforts to prevent foster care reentry (item 5), ensure placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establish appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner, as well as seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining items focus on an assessment of State efforts to achieve permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, or permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9), or to ensure that children who have a case goal of other planned permanent living arrangement are in stable long-term placements and are

adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10). Permanency Outcome 1 also incorporates four national data indicators for which national standards have been established. These data indicators measure the timeliness and permanency of reunification, the timeliness of adoptions, permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods, and placement stability.

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 22.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 15 percent of King County cases, 20 percent of Spokane County cases, and 40 percent of Whatcom County cases. In addition to case review findings, Washington did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to (1) timeliness and permanency of reunification, (2) timeliness of adoptions, (3) permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods, and (4) placement stability. However, it should be noted that in the State Data Profile for FY 2009, the State exceeded the national data standard pertaining to permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. Additionally, in the State Data Profile for FY 2009b-2010a, the State exceeded the national data standards pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification, timeliness of adoptions, and placement stability.

The 2010 CFSR case reviews identified the following concerns in the cases reviewed:

- Although the case reviews found that there was no foster care reentry in the 12 applicable cases reviewed, the State's performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was as follows: 16.0 percent of children exiting foster care to reunification reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage is greater than the national median of 15.0 percent. (For this measure, lower percentages reflect higher levels of performance.)
- In some cases, children did not experience stability in their foster care placements.
- In some cases, the permanency goal for the child was either not appropriate or not established in a timely manner.
- In some cases, the agency had not sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA.
- In some cases, there were delays in achieving reunification, guardianship, and adoption in a timely manner.
- In some cases, the agency had not made concerted efforts to provide the child with Independent Living services.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to prevent foster care reentries.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure placement stability for children in foster care.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner or to achieve permanency for children in a timely manner.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure that older children in long-term foster care receive appropriate services to assist them in making the transition from foster care to independent living.

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

- The Shared Planning policy to bring together individuals, including parents, to share information, plan, and inform decisions
- The Trial Return Home policy that begins when a child transitions home and provides support to the parents and child for 6 months
- Revision of the Reunification Assessment and Transition and Safety Plan for reunifications if a child is in care longer than 60 days
- FTDM meetings to be used to prevent placement disruption
- To improve placement stability, an after-hours support crisis line for foster parents, improved respite for foster parents, and development of the foster parent survey
- The Permanency Planning Policy and *Permanency Planning Practice Guide for Social Workers*
- The Kids Come First policy framework and tools (initial licensing, relative search, relative home study, respite) to lay the foundation for working more effectively with relatives
- The Unified Home Study to support foster-to-adopt
- The requirement for licensors to discuss the option of adoption with families at the time of licensure, and a requirement for CWS social workers to discuss adoption with the resource family prior to TPR
- The Ansell-Casey computerized Independent Living Skills assessment and case planning model

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

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

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

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 67.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 55 percent of King County cases, 70 percent of Spokane County cases, and 90 percent of Whatcom County cases.

The 2010 CFSR case reviews determined that the State was effective with regard to placing children in close proximity to their parents and that most children were placed with their siblings when appropriate. However, the 2010 CFSR also identified inconsistent practice resulting in the following concerns:

- In some cases, the agency had not ensured that children had the opportunity to visit with their parents and siblings in foster care.

- In some cases, the agency had not ensured that important connections were maintained for children in foster care.
- In some cases, the agency had not made concerted efforts to search for either maternal or paternal relatives as potential placement resources.
- In some cases, the agency did not promote the relationship of the child in foster care with parents.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure that children in foster care visited with their parents and siblings with sufficient frequency and that those visits were of sufficient quality.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to preserve connections for children in foster care with their extended family and community.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to seek and assess relatives as placement resources for children in foster care.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to support the relationship of children in foster care with their parents.

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

- A visitation guide to support parent/child and sibling visits
- The Kids Come First policy framework and tools (initial licensing, relative search, relative home study, respite) to lay the foundation for working more effectively with relatives
- A policy requiring notice to the Tribe within 1 working day of identification of a child's Tribal and/or Band affiliation for children in care to increase Tribal involvement in case planning
- A collaboration with CIP to develop a process for inquiry as to Tribe and/or Band affiliation at the shelter care hearing
- A strengthened ISSP guide to include provisions for identifying cultural heritage and development of plans for maintaining cultural and community connections
- FTDM meetings to engage Tribes, families, and fathers early in the case
- Training for staff and foster parents on engaging families, relatives, and fathers

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

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

Well-Being Outcome 1 incorporates four items. One item pertains to State efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and that the necessary services are provided to meet identified needs (item 17). A second item examines State efforts to actively involve parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two

remaining items examine the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 41.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 52.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 24 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. In addition, the outcome was substantially achieved in 35 percent of King County cases, 59 percent of Spokane County cases, and 35 percent of Whatcom County cases.

The 2010 CFSR case reviews found that the agency made concerted efforts to assess and address the needs of children in foster care in most cases. However, the 2010 CFSR case reviews identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts consistently to assess and address the service needs of children in the in-home cases, parents (especially of fathers), and foster parents.
- The agency did not make concerted efforts consistently to involve children, mothers, and fathers in case planning. Fathers were least likely to be involved in case planning.
- The frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children and parents were not consistent or sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to assess and meet the services needs of children, parents, and foster parents.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to involve children and parents in the case planning process.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure that agency social workers had sufficient contact with the children and parents in their caseloads, particularly with the children and parents in the in-home services cases.

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

- The Strength-Based Family Assessment Tool
- The Shared Planning policy, which emphasizes the inclusion of parents, children, and foster parents in the decision-making process
- Strengthened policies to improve the engagement of fathers and absent parents
- A video for adolescents to help them understand and navigate the dependency process
- Thirty-day social worker visits with children in in-home dependency cases
- FTDM meetings to engage families, relatives, and providers within 72 hours of a child's placement

- A new practice model for CPS/CWS to support earlier engagement of families in services, including the framework for assessment, case planning, and service delivery
- Additional engagement training for staff and foster parents/relative caregivers statewide

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

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

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

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 80.5 percent of the applicable cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 84 percent of the 32 applicable foster care cases and 67 percent of the 9 applicable in-home services cases. In addition, the outcome was substantially achieved in 76 percent of applicable King County cases, 82 percent of applicable Spokane County cases, and 89 percent of applicable Whatcom County cases.

The 2010 CFSR case reviews determined that in 80 percent of cases reviewed, the educational needs of children were being appropriately and adequately assessed and addressed.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that the agency was not consistently effective in meeting the educational needs of children in the in-home services cases.

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

- Agreements with 96 school districts to improve communication, collaboration, and coordination
- The Educational Advocacy program to provide assistance and advocacy for school-age children and youth in foster care
- Child Health Education Tracking (CHET) for children in foster care longer than 30 days
- Regional Education Summits to provide training to social workers, educators, caregivers, and community partners
- The Foster Care to College Partnership
- Establishment of practice guidelines for social workers regarding educational assessment and advocacy across all programs for in-home and out-of-home cases

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

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

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

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 82.0 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 87.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 71 percent of the 21 applicable in-home services cases. In addition, the outcome was substantially achieved in 77 percent of King County cases, 81 percent of applicable Spokane County cases, and 93 percent of Whatcom County cases.

The 2010 CFSR case reviews determined that the State was effective in assessing and meeting the physical and dental needs of children and, in many cases, the State was effective in assessing and meeting the mental health needs of children. In addition, the 2010 CFSR found that children in foster care were more likely to have their mental health needs assessed and addressed than children in the in-home services cases.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that the agency was not consistently effective in addressing the physical and mental health needs for children, particularly for children in the in-home services cases.

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

- The CHET policy and guide to improve education outcomes and health care for children
- Regional resource guides for staff regarding existing mental health resources available in each region
- Working agreements with the State mental health providers and Regional Service Networks to maximize access to mental health services for children

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

II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Statewide Information System

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

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The 2010 CFSR determined that the State is operating a statewide information system called FamLink that can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care.

Washington also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Case Review System

Five items are included in the assessment of State performance for the systemic factor of Case Review System. The items examine development of case plans and parent involvement in that process (item 25), the consistency of 6-month case reviews (item 26) and 12-month permanency hearings (item 27), implementation of procedures to seek TPR in accordance with the timeframes established in ASFA (item 28), and notification of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers about case reviews and hearings to be held regarding the children in their care and about their right to be heard in those proceedings (item 29).

Washington is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System.

The 2010 CFSR determined the following strengths:

- The State provides a process for the periodic review of each child at least once every 6 months.
- The State provides a process to ensure that each child in foster care has a permanency hearing at least every 12 months.

However, the 2010 CFSR also identified the following concerns:

- The State is not consistent in its efforts to ensure that the case plan is developed jointly with the child's parents.
- Although the State provides a process for TPR proceedings, this process is not effective in ensuring that TPR petitions are filed in accordance with the provisions of ASFA consistently.
- The State is inconsistent in practice with regard to providing notice to caregivers about hearings to be held concerning children in their care and providing caregivers with an opportunity to be heard in those hearings.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State did not have a process to ensure the consistent involvement of parents and children in the development of case plans.
- There were delays in the process of filing for TPR.
- Foster parents and other caretakers were not informed about hearings on a consistent basis, or when they were informed, were not given the opportunity to be heard routinely during the proceedings.

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

- A video for adolescents in the foster care system to explain their rights, how the system works, and how their voices can be heard
- FTDM and Shared Planning Meetings to strengthen parent involvement in case planning
- Collaborations with the CIP to develop additional Family Treatment Courts
- Partnerships with the Assistant Attorney General to identify barriers to filing TPR and reduce the backlog of cases waiting for TPR
- A Model Court Order with language regarding compelling reasons to justify not filing a TPR
- Development of policies and procedures regarding notice to caregivers and the opportunity to be heard in court
- Creation of a standardized letter for notice of hearings to caregivers as well as a standardized form for caregivers to provide input to the court

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

Quality Assurance System

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

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The 2010 CFSR determined that the State has standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. In addition, the State is operating a QA system to evaluate the quality of services, identify strengths and needs, provide relevant reports, and evaluate improvement plans. At the time of the Onsite Review, the State was in the process of restructuring the QA process to improve QA functions.

Washington also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Staff and Provider Training

The systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training incorporates an assessment of the State's training provided to new caseworkers (item 32), the ongoing training provided to agency staff (item 33), and both initial and ongoing training provided to foster and adoptive parents (item 34). This systemic factor does not assess the training of service providers other than child welfare agency staff unless the service providers are private agency caseworkers, operating under a contract with the State, who have full case management responsibilities.

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. The 2010 CFSR determined that the State is operating a pre-service training and ongoing training program for CA staff. In addition, the State provides initial training for prospective foster and adoptive parents and staff of licensed facilities and requires foster parents to complete ongoing training.

Washington was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- Although ongoing training opportunities were made available to staff, ongoing training was not mandated, and there were social workers and supervisors who did not participate in ongoing training.
- Although there was high-quality, mandatory initial training for foster parents, there was no requirement that foster parents participate in ongoing training, and many foster parents did not participate in ongoing training.

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

- The Mandatory Training Policy that required all agency social workers to complete 20 hours of ongoing training annually
- A requirement for all agency social workers hired after January 1, 2005, to attend 8 additional days of mandatory specialized training appropriate to their caseload or program area within the first 2 years of hire
- A requirement for all licensed family foster homes to complete 36 hours of ongoing training during each 3-year licensing period

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

Service Array and Resource Development

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

Washington is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. The 2010 CFSR determined that the State has an appropriate array of key services to assess the strengths and address the needs of children and families. However, the 2010 CFSR also identified concerns that there are barriers to accessing key services, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment services, in some parts of the State due to the rural nature of the State and a deficiency of service providers. In addition, the State does not individualize services consistently to meet the unique needs of children and families.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State had critical gaps in its service array, particularly in the areas of mental health services and substance abuse treatment, and had an insufficient pool of foster homes.
- Services were not consistently accessible to children and families on a statewide basis. Rural areas lacked specialized services, had limited choices, and experienced chronic shortages.
- Services were not consistently individualized to meet cultural, language, and other unique needs of families and children.

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

- The establishment of Chemical Dependency Counselors in local agency offices to help screen and support families through the substance abuse assessment and treatment process
- The introduction of evidence-based practices including Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care and Functional Family Therapy
- Foster parent recruitment and retention services contracts to increase the pool of foster homes
- A formal contract review process to maximize resources and support better outcomes
- Development of the Cultural Competency Self-Assessment Tool for contracted service providers to determine and improve their level of cultural responsiveness
- Shared Planning Meetings to support the development of individualized services to meet unique needs of children and families

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

Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community incorporates an assessment of the State's consultation with external stakeholders in developing the CFSP and producing Annual Progress and Service Reports (APSRs) (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 2010 CFSR determined that the State engages in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders in developing the goals and objectives for the CFSP and in preparing the APSRs. In addition, the State's coordinates its services with those of other Federal or Federally-assisted programs.

Washington also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

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 who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of foster children (item 44), and the State's activities with regard to using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements for waiting children (item 45).

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The 2010 CFSR determined the following:

- The State has licensing standards for foster homes and child care institutions and ensures that they are applied equally.
- The State completes criminal background clearances in licensing foster and adoptive placements consistent with the Federal requirements.
- The State has a process for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom homes are needed.
- The State has a process in place for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely permanent placements for waiting children.

Washington also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Table 1. Washington 2010 CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings			Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved*	Met National Standards?	Rating**	Percent Strength
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	67.7	Met 0 of 2		
Item 1. Timeliness of investigations				ANI	68
Item 2. Repeat maltreatment				Strength	92
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	60.0			
Item 3. Services to protect children in home				ANI	66
Item 4. Risk of harm				ANI	60
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	22.5	Met 0 of 4		
Item 5. Foster care reentry				Strength	100
Item 6. Stability of foster care placements				ANI	77.5
Item 7. Permanency goal for child				ANI	45
Item 8. Reunification, guardianship, and placement with relatives				ANI	29
Item 9. Adoption				ANI	35
Item 10. Other planned living arrangement				ANI	50
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	67.5			
Item 11. Proximity of placement				Strength	97
Item 12. Placement with siblings				ANI	87.5
Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	61
Item 14. Preserving connections				ANI	86
Item 15. Relative placement				ANI	77
Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	48

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

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

Table 2. Washington 2010 CFSR Ratings for Child and Family Well-Being Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings		Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved	Rating**	Percent Strength
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs	No	41.5		
Item 17. Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents			ANI	45
Item 18. Child/family involvement in case planning			ANI	55
Item 19. Caseworker visits with child			ANI	58
Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents			ANI	36
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive services to meet their educational needs	No	80.5		
Item 21. Educational needs of child			ANI	80
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	No	82.0		
Item 22. Physical health of child			Strength	92
Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of child			ANI	77

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

** Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANIs). For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases reviewed for the item (with the exception of item 21) must be rated as Strengths. Because item 21 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95-percent Strength rating applies.

