



CFSR Self-Assessment Review and Narrative

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

P.O. BOX 346

JACKSON, MS 39205

COMMISSIONER JESS H. DICKINSON

Statewide Assessment Instrument

Section 1 – General Information

Name of State Agency
Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services P.O. Box 346 Jackson, MS 39205
Period Under Review
Onsite Review Sample Period: October 1, 2017 – September 23, 2018
Period of AFCARS Data: 2017A, 2017B
Period of NCANDS Data (or other approved source; please specify if alternative data source is used): FFY 2016
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Statewide Assessment Participants:

Provide the names and affiliations of the individuals who participated in the statewide assessment process; please also note their roles in the process.

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[Data profile removed in its entirety.]

NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY OUTCOMES

Since September 2017, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services' Evaluation and Monitoring Unit has conducted regional baseline case reviews utilizing the federal On-Site Review Instrument (OSRI). Data provided in this CFSR Self-Assessment provided from the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (EMU) items is indicative of cases reviewed between September 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018.

To-date, the regional reviews utilizing the OSRI have been conducted in the following MDCPS regions:

- 3-South (includes 2018 CFSR site Hinds County)
- 4-South
- 3-North
- 4-North
- 5-East
- 7-Central (includes 2018 2018 CFSR site Harrison County)
- 1-South (includes 2018 CFSR sites Pontotoc County and Union County)
- 2-West
- 5-West
- 7-East

Comparable reviews have not yet been conducted in the following MDCPS regions:

- 1-North
- 2-East
- 6
- 7-West

In the regions thus far reviewed, the case reviews included 14 foster care and 28 in-home case types (42 total cases). The use of the Evaluation and Monitoring automated review tool that had been in use from June 2010 to March 2017 was discontinued. Data from the Evaluation and Monitoring instrument is included below but will not be used to determine improvements due to the differences in the two instruments. Instead, the information from the Evaluation and Monitoring instrument will be used to reflect indications of progress in case practice. Data reports from the Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System (MACWIS) are referenced for all items where available. The MACWIS reports represent statewide data.

The following Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) outcomes are addressed below:

- **Safety Outcome 1:** Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect;
- **Safety Outcome 2:** Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate;
- **Permanency Outcome 1:** Children have permanency and stability in their living situations;
- **Permanency Outcome 2:** The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children;
- **Well-Being Outcome 1:** Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs;
- **Well-Being Outcome 2:** Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs;
- **Well-Being Outcome 3:** Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

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

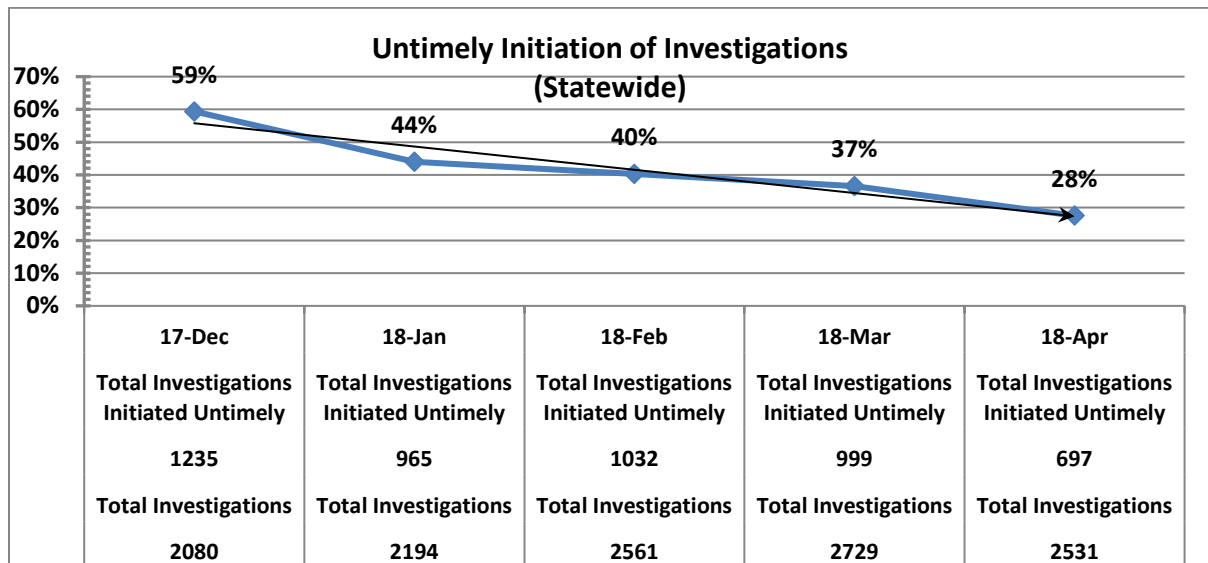
Case review data from September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, utilizing the federal OSRI shows 66.07% of the cases reviewed rated “Substantially Achieved” for Safety Outcome 1.

Item 1: Were the agency’s responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports initiated, and face-to-face contact with the child(ren) made, within time frames established by agency policies or state statutes?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data, MACWIS data, and the state’s data profile indicate an area needing improvement is the area of initiating reports of child maltreatment. In March 2018, the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit began a targeted review of investigations not initiated timely since December 2017.

The chart below reflects the trends in initiation since that time:



Common areas noted as reasons for delay in initiation of investigations as a result of these reviews are:

- A lack of understanding of investigation initiation policy and the required timeframes;
- Reports of abuse/neglect/exploitation not being screened-in in an appropriate amount of time to effect timely initiation;
- Data entry errors such as caseworkers not entering the names of the victims in the participants’ box;
- Not appropriately documenting attempted contacts in a timely manner (or at all).

The chart above does show that investigations initiated untimely are on a downward trend. This is attributable to Field Staff making a concerted effort to monitor their investigation timeliness more closely and keep this issue in the forefront for continued improvement.

Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment: For September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, case review data utilizing the On-Site Review Instrument reflects the following regarding all cases reviewed, foster care cases, and in-home cases:

Item 1	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	66.07% (n=148)	33.93% (n=76)	n=196
Foster Care (FC)	64.62% (n=42)	35.38% (n=23)	n=75
In-Home (IH)	66.67% (n=106)	33.33% (n=53)	n=122

Strength indicates the investigations into the reports of maltreatment were initiated in accordance with MDCPS timeframes and requirements for a report of that priority and that face-to-face contact with the child(ren) who are the subject of the report was made in accordance with the State’s timeframes and requirements for a report of that priority.