Table 3. Washington 2010 CFSR Ratings for Systemic Factors and Items

Systemic Factors and Items	Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Statewide Information System	Yes	3	
Item 24. The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or, within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care			Strength
Case Review System	No	2	
Item 25. The State provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions			ANI
Item 26. The State provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review			Strength
Item 27. The State provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter			Strength
Item 28. The State provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act			ANI
Item 29. The State provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child			ANI
Quality Assurance System	Yes	4	
Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children			Strength
Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented			Strength
Staff and Provider Training	Yes	4	
Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services			Strength
Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP			Strength

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

** Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANIs).

Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children			Strength
Service Array and Resource Development	No	2	
Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency			Strength
Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP			ANI
Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency			ANI
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Yes	4	
Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP			Strength
Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, Annual Progress and Services Reports delivered pursuant to the CFSP			Strength
Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally-assisted programs serving the same population			Strength
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	Yes	4	
Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards			Strength
Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds			Strength
Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children			Strength
Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed			Strength
Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children			Strength

* Scores range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 means that the factor is not in substantial conformity. A score of 3 or 4 means that the factor is in substantial conformity. ** Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANIs).

Final Report
Washington Child and Family Services Review
April 2011

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

INTRODUCTION

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

The Washington CFSR was conducted the week of September 13, 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from April 1, 2009, through September 17, 2010. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Children's Administration (CA) of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR data period ending September 30, 2008. It should be noted that in the State Data Profile for FY 2009 or for 2009b-2010a, the State exceeded the following five of the six national data standards: absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff, timeliness and permanency of reunification, timeliness of adoptions, permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods, and placement stability.
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 31 cases in King County, 17 cases in Spokane County, and 17 cases in Whatcom County
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys

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

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

Key Characteristics of Cases Reviewed

Case Characteristics	Foster Care	In-Home Services
Total Number of Cases	40	25
Date case was opened		
Open prior to the period under review	34 (85%)	15 (60%)
Open during the period under review	6 (15%)	10 (40%)
Child entered foster care during the period under review	12 (30%)	N/A
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than 10	25 (62.5%)	*
At least 10 but younger than 13	2 (5%)	*
At least 13 but younger than 16	4 (10%)	*
16 and older	9 (22.5%)	*
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-Hispanic	2 (5%)	*
Asian Non-Hispanic	0	*
Black Non-Hispanic	6 (15%)	*
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic	1 (2.5%)	*
Hispanic (of any race)	2 (5%)	*
White Non-Hispanic	19 (47.5%)	*
Unknown/Unable to Determine	0	*
Two or More Races Non-Hispanic**	10 (25%)	*
Primary reason for opening case		
Physical abuse	6 (15%)	5 (20%)
Sexual abuse	2 (5%)	0
Emotional maltreatment	0	0
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	12 (30%)	11 (44%)
Medical neglect	0	0
Abandonment	0	0
Mental/physical health of parent	3 (7.5%)	1 (4%)
Mental/physical health of child	0	1 (4%)
Substance abuse by parent	15 (37.5%)	3 (12%)
Child's behavior	1 (2.5%)	4 (16%)
Domestic violence in child's home	0	0
Child in juvenile justice system	0	0
Other	1 (2.5%)	0

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

**Four of these cases were children who were part American Indian/Alaskan Native and six of these cases were children who were part Black.

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

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

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

It should be noted, however, that States are not required to attain the 95-percent standard established for the CFSR Onsite Review or the national standards for the six data indicators by the end of their Program Improvement Plan implementations. The Children’s Bureau recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often take time to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with the Children’s Bureau to establish a specified amount of improvement or to determine specified activities for their Program Improvement Plans. That is, for each outcome that is not in substantial conformity or item that is rated as an Area Needing Improvement, each State (working in conjunction with the Children’s Bureau) specifies the following: (1) how much improvement the State will demonstrate and/or the activities that it will implement to address the Areas Needing Improvement and (2) the procedures for demonstrating the achievement of these goals. Both the improvements specified and the procedures for demonstrating improvement vary across States. Therefore, a State can meet the requirements of its Program Improvement Plan and still not perform at the 95-percent (for outcomes) or the 90-percent (for items) levels established for the CFSR.

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

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

Because many changes were made in the CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State's performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the first round, particularly with regard to comparisons of data indicators or percentages regarding Strength and Area Needing Improvement ratings. Key changes in the CFSR case review process that make it difficult to compare performance across reviews include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items
- Changes in criteria for specific items to enhance consistency and ensure an assessment of critical areas such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents in planning for their children

For each outcome, there is a table presenting the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of Washington's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State's first CFSR report, which was held in fiscal year (FY) 2003, the State's status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Differences in findings across the sites included in the Onsite Review are presented in the tables. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate.

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	9	4	8	21	67.7
Partially Achieved	4	1	0	5	16.1
Not Achieved	4	1	0	5	16.1
Total Applicable Cases	17	6	8	31	
Not Applicable Cases	14	11	9	34	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	53%	67%	100%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (%)	State's Percentage	Meets Standards?
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6 +	93.9	No
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68 +	99.62	No

Status of Safety Outcome 1

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 67.7 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. In addition to case review findings, Washington did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to absence of maltreatment recurrence and absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff. However, it should be noted that in the State Data Profile for FY 2009, the State exceeded the national data standard pertaining to the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- There were delays in some cases in responding to reports of maltreatment, some of which were classified as high risk.

- The State did not meet the national standard for maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period.

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

- Implemented new response times for face-to-face contact with alleged child victims to provide a more immediate response to Child Protective Services (CPS) reports: 24 hours for emergent situations and 72 hours for all other situations
- Implemented guidelines outlining intake timelines for referral, review, and transfer to CPS
- Provided additional engagement training for staff and foster parents/relative caregivers statewide to prevent maltreatment recurrence
- Revised contracts with providers to require the use of assessment tools to better serve families with high referral rates

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 31 (48 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item when there were no child maltreatment reports during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with the State child welfare agency policy requirements.

State policy regarding timelines for initiating an investigation or intake assessment of a child abuse and neglect report is the following:

- Emergent Response: CA social workers must have face-to-face contact with all alleged child abuse or neglect victims within 24 hours from the time CA receives the intake.
- Non-Emergent Response: CA social workers must have face-to-face contact with all alleged child abuse or neglect victims within 72 hours from the time CA receives the intake.
- Family Reconciliation Services (FRS): The FRS social worker must attempt to contact the referring party (youth or family) within 24 hours of the time CA receives the intake, excluding weekends and holidays. The FRS social worker may make this contact via telephone, and there is no requirement for face-to-face contact.
- Alternative Intervention: CA or a contracted agency must respond within 10 days via letter, telephone, or visit with the family. There is no requirement for face-to-face contact.

Time-limited extensions of the time allotted for initiating an investigation are granted in the following situations:

- When protocols with law enforcement or other community resources exist that require CA to delay contact with the child
- When a child is unable to be located within the 24- or 72-hour timeframe
- When a child’s safety may be compromised by conducting the initial face-to-face contact
- When an intake is received on a weekend or holiday and relates to the alleged abuse or neglect of a child in a licensed facility that is not providing care for the child during that weekend or holiday

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

Item 1 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	9	4	8	21	68
Area Needing Improvement	8	2	0	10	32
Total Applicable Cases	17	6	8	31	
Not Applicable Cases	14	11	9	34	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	53%	67%	100%		

Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 21 cases when the investigation was initiated, and face-to-face contact was made within the timeframes required by State policy. Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when the investigation was not initiated within the required timeframes. The 10 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement involved 13 investigations that were not initiated within the required timeframes: three were emergent response, seven were non-emergent response, and three were alternative intervention.

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 68 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 1 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CA receives and screens reports of child abuse and neglect, including those received with regard to cases currently open for services and children placed in child placement facilities. In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) investigates allegations of abuse and neglect of children residing in licensed or certified foster care homes or facilities operated by DSHS.

The Statewide Assessment reports that intake staff use a Structured Decision Making (SDM) model, called the Decision Tree, to guide and improve consistency in assigning priority levels to reports of child abuse and neglect. The Statewide Assessment also reports that,

in January 2007, State legislation provided additional social workers to increase staffing levels to ensure completion of face-to-face contacts with the alleged child victim often well before required timeframes. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that the requirement for supervisors to confirm that CPS social workers have completed the 24-hour or 72-hour response for all investigations has improved accountability.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the Governor's performance measurement system, which is called Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP), monitors performance in the area of intake response times. GMAP data for February 2010 show that response times were met for 93 percent of the reports: responses were timely for 95 percent of alleged victims identified in emergent reports and 91 percent of alleged victims identified in non-emergent reports.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the new electronic child welfare information system, called FamLink, presents challenges for social workers in initiating timely investigations. Social workers are required to spend more time in advance of initiating investigations to review person and case information prior to conducting an initial face-to-face contact.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that when there are delays in investigations, often they are due to inaccurate addresses recorded in FamLink. These stakeholders noted that because FamLink is a relatively new information management system, there are challenges in entering information correctly. In addition, some stakeholders indicated that there are delays in initiating investigations because FamLink does not display accurate information with regard to case history.

A few stakeholders reported that there is an effective working relationship with good communication and written protocols between law enforcement agencies and CA that supports timely investigations.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 12 (18 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review. For all applicable cases, reviewers were to determine if there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family during the period under review, and, if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report involving similar circumstances had occurred within a 6-month period before or after that identified report. The results of the assessment of item 2 are presented in the table that follows.

Item 2 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	7	1	3	11	92
Area Needing Improvement	1	0	0	1	8
Total Applicable Cases	8	1	3	12	
Not Applicable Cases	23	16	14	53	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	87.5%	100%	100%		

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 11 cases when there was one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family and there was not another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period. Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case when there were two substantiated maltreatment reports on the family within a 6-month period.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 92 percent of the applicable cases, there was no recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment within a 6-month period. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, strategies to prevent repeat maltreatment include the following:

- The use of the Chronicity Indicator in FamLink (the State’s electronic child welfare information system) to flag cases that involve chronic neglect as a recurring form of maltreatment
- The availability of FRS to support families of adolescents
- The availability of Shared Planning Meetings and Family Team Decision Making (FTDM) to engage families early in case planning to protect children
- The use of the Family Action Plan (FAP) prior to closing a case in order to document the family’s after-care plan and supportive services
- The use of SDM at the time of intake to improve the consistency of decision-making and risk assessment

The Statewide Assessment indicates that neglect legislation was implemented in January 2007. This legislation includes provisions to strengthen the ability of CA to engage families in services, including substance abuse services. The legislation also includes a new definition of negligent treatment or maltreatment as a failure to act or the cumulative effects of a pattern of conduct, behavior, or inaction. According to the Statewide Assessment, the legislation provides for CA to file court petitions if a neglecting parent should fail to participate in services and empowers the court to support a parent’s early participation in services to reduce the likelihood of future abuse.

The Statewide Assessment reports that data from FamLink show that 6.3 percent of children were revictimized within 6 months during the period July through December 2008, compared to 10.4 percent during the period July through December 2005.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive comments from stakeholders on this item during the onsite CFSR.

Safety Outcome 2

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	16	12	11	39	60.0
Partially Achieved	4	0	3	7	10.8
Not Achieved	11	5	3	19	29.2
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	52%	71%	65%		

Status of Safety Outcome 2

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 60.0 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- In some cases, safety assessments and/or service provision were not sufficiently comprehensive to ensure children’s safety.
- In some cases, social workers were not monitoring safety plans and service participation when children remained in their homes.

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

- Provided refresher training on Safety and Risk Assessments for all agency staff and supervisors
- Implemented FTDM meetings to engage families, relatives, and providers within 72 hours of a child’s placement and to develop safety plans
- Implemented the Trial Home Visit Policy that included a 6-month after-care support plan
- Defined a new practice model for CPS/Child Welfare Services (CWS) to support child safety and the earlier engagement of families in services that included a framework for assessment, case planning, and service delivery

- Redesigned the Individual Social Service Plan (ISSP), implemented the new ISSP in a pilot site, and developed a plan for statewide implementation of the new ISSP
- Implemented a statewide case review model for assessing and improving practice related to safety, permanence, and well-being

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable for 32 (49 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and there were no other children in the home, or if there were no concerns regarding the safety of any of the children in the home during the period under review. For applicable cases, reviewers assessed whether the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families that would prevent placement of children in foster care and at the same time ensure their safety. The results of the assessment of item 3 are presented in the table below.

Item 3 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	11	3	7	21	66
Area Needing Improvement	6	3	2	11	34
Total Applicable Cases	17	6	9	32	
Not Applicable Cases	14	11	8	33	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	65%	50%	78%		

Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 21 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Although no services were provided when the child was removed from the home, the removal was necessary to ensure the safety of the child (seven cases).
- Services were provided to the family to ensure the safety of the child and prevent removal (15 cases).
- Services were provided to the family to ensure the safety of the child and prevent reentry (one case).

Case review information indicates that a range of services was offered or provided to families. This included (but was not limited to) the following: Family Preservation Services (FPS), in-home services, mental health assessment, counseling, therapy, parenting classes,

substance abuse treatment, anger management classes, housing assistance, domestic violence services, public health nurse services, and childcare.

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

- Services were not provided to the family, and the children remained at risk in the home (one case).
- Services were provided, but they did not target the key safety concern in the family, leaving the children at risk in the home (eight cases).
- No services were provided to prevent the children's removal from the home, although the removal was not immediately necessary to ensure the children's safety (one case).
- No services were provided at the time of reunification, and the children were at risk in the home (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 66 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 3 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, strategies to protect children in the home and prevent removal or reentry into foster care include the following:

- Redesigning CPS and Child and Family Welfare Services (CFWS) to increase the focus on voluntary services early in the case
- The use of FRS, a voluntary in-home service delivery system that develops skills and supports in families to resolve problems related to at-risk youth in need of services or in family conflict
- The use of Early Family Support Services (EFSS) referral services for families for up to 30 days and the use of EFSS in-home services to CPS families for 3 to 6 months, with a possible extension to 9 months
- The use of placement prevention services including FPS and Intensive Family Preservation Services (IFPS)
- The use of the Solution-Based Casework (SBC) Practice Model, a framework for identifying and addressing family-level needs such as housing, and individual-level issues such as drug abuse treatment
- The availability of Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS), which uses wraparound services to keep youth safely in their own homes
- The implementation of a new policy that requires all families to be screened for the identification of domestic violence
- The use of the Global Assessment of Individual Needs (GAIN)–Short Screen, which is required to be used with adults and youth age 13 and older to screen for substance abuse, mental health, and co-occurring disorders
- The use of Evidence-Based/Promising Programs including the following: Promoting First Relationships, Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), Incredible Years, Project SafeCare, Functional Family Therapy, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, Aggression Replacement Therapy, Project Keep, and Homebuilders

The Statewide Assessment reports that the Central Case Review collects and analyzes data from a sample of cases in each of the State's 46 field offices every 18-24 months. In the 2009 Central Case Review, this item was rated as a Strength in 87 percent of the 308 cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there are family support services and FPS available to prevent a child's entry into foster care. However, some stakeholders expressed concern about recent and projected budget cuts that impact the service array.

Item 4. Risk assessment and safety management

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 4 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	16	12	11	39	60
Area Needing Improvement	15	5	6	26	40
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	52%	71%	65%		

Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 39 cases when reviewers determined that risk and safety were appropriately addressed by the agency through the following: conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children's home or in the children's foster home, and addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment.

Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 26 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was no initial safety and/or risk assessment (three cases).
- There was no ongoing safety and/or risk assessment in the child's home during the period under review (25 cases).
- There were continued risk concerns in the home that were not addressed and/or monitored by the agency (13 cases).
- There were safety concerns during visitation that were not addressed for the child in foster care (four cases).
- There were safety concerns in the foster home that were not addressed for the child in foster care (one case).
- The case was closed without any safety and risk assessment (three cases).

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 60 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to assess and address the risk of harm to the child. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 4 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, social workers are required to use the SDM risk assessment tool in conjunction with a safety assessment as part of the investigative assessment process. In addition, the SDM risk assessment tool must be used to determine whether to offer ongoing services monitored through a voluntary services plan. SDM is a structured assessment that includes 18 specific questions that result in a score that is correlated with a specific risk classification.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the SDM safety assessment tool includes a domestic violence screening component. The Statewide Assessment indicates that social workers are required to assess domestic violence issues throughout the life of the case. The domestic violence policy guides social workers through an assessment when considering out-of-home placement, contact between the victim and perpetrator, critical components of the safety plan, and a list of categories when out-of-home placement must occur.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the FAP is used prior to closing a case in order to document the family's after-care plan and supportive services. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that social workers must use the FAP tool for every case flagged by the Chronicity Indicator and that has an SDM score of "moderately high" or "high."

The Statewide Assessment reports that in the 2009 Central Case Review, this item was rated as a Strength in 79 percent of the 407 cases reviewed. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that in the 2009 Indian Child Welfare (ICW) Case Review, this item was rated as a Strength in 77 percent of the 217 cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that practice is inconsistent with regard to assessing and managing safety and risk factors in a timely manner. In addition, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process were concerned that there was a lack of cultural awareness and cultural competence in working with families, which can result in an inability to identify risk accurately.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR stated that SDM tools are used to assess risk and manage safety.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	3	2	4	9	22.5
Partially Achieved	17	6	6	29	72.5
Not Achieved	0	2	0	2	5.0
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	15%	20%	40%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (Scaled Score)	State Score (Scaled Score)	Meets Standards?
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	122.6 +	108.5	No
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	106.4 +	96.0	No
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods	121.7 +	120.0	No
Composite 4: Placement stability	101.5 +	95.8	No

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 22.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity. In addition to case review findings, Washington did not meet the national standards for any of the national data indicators pertaining to permanency. However, it should be noted that in the State Data Profile for FY 2009, the State exceeded the national data standard pertaining to permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. Additionally, in the State Data Profile for FY 2009b2010a, the State exceeded the national data standards pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification, timeliness of adoptions, and placement stability.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to prevent foster care reentries.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure placement stability for children in foster care.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner or to achieve permanency for children in a timely manner.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure that older children in long-term foster care receive appropriate services to assist them in making the transition from foster care to independent living.

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

- Implemented the Shared Planning policy to bring together individuals, including parents, to share information, plan, and inform decisions
- Implemented the Trial Return Home policy that begins when a child transitions home and provides support to the parents and child for 6 months
- Revised the Reunification Assessment and Transition and Safety Plan for reunifications if a child is in foster care longer than 60 days
- Implemented FTDM meetings to be used to prevent placement disruption
- To improve placement stability, implemented the after-hours support crisis line for foster parents, improved respite for foster parents, and developed the foster parent survey
- Developed the Permanency Planning Policy and *Permanency Planning Practice Guide for Social Workers*
- Implemented the Kids Come First policy framework and tools (initial licensing, relative search, relative home study, respite) laying the foundation for working more effectively with relatives
- Implemented the Unified Home Study to support foster-to-adopt
- Implemented the requirement for licensors to discuss the option of adoption with families at the time of licensure and required CWS social workers to discuss adoption with the resource family prior to termination of parental rights (TPR)
- Implemented the Ansell-Casey computerized Independent Living (IL) Skills Assessment and case planning model

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

Item 5. Foster care reentries

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 5 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	6	3	3	12	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	3	3	12	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	7	7	28	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	100%		

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in all 12 applicable cases when the child's entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode (11 cases), or there was evidence that concerted efforts were made to prevent reentry (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases. Item 5 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

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

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

Washington's performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was as follows: In the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period for the data indicators, 16.0 percent of children exiting foster care to reunification reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage is greater than the national median of 15.0 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following strategies are in place to prevent foster care reentries:

- The Trial Return Home Policy, which provides for a 6-month trial period during which time dependency is retained and the family receives support when the child transitions home
- The FAP, which is used prior to closing a case in order to document the family’s after-care plan and supportive services
- FTDM, which is used to engage families in safety planning and reunification planning

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the availability of community support services to a child and family after a child returns home is inconsistent across the State.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few Whatcom County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that when children reenter foster care, usually it is due to chronic parental substance abuse.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 6 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	16	7	8	31	77.5
Area Needing Improvement	4	3	2	9	22.5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	80%	70%	80%		

Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 31 cases when reviewers determined that the child’s current placement was stable and that the child either did not experience a placement change during the period under review or that the placement changes experienced were in the child’s best interests (i.e., they were intended to further achievement of the child’s permanency goal or to provide specialized services for the child).

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

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

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 24 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in 10 cases experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Children in six cases experienced three or more placements during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77.5 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

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

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

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

- C4.1: 82.3 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is less than the national median of 83.3 percent.
- C4.2: 61.9 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the national median of 59.9 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 65.4 percent.
- C4.3: 38.4 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the national median of 33.9 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 41.8 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following requirements must be met prior to any placement move for a child, unless the immediate safety of the child is at imminent risk:

- The Regional Administrator must approve the placement change (this step is required only when a child has been in the same placement for 12 months or longer).
- An FTDM meeting must be convened to discuss the placement change.

- A report to the court must be prepared justifying the placement change.
- A Shared Planning Meeting/Multiple Placement Staffing must be convened (this step is required only for cases in which the child has experienced three or more placement settings).

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following supports provided to caregivers to promote placement stability:

- Monthly Health and Safety Visits, which are used to identify needed supports for the child and the caregivers
- The Foster Parent Critical Support and Retention program, which provides on-call support and in-home case management services for foster families
- Foster parent —hub³ and support groups, which promote retention of foster parents by helping foster parents stay connected with each other, providing networking opportunities, allowing for the exchange of ideas and resources, and providing mandatory monthly training

The Statewide Assessment reports that in the 2009 Central Case Review, this item was rated as a Strength in 79 percent of 275 cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that a 2008 FTDM Evaluation Report showed that although placement changes may still occur following an FTDM meeting, future placements are more stable.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that one of the key barriers to ensuring placement stability is the lack of a sufficient pool of foster homes that can be matched to the needs of the children in foster care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few Whatcom County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that family support services are available to support foster families. In addition, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that there have been improvements in the ability with which CA matches the needs of children with appropriate placement resources. However, some stakeholders confirmed the information presented in the Statewide Assessment with regard to the lack of a sufficient pool of foster homes. In addition, a few King County and Spokane County stakeholders expressed the opinion that relative placements are not as stable as non-relative foster care placements.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

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

Item 7 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	9	3	6	18	45
Area Needing Improvement	11	7	4	22	55
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	45%	30%	60%		

Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 18 cases when reviewers determined that the child’s permanency goal was appropriate, had been established in a timely manner, and, if relevant, that the agency had filed for TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA.

Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 22 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child’s permanency goal was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (nine cases).
- The child’s permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (16 cases).
- The agency had not sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA, including the requirement to document compelling reasons for not filing for TPR in the case file (three cases).

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

- Adoption only (14 cases)
- Reunification only (including reunification with relatives) (four cases)
- Guardianship only (two cases)
- Other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA) only (three cases)
- Concurrent goals of adoption and guardianship (five cases)
- Concurrent goals of adoption and reunification with parents (seven cases)
- Concurrent goals of guardianship and reunification with parents (one case)
- Concurrent goals of adoption and guardianship and reunification with parents (one case)
- Concurrent goals of guardianship and OPPLA (two cases)
- Concurrent goals of reunification with relatives and OPPLA (one case)

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 45 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and had met ASFA requirements when relevant. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 7 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods

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

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

- C3.1: 31.9 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the 12-month CFSR target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 29.1 percent.
- C3.2: 93.3 percent of the children exiting foster care during the target period who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home. This percentage is less than the national median of 96.8 percent.
- C3.3: 49.9 percent of the children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month target period with a discharge reason of emancipation had been in foster care for 3 years or longer at the time of discharge. This percentage is greater than the national median of 47.8 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, permanency plans, including a permanency plan goal, must be developed for all children in out-of-home care no later than 60 days from the original placement date. The Statewide Assessment reports that the goal is developed following the SBC Shared Planning Meeting, which is used to bring individuals together to share information, plan, and inform decisions regarding children and families. At that time, an ISSP is developed, which includes a primary permanency goal and an alternate goal. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the two goals are pursued concurrently.

The Statewide Assessment notes that if the child is identified as an Indian child, a local ICW advisory committee staffing is required to establish the permanency goal no later than 60 days from the original placement date.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that a child's plan may be for long-term foster or long-term relative care; although these plans are intended to provide continuous care to the child until the child reaches the age of 18 years, they are not considered a permanency goal. The Statewide Assessment notes that a plan for long-term foster/relative care is considered only when permanency goals are not in the best interests of a child.

The Statewide Assessment notes that social workers are required to file a petition for TPR when a child has been in out-of-home care for 12 of the last 19 months, unless a compelling reason exists not to file a TPR petition. The Statewide Assessment also notes that compelling reasons not to file a TPR petition must be documented in the ISSP and are subject to court review. The Statewide Assessment indicates that compelling reasons not to file a TPR petition must be made on a case-by-case basis and reflect the

individual circumstances of the child and family. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that, in Washington, if a child's identified Tribe does not concur with the TPR plan, that information is documented in the case file as a compelling reason not to file a TPR petition.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 79 percent of 270 cases reviewed.
- Permanency goals were established in a timely manner and were appropriately matched to the child's needs and circumstances of the case in 85 percent of the cases reviewed.
- A petition for TPR was filed if the child was in out-of-home placement for 15 of the most recent 22 months, or compelling reasons were documented in the current ISSP, in 75 percent of the cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR addressed the issues of concurrent planning and compelling reasons not to file TPR petitions. Most stakeholders commenting on concurrent planning expressed the opinion that the agency develops concurrent plans early in the life of the case.

Some stakeholders commenting on compelling reasons not to file TPR petitions expressed the opinion that, when there is a compelling reason not to file a TPR petition, that reason is documented in the ISSP. However, several stakeholders indicated that TPR petitions are not filed in a timely manner consistently. Various King County and State-level stakeholders also expressed the opinion that delays in service provision often result in delays in the decision to file a TPR petition.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 21 (52.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the permanency goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of the assessment of item 8 are presented in the table that follows.

Item 8 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	2	2	2	6	29
Area Needing Improvement	9	5	1	15	71
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	11	7	3	21	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	9	3	7	19	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	18%	29%	67%		

Note: Two cases with concurrent goals are not included here because the alternate goal was achieved in a timely manner or considered to be more appropriate.

Item 8 was rated as a Strength in six cases when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 15 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to achieve reunification (eight cases) or guardianship (eight cases, including one case with a concurrent goal of reunification) in a timely manner. In addition, reviewers noted that, of the 15 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for item 8, 6 cases involved children who had a concurrent/alternate goal of reunification and 5 cases involved children who had a concurrent/alternate goal of guardianship (including one case with a concurrent goal of reunification).

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 29 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 8 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

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

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

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Washington’s performance on the individual measures included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification is presented below for the measures pertaining to timeliness:

- C1.1: 63.8 percent of the reunifications occurred in at least 8 days but less than 12 months of the child’s entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 69.9 percent.
- C1.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children discharged to reunification after being in foster care for at least 8 days was 7.0 months. This length of stay is greater than the national median of 6.5 months. (For this measure, a lower number reflects a higher level of performance.)

- C1.3: 36.0 percent of children entering foster care in the 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in more than 7 days but less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 39.4 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State's permanency goals relevant to this item are (1) return of the child to the home and (2) guardianship. The Statewide Assessment notes that there is support for relatives who become guardians through the State's Guardianship Assistance Program, which provides a monthly subsidy when a guardianship is established for a child in foster care who meets title IV-E eligibility requirements.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating reunification and guardianship:

- In order to plan for reunification, SBC Shared Planning Meetings can be convened within 72 hours of the original placement date or within 30 days.
- In order to facilitate and support safe and timely reunification, home-based services, IFPS, and FPS are available statewide to support families post-reunification.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in the 2009 Central Case Review, this item was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of 220 cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following reasons for delays in the achievement of reunification:

- There is limited access to services to address parental treatment needs.
- There is a tendency to maintain the goal of reunification beyond what is realistic.
- There is a lack of consistency in the delivery of post-reunification supportive services.