Reasons for delays in initiation of investigations or assessments and/or face-to-face contact were due to circumstances beyond the control of the agency in 13 of 66 (19.7%) applicable cases. Case review data from September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, reflects that two (2) of the 25 applicable foster care cases (8%) had delays in initiation due to circumstances beyond the agency’s control while 13 of the 66 applicable cases (19.7%) were due to delays beyond the control of the agency.

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool reflects 64.94% of 271 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017. Further, 75.65% of 115 applicable cases rated a “Strength” during the previous fiscal year (July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016).

Item 1 Report Data Response:

- **Report MWZ1272C: All Children in Open ANE Investigations (Combined Levels Summary):** For the month of May 2018, 88.2% of intakes were initiated timely.
- **Report SZ1271: Timeliness of Investigations for Custody Children:**
 - 05/01/2018 to 05/31/2018: 91.67% of the investigations of maltreatment in care were initiated timely statewide.

-- 04/01/2017 to 04/30/2017: 95.45% of investigations of maltreatment were initiated timely statewide.

Currently, MDCPS shows a slight decrease in performance for this measure compared to the data collected in the previous year. All Regional Directors have instructed investigation workers to initiate all reports within 24 hours, regardless of priority level. In addition to this, workers have been reminded to be mindful of investigations which are received on or around the dates of Data Extraction as this, too, can lead to investigations not being captured as timely.

- Regarding maltreatment in care, Mississippi's data profile for 15AB, FY15 shows 13.5 victimizations per 100,000 days in care against a National Performance of 9.67 and a recurrence of maltreatment of 12.5% for FY15-16 against a National Performance of 9.5%. These data indicators show a need for improvement in this area for the state.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Case review data from September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, utilizing the federal OSRI shows 60.71% of the cases reviewed rated "Substantially Achieved" for Safety Outcome 2.

Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Foster Care

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data and the state's data profile indicate a "Strength" for the area of providing services to families to protect children in the home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care.

September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, case review data utilizing the On-Site Review Instrument reflects the following regarding 1) all cases reviewed, 2) foster care cases, and 3) in-home cases:

Item 2	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	73.63% (n=134)	26.37% (n=48)	n=182
Foster Care (FC)	89.29% (n=25)	10.71% (n=3)	n=28
In-Home (IH)	70.78% (n=109)	29.22% (n=45)	n=154

This item looks at concerted efforts to provide or arrange for appropriate services to the family to protect children and prevent their entry into foster care or re-entry into foster care after a reunification and, when removal was necessary to ensure the child’s safety, to determine whether the child was removed without first providing or arranging for services. The agency performance on this measure is similar to that of the past years’ performance although the review instruments used to collect this information have variances from one another. This performance can be attributed to the timeliness with which services are provided, and in the provision of services overall.

Further analysis of the elements within this item reflect the following:

- MDCPS made concerted efforts to provide or arrange for appropriate services for the family to protect the children and prevent their entry or re-entry into foster care in 4.4% (8) of 182 applicable cases overall, in 28.57% (8) of 28 applicable foster care cases, and in 0% (0) of 154 applicable in-home cases;
- Although the agency did not make concerted efforts to provide or arrange for appropriate services for the family to protect the children and prevent their entry into foster care, the child(ren) was removed from the home because this action was necessary to ensure the child’s safety in 4.95% (9) of 182 overall applicable cases, 32.14% (9) of 28 applicable foster care cases, and in 0% (0) of 154 applicable in-home cases.
- Concerted efforts were not made to provide appropriate safety-related services and the child(ren) remaining in the home in 24.73% (45) of 182 overall applicable cases, in 0% (0) of 28 applicable cases, and in 29.22% (45) of 154 applicable cases.

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool reflects for July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, that 79.29% of 338 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” Further, 72.97% of 185 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for federal fiscal year 2016.

Item 2 Report Data Response:

- Mississippi’s data profile for 15A/15B reflects a foster care re-entry rate of 4.6% against a National Performance of 8.1%. This data indicator reflects a “Strength” in this area for the state.

Item 3: Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the children in their own homes or while in foster care?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data reflects an area needing improvement for timely initial and on-going assessment for safety and risk. This is (primarily) due to the agency not conducting ongoing assessments in the in-home cases that accurately assessed all risk and safety concerns and, when safety and risk were evident, not developing safety plans to adequately address these issues with the family and continually monitor the safety plan as needed, including monitoring family engagement in safety-related services. Safety concerns pertaining to children in the family home were not always adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency.

Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management: September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018, 62.38% of the 420 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for this item.

Item 3	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	62.38% (n=262)	37.62% (n=158)	n=420
Foster Care (FC)	76.43% (n=107)	23.57% (n=33)	n=140
In-Home (IH)	55.52% (n=156)	44.48% (n=125)	n=281

A “Strength” rating indicates that safety and risk were assessed timely initially and on an on-going basis throughout the review period. The agency performance in this measure utilizing the OSRI is similar to (although slightly lower than) the previous years’

performance in the same measure which utilized the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool. Risk assessments are qualitatively assessed by reviewers for their timeliness and content, as well as a determination whether ongoing assessments (either formal or informal) were made during the review period. In this reporting year, ongoing assessments were generally done informally, as was the case during prior years.

Further analysis of the elements within this item reflects the following:

Practice Description	Overall Performance	Foster Care Performance	In-Home Performance
There were no maltreatment allegations about the family that were never formally reported or formally investigated/assessed.	97.38% (409) of 420 applicable cases	99.29% (139) of 140 applicable cases	96.44% (271) of 281 applicable cases
There were no maltreatment allegations that were not substantiated despite evidence that would support substantiation.	97.86% (411) of 420 applicable cases	99.29% (139) of 140 applicable cases	97.15% (273) of 281 applicable cases
The agency conducted an initial assessment that accurately assessed all risk and safety concerns.	83.09% (172) of 207 applicable cases	82.93% (34) of 41 applicable cases	83.13% (138) of 166 applicable cases
The agency conducted ongoing assessments that accurately assessed all risk and safety concerns.	68.27% (284) of 416 applicable cases	84.29% (118) of 140 applicable cases	60.29% (167) of 277 applicable cases
When safety concerns were present, the agency developed an appropriate safety plan with the family and continually monitored the safety plan as needed, including monitoring family engagement in safety-related services.	73.13% (117) of 160 applicable cases	87.88% (29) of 33 applicable cases	69.29% (88) of 127 applicable cases

Practice Description	Overall Performance	Foster Care Performance	In-Home Performance
There were no safety concerns pertaining to children in the family home that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency.	72.41% (105) of 145 applicable cases	87.5% (35) of 40 applicable cases	66.67% (70) of 105 applicable cases
There were no concerns related to the safety of the target child in foster care during visitation with parent(s)/caretaker(s) or other family members that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency.	96.58% (113) of 117 applicable cases	96.58% (113) of 117 applicable cases	0 applicable cases
There were no concerns for the target child's safety in the foster home or placement facility that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency.	99.28% (138) of 139 applicable cases	99.29% (139) of 140 applicable cases	0 applicable cases

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool reflects for July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, that 66.45% of 462 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” For July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016, 66.35% of 312 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

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

Case review data from September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, utilizing the federal OSRI shows 32.37% of the cases reviewed rated “Substantially Achieved” for Permanency Outcome 1.

Item 4: Is the child in foster care in a stable placement and were any changes in the child’s placement in the best interests of the child and consistent with achieving the child’s permanency goal(s)?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data reflects this is a “Strength” for the state in that children are remaining in the same least restrictive placement during their episodes in foster care or, if there was more than one placement, all placement changes during the review period were planned by the agency in an effort to achieve the child’s case plan goals or made in an effort to meet the identified needs of the child. The agency’s efforts to place children with relatives have contributed to the success of this item. Also, improved efforts to have family team meetings to discuss means to maintain the child in a home that could be at-risk for disruption have shown to be beneficial in promoting the stability of foster care placements. However, Mississippi’s data profile for 17A/17B reflects a performance of 4.90 moves which is slightly above the National Performance of 4.44 moves for Placement Stability and represents an area needing improvement.

Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement:

Item 4	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	87.77% (n=122)	12.23% (n=17)	n=139
Foster Care (FC)	87.86% (n=123)	12.14% (n=17)	n=140
In-Home (IH)	n/a	n/a	n/a

For September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, data shows 87.77% of the 139 overall applicable cases rated a “Strength” for this item. The case review data from the September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, period is similar to previous years’ performance and could be an indication of a consistency in practice. A “Strength” indicates if there was more than one placement, all placement changes during the review period were planned by the agency in an effort to achieve the child’s case plan goals or made in an effort to meet the needs of the child, the child’s placement is stable, the child placement meets their needs for therapeutic, educational, and medical needs if they have been assessed with special needs, and the child’s placement is least restrictive.

During the September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, case reviews, it was found that placement changes for the child were planned by the agency in an effort to achieve the child’s case goals or to meet the needs of the child in 80.77% of 52 applicable cases. It

was found in 93.53% of the 139 applicable cases that the target child's current or most recent placement is stable.

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool reflects for July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017: 89.24% of 251 applicable cases rated a strength. The percentage for the reporting period of July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016 reflects 88.46% of 182 applicable cases.

Item 4 Report Data Response:

- Mississippi's data profile for 17A/17B reflects a performance of 4.90 moves which is slightly above the National Performance of 4.44 moves for Placement Stability.

Item 5: Did the agency establish appropriate permanency goals for the child in a timely manner?

RESPONSE:

Overall: These data indicators appear consistent with the September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, case review data and may represent a "Strength" in the area of the timely development of appropriate permanency goals for children. Children in applicable cases were found to have permanency goals established in a timely manner that were appropriate to the child's needs for permanency and to the circumstances of the case. The MACWIS data indicators are consistent with the September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, case review data and may represent a strength in the area of the timely development of appropriate permanency goals for children.

Item 5: Permanency goal for child:

For September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, case review data reflects that 54.68% of the 139 applicable cases rated a "Strength" while 45.32% rated an area needing improvement. The September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, case review data could be an indicator of improved practice in this area. A "Strength" indicates that the child has a permanency goal specified in the case file and that the plan was developed within 30 days of the child entering state's custody. If the child was in state's custody for 15 of the most recent 22 months, a petition for termination of parental rights was entered or an exception (or compelling reasons) for not filing for TPR was documented in the case file. This

measure also takes into consideration whether a child's permanency goals are appropriate given the circumstances of the child's case.

Case review data reflects that 64.03% of the 139 applicable cases had permanency goals in effect during the period under review that was established in a timely manner. Permanency goals in effect during the period under review were appropriate to the child's needs for permanency and to the circumstances of the case in 89.93% of the applicable cases. Reviewers were asked to determine if the agency either filed or joined a termination of parental rights petition in a timely manner or if an exception applied. 77.46% (55) of the 71 applicable cases were answered "yes" to those elements.

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool for July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 reflects 36.65% of 251 applicable cases rated a strength. July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016: 31.32% of 182 applicable cases which rated a strength as well.

Item 5 Report Data Response:

- **Report SLS312: *Children Who Have a Permanency Plan Developed within 30 Days of Entry into Foster Care:***
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2017, through April 30, 2018:
56.36% of children entering foster care during this time frame had a permanency plan developed in 30 days.
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2016 through April 30, 2017:
54.06% of children entering foster care during this time frame had a permanency plan developed within 30 days.

Item 6: Did the agency make concerted efforts to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement for the child?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data and information from MACWIS data reports and the state's data profile indicate this item is an area of needed improvement in the timely achievement of permanency goals. According to the Practice Performance Indicators, achieving adoption and OPPLA appear to be driving the area needing improvement for this item. Barriers to achieving timely adoptions are caseworkers submitting referrals for termination of parental rights in an untimely or inaccurate manner and courts continuing

the TPR hearings. Assuring children/youth with a plan of OPPLA have a permanent living arrangement until discharge is an issue that needs further attention.

Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement:

September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018: 49.64% of the 139 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for this item while 50.36% rated an area needing improvement.