The Statewide Assessment reports that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified the following concerns with regard to the ability of CA to return children home in a timely manner:

- Infrequent identification of noncustodial fathers/paternal relatives as a reunification option
- A lack of guidance from social workers to parents as to what steps will be required prior to reunification
- Social workers' and service providers' bias resulting in exaggerating, missing, or minimizing safety issues
- Disproportionality concerns that reunification is delayed for children with certain demographic characteristics
- A perception in some communities that CA is risk-averse in decisions of reunification

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on guardianship during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that changes in guardianship policies limiting support available to prospective guardians are a barrier to establishing permanency for some children.

Item 9. Adoption

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 9 was applicable for 26 (65 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. The results of the assessment of item 9 are presented in the table below.

Item 9 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	4	2	3	9	35
Area Needing Improvement	9	4	4	17	65
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	13	6	7	26	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	4	3	14	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	31%	33%	43%		

Note: One case with concurrent goals is not included here because the alternate goal of reunification was achieved in a timely manner.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in nine cases when reviewers determined that the State had made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 17 cases when reviewers identified one or more of the following:

- Delays in filing for TPR (three cases)
- Delays in the TPR finalization process (after filing) (two cases)
- Delays in completing or approving home studies (three cases)
- Delays in the identification of an appropriate adoptive resource family (four cases)
- Delays in the finalization of the adoption (five cases)
- Delays due to a lack of diligent efforts to provide services toward the goal of adoption over a period of time (two cases)

Additional findings relevant to this item were the following:

- Of the 26 children with a goal of adoption, 10 achieved the goal during the period under review.
- Of the 10 children who had a finalized adoption during the period under review, 1 had been in foster care for less than 24 months.
- Of the 16 children with a goal of adoption who were not adopted during the period under review, 7 had been in foster care for at least 24 months.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 35 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 9 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

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

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

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Washington's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions is presented below:

- C2.1: 24.5 percent of the children exiting to adoption were discharged in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 26.8 percent.
- C2.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 31.8 months. This median length of stay is less than the national median of 32.4 months but greater than the national 25th percentile of 27.3 months. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)
- C2.3: 20.6 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the year. This percentage is greater than the national median of 20.2 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 22.7 percent.
- C2.4: 15.3 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within the first 6 months of the year. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 10.9 percent.
- C2.5: 43.2 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percentage is less than the national median of 45.8 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, concurrent planning facilitates the timely achievement of adoptions. The Statewide Assessment also notes that timely adoption is facilitated by the availability of post-adoption services, which are available for every child eligible for the Adoption Support Program. The Statewide Assessment indicates that prospective adoptive parents complete the same training as foster parents and, in addition, are required to complete additional training specifically designed for adoptive families.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in the 2009 Central Case Review, it was determined that adoptions were completed within 24 months for 61 percent of 136 cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment reports that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified concern that delays in achieving adoptions can be due to inconsistencies in the identification of Native American ancestry, a shortage of after-care and support groups for adoptive parents, delays in the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process, and a reluctance of some courts to terminate parental rights.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that delays in achieving adoptions are due in part to delays in the TPR appeals process and delays in scheduling TPR finalization hearings.

Item 10. Other planned permanent living arrangement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 6 (15 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to OPPLA. The results of the assessment of item 10 are presented in the table below.

Item 10 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	0	1	2	3	50
Area Needing Improvement	2	1	0	3	50
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	2	2	6	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	18	8	8	34	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	0	50%	100%		

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in three cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a long-term placement for the child and/or to provide the necessary service(s) to prepare the child for independent living. Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- Concerted efforts were not made to provide the child with IL services (two cases).
- Concerted efforts were not made to ensure that the child was placed in a permanent living arrangement (two cases).

The following provides information about the age of the child at the time the goal of OPPLA was established:

- Two children were older than age 12 but younger than age 16.
- Four children were age 16 or older.

Rating Determination

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 50 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 10 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, social workers are required to develop a plan for youth who are 15 to 18 years old that addresses how the youth will acquire IL skills; this plan must be documented in the ISSP. The Statewide Assessment identifies the following services and strategies as facilitating the development of IL skills:

- During the SBC Shared Planning Meeting, youth are engaged in the development of their IL plans.
- All eligible youth age 15 and older are referred to a contracted IL provider.
- Transitional Living Services are available to youth until they are age 21.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in the 2009 Central Case Review, this item was rated as a Strength in 50 percent of the 24 cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the following concerns relevant to youth who have the goal of OPPLA:

- There are waiting lists for some IL services.
- There is an insufficient number of stable, long-term placements for older youth in foster care.

Permanency Outcome 2

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	11	7	9	27	67.5
Partially Achieved	8	3	1	12	30.0
Not Achieved	1	0	0	1	2.5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	55%	70%	90%		

Status of Permanency Outcome 2

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 67.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The State also

was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure that children in foster care visited with their parents and siblings with sufficient frequency and that those visits were of sufficient quality.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to preserve connections for children in foster care with their extended family and community.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to seek and assess relatives as placement resources for children in foster care.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to support the relationship of children in foster care with their parents.

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

- Developed a visitation guide to support parent/child and sibling visits
- Implemented the Kids Come First policy framework and tools (initial licensing, relative search, relative home study, respite), laying the foundation for working more effectively with relatives
- Implemented policy requiring notice to the Tribe within 1 working day of identification of a child's Tribal and/or Band affiliation for children in foster care to increase Tribal involvement in case planning
- Collaborated with the Court Improvement Program (CIP) to develop a process for inquiry as to Tribe and/or Band affiliation at the shelter care hearing
- Strengthened ISSP guide to include provisions for identifying cultural heritage and developing plans for maintaining cultural and community connections
- Implemented FTDM meetings to engage Tribes, families, and fathers early in the case
- Trained staff and foster parents on engaging families, relatives, and fathers

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 11 was applicable for 30 (75 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if TPR was attained prior to the period under review, contact with parents was not considered to be in the child’s best interests, and/or parents were deceased or their whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child’s most current foster care setting was near the child’s parents or close relatives. The results of the assessment of item 11 are presented in the table below.

Item 11 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	16	6	7	29	97
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	1	1	3
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	16	6	8	30	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	4	2	10	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	87.5%		

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

- The child was placed in the same community or county as the parents or in close proximity (28 cases).
- Even though the child was not placed in close proximity to the parents, the placement was necessary to meet the needs of the child, support attainment of the permanency goal, and visitation was supported with the parents (one case).

Item 11 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case when reviewers determined that the child’s placement was not in close proximity to the child’s parents.

Rating Determination

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 97 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed children in locations close to their parents or relatives when appropriate. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 11 also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires that a child’s placement be in close proximity to his or her family home and current school or daycare provider, unless such placement is not consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that one strategy CA has developed to facilitate the placement of children in close proximity to their homes is placement with –suitable others.” Such placements could include neighbors, friends, and professionals who have a relationship with the child. However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the

Statewide Assessment process identified a lack of community-based placement resources and a lack of placement resources for youth in some communities.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there are not enough foster homes in many of the communities from which children are removed.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 12 was applicable for 24 (60 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if the child did not have a sibling in foster care at any time during the period under review. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were currently, or had been, placed together, and if separated, whether the separation was necessary to meet the service or safety needs of one or more of the children. The results of the assessment of item 12 are presented in the table below.

Item 12 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	8	5	8	21	87.5
Area Needing Improvement	3	0	0	3	12.5
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	11	5	8	24	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	9	5	2	16	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	73%	100%	100%		

Item 12 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed with all siblings (nine cases).
- There was a valid reason for child’s separation from siblings (for example, the separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings, to address safety concerns for one or more of the siblings, or to accommodate a large sibling group) (12 cases).

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

Rating Determination

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 87.5 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 12 was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy emphasizes that the best interests of the child are served by placing the child in a foster care placement with his or her siblings, if appropriate. The Statewide Assessment notes that if siblings are not placed together, the child’s social worker must document continued efforts to place siblings together throughout the life of the case.

The Statewide Assessment reports that 2009 data from FamLink show that 60.9 percent of siblings were placed with all their siblings and 80.9 percent were placed with at least one other sibling.

The Statewide Assessment reports that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process noted that the use of FTDM and Shared Planning Meetings often is helpful in identifying relatives or neighbors who are able to accept sibling groups. However, these focus group participants also noted that an FTDM meeting is not held in all cases and that the level of support given to families that accept sibling groups varies.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there are not enough foster homes that are able to accommodate sibling groups, particularly large sibling groups.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 13 was applicable for 33 (82.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if the child had no siblings in foster care and if one of the following conditions was met with regard to the parents: TPR was established prior to the period under review, and parents were no longer involved in the child’s life or were deceased; or visitation with a parent was not considered in the best interests of the child. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and between children in foster care and their siblings also in foster care, and whether the visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The results of the assessment of item 13 are presented in the table below.

Item 13 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	7	6	7	20	61
Area Needing Improvement	8	3	2	13	39
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	15	9	9	33	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	1	1	7	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	47%	67%	78%		

Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 20 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visitation with parents and siblings met the needs of the children. Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to ensure sufficient visitation with the mother (six cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to ensure sufficient visitation with the father (five cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to ensure sufficient visitation with siblings in foster care (five cases).

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

Typical Frequency of Child’s Visits During the Period Under Review	With Mother	With Father	With Siblings in Foster Care
Visits occurred at least once a week	12 (46%)	7 (39%)	7 (47%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	2 (8%)	1 (6%)	2 (13%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	2 (8%)	2 (11%)	3 (20%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	9 (35%)	4 (22%)	2 (13%)
There were no visits during the period under review	1 (4%)	4 (22%)	1 (7%)
Total Applicable Cases	26	18	15

The data indicate that children visited at least once per month with their mothers in 62 percent of the applicable cases, with their fathers in 56 percent of the applicable cases, and with their siblings in foster care in 80 percent of the applicable cases.

Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 61 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the family. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 13 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the child’s social worker must develop a written plan for visitation within 3 business days of the child’s placement in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that there is no minimum frequency of parent-child visits but that an initial child/parent visit should occur within 72 hours of placement or, at a maximum, within 5 business days. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that, when siblings in foster care are placed separately, a written plan for a minimum of twice-monthly visits must be developed unless safety concerns exist.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the child’s social worker determines the level of supervision required for parent-child visits and that the foster caregivers often facilitate both parent-child and sibling visitation. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that, although noncustodial parents are not addressed in visitation policy, the court usually addresses visits with noncustodial parents in the

court order. The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that establishing parent-child visitation with incarcerated parents is challenging and that CA provided online training for social workers regarding parent-child visits with incarcerated parents.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in the 2009 Central Case Review, this item was rated as a Strength in 81 percent of the 239 cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there are limited transportation resources to support visitation of children with their parents and siblings.

Item 14. Preserving connections

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 14 was applicable for 37 (92.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child’s connections to neighborhood, community, faith, language, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends while the child was in foster care. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care. The results of the assessment of item 14 are presented in the table below.

Item 14 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	15	7	10	32	86
Area Needing Improvement	3	2	0	5	14
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	18	9	10	37	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	1	0	3	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	83%	78%	100%		

Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 32 cases when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with extended family members, religious or cultural heritage, schools, community, and friends.

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

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

Rating Determination

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 86 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections with neighborhood, community, faith, language, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 14 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, information on a child's potential connections to family, school, and social peer groups is collected through the Child Health Education Tracking (CHET) report, which identifies and organizes essential and appropriate information about the educational status, physical health, development, connections to family and social peer groups, and emotional/behavioral health of children in CA custody. The CHET report must be completed within 30 days of placement and is used to inform placement decisions, case planning, and service delivery. The Statewide Assessment indicates that CA uses the SBC Shared Planning Meeting and FTDM to identify connections.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that, for children of school age, the child's placement should be in close proximity of the child's school. However, the Statewide Assessment reports that data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) enrollment records for State FY 2009 indicate that, during the 2007-2008 school year, 21.8 percent of children in out-of-home care changed schools due to an initial placement or to a change in placement.

The Statewide Assessment notes that if a child is identified as having an affiliation with an Indian Tribe or Band, the social worker is required to exercise due diligence to identify and provide notification to the Indian Tribe or Band within 30 days after the child is removed from the home. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that CA complies with Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) notification requirements at the time TPR is pursued. However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified a lack of consistency in the ability of social workers to obtain Tribal input on case planning.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings of the 2009 Central Case Review:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 78 percent of the 270 cases reviewed.
- CA contacted the Tribe to determine the child's Indian status in 50 percent of the cases reporting Native American ancestry.
- CA provided translation and/or interpreter services in 71 percent of the cases when the family had limited English proficiency.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that in the 2009 ICW Case Review, it was determined that CA made active efforts to include the child's Tribe in case planning in 43 percent of the cases reviewed and maintained family, Tribal, and cultural connections in 56 percent of the cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency queries the family as to whether a child has Native American ancestry and notifies Tribes when children with Native American ancestry enter foster care.

Item 15. Relative placement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 15 was applicable for 31 (77.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period, or the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency made diligent efforts to locate and assess both maternal and paternal relatives as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of the assessment of item 15 are presented in the table below.

Item 15 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	14	4	6	24	77
Area Needing Improvement	3	4	0	7	23
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	17	8	6	31	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	3	2	4	9	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	82%	50%	100%		

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

- The child was placed with relatives (15 cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives, but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives when applicable (nine cases).

Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in seven cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made efforts to search for maternal and paternal relatives.

Rating Determination

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 15 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires the social worker to exercise due diligence in identifying and providing notification of a child’s placement in foster care to all grandparents and all adult relatives within 30 days after the child is removed from the home. The Statewide Assessment notes that the SBC Shared Planning meeting and FTDM often are used to identify and engage all adults who may be considered as possible placement options. The Statewide Assessment also notes that, if the assigned social worker has not identified any relatives within 7 working days of the child’s removal from the home, the social worker is to recommend that Relative Search Specialists begin searching for relatives using the advanced search database.

The Statewide Assessment reports that 2009 FamLink data indicate that 38.1 percent of the children living in an out-of-home placement were being cared for by relatives. The Statewide Assessment also reports that in the 2009 Central Case Review, this item was rated as a Strength in 78 percent of the 260 cases reviewed, considering placement with relatives and —suitable others.”