- 60% of the 70 applicable cases showed the agency and the courts made concerted efforts to achieve reunification in a timely manner;
- 53.45% of the 116 applicable cases showed the agency and the courts made concerted efforts to achieve guardianship in a timely manner;
- 30.51% of the 59 applicable cases show the agency and the courts made concerted efforts to achieve adoption in a timely manner;
- 21.43% of the 14 applicable cases showed the agency and the courts made concerted efforts to place a child with a goals of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA) that can be considered permanent until discharge from foster care.

Of the children in foster care with a permanency goal of Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement, their case rated a “Strength” if the agency and the court are making concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner, the parental service plans identify services MDCPS deems necessary to address behaviors or conditions resulting in the child’s placement in foster care, if the agency made those services available through direct or indirect referral.

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool for July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017: 30.16% of 189 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016: 34.17% of 120 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 6 Report Data Response:

- **Report SBRD05: Children Exiting Custody with an Outcome of Reunification:**
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2017, through April 30, 2018: 59.95% of children exited foster care to reunification within 12 months statewide.

- Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2016, through April 30, 2017: 66.74% percent of children exited to reunification within 12 months statewide.
- Mississippi’s data profile (15A/15B) reflects the state’s performance at 43.8% against a National Performance of 42.7% for Permanency in 12 months. The percentage from the data profile for Permanency in 12-23 months for 17A/17B reflects a performance of 36.4% against a National Performance of 45.9%. The state’s performance for Permanency in 24+ months is 21% against a National Performance of 31.8%. Achieving permanency in 12 months appears to be a strength but the data reflecting the 12-23 month and 24+ months intervals indicate a need for improvement.
- **Report SBRD10: Length of Time to Adoption Finalization:**
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2017, through April 30, 2018: 1.90% of children were adopted within 12 months, 14.60% were adopted within 24 months, and 41.30% were adopted within 36 months.
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2016, through April 30, 2017: 0.90% of children was adopted within 12 months, 12.20% of children were adopted within 24 months and 40.60% of children were adopted within 36 months.

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

Case review data from September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018 utilizing the federal OSRI shows 57.55% of the cases reviewed rated “Substantially Achieved” for Permanency Outcome 2.

Item 7: Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data and MACWIS data reports indicate this item is a strength for the state in that children in foster care are generally placed with all siblings who are in foster care or, if not, there is a valid reason for the child’s separation from siblings such as the separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings or to accommodate a large sibling group.

Item 7: Placement with Siblings:

September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018: 96.08% of 102 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for this item while 3.92% rated an area needing improvement. A “Strength” is evident when children in foster care are placed with all siblings who are in foster care or, if not, there is a valid reason for the child’s separation from siblings such as the separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings or to accommodate a large sibling group. The September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018 performance on this item (utilizing the OSRI) is similar to that of previous years’ performance in which the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool was utilized.

Case review from the practice performance indicators reflects that 53.92% of 102 applicable cases where the child was placed with all siblings who were also in foster care. If there was a valid reason for the child’s separation from siblings in placement, it was evident in 91.49% of the 47 applicable cases.

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool reflects for July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017: 98.77% of 162 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016: 98.36% of 122 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 7 Report Data Response:

- **Report SLS316: Children in Sibling Groups Who Have Entered Care Who are Initially Placed Together:**
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2017, through April 30, 2018: 74.40% of siblings were placed together or had exceptions noted during this time frame.
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2016, through April 30, 2017: 76.27% of siblings were placed together or had exceptions noted during this time frame. Though the current data indicator reflects slightly lower performance, it is comparable to the previous years’ performance.

Item 8: Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child’s relationships with these close family members?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data and MACWIS data reports indicate the frequency and quality of visits between the child, parents, and separated siblings in foster care need improvement to promote the continuity of these relationships. According to the Practice

Performance Indicators, of the 98 applicable cases reviewed, 31.63% was the most frequent pattern of visitation noted for children visiting with their mothers. Further, 35.53% of the children had no visits with their fathers, with the next highest frequency of visitation (31.58%) being less than once a month. Sibling visits took place most frequently occurring with 37.78% of the cases and at least twice monthly (or more frequently) in another 33.33% of the cases.

This could be explained by the following:

- Parents who have not been engaged regarding visitation;
- Proposed visitation hours and locations not being convenient for parents (For example, parents who work or live a long distance from where their children are located);
- Parents who have been engaged regarding visitation but, for whatever reason, do not visit with their children;
- Visitation taking place in the home of a relative but does not get documented by the county worker or the relative supervising the visit;
- The parents' whereabouts are unknown;
- Efforts are not made by the caseworker to arrange for more frequent visitation;
- Caseworkers not documenting the visits that occur in a timely or accurate manner (or not at all) so that MACWIS counts the visits.

Item 8: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018; 42.98% of the 114 applicable cases rated a "Strength" for this item while 57.02% rated an area needing improvement. A "Strength" is identified when visits between the child, parents, and separated siblings in foster care are of a frequency and quality to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship.

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool reflects for July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017: 21.49% of 228 applicable cases rated a "Strength." July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016: 25.81% of 155 applicable cases rated a "Strength."

Item 8 Report Data Response:

Report MWLS318S: Child Contact with Parents and Siblings While in Custody:

For the month of April 1, 2018 through April 30, 2018:

- 8.43% of children met with their mother

- 5.06% of children met with their father
- 22.72% of children met with their siblings
- 5.82% met all visitation requirements

For the month of April 1, 2017 through April 30, 2017:

- 6.61% of children met with their mother
- 5.387% of children met with their father
- 19.77% of children met with their siblings
- 5.30% met all visitation requirements

These data indicators reflect a continued need for improvement in this area.

Item 9: Did the agency make concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends?

RESPONSE:

Overall: The September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, case review data shows a similar (though slightly higher) performance in this area from past years is an indicator of strength in practice in that concerted efforts are being made to maintain children’s important connections. The case review data shows 88.89% of the cases rated a “Strength” and 89.63% had concerted efforts made to maintain the child’s important connections.

Item 9: Preserving Connections:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018; 88.89% of the 135 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for this item with 11.1% rating an area needing improvement. In rating “Strength,” there is evidence that concerted efforts were made to maintain the child’s important connections to their neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends. This item also measures if ICWA inquiries were made and actions were taken in the event the child was found to be of Native American ancestry.