Stakeholder Interview Information

Several stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes efforts to identify relatives both initially and on an ongoing basis. A few King County and Whatcom County stakeholders noted that there is a relative search specialist or unit that is responsible for conducting searches for potential relative resources. A few King and Spokane County stakeholders noted that the agency conducts searches for relatives in order to invite them to attend the FTDM meeting.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 16 was applicable for 25 (62.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if parental rights had been terminated before the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, a relationship with the parents was not considered in the child’s best interests throughout the period under review, or both parents were deceased. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers through efforts other than arranging visitation. The results of the assessment of item 16 are presented in the table below.

Item 16 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	5	3	4	12	48
Area Needing Improvement	9	1	3	13	52
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	4	7	25	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	6	3	15	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	36%	75%	57%		

Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 12 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children through various activities. Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the mother when applicable (10 cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the father when applicable (eight cases).

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

Efforts Made	With Mother Number of Cases	With Father Number of Cases
Encouraging the parent’s participation in school or after-school activities and attendance at medical appointments and special events	9	6
Providing transportation so that parents can participate in these events, activities, or appointments	5	3
Providing opportunities for family therapeutic situations	7	4
Encouraging foster parents to mentor biological parents and serve as parenting role models for them	6	1
Encouraging and facilitating contact with incarcerated parents (when appropriate) or with parents living far away from the child	3	3
Total Applicable Cases (in which concerted efforts were identified)	23	18

Rating Determination

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 48 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 16 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the need to maintain parent-child relationships for children in foster care is a focus of the State legislature, CA, and the courts. However, parental involvement in the child’s activities (i.e., school, sports, and other appointments) has not been focused upon or emphasized.

The Statewide Assessment reports that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment expressed concern that parents generally are not permitted to call, e-mail, or write to their children. The Statewide Assessment indicates that CA must strive for greater consistency in the decision-making surrounding the limiting of or liberalizing of contact between parents and children/youth.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive comments from stakeholders on this item during the onsite CFSR.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well-Being Outcome 1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	11	10	6	27	41.5
Partially Achieved	8	3	7	18	27.7
Not Achieved	12	4	4	20	30.8
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	35%	59%	35%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 41.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 52.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 24 percent of the 25 in-home services cases.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to assess and meet the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to involve children and parents in the case planning process.
- The agency was not consistent in its efforts to ensure that agency social workers had sufficient contact with the children and parents in their caseloads, particularly children and parents in the in-home services cases.

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

- Implemented the Strength-Based Family Assessment Tool

- Implemented the Shared Planning policy which emphasizes the inclusion of parents, children, and foster parents in the decision-making process
- Strengthened policies to improve the engagement of fathers and absent parents
- Developed a video for adolescents to help them understand and navigate the dependency process
- Implemented the 30-day social worker visits with children in in-home dependency cases
- Implemented FTDM meetings to engage families, relatives, and providers within 72 hours of child’s placement
- Defined a new practice model for CPS/CWS to support the earlier engagement of families in services, including the framework for assessment, case planning, and service delivery
- Provided additional engagement training for staff and foster parents/relative caregivers statewide

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 17 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents and provided the services necessary to meet those needs. This item excludes the assessment of children’s (but not parents’) needs pertaining to education, physical health, and mental health. These areas are addressed in later items. The results of the assessment of item 17 are presented in the table below.

Item 17 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	12	10	7	29	45
Area Needing Improvement	19	7	10	36	55
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	39%	59%	41%		

Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 55 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 28 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 29 cases when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met.

Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 36 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was an inadequate assessment of children’s needs (10 cases).
- There was an inadequate assessment of mothers’ needs (18 cases).
- There was an inadequate assessment of fathers’ needs (19 cases).
- There was an inadequate assessment of the needs of foster parents (nine cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address the needs of children (13 cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address the needs of mothers (21 cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address the needs of fathers (23 cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address the needs of foster parents (11 cases).

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

Target Person for Needs Assessment and Services	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable	Yes	Applicable
Child’s needs assessed and met	35 (87.5%)	40	17 (68%)	25
Mother’s needs assessed and met	17 (63%)	27	13 (54%)	24
Father’s needs assessed and met	11 (55%)	20	4 (22%)	18
Foster parents’ needs assessed and met	25 (69%)	36	N/A	N/A

Rating Determination

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 45 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the State had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 17 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, with regard to assessing the needs of children and parents, the SBC practice model provides social workers with the tools, skills, and supports necessary to conduct effective family assessment, case planning, and ongoing casework. The Statewide Assessment notes that Shared Planning Meetings and FTDM are used to plan and inform decisions regarding the individualized development of the ISSP. The Statewide Assessment notes that agency policy requires social workers to conduct Monthly Health and Safety Visits to identify needed supports for the child. Health and Safety Visits also are used to assess the needs of foster caregivers.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review of foster care and in-home cases:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 63 percent of the 416 cases reviewed.
- The needs of the father were assessed and addressed in 63 percent of the cases reviewed.
- The needs of the mother were assessed and addressed in 75 percent of the cases reviewed.

- The needs of the caregiver were assessed and addressed in 98 percent of the cases reviewed.
- The needs of the child were assessed and addressed in 99 percent of the cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that 71.9 percent of 1,307 foster parents responding to a 2009 survey indicated that they had adequate support for their role from the agency. However, participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified a lack of consistency in the supportive services available and provided to relative caregivers.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State uses FTDM and is implementing SBC principles in assessing the needs of children and parents and developing the ISSP. Several stakeholders indicated that the case plans developed for each family reflect the individual needs of the family and are updated regularly.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 18 was applicable for 60 (92 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review, parents were not involved with the child in any way, and/or the child was too young or had cognitive delays or other conditions that were barriers to participation in case planning. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents and children (when appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and, if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child’s best interests. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent or child actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. The results of the assessment of item 18 are presented in the table below.

Item 18 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	15	10	8	33	55
Area Needing Improvement	14	5	8	27	45
Total Applicable Cases	29	15	16	60	
Not Applicable Cases	2	2	1	5	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	52%	67%	50%		

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 63 percent of the 35 applicable foster care cases and 44 percent of the 25 in-home services cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 33 cases when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in the case planning process. The item was rated as an

Area Needing Improvement in 27 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process.

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

Person Involved in Case Planning	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable Cases	Yes	Applicable Cases
Mother involved in case planning?	17 (65%)	26	16 (67%)	24
Father involved in case planning?	11 (58%)	19	5 (28%)	18
Children involved in case planning?	13 (76%)	17	11 (69%)	16

Rating Determination

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 55 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 18 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires the social worker to involve parents and children in case planning. The Statewide Assessment notes that the Shared Planning Meetings and FTDM can be used to build a consensus with the family and service providers on what must occur and the goals that must be achieved to reduce the risk of harm to the child. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the Shared Planning Meeting must include the child’s social worker, his or her supervisor, the biological parents, the child, the resource/caregiver family, the guardian *ad litem*, the court-appointed special advocate, members of the extended family, service providers, community representatives, and any other supports identified by the child. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the requirement for the child’s social worker to conduct Monthly Health and Safety Visits provides an opportunity for ongoing engagement with children in case planning.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that there is a program called Parent Advocates in which veteran birth parents who have been involved with the child welfare system and who have reunified with their children mentor parents who have children in foster care to encourage those parents’ involvement in case planning.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review of foster care and in-home cases:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 46 percent of the 405 cases reviewed.
- Fathers were engaged in case planning in 47 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Mothers were engaged in case planning in 68 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Children were engaged in case planning in 63 percent of the cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified the following concerns with regard to consistent involvement of parents and children in case planning:

- The agency is not consistent with regard to identifying and locating absent parents so that they can participate in case planning.
- There is a lack of sufficient cultural awareness and cultural competence to ensure involvement of parents in case planning.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions with regard to the State’s effectiveness in involving children and families in case planning. Several stakeholders indicated that the agency is not consistent in developing case plans jointly with youth or with parents. However, other stakeholders indicated that youth and parents are involved in case planning activities during FTDM and Shared Planning Meetings. In addition, several State-level stakeholders indicated that veteran birth parent mentors are helpful in ensuring that parents are engaged in case planning.

Additional information on stakeholder perceptions of the involvement of parents in the case planning process is provided under item 25 in the Systemic Factors section of this report.

Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 19 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	15	12	11	38	58
Area Needing Improvement	16	5	6	27	42
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	48%	71%	65%		

Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 70 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 40 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 38 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child’s well-being and promote attainment of case goals. Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, and if visits did occur, they did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (14 cases).

- The frequency of caseworker visits with children was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, although when visits did occur, they focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (four cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (nine cases).

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

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Child During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Services Cases
Visits occurred at least once a week	1 (2.5%)	0
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	5 (12.5%)	1 (4%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	27 (67.5%)	13 (52%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	7 (17.5%)	11 (44%)
There were no visits during the period under review	0	0
Total cases	40	25

The data indicate that caseworkers visited with children at least once per month in 82.5 percent of the foster care cases and 56 percent of the in-home services cases.

Rating Determination

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 58 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and quality. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 19 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires the social worker to conduct monthly face-to-face Health and Safety Visits with children in the in-home dependency, out-of-home placement, and Family Voluntary Services (FVS) cases. Health and Safety Visits provide ongoing assessment of the health, safety, permanency, and well-being of the child. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the first visit must occur within 7 calendar days of initial placement. For in-home dependency cases, all health and safety visits must occur in the home where the child resides. The majority of visits for out-of-home placements must occur in the home where the child resides.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 53 percent of the 410 cases reviewed.
- 56 percent of the children in all types of cases reviewed received monthly visits from their social worker.
- When visits occurred, 95 percent of the children in all types of cases reviewed received high-quality visits from the social worker.

- For in-home cases reviewed, 33 percent of the children received monthly visits from the social worker.
- For out-of-home cases reviewed, 63 percent of the children received monthly visits from the social worker.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that FamLink data indicate that 91 percent of children received a social worker visit in January 2010, representing an improvement from 77 percent in July 2009.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that social workers visit monthly with the children in their caseloads.

Item 20. Caseworker visits with parent(s)

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 20 was applicable for 53 (82 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of their children. All cases that were not applicable are foster care cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworkers’ face-to-face contact with the children’s mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and ensure the children’s safety and well-being. The results of the assessment of item 20 are presented in the table below.

Item 20 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	8	6	5	19	36
Area Needing Improvement	19	6	9	34	64
Total Applicable Cases	27	12	14	53	
Not Applicable Cases	4	5	3	12	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	30%	50%	36%		

Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 43 percent of the 28 applicable foster care cases and 28 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 19 cases when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment.

Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 34 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency (21 cases).
- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient quality (15 cases).

- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency (25 cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient quality (11 cases).

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

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Parents During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Visits occurred at least once a week	2 (7%)	1 (5%)	0	0
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	3 (11%)	2 (11%)	2 (8%)	0
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	8 (30%)	3 (16%)	12 (50%)	4 (22%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	11 (41%)	5 (26%)	5 (21%)	7 (39%)
There were no visits during the period under review	3 (11%)	8 (42%)	5 (21%)	7 (39%)
Total Applicable Cases	27	19	24	18

The data indicate that caseworkers visited at least once per month with mothers in 48 percent of the applicable foster care cases and 58 percent of the applicable in-home services cases; caseworkers visited at least once per month with fathers in 32 percent of the applicable foster care cases and 22 percent of the applicable in-home services cases.

Rating Determination

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 36 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with parents were sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 20 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires social workers to conduct monthly visits with parents in the in-home dependency cases and the FVS cases. The Statewide Assessment notes that although there is no required frequency of visits for caseworker visits with parents of children in foster care, the social worker is required to have regular visits with the parents in these cases to monitor progress.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review of foster care and in-home cases:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 21 percent of 376 cases reviewed.
- There were monthly visits with the father in 19 percent of cases reviewed.
- There were monthly visits with the mother in 32 percent of cases reviewed.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports the following findings provided by 809 respondents to a 2009 Parent Survey:

- 60 percent of parents surveyed reported satisfaction with the frequency and quality of their contact with their social workers.
- 22 percent of parents surveyed reported that they saw their social workers about once a month.
- 46 percent of parents surveyed reported that they had too little contact with their social workers.
- 43 percent of parents surveyed reported that they had the right amount of contact with their social workers.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process expressed concern that conducting effective visits with parents is compromised by a lack of consistent cultural awareness and cultural competence on the part of social workers.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Several King County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that social workers are not consistent with regard to conducting visits with parents at least monthly. A few of these stakeholders attributed this lack of consistency to high workloads.

Well-Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	16	9	8	33	80.5
Partially Achieved	0	0	1	1	2.4
Not Achieved	5	2	0	7	17.1
Total Applicable Cases	21	11	9	41	
Not Applicable Cases	10	6	8	24	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	76%	82%	89%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 2

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 80.5 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 84 percent of the 32 applicable foster care cases and 67 percent of the 9 applicable in-home services cases.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that the agency was not consistently effective in meeting the educational needs of children in the in-home services cases.

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

- Implemented agreements with 96 school districts to improve communication, collaboration, and coordination
- Implemented a Educational Advocacy program to provide assistance and advocacy for school-aged children and youth in foster care
- Implemented CHET for children in foster care longer than 30 days
- Conducted regional Education Summits to provide training to social workers, educators, caregivers, and community partners
- Implemented the Foster Care to College Partnership
- Established practice guidelines for social workers regarding educational assessment and advocacy across all programs for in-home and out-of-home cases

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 21 was applicable for 41 (63 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable for this item if either of the following applied: Children were not of school age, or children in the in-home services cases did not have service needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of the assessment of item 21 are presented in the table that follows.