The Practice Performance indicators show concerted efforts were made to maintain the child’s important connections in 89.63% of the 135 applicable cases by keeping them within a 50-mile radius of their original home (or 75 miles within regions 2-West and 5-West); allowing for children to continue attending their current school; having contact with friends, extended family members, and other important relationships they had prior to entering foster care; and continuing to take part in their cultural activities and traditions.

Data from the discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool reflects for July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017: 84.86% of 251 applicable cases rated a “Strength” and a “Higher Strength” in comparison to the July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016 period in which 80.22% of 182 cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 9 Report Data Response:

There are no data reports for this item.

Item 10: Did the agency make concerted efforts to place the child with relatives when appropriate?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Based on case review data, it appears this item is an area needing improvement in that the agency is not fully making efforts to place children with relatives. However, of those children who are placed with relatives, the placement is stable and appropriate to meet the child’s identified needs.

Item 10: Relative placement:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018; 71.97% of the 132 applicable cases rated a “Strength” while 28.03% rated an area needing improvement. A “Strength” is evident when the child’s current or most recent placement is with a relative and the placement is stable. If the child is not placed with a relative, efforts to identify, locate, and evaluate maternal and paternal relatives were made before being ruled out as, or were unwilling to be, placement resources. Although the current case review data was gathered on a different (though somewhat similar) instrument from previous years, continued agency efforts to place children with relatives seem to be the reason for what could be an upward trend in this area of practice.

Practice Performance indicators reflect 46.97% of the 132 applicable cases were placed with a relative. The relative placement was found to be stable and appropriate for the child’s needs in 95.16% of the cases. The Practice Performance indicators show the

following regarding existing concerns surrounding the agency’s practice for identifying and locating relatives (maternal and paternal) for placement:

Practice Description	Performance
The child's current, or most recent, placement was with a relative.	46.97% (62) of 132 applicable cases
The child's current or most recent placement with a relative was stable or appropriate to the child's needs.	95.16% (59) of 62 applicable cases
Cases in which concerns existed due to a lack of concerted efforts to Identify maternal relatives.	76.19% (16) of 21 applicable cases
Cases in which concerns existed due to a lack of concerted efforts to Locate maternal relatives.	71.43% (15) of 21 applicable cases
Cases in which concerns existed due to a lack of concerted efforts to Inform maternal relatives.	52.38% (11) of 21 applicable cases
Cases in which concerns existed due to a lack of concerted efforts to Evaluate maternal relatives.	47.62% (10) of 21 applicable cases
Cases in which concerns existed due to a lack of concerted efforts to Identify paternal relatives.	87.1% (27) of 31 applicable cases
Cases in which concerns existed due to a lack of concerted efforts to Locate paternal relatives.	80.65% (25) of 31 applicable cases
Cases in which concerns existed due to a lack of concerted efforts to Inform paternal relatives.	61.29% (19) of 31 applicable cases
Cases in which concerns existed due to a lack of concerted efforts to Evaluate paternal relatives.	64.52% (20) of 31 applicable cases

The Practice Performance indicators reflect there is a large percentage of applicable cases regarding the agency’s efforts to locate and identify maternal and paternal relatives for placement.

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, data from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 reflects 66.39% of 238 applicable cases rated a “Strength” and a “Higher Strength” in comparison to the July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016, data in which 60.12% of 166 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 10 Report Data Response:

- **Report SZ0510: Number of Children in Foster Care by Placement Type:**

- As of April 30, 2018: 33.04% of all children in foster care were placed in relative placements.
- As of April 30, 2017: 34.01% of all children in foster care were placed in relative placements.

Item 11: Did the agency make concerted efforts to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregivers from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data reflects this as an area “Needing Improvement” as more efforts need to be made with mothers and fathers for shared parenting when safe and appropriate to do so. Also, more efforts is needed to work with foster parents and relative caregivers in promoting and encouraging their participation in facilitating shared parenting duties to achieve permanency for children more timely and to help with their adjustment in foster care.

Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care with Parents:

September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018: 41.41% of the 99 applicable cases rated a “Strength” with 58.59% rating an area needing improvement. This item rates a “Strength” when there is evidence of concerted efforts to promote, support, and maintain positive relationships for the child in foster care with his mother and father (or other primary caregivers) when safe and appropriate to do so based on case circumstances such as through shared parenting responsibilities between the birth parent and the resource parent.

The Practice Performance indicators show concerted efforts were made to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive, nurturing, relationship between the child in foster care and his/her mother in 48.45% of the applicable cases while those efforts were made in 43.48% with respect to the child’s father.

Though slightly higher, the September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018 performance in this area appears to be similar to previous years’ performances which were gathered utilizing a different (but somewhat similar) review instrument.

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017, data shows 38.13% of 139 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 27.52% of 109 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 11 Report Data Response:

There are no data reports for this item.

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

Case review data from September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, utilizing the federal OSRI shows 30.24% of the cases reviewed rated “Substantially Achieved” for Well-Being Outcome 1.

Item 12: Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess the needs of and provide services to children, parents, and foster parents to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency’s involvement with the family?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Item 12 (overall) is an area needing improvement for the state in that needs and services to parents are not assessed and provided on a widespread scale as they should be. The agency does well with formal and informal assessments and initial and on-going basis for children in care and with foster and pre-adoptive parents. However, assessing the needs of parents and providing services to meet their identified needs is an area of continuing need of improvement in foster care as well as in-home services cases. The Safe at Home initiative the agency is undertaking has the potential to improve these efforts and result in children being able to be safety maintained in their home as opposed to being placed in foster care.

Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 36.9% of the 420 applicable cases rated a “Strength” while 63.1% of the applicable cases rated an area “Needing Improvement.”

The table below reflects the strength and area needing improvement performance for this item between foster care and in-home services cases:

Needs and Services to the Child, Parents, and Foster Parents			
Item 12	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	36.9% (n=155)	63.1% (n=265)	n=420
Foster Care (FC)	41.43% (n=58)	58.57% (n=82)	n=140
In-Home (IH)	34.88% (n=98)	65.12% (n=183)	n=281

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 data reflects 19.70% of 462 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 25.96% of 312 applicable cases rated a strength. A strength for this item is evident when the strengths and needs of the child, the parents, and the resource parents are assessed formally and/or informally on an initial basis as well as on an on-going basis and that services are provided a timely manner to meet any identified needs.

Case review data for this item reflects an area of needed improvement especially in assessing the strengths and needs of children and parents (*as reflected in the following 12A and 12B Responses*).

Response: Item 12 (Section A): Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents:

Needs and Services to the Child			
Item 12A	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	66.43% (n=279)	33.57% (n=141)	n=420

Foster Care (FC)	78.57% (n=110)	21.43% (n=30)	n=140
In-Home (IH)	60.5% (n=170)	39.5% (n=111)	n=281

September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018: 66.43% of 420 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” Assessing the needs and services for children in foster care cases appears to be an area in which the agency is performing well at 78.57%. Making these assessments with in-home cases is lower at 60.5% and more attention needs to be given to doing so. The Practice Performance indicators show the agency conducted formal or informal initial and/or ongoing comprehensive assessments that accurately assessed the child's needs in 80.71% of the applicable 140 foster care cases. Further, 64.06% of the applicable in-home cases show formal or informal initial and/or ongoing comprehensive assessments that were accurately assessed the child's needs. Appropriate services were provided to meet the child’s needs in 87.31% of the applicable foster care cases while appropriate services were provided to meet the child’s needs in 64.59% of the applicable in-home cases.

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, data from July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, reflects 51.08% of 462 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” For July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016: 56.09% of 312 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Response: Item 12 (Section B): Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents:

12B: Needs and Services to the Parents			
Item 12B	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	35.68% (n=137)	64.32% (n=247)	n=384
Foster Care (FC)	33.64% (n=37)	66.36% (n=73)	n=110
In-Home (IH)	36.5% (n=100)	63.5% (n=174)	n=274

For September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 35.68% of the 384 applicable cases rated a “Strength” while 66.36% rated an area “Needing Improvement.” Further, 33.64% of the foster care cases rated a “Strength” while 66.36% rated an area “Needing Improvement” with regard to assessing needs and services to parents. Of the in-home cases, 36.5% rated a “Strength” while 63.5% rated an area “Needing Improvement.”

The practice performance indicators reflect the following with regard to the agency conducting assessments (formal and informal / initial and ongoing) with parents:

Item 12 (Parents)		
Practice Description	Foster Care Performance	In-Home Performance
The agency conducted formal or informal initial and/or ongoing comprehensive assessments that accurately assessed the mother's needs.	61.17% (63) of 103 applicable cases	62.12% (164) of 264 applicable cases
The agency conducted formal or informal initial and/or ongoing comprehensive assessments that accurately assessed the father's needs.	40% (34) of 85 applicable cases	35.9% (70) of 195 applicable cases
Appropriate services were provided to meet the mother's needs.	57.58% (57) of 99 applicable cases	59.92% (148) of 247 applicable cases
Appropriate services were provided to meet the father's needs.	37.18% (29) of 78 applicable cases	38.27% (62) of 162 applicable cases
Concerted efforts were made both to assess and address the needs of mothers.	52.43% (54) of 103 applicable cases	53.79% (142) of 264 applicable cases
Concerted efforts were made both to assess and address the needs of fathers.	34.12% (29) of 85 applicable cases	31.28% (61) of 195 applicable cases

The table above reflects a performance that is in much need of improvement regarding assessing the needs and services for parents. The formal/information and initial/on-going assessment of needs and provision of services to mothers is greater than those same efforts being made with fathers.

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, data for July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, reflects 18.79% of 431 applicable cases rated a “Strength”. July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016: 19.25% of 265 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Response: Item 12 (Section C): Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 87.3% (n=110) of 126 applicable cases rated a strength while 12.7% (n=16) rated an area needing improvement. The Practice Performance indicators reflect the agency adequately assessed the needs of foster or pre-adoptive parents related to caring for children in their care in 88.89% of the 126 applicable cases. The agency provided appropriate services to foster and pre-adoptive

parents related to caring for the children in their care in 90.52% of the 116 applicable cases.

July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool reflects 81.78% of 214 applicable cases rated a strength. July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 83.75% of 160 applicable cases rated a strength.

Item 12 Report Data Response:

There are no data reports for this item.

Item 13: Did the agency make concerted efforts to involve the parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis?

RESPONSE:

Overall: The case review data from the baseline reviews conducted by the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit using the OSRI from September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018 show the state needs continued improvement in the area of involving children and parents in foster care and in-home cases in the case planning process. Often, in foster care cases, the parent from whom the child is removed is engaged in this effort, but the absent parent (oftentimes the father) is not. Regarding in-home cases, improvement in engaging all family members needs to be an ongoing and consistent effort statewide.

Item 13: Child and family involvement in case planning:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 38.61% of the 404 applicable cases rated a strength for this item while 61.39% rated an area needing improvement. A strength for this item indicates that families and children (if developmentally appropriate) were involved in the initial and on-going development of case plans. The agency currently shows much higher performance for this measure to previous years' performance. This item is rated a strength when there is evidence concerted efforts were made to involve children and their parents in the case planning process.

The table below reflects the strength and area needing improvement ratings for this item for foster care cases and in-home cases:

Item 13	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	38.61% (n=156)	61.39% (n=248)	n=404

Foster Care (FC)	47.2% (n=59)	52.8% (n=66)	n=125
In-Home (IH)	35% (n=98)	65% (n=182)	n=182

The table below shows the agency needs continued improvements in involving children, mothers, and fathers in the case planning process. Children in foster care cases who are age appropriate and developmentally appropriate for case planning are involved in the process much more than children in in-home cases. Mothers appear to be involved at a consistent rate in both case types but the level of their participation reflects a need for improvement. Fathers are involved in the case planning process at a much lower rate in both case types than children and mothers.

Item 13		
Practice Description	Performance (Foster Care)	Performance (In-Home Services)
The agency made concerted efforts to actively involve the child in the case planning process.	66.23% (51) of 77 applicable cases	48.39% (105) of 217 applicable cases
The agency made concerted efforts to actively involve the mother in the case planning process.	58.89% (53) of 90 applicable cases	56.55% (151) of 267 applicable cases
The agency made concerted efforts to actively involve the father in the case planning process.	42.42% (28) of 66 applicable cases	34.27% (61) of 178 applicable cases

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, data for July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 reflects: 9.98% of 461 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 14.42% of 312 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 13 Report Data Response:

There are no data reports for this item.