Item 21 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	16	9	8	33	80
Area Needing Improvement	5	2	1	8	20
Total Applicable Cases	21	11	9	41	
Not Applicable Cases	10	6	8	24	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	76%	82%	89%		

Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 33 cases when reviewers determined that the child’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and services were provided, if necessary. Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in eight cases when reviewers determined one of the following:

- The child’s educational needs were not assessed or addressed (seven cases).
- The child’s educational needs had been identified but not addressed (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 80 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a rating of Strength. A 95-percent standard is established for this item because it is the only item assessed for this outcome. Item 21 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following agency policies and practices address the issue of meeting children’s educational needs:

- The social worker has primary responsibility for ensuring that the educational needs of a child in the custody of CA are assessed, documented, and addressed.
- The social worker is required to document educational information, tasks, and activities when the child is initially placed or moved to a new placement, after Shared Planning Meetings and school conferences, when completing or updating the child’s ISSP, and any time the child’s educational status changes.
- Each child in out-of-home care must have a long-range educational plan included in the ISSP.
- The social worker is required to complete the CHET.
- Educational information must be shared with caregivers, and both caregivers and social workers are expected to use this information to inform placement decisions, case planning, and service delivery.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that 182 of the State's 295 school districts have entered into local agreements with CA to address the educational needs of children in foster care: over 90 percent of school-aged children in foster care are served by these 182 school districts.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that Educational Advocates are available in each region to provide coordination of educational services and support to all school-aged children in out-of-home care. The Statewide Assessment also notes that there are contracts with private agencies to recruit and retain foster parents in local school districts that have the highest rates of placement in foster care. The purpose of these contracts is to ensure that a child's education can continue uninterrupted when a child enters foster care.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 86 percent of the 264 cases reviewed.
- 83 percent of children in the in-home cases reviewed had their educational needs appropriately addressed.
- 87 percent of children in the out-of-home cases reviewed had their educational needs appropriately addressed.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that 2009 data from CHET show that 64 percent of the cases had completed the CHET within 30 days of placement.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that there are high correlations among instability in foster care placements, poor educational outcomes, and low high school graduation rates. The Statewide Assessment reports that data from the *Washington State Institute for Public Policy Report - November 2009* show that only 30 percent to 40 percent of foster youth in placement for at least half the school year graduate after 4 years in high school (compared with 70 percent of all children statewide), and that 8 percent to 13 percent of foster youth with a long-term (full-year) placement drop out of high school (compared with 5 percent to 6 percent of all children statewide).

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that educational needs of children in foster care generally are monitored and services are provided when necessary. Some stakeholders noted that CA has become more attentive to developing strategies to address the educational needs of children.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	23	13	14	50	82.0
Partially Achieved	3	1	0	4	6.6
Not Achieved	4	2	1	7	11.5
Total Applicable Cases	30	16	15	61	
Not Applicable Cases	1	1	2	4	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	77%	81%	93%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3

Washington is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 82.0 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 87.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 71 percent of the 21 applicable in-home services cases.

Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concern From the 2003 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that the agency was not consistently effective in addressing the physical and mental health needs for children, particularly for children in the in-home services cases.

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

- Implemented the CHET policy and guide to improve education outcomes and health care for children
- Developed regional resource guides for staff regarding existing mental health resources available in each region
- Implemented working agreements with the State mental health providers and Regional Service Networks to maximize access to mental health services for children

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

Item 22. Physical health of the child

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 22 was applicable for 50 (77 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable for this item if they were in-home services cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children’s physical health needs (including dental needs) had been appropriately assessed, and the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of the assessment of item 22 are presented in the table below.

Item 22	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	23	12	11	46	92
Area Needing Improvement	2	1	1	4	8
Total Applicable Cases	25	13	12	50	
Not Applicable Cases	6	4	5	15	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	92%	92%	92%		

Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 92.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 90 percent of 10 applicable in-home services cases. Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 46 cases when reviewers determined that children’s medical and dental needs were routinely assessed and necessary services were provided. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in four cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child’s physical health needs were not adequately assessed (two cases).
- The child’s physical health needs were not adequately addressed (three cases).
- The child’s dental health needs were not adequately assessed (two cases).
- The child’s dental health needs were not adequately addressed (three cases).

Rating Determination

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of a Strength. In 92 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was effective in assessing and meeting children’s physical health needs. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the social worker is responsible for ensuring that the health-care needs of the child are met. The Statewide Assessment indicates that children must receive an Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) examination within 30 days of entering out-of-home placement and children older than age 3 must receive at least an annual EPSDT examination. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that children in out-of-home care must have an initial dental examination scheduled within the first 30 days of placement and must receive at least one dental examination every 6 months. The Statewide Assessment notes that CHET includes results from the EPSDT and information about the physical health, development, and emotional/behavioral health of children in CA custody.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies that facilitate the provision of physical health services to meet the needs of children:

- Regional Medical Consultants from the Medicaid Purchasing Administration (MPA) are located in the regional offices to provide consultation concerning medical needs.
- The Passport program includes specific care coordination elements to improve access and communication for children with complex health needs.
- The Fostering Well Being program provides a cohesive set of health-related services and supports to children.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 76 percent of the 343 cases reviewed.
- 78 percent of children in the in-home cases reviewed had their physical health needs appropriately addressed.
- 76 percent of children in the out-of-home cases reviewed had their physical health needs appropriately addressed.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that there is an insufficient number of dental providers who accept Medicaid in certain areas of the State.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that social workers conduct Monthly Health and Safety Visits that include monitoring the health of children, that health information is collected for children in foster care, and that children in foster care receive routine physical health screenings.

Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 23 was applicable for 39 (60 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable for this item if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or if there were no mental health concerns. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The results of the assessment of item 23 are presented in the table below.

Item 23 Ratings	King	Spokane	Whatcom	Total	Percent
Strength	12	9	9	30	77
Area Needing Improvement	6	2	1	9	23
Total Applicable Cases	18	11	10	39	
Not Applicable Cases	13	6	7	26	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	67%	82%	90%		

Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 88 percent of the 25 applicable foster care cases and 57 percent of the 14 applicable in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 30 cases when reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were appropriately assessed and the identified mental health needs were addressed. Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in nine cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- Mental health needs were not assessed (five cases).
- Mental health needs were not addressed (nine cases).

Rating Determination

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, mental health evaluation and treatment is provided to Medicaid-eligible children based on the findings of the EPSDT screenings. If the EPSDT screening indicates that a further comprehensive mental health assessment is needed, the assessment must occur within 45 calendar days of entering foster care and service delivery must occur within 90 days of placement. The Statewide Assessment notes that information about mental health services must be indicated in the ISSP within 60 days of placement and that this information must be updated at least once every 6 months. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that CHET includes information about the development and emotional/behavioral health of children in CA custody.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 84 percent of the 268 cases reviewed.

- 78 percent of children in the in-home cases reviewed had their mental/behavioral health needs appropriately addressed.
- 86 percent of children in the out-of-home cases reviewed had their mental/behavioral health needs appropriately addressed.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process reported that it is difficult to access mental health services for children, especially in rural areas.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that it is difficult to access mental health treatment providers for children when they are located far from where the children reside because transportation is difficult to arrange.

SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

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

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

Rating the Systemic Factor

Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
1	2	3	4
None of the CFSP or program requirements is in place.	Some or all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

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

If a State is not in substantial conformity with a particular systemic factor, then that factor must be addressed in the State’s Program Improvement Plan. For each systemic factor, information is provided about the State’s performance in its first CFSR as well as in the current CFSR. If the systemic factor was part of the State’s Program Improvement Plan, the key concerns addressed in the Program Improvement Plan and the strategies for assessing those concerns are noted.

I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

Status of Statewide Information System

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. Washington also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the item assessed under Statewide Information System are presented and discussed below.

Item 24. The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State is operating a statewide information system called FamLink that can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care. However, information from stakeholder interviews indicates that there may be delays in entering information on placement changes or goals. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State implemented a new statewide automated child welfare information system called FamLink between January and June 2009. FamLink collects and reports information on the location, goals, legal status, and demographic characteristics for each child in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that all placements are entered in FamLink by the social worker at the time that the child is placed and that all children placed by CA in private placing agencies are tracked in FamLink by the assigned social worker. The Statewide Assessment indicates that FamLink provides reports and serves as a case management tool for regional and headquarters staff, management, and administration.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that FamLink can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care. However, several stakeholders indicated that because FamLink is a new system, there may be delays of up to a week in entering information on placement changes or goals. Various stakeholders indicated that there are delays in entering information with regard to children placed through child placing agencies and delays due to the system requirement to enter certain information into FamLink in a specific order.

II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

Status of Case Review System

Washington is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Washington also was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State did not have a process to ensure the consistent involvement of parents and children in the development of case plans.
- There were delays in the process of filing for TPR.
- Foster parents and other caretakers were not informed about hearings on a consistent basis, or when they were informed, were not given the opportunity to be heard routinely during the proceedings.

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

- Developed a video for adolescents in the foster care system to explain their rights, how the system works, and how their voices can be heard
- Utilized FTDM and Shared Planning Meetings to strengthen parent involvement in case planning
- Collaborated with the CIP to develop additional Family Treatment Courts
- Partnered with the Assistant Attorney General to identify barriers to filing TPR and reduce backlog of cases waiting for TPR
- Utilized a Model Court Order with language regarding compelling reasons to justify not filing a TPR

- Developed policies and procedures regarding notice to caregivers and the opportunity to be heard in court
- Created a standardized letter for notice of hearings to caregivers as well as a standardized form for caregivers to provide input to the court

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State is not consistent in its efforts to ensure that the case plan is developed jointly with the child’s parents. In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that the State does not have data regarding the percentage of cases in which an ISSP was developed in a timely manner. During the onsite CFSR, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve mothers in case planning in 66 percent of the applicable cases and fathers in case planning in 43 percent of the applicable cases. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, for foster care cases, an ISSP must be completed within 60 days of the child’s removal from the parent and updated a minimum of once every 6 months. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the State does not have data regarding the percentage of cases in which an ISSP was developed or updated in a timely manner.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the case plan is to be developed jointly with the child’s family during Shared Planning Meetings and/or during the FTDM meeting. The FTDM meeting must be held any time there is a decision to be made about a child’s placement. Shared Planning Meetings must occur within 72 hours from the original placement time, at the time a child has been in placement for 30 days, at 6 months in placement, at 9 to 11 months in placement, and every 12 months thereafter.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following findings from the 2009 Central Case Review of foster care and in-home cases:

- Fathers were engaged in case planning in 47 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Mothers were engaged in case planning in 68 percent of the cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified the following concerns regarding case plan development:

- A lack of consistency in practice in completing and updating case plans
- A lack of consistency in practice in involving parents in developing the case plan

Stakeholder Interview Information

The key issues addressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were (1) whether a case plan is developed for each child in foster care; (2) whether the case plan is developed jointly with parents; and (3) the State's effectiveness in searching for and engaging fathers in case planning.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that a case plan is developed for each child in foster care within 60 days and that the ISSP guidelines and Shared Planning Meetings provide a framework for developing an appropriate case plan.

With regard to whether the case plan is developed jointly with parents, several stakeholders indicated that case plans are not developed jointly with parents consistently. However, other stakeholders indicated that SBC principles, FTDM, and Shared Planning Meetings were useful tools that resulted in the successful engagement of parents in case planning.

With regard to the State's effectiveness in identifying and engaging fathers in case planning, some stakeholders indicated that the agency is required to initiate a search for the father at the beginning of the case. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that it is difficult to find and engage fathers in case planning and some stakeholders noted that efforts to identify and engage fathers are not consistently implemented.

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

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child in foster care in court at least every 6 months. The Statewide Assessment reports that 90 percent of all reviews were held within 6 months during the period January 1, 2009, through August 31, 2009. However, information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that there are concerns about the effectiveness of review hearings due to the brevity of some court reviews. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the case of every dependent child must be reviewed by the juvenile court within 6 months from the date of the establishment of dependency or the date of the placement of the child, whichever comes first, and every 6 months thereafter. The Statewide Assessment notes that the reviews are to assess the agency's and parents' efforts that demonstrate consistent measurable progress over time in meeting the court's disposition plan requirements. According to the Statewide Assessment, Foster Care Review Boards were eliminated by the legislature effective July 26, 2009, and all 6-month reviews of active dependency cases are held in superior court.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the *Timeliness of Dependency Case Processing in Washington 2009 Annual Report* contains findings related to the timeliness of conducting periodic reviews. The findings show that 89 percent of first reviews and 90 percent of all reviews were held within 6 months during the period January 1, 2009, through August 31, 2009. For the purposes of this report, the due date for the first review hearing was determined to be 6 months from the filing date of the dependency petition for children found to be dependent. Due dates for subsequent review hearings were determined to be 6 months from the previous review hearing.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process expressed concern about the effectiveness of review hearings due to the brevity of many of the court reviews, some of which are held in as little as 10 minutes. The Statewide Assessment notes that CIP's Judicial Workload Study and the King County Model Court Project are addressing concerns about the quality of hearings, and findings from these projects will inform improvement efforts.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State holds periodic court reviews of the status of each child in foster care at least every 6 months. Several stakeholders in all three sites also expressed the opinion that the reviews are effective and assess progress made toward achieving the goals expressed in the case plan. Various stakeholders identified the following practices that facilitate timely court reviews:

- Courts schedule the 6-month review at the shelter hearing.
- There is case-level continuity in judicial oversight in Whatcom and Spokane counties.