Item 14: Were the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and child (ren) sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data and MACWIS data reports indicate this is area of practice needing improvement in that children in in-home services cases are not seen of a frequency and quality to promote safety, permanency, and well-being and to assess for

needed services and case plan goal attainment. The performance in this area can be attributed mostly to the needed improvement to see children in in-home cases at a frequency comparable to foster care cases. MACWIS data reflects a substantial caseworker contact performance with foster children. However, that particular report does not capture quality of the visits and there is no data report to capture caseworker visits with children in the in-home services cases which does not encourage or inform caseworkers or supervisors to put an emphasis on their performance of this measure.

Item 14: Caseworker visits with child:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 60.48% of the 420 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for this item while 39.52% rated an area needing improvement. Caseworker contacts with foster children are taking place on a more frequent basis than with in-home cases.

A “Strength” indicates that children were seen, face-to-face, and the contacts were of a frequency and a quality to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being. This particular measure looks not only at the frequency with which children are seen by their workers, but also at the quality of the content of the contacts.

Item 14	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	60.48% (n=254)	39.52% (n=166)	n=420
Foster Care (FC)	85% (n=119)	15% (n=21)	n=140
In-Home (IH)	48.4% (n=136)	51.6% (n=145)	n=281

The Practice Performance indicators reflect the following regarding caseworker visits with children in foster care and in-home services cases:

- The most typical pattern of visitation between caseworkers and foster children is less than once a week but at least twice monthly in 85% of the cases. In 94.29% of the foster care cases, the frequency of caseworker visits with children was sufficient and in 87.86% the quality of the visits was found to be sufficient;
- The most typical pattern of visitation between caseworkers and children in the in-home services cases is 39.86% for less than once-a-week but at least twice monthly visits and 32.74% less than once-a-month. Also, 9.61% of the in-home services cases never had caseworker visits with the child(ren) in the case. Of the applicable cases that had visits with children in the in-home services cases, 53.74% were found to be of a sufficient frequency and, of those with caseworker contacts, 69.32% of those visits were found to be of a sufficient quality.

The current case review data indicates a performance at slightly higher level than that of the performance in previous years gathered on the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review instrument.

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, the July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017 data reflects 56.49% of 462 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 56.73% of 312 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 14 Report Data Response:

- **Report MWZWCM5S: Annual Worker/Child Face to Face Visit Contact Report:**
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2017 through April 30, 2018: 93.12% of monthly required foster child visits occurred within this 12-month period statewide.
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2016 through April 30, 2017: 91.47% of monthly required foster child visits occurred within this 12-month period statewide.

Item 15: Were the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers of the child(ren) sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data and MACWIS report data indicate the state needs improvement in making frequent and quality visits with parents/caretakers to assess for service needs and goal attainment. The case review data is comparable to the MACWIS data report performance on this item regarding the foster care cases. There are no data reports to reflect performance of caseworker contacts with parents with respect to in-home services cases which does not encourage or inform caseworkers or supervisors to put an emphasis on their performance of this measure.

Item 15	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	33.6% (n=127)	66.4% (n=251)	n=378
Foster Care (FC)	33.67% (n=33)	66.33% (n=65)	n=98
In-Home (IH)	33.57% (n=94)	66.43% (n=186)	n=280

Item 15: Caseworker visits with parents:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 33.6% of the 378 applicable cases rated a strength while 66.4% of the applicable cases rated an area needing improvement. A strength indicates that parents (mother and father) were seen, face-to-face, and the contacts were of a frequency and a quality to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote the achievement of case plan goals and to assess service delivery.

The Practice Performance indicators reflect the following with regard to caseworker visits with parents in foster care and in-home cases:

- Overall, the most typical pattern of visitation between the caseworker and the mother is less than once a month (41.81% of the 357 applicable cases reviewed). The most typical pattern of visitation between the caseworker and the father is less than once a month (38.27% of the 243 applicable cases).

The Practice Performance indicators reflect the following regarding caseworker visits with the **mother** in foster care and in-home services cases:

Item 15 (Mother)		
Practice Description	Foster Case Performance (Mother)	In-Home Services Performance (Mother)
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and mother was more than once a week.	0% (0) of 89 applicable cases	0% (0) of 268 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and mother was once a week.	0% (0) of 89 applicable cases	0.37% (1) of 268 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and mother was less than once a week but at least twice a month.	22.47% (20) of 89 applicable cases	24.63% (66) of 268 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and mother was less than twice a month but at least once a month.	26.97% (24) of 89 applicable cases	23.51% (63) of 268 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and mother was less than once a month.	44.94% (40) of 89 applicable cases	39.93% (107) of 268 applicable cases
Caseworker never had visits with mother.	5.62% (5) of 89 applicable cases	11.57% (31) of 268 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and the mother was sufficient.	48.31% (43) of 89 applicable cases	50.75% (136) of 268 applicable cases
The quality of visits between the caseworker and the mother was sufficient.	56.63% (47) of 83 applicable cases	63.95% (149) of 233 applicable cases

The Practice Performance indicators reflect the following with regard to caseworker visits with the **father** in foster care and in-home services cases:

Item 15 (Father)

Practice Description	Foster Care Performance (Father)	In-Home Services Performance (Father)
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and father was more than once a week.	0% (0) of 67 applicable cases	0% (0) of 176 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and father was once a week.	0% (0) of 67 applicable cases	0% (0) of 176 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and father was less than once a week but at least twice a month.	14.93% (10) of 67 applicable cases	10.23% (18) of 176 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and father was less than twice a month but at least once a month.	17.91% (12) of 67 applicable cases	13.64% (24) of 176 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and father was less than once a month.	44.78% (30) of 67 applicable cases	35.8% (63) of 176 applicable cases
Caseworker never had visits with father.	22.39% (15) of 67 applicable cases	40.34% (71) of 176 applicable cases
The typical pattern of visits between the caseworker and the father was sufficient.	40.3% (27) of 67 applicable cases	28.41% (50) of 176 applicable cases
The quality of visits between the caseworker and the father was sufficient.	52.94% (27) of 51 applicable cases	58.65% (61) of 104 applicable cases
Both the frequency and quality of caseworker visitation with the mother were sufficient.	43.82% (39) of 89 applicable cases	47.01% (126) of 268 applicable cases
Both the frequency and quality of caseworker visitation with the father were sufficient.	34.33% (23) of 67 applicable cases	28.41% (50) of 176 applicable cases

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, data for July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 reflects 17.67% of 430 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”
 For July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 20.5% of 278 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 15 Report Data Response:

- **Report SZCR3: Frequency of Caseworker Visits with Parents/Caregivers with whom Children are to be Reunified:**
 - For the month of April 1, 2018 through April 30, 2018, 39.32% of cases met the frequency of parent/caregiver contact requirement when there was a goal of reunification in the Family Service Plan (FSP).
 - For the month of April 1, 2017 through April 30, 2017, 28.23% of cases met the frequency of parent/caregiver contact requirement when there was a goal of reunification in the FSP.

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

Case review data from September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018 utilizing the federal OSRI shows 72.38% of the cases reviewed rated Substantially Achieved for Well-Being Outcome 2.

Item 16: Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess children’s educational needs, and appropriately address identified needs in case planning and case management activities?

Response:

Overall: Case review data seems to reflect this is a strength for assessing (initially and on-going) the educational needs of children. The case review data reflects consistent performance between the two case types (foster care and in-homes services cases). Concerted efforts are made to assess children’s educational needs and to provide services to meet any identified needs that may be present.

Item 16	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	72.38% (n=131)	27.62% (n=50)	n=181
Foster Care (FC)	72.5% (n=87)	27.5% (n=33)	n=120
In-Home (IH)	72.58% (n=45)	27.42% (n=17)	n=62

Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 72.38% of the 181 applicable cases rated a strength for this item while 27.62% rated an area needing improvement. Cases where the child’s educational needs were assessed initially and on-going and services were provided to meet their identified educational needs rated a strength. The performance on this item is consistent in both case types. The Practice Performance indicators reflect the following:

- The agency made concerted efforts to accurately assess the children's educational needs in 74.17% (89) of 120 applicable foster care cases.
- The agency made concerted efforts to accurately assess the children’s educational needs in 75.81% (47) of 62 applicable foster care cases.
- The agency made concerted efforts to address the children's educational needs through appropriate services in 70.1% (68) of 97 applicable foster care case.
- The agency made concerted efforts to address the children's educational needs through appropriate services in 70.59% (36) of 51 applicable cases.

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, data for July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 reflects 65.77% of 260 applicable cases rated a “Strength.” For July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 68.42% of 171 applicable cases rated a “Strength.”

Item 16 Report Data Response:

There are no data reports for this item.

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

Case review data from September 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, utilizing the federal OSRI shows 54.01% of the cases reviewed rated “Substantially Achieved” for Well-Being Outcome 3.

Item 17: Did the agency address the physical health needs of children, including dental health needs?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data and MACWIS report data seem to reflect this as an area needing improvement for physical health and dental health being assessed in a timely manner (initially and on-going) and timely services being provided to meet the child’s identified needs. The case review data and MACWIS report data are not compatible with one another for the performance on this item which is an indicator of untimely and/or accurate data entry. In addition, some counties report having difficulties obtaining medical and dental records from providers as well as securing timely appointments for children which also results in information not being added to MACWIS in a timely manner. Also, the agency has not placed the emphasis on the in-home services cases that it has placed on foster care cases due to the Olivia Y consent decree. This has resulted in a lesser performance in practice for in-home services cases. It is anticipated the Safe at Home initiative will improve performance regarding in-home services and result in fewer children in those case types being at-risk of entering foster care.

Item 17: Physical Health of the Child:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 63.24% of the 204 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for this item with 36.76% rating an area needing improvement. This item rated a “Strength” if the child’s physical health and dental health were assessed in a timely manner (initially and on-going) and timely services were provided to meet the child’s identified needs.

Item 17	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	63.24% (n=129)	36.76% (n=75)	n=204
Foster Care (FC)	64.29% (n=90)	35.71% (n=50)	n=140
In-Home (IH)	61.54% (n=40)	38.46% (n=25)	n=65

The Practice Performance indicators reflect the following for foster care and in-home services cases with respect to physical health of the child:

Item 17		
Practice Description	Foster Care Performance	In-Home Services Performance
The agency accurately assessed the children's physical health needs.	86.43% (121) of 140 applicable cases	71.43% (45) of 63 applicable cases
The agency accurately assessed the children's dental health care needs	78.13% (100) of 128 applicable cases	44.44% (4) of 9 applicable cases
The agency provided appropriate oversight of prescription medications for the physical health issues of the target child in foster care.	76.92% (50) of 65 applicable cases	0 applicable cases
The agency ensured that appropriate services were provided to the children to address all identified physical health needs.	82.35% (112) of 136 applicable cases	62.3% (38) of 61 applicable cases
The agency ensured that appropriate services were provided to the children to address all identified dental health needs.	74.19% (92) of 124 applicable cases	50% (3) of 6 applicable cases

Case review data reflects children in in-home services cases are not assessed for physical health needs or dental health needs on the same level as children in foster care cases and service provision doesn't occur for children in in-home services cases as it does foster care cases. This is due to the following factors:

- An emphasis has not been placed on in-home services cases to the extent that it has for foster care cases due to the agency focusing its efforts on foster care cases as it relates to the Olivia Y consent decree.
- There are no MACWIS data reports to measure performance for assessment and provision of services for in-home cases as it relates to physical health needs of the child.

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, data for July 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, reflects 53.07% of 309 applicable cases rated a "Strength". For July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 53.92% of 217 applicable cases rated a "Strength."

Item 17 Report Data Response:

- **Report SLS315: Children Who Had an Initial Screening and Comprehensive Health Assessment upon Entering Custody:**
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2017, through April 30, 2018: 34.64% of children who were in custody for at least 72 hours received an initial screening timely, and 38.90% of children who were in custody for at least 30 days had a Comprehensive Health Assessment within 30 days of entering care.
 - Rolling 12-month period from May 1, 2016, through April 30, 2017: 34.18% of children were in custody for at least 72 hours received an initial screening timely, and 36.74% of children who were in custody for at least 30 days had a Comprehensive Health Assessment within 30 days of entering care.

Item 18: Did the agency address the mental/behavioral health needs of children?

RESPONSE:

Overall