However, a few King County and State-level stakeholders indicated that the effectiveness of reviews is inconsistent due to variations in the quality of reports provided by the social workers and variations in the length of the reviews, which can be limited due to full dockets.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 27 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State provides a process to ensure that each child in foster care has a permanency hearing at least every 12 months. While the timing of permanency hearings is not assessed through the title IV-E Eligibility Reviews, insight into the timeliness of these hearings is gained in the review of State compliance with Federal title IV-E eligibility criteria. In the 2007 Washington State title IV-E Eligibility Review, none of the cases reviewed were missing reasonable efforts determinations due to the lack of a timely permanency hearing. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the juvenile court must hold a permanency planning hearing by the 12th month of the original placement date and annually thereafter. The Statewide Assessment notes that a permanency planning hearing also is required if, following 90 days of service delivery after disposition, the parents have failed to make progress or engage in services to resolve the issues that brought the child into foster care. In addition, a permanency planning hearing is required within 30 days after the court has determined that reunification services for the family are no longer required. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the permanency hearing examines progress toward the permanency goal, changes to the goal, and timeframes for achieving permanency.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the *Timeliness of Dependency Case Processing in Washington 2009 Annual Report* contains findings related to the timeliness of conducting permanency hearings from 12 counties representing 43 percent of children in foster care in the State. The findings show that 80 percent of the cases met the 12-month standard during the period January 1, 2009, through August 31, 2009.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process expressed concerns about the effectiveness of permanency hearings in some courts due to insufficient court time scheduled for the hearings and full dockets. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that these participants indicated that the Court Improvement Training Academy provides training to judicial officers across the State. In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that these participants noted that the Academy and the Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Plan offer courts support for strategic planning, and programmatic and system change initiatives.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that permanency hearings occur every 12 months for children in foster care. Most stakeholders also reported that permanency hearings are used to examine whether the permanent plan for the child is appropriate and the steps that are required to achieve the plan.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that, although the State provides a process for TPR proceedings, this process is not effective in ensuring that TPR petitions are filed in accordance with the provisions of ASFA consistently. The Statewide Assessment reports that a TPR petition was filed in accordance with ASFA provisions in 62 percent of the cases during the period January 1, 2009, through August 31, 2009. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires that a referral for TPR must 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. At that time, a TPR petition must be filed unless there are compelling reasons not to file the petition. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the Attorney General's Office conducts an analysis of the circumstances of the case and determines whether the circumstances meet the legal requirements for TPR. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the revised standardized court form includes a paragraph requiring the court to state if compelling reasons exist to justify not filing a petition for TPR at the time a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the *Timeliness of Dependency Case Processing in Washington 2009 Annual Report* contains statewide findings related to the timeliness of filing TPR petitions in accordance with the provisions of ASFA. The findings show that a TPR petition was filed in accordance with ASFA provisions in 62 percent of the cases during the period January 1, 2009, through August 31, 2009. This figure excludes those cases that were exempt from ASFA requirements or in which compelling reasons for not filing TPR were documented.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that the 2009 Central Case Review found that in 75 percent of the cases reviewed a petition to file for TPR was filed if the child was in out-of-home placement for 15 of the most recent 22 months, or compelling reasons were documented in the current ISSP.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CA does not ensure that TPR petitions are filed in accordance with the provisions of ASFA consistently. Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that when there is a compelling reason not to file a TPR petition, that reason is documented in the case file consistently.

A key stakeholder reported that the court shall require the department or supervising agency to file a petition for TPR if the child has been in out-of-home care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State is inconsistent in practice with regard to providing notice to caregivers about hearings held concerning children in their care and providing caregivers with an opportunity to be heard in those hearings. The Statewide Assessment reports that 59.4 percent of the licensed caregivers said that they received notice of court hearings within 10 working days prior to the hearing —~~always~~” or ~~most~~ of the time.” This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State statute requires CA to provide foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers with notice of review hearings regarding a child in their care and that caregivers have an opportunity to be heard in any such hearing. The Statewide Assessment notes that a standardized caregiver report form has been developed for foster parents to provide input to the court in writing. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that the Administrative Office of the Courts developed a form for verification that CA provided notice to caregivers to facilitate tracking of this requirement. However, the Statewide Assessment indicates that this form is not used consistently.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, according to a 2009 Foster Parent Survey to which 1,307 licensed caregivers responded, 59.4 percent said that they received notice of court hearings within 10 working days prior to the hearing —~~always~~” or ~~most~~ of the time,” and 57.3 percent said that they were advised they would have the opportunity to be heard at the hearing —~~always~~.”

The Statewide Assessment reports that the 2009 Central Case Review found that 37 percent of caregivers were notified of the most recent court hearing within CA required timeframes. The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified inconsistency in practice with regard to notification to caregivers of hearings.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that, although notice is provided to some caregivers of hearings held with respect to the children in their care, this notice is not provided consistently and in a timely manner. In addition, most stakeholders indicated that although some caregivers are given the opportunity to be heard in hearings either in person or through the use of a written report, the agency and courts do not encourage participation consistently.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Status of Quality Assurance System

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance (QA) System. Washington also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under QA System are presented and discussed below.

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

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, practice standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health include the following:

- The CHET must be completed within 30 days and is shared with caregivers and social workers to use in placement decisions, case planning, and service delivery.
- The EPSDT is required to identify physical and/or mental health concerns.
- The Social Worker Monthly Health and Safety Visits identify issues of safety, well-being, and stability.

- The Fostering Well Being program was implemented in January 2010 and provides a cohesive set of health-related services and supports to children, including Regional Medical Consultants and the Passport Program, which is designed to coordinate and improve access.
- Monthly supervisor case reviews ensure that appropriate and timely delivery of services to children in foster care is occurring and that any safety concerns are addressed.
- The DLR conducts health and safety inspections of all facilities and 10 percent of foster homes on an annual basis.
- Evidence-Based/Promising Programs include the following: SBC, Promoting First Relationships, Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), Incredible Years, Project SafeCare, Functional Family Therapy, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, Aggression Re-Placement Therapy, Project Keep, and Homebuilders.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Various stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR identified the same activities used to monitor the safety and health of children in foster care that were reported in the Statewide Assessment.

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. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State is operating a QA system to evaluate the quality of services, identify strengths and needs, provide relevant reports, and evaluate improvement plans. At the time of the Onsite Review, the State was in the process of restructuring the QA process to improve QA functions. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Central Case Review provides a consistent measurement of the CFSR outcomes for safety, permanency, and well-being. The Central Case Review is conducted in each of the State’s 46 field offices every 18 to 24 months and includes a sample of cases from all program areas. The Statewide Assessment indicates that special reviews are conducted by the Central Case Review when required by legislative mandate or at the request of agency management to review specific offices or programs for which there is an identified need for evaluation.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the Central Case Review provides direct feedback to social workers, supervisors, and management on all cases reviewed and identifies practice trends, clarifies policy and practice, and provides recommendations for improvement. The Central Case Review concludes with the development of localized practice improvement strategies, goals, and action plans that are subsequently tracked.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following additional QA efforts:

- The ICW Case Reviews assess CA compliance with ICWA and the quality of practice for Native American children.
- The Partners for Our Children program at the University of Washington School of Social Work evaluates the impact of the SBC practice model and develops training curricula relevant to implementing the model.
- In early 2010, the requirements of the Braam Settlement Agreement were incorporated into ongoing implementation, quality assurance, and practice improvement activities.
- The GMAP initiative monitors performance in the area of intake response times.
- The Quality Practice Improvement Team (QPIT) is a unified QA and accountability team designed to communicate expectations, track, monitor, and analyze program performance and service delivery.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the results of the Central Case Review and the ICW Case Review inform policy, practice, and training decisions. The Statewide Assessment also reports that the QPIT is in the process of analyzing data from multiple sources identify practice trends and make recommendations to management regarding practice improvement.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State conducts the Central Case Review in each region on a regular basis to review a sample of cases using a process similar to the CFSR. Several stakeholders noted that the Central Case Review culminates in the development of an improvement plan that the Regional Administrator monitors.

In addition, various stakeholders identified the following QA activities:

- Monthly supervisory reviews of every case
- Regular ICW Case Reviews

However, a few stakeholders stated that Central Case Review data are not used to inform policy, training, and program development.

IV. STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

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

Status of Staff and Provider Training

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. Washington was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- Although ongoing training opportunities were made available to staff, ongoing training was not mandated, and some social workers and supervisors did not participate in the training.
- Although there was high-quality, mandatory initial training for foster parents, there was no requirement that foster parents participate in ongoing training, and many foster parents did not participate in ongoing training.

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

- Implemented the Mandatory Training Policy that required all agency social workers to complete 20 hours of ongoing training annually
- Implemented a requirement for all agency social workers hired after January 1, 2005, to attend 8 additional days of mandatory specialized training appropriate to their caseload or program area within the first 2 years of hire
- Implemented a requirement for all licensed family foster homes to complete 36 hours of ongoing training during each 3-year licensing period

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Staff and Provider Training are presented and discussed below.

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

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

Item 32 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State is operating a staff development and training program for social workers that addresses the child welfare policies and practice outlined in the CFSP. The State tracks whether new social workers complete initial training. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all new social work staff must initiate participation in mandatory Social Worker Academy training within 15 days of hire. The Statewide Assessment reports that Academy sessions are conducted monthly and contain 134 hours of training over a period of 4 weeks. New caseworkers also must complete a field training component. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that all newly hired intake, adoptions, DLR-Licensing, DLR-CPS, and FRS social workers are required to attend 40 hours of specialized training in their program areas.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that social workers evaluate the effectiveness of the training via class evaluations and follow-up e-mails and that the training consistently scores above 4.5 on a 5.0-point scale. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that new social workers cannot be assigned case-carrying responsibilities until successful completion of the 4-week Academy program. All mandatory training requirements are tracked by the Aspen Learning Management System (LMS). LMS notifies employees and their supervisors when a staff member has not completed a required training and when the next session will be held. However, at the time of the Statewide Assessment, LMS did not provide information with regard to the percentage of staff meeting training requirements.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Various stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR identified the following aspects of the State's initial training program:

- The State requires 134 hours of Academy training and 40 hours of specialized training.
- LMS tracks participation in Academy and specialized training.
- SBC principles are infused into the curriculum.
- Social workers do not carry caseloads until initial training is complete, although they may co-manage cases with a fully trained social worker.
- Academy training is offered in sufficient quantity and with sufficient frequency.

Some stakeholders noted that the Academy provides effective training. However, other stakeholders noted that the Academy training is not effective in preparing social workers for their jobs. Various stakeholders identified the following shortcomings of the initial training program for new social workers:

- The Academy training is too general or theoretical and not practical enough.
- The Academy does not provide enough information for the specific job.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State provides ongoing training for social workers and supervisors that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP. The State tracks whether social workers and supervisors complete ongoing training requirements. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all social workers are required to complete 20 hours of ongoing training on an annual basis by participating in the following opportunities: conferences and specialized training in child welfare issues, CA Post-Academy training, CA ongoing classes, and certification programs or other training opportunities that have been approved by their supervisors. In addition, all social workers hired after January 1, 2005, must complete 8.5 days of mandatory training within their first 2 years of hire in the following subject areas: ICW, substance abuse, caseworker safety, neglect, teaming with foster parents, and permanency planning. CPS social workers are required to attend specialized investigation and interviewing training. The Statewide Assessment notes that ongoing training is made available in all offices and in central locations. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the State offers a title IV-E stipend program for social workers to obtain a master's degree in social work.

The Statewide Assessment notes that supervisors must attend a 3-week Supervisors Academy, which is conducted twice a year for new and current CA supervisors. In addition, there is supervisory training provided by both DSHS and the Division of Human Resources. The Supervisors Academy training includes clinical supervision, core functions for supervisors, personnel issues, and SBC.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that supervisors are required to review training records during annual staff evaluations and use that information to create a Performance Development Plan for each social worker. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that LMS tracks staff participation in ongoing training but does not provide data on the percentage of staff meeting the requirements for ongoing training.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Several stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State requires 20 hours of annual ongoing training for social workers. However, other stakeholders expressed confusion as to the number of ongoing training hours required and whether ongoing training was mandatory. Some stakeholders indicated that ongoing training is offered in sufficient quantity and with sufficient frequency and that LMS tracks participation in ongoing training.

Several stakeholders noted that ongoing training is effective in developing the skills needed to perform the job. However, other stakeholders indicated that social workers do not have time to attend training sessions due to the high day-to-day demands of the job.

Some stakeholders indicated that supervisors are required to participate in the Supervisors Academy and that supervisors identify the training needs of their staff.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State provides initial training for prospective foster and adoptive parents and staff of licensed facilities. In addition, the State requires foster parents to complete ongoing training to maintain licensure. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, 27 hours of mandatory prelicensing training are required for all prospective licensed caregivers and that all foster and adoptive parents complete preservice training prior to licensing. The Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) curriculum is used for the prelicensing training and is offered to unlicensed relatives. The Statewide Assessment notes that the Resource Family Training Institute provides training locally in each region at least monthly and that training is offered at times that are convenient for caregivers. The Statewide Assessment reports that group care staff are required to comply with training requirements outlined in the Washington Administrative Code.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that all licensed foster parents, including licensed relative foster parents, are required to complete 36 hours of continuing education (in-service training) during each 3-year licensing period. The Statewide Assessment notes that additional specialized training is required for families providing therapeutic care. The Statewide Assessment also notes that DLR is responsible for monitoring compliance with ongoing training requirements. However, data with regard to the percentage of foster parents completing ongoing training requirements are not available.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that initial training is required and provided using the PRIDE curriculum. In addition, most stakeholders indicated that ongoing training is required. A few stakeholders also noted that State training is available to unlicensed foster families and foster families licensed by Tribes.

However, stakeholders expressed different opinions regarding the effectiveness of the training provided to foster parents and other caregivers. Some stakeholders indicated ongoing training is of high quality and relevance to foster parenting. Other stakeholders, however, indicated that a wider variety of topics is needed for ongoing training opportunities.

In addition, although some stakeholders indicated that there is sufficient access to ongoing training opportunities, a few State-level and Whatcom County stakeholders indicated that there is limited or no childcare available to support families when they attend training.

V. SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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

Status of Service Array and Resource Development

Washington is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State had critical gaps in its service array, particularly in the areas of mental health services and substance abuse treatment, and had an insufficient pool of foster homes.
- Services were not consistently accessible to children and families on a statewide basis. Rural areas lacked specialized services, had limited choices, and experienced chronic shortages.
- Services were not consistently individualized to meet cultural, language, and other unique needs of families and children.

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

- Established Chemical Dependency Counselors in local agency offices to help screen and support families through the substance abuse assessment and treatment process
- Introduced Evidence Based Practices including Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care and Functional Family Therapy
- Implemented foster parent recruitment and retention services contracts to increase the pool of foster homes
- Conducted a formal contract review process to maximize resources and support better outcomes
- Developed the Cultural Competency Self-Assessment Tool for contracted service providers to determine and improve their level of cultural responsiveness
- Utilized Shared Planning Meetings to support the development of individualized services to meet unique needs of children and families

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Service Array and Resource Development are presented and discussed below.

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

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has an adequate array of services to assess the strengths and address the needs of children and families. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, The CA provides services to children and their families in the following general areas:

- CPS including investigations, and risk and safety assessment
- In-home family preservation services and supports including FVS, CFWS, EFSS, FPS, IFPS, Homebuilders, and home-based services
- Out-of-home placement services including foster care placement and supportive services, treatment foster care, crisis residential centers, the Children's Hospital Alternative Program, supervised visitation, and the Relative Guardianship Assistance Program
- Foster care licensure, foster home monitoring, and abuse and neglect investigation in foster homes and facilities
- Adoption services including funding for post-adoption services for children with special needs
- Family support services including BRS, childcare, functional family therapy, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Promoting First Relationships, and Triple P
- Supports for older youth, including IL, FRS, the Responsible Living Skills Program, and Transitional Living Services
- Targeted services including domestic violence treatment, Nurse-Family Partnerships, Aggression Replacement Training, Project SafeCare, ICW, ICPC, Medicaid, CHET, educational advocacy, and the Education and Training Voucher Program

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has an adequate array of services to assess the strengths and address the needs of children and families.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the service array is not accessible to families and children statewide. There are insufficient services in key areas such as mental health and substance abuse treatment. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CA worked with communities to identify service gaps and secure resources for children in foster care. The Statewide Assessment indicates that updates and memos are provided to social workers to inform them about the services available statewide and on a regional basis. The Statewide Assessment reports that the following service areas have expanded available services throughout the State: adolescent services, health and education services, maintaining family connections, trauma treatment, home-based services, IFPS, and FPS.

However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that access to services in rural areas is a challenge. In addition, participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified the following concerns:

- Services are not consistently accessible to children and families statewide.
- Necessary services are not accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions in the State, and some Tribes experience difficulty accessing State services for the families they serve.
- There is no adequate inventory of available services statewide to identify service type and location of service gaps.
- There are gaps and delays in services that negatively impact transitioning children back home and the provision of support for families post-adoption and postdependency.
- There is a lack of community-based placement resources and placement resources for youth in some communities.
- There is a lack of direct services and supports for fathers.
- There are concerns about equitable access to services for relative placements.
- There is an inadequate number of dental providers who accept Medicaid in certain areas of the State.
- There is difficulty in accessing mental health services for children and families, especially in rural areas.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that despite the lack of some services in some parts of the State, families are able to get the services they need most of the time. Various stakeholders identified the following concerns:

- Stakeholders from all sites noted that there is a lack of sufficient and appropriate mental health assessment and treatment services for parents and children, psychological evaluations for children, and inpatient and outpatient substance abuse treatment services for both parents and children.

- Stakeholders from all sites noted that there is a lack of transportation support and services to assist families in accessing available services.
- Stakeholders from all sites noted that there is an insufficient quantity of housing services, foster homes, treatment foster homes, and foster homes specifically for youth.
- Stakeholders from all sites noted that there is a lack of transition services and housing for youth transitioning out of foster care.
- Stakeholders from all sites noted that there is a lack of funding for services outlined in the case plans, particularly when families do not meet program eligibility requirements.
- State-level, King County, and Whatcom County stakeholders noted that there is a lack of sufficient domestic violence treatment services for men and batterers.
- King County and Whatcom County stakeholders noted that there are insufficient services for both custodial and noncustodial fathers.
- King County and Whatcom County stakeholders noted that there is a lack of sufficient visitation support services.
- State-level stakeholders noted that there are insufficient veteran parent advocate funds to support the program to the extent it is needed.

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

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

Item 37 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that, although the State uses assessments and practices that can result in individualized service plans, the State does not individualize services consistently to meet the unique needs of children and families. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the primary tools used to individualize services to meet the unique needs of children and families are FTDM, Shared Planning Meetings, GAIN for substance abuse treatment, the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment for IL services, SBC, and the development of evidence-based practices.

The Statewide Assessment notes that requests can be made for funds to meet special needs for furniture, clothing, and similar needs. However, the Statewide Assessment reports that the ability to use discretionary funds or to access other services to address practical issues facing the family, such as a lack of housing, is limited. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, action plans often reflect what is possible or usual, and not necessarily what an individual family needs most acutely.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that CA engages in culturally competent and antiracist training for all staff. However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that participants in focus groups convened for the Statewide Assessment process identified a lack

of cultural awareness and cultural competence among the providers working with families. In addition, there is a need for Spanish-speaking providers and interpreters, particularly in rural areas.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State does not individualize services consistently to meet the unique needs of children and families. Although many Whatcom County stakeholders indicated that services are individualized, several other stakeholders in Whatcom County and in the other sites raised the following concerns with regard to individualizing services to meet the unique needs of families:

- Many services do not demonstrate cultural competency.
- Many services are not offered in the language appropriate for the family, particularly with regard to families that speak Spanish.
- Many service plans incorporate a standard set of services for families regardless of the individual needs of the family.

VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Washington also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that key stakeholders are engaged in developing the goals and objectives of the CFSP, including courts, community partners, advocacy groups, youth, foster parents, birth parent groups, advisory groups, legislative partners, and Tribal advisory groups. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, input into the CFSP is gathered from the following groups as part of an ongoing community consultation process:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Statewide Planning Committee | Children, Youth, and Family Services Advisory Committee |
| Indian Policy Advisory Committee | Children’s Justice Advisory Board |
| Foster Youth Advisory Board | Family Policy Council Interagency Coordinating Committee |
| Partners for Our Children | Governor’s Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee |
| Children and Families of Incarcerated Parents | Governor’s Office on Indian Affairs |
| Statewide and Regional Foster Parent 1624 Workgroup | Foster Care Advisory Committee |
| Collaboration Forums | Foster Care Citizen Review Board Advisory Committee |
| Birth to Six Interagency Coordinating Council | CIP Advisory Committee. |
| Child Fatality Committee | |

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State seeks input from key stakeholders in developing the goals and objectives of the CFSP and identified stakeholders similar to those listed in the Statewide Assessment. Several stakeholders indicated that agency efforts to consult with Tribal representatives have increased in recent years.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State develops the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) in consultation with key stakeholders. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA solicits input on specific topics as they relate to the APSR from the same entities that are consulted for the CFSP. In addition, for the APSR, input is solicited from:

- Passion to Action (a youth advisory committee)

- Statewide Quality Assurance Team
- Braam Settlement Agreement
- Foster Parents Association of Washington
- Committee for Transforming Child Welfare
- University of Washington School of Social Work and Eastern Washington School of Social Work Statewide Education Committee
- Casey Family Program and Annie E. Casey Foundation
- National Resource Centers
- Catalyst for Kids program
- Superior Court Judges Association (subcommittee for children and families)
- Veteran Birth Parents Advocacy Committee
- Provider groups
- Private agencies

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State develops the APSRs in consultation with the key stakeholders listed in item 38 above. Some stakeholders indicated that Tribal representatives are consulted in the development of the APSR.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State’s services described under the CFSP are coordinated with the services of other Federal and Federally-assisted programs such as financial assistance programs, developmental disabilities programs, juvenile justice programs, Medicaid, and Tribal programs. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CA coordinates services with services of other Federal and Federally-assisted programs serving the same population through the following partnerships:

- CA collaborates with the Economic Services Administration (ESA), the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA), the Division of Developmental Disabilities, and the Division of Behavioral Health.
- CA coordinated policy development with ESA to ensure that families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits can maintain eligibility for their cash benefits for up to 180 days when their children are removed and placed in out-of-home care.

- CA has a partnership with JRA to increase cross-system collaboration.
- OSPI has designated staff to work with CA on foster care issues, and 182 of the State’s 295 school districts have entered into local agreements with CA. In addition, Education Summits have been held across the State.
- Regional Medical Consultants from MPA are located in the regional offices to provide consultation around medical needs.
- CA coordinates services with the Health Resources and Services Administration and OSPI to support the health and education needs of children in foster care.

The Statewide Assessment notes that CA is working toward further improving coordination of services with programs providing TANF, food assistance, Medicaid, WorkFirst, Social Security, childcare, and housing assistance.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Various stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State coordinates services under the CFSP with services of the following programs: TANF, developmental disabilities, juvenile justice, health, mental health, Medicaid, Tribal programs, and the courts.

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

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

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

Washington is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Washington also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has licensing standards for foster homes and childcare institutions that include training, home studies, background checks, and health and safety checks. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, general foster home licensing requirements include the following: age 21, tuberculosis testing, background clearance, CPR training, first aid training, HIV/AIDS training, approved home study, facility check, health and safety certificate of compliance from the Department of Health and Fire Marshall for group care facilities and staffed residential homes licensed for six children, and preservice training. The Statewide Assessment notes that private agency foster homes are certified by their agencies and monitored by regional licensors. In addition, the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe operates a child welfare program pursuant to a title IV-E agreement with the State and licenses its own homes using Tribal licensing standards.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the licensing process is expected to be completed within a 90-day period and that FamLink ensures that a license is approved prior to the family receiving payment.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that all foster homes, group residential facilities, and child-placing agencies are relicensed every 3 years. In addition, at least 10 percent of licensed resource homes must be monitored annually to determine whether the level of safety and compliance with requirements are still being met. The Statewide Assessment reports that CA has exceeded the requirement of 10 percent for the past 5 years and monitored 16.4 percent of foster homes in FY 2009.

The Statewide Assessment notes that DLR provides for State-licensed foster homes to conduct an annual voluntary self-assessment, which provides an opportunity for the foster family to engage DLR between licensing periods to ensure that licensing standards continue to be met, to assess the needs of the foster home, and to provide the family with additional support.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that State statute allows relatives and “stable others” to receive placement of a child without obtaining a license or receiving title IV-E funds. In these cases, a background clearance and home study are required.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has licensing standards for foster homes and congregate care facilities that include training, home studies, background checks, and health and safety checks. A few stakeholders noted that licenses must be reissued every 3 years. These stakeholders noted that, if a home is found to be out of

compliance with relicensing requirements due to a safety concern, the home is placed on a compliance plan, during which time no child is placed in the home.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State ensures that licensing standards are applied equally to all licensed homes and facilities. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

The State passed the title IV-E eligibility review conducted in September 2007 with regard to licensing procedures.

Statewide Assessment

According to the Statewide Assessment, licensing requirements are the same for all licensed foster homes and apply to private-agency and State-licensed foster homes. The Statewide Assessment notes that an initial license may be issued, instead of a full license, to a home or facility for a period of time not to exceed 6 months, to allow the family or facility a reasonable time to meet all requirements and become fully licensed. During the initial licensing period these placements are not eligible for title IV-E reimbursements. The Statewide Assessment also notes that a probationary license is issued as part of a disciplinary action to an individual or agency that has previously been issued a full license but is out of compliance with minimum licensing requirements and has entered into an agreement aimed at correcting deficiencies.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the administrative approval of the Assistant Secretary is required for waivers for a criminal history of disqualifying crimes per Federal requirements and of crimes on the 5-year Secretary’s list (less than 5 years since conviction). The most common reasons for requesting a licensing waiver include income requirements, space requirements, and requests to increase the number of children allowed in a home in order to place siblings together. The Statewide Assessment notes that DLR tracks all waivers and administrative approvals at the regional level.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally ensures that licensing standards are applied equally to all licensed homes and facilities, including licensed relative homes. Some stakeholders indicated that administrative approvals are granted, usually to relatives or “suitable others,” to waive licensing requirements with regard to space, capacity, income, and any criminal history that either is old or not relevant to licensing.

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. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State completes criminal background clearances in licensing foster and adoptive placements consistent with the Federal requirements. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

The State passed the title IV-E eligibility review conducted in September 2007 with regard to criminal background clearance procedures.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, applicants requesting a license, certification, or a position as an employee, volunteer, intern, or contractor in a foster home, group care facility, staffed residential home, or child-placing agency must clear a background check prior to having unsupervised access to children. The Statewide Assessment reports that CA complies with the requirements of the Adam Walsh Act and requires Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint checks for all new licensed caregivers, as well as birth and adoptive children age 18 and older living in the home. The Statewide Assessment notes that group care staff must obtain fingerprint clearance prior to unsupervised contact only if they have lived outside of the State during the past 3 years. The Statewide Assessment reports that background clearances should be completed within the 90-day licensing process.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that, in emergent circumstances that do not allow for a national fingerprint check to be completed prior to placement, authorized staff may process requests from social workers to get immediate criminal history data from the National Crime Information Center database prior to placing a child with unlicensed individuals.

The Statewide Assessment notes that foster parents and group care staff must submit to a background check at the time of renewal every 3 years but do not need to resubmit a fingerprint-based clearance at the time of renewal as long as there remains no break in service.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the FBI rejects roughly 4 percent to 8 percent of fingerprint-based clearance checks, resulting in delays in the licensing process.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State conducts criminal background checks of all adults living in the prospective foster or adoptive home or staff in the residential facility. Some stakeholders noted that

fingerprints are required of prospective foster and adoptive parents, but not of residential facility staff. A few stakeholders noted that there are delays in obtaining the results of fingerprint clearances.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has a process for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom homes are needed. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CA provides region-based contracts for general, child-specific, and targeted recruitment and retention. These contracts require that contractors hire staff who are either current or former foster parents to assist in the recruitment and retention of foster parents. In addition, the Statewide Assessment identifies the following recruitment and retention activities:

- The Family-to-Family program provides recruitment with an emphasis on “neighborhoods of focus,” including neighborhoods with the highest removal rate of children and often the fewest number of foster homes or other placement resources. Often, the very neighborhoods with the highest rates of African-American and Native American families are those experiencing the highest removal and placement rates.
- The Mockingbird Society is a private organization that strives to develop community-based caregivers in communities where children are removed.
- More than 50 contracted Recruitment and Retention Specialists are in place.
- Foster parent “hubs” promote retention of foster parents by supporting foster parents after they have been licensed.

The Statewide Assessment notes that statewide data regarding the racial and ethnic breakdown of licensed homes are not easily accessible through FamLink at this time.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has a process to contract with local agencies to conduct general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment activities. Several stakeholders noted that there are regional recruitment plans, developed using database information, that target communities that represent the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care. A few stakeholders indicated that foster parent “hubs” and support groups are effective in recruiting and retaining foster families in particular neighborhoods. Some stakeholders indicated that there are efforts in place to recruit Native American homes. A few King County stakeholders noted that there are efforts in place to recruit homes from immigrant communities.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has a process in place for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely permanent placements for waiting children. This item also was rated as a Strength in Washington’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CA pursues the following strategies to support the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children:

- Specialized Adoption Recruitment Program
- Family-to-Family and Building Community Partnerships
- Northwest Resource Associates, Northwest Adoption Exchange, and Washington Adoption Resource Exchange
- Families Like Ours
- AdoptUSKids
- ICPC
- ICWA

The Statewide Assessment notes that a specialized ICPC training module was developed and implemented for the Social Worker Academy. The Statewide Assessment notes that the Specialized Adoption Recruitment Program provides child-specific recruitment for more than 60 children per year.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Various stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State uses the following resources to support the permanent placement of waiting children: ICPC, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids, and Wednesday’s Child. A key stakeholder reported that a border agreement was developed with the State of Oregon to facilitate placements for children with relatives across State lines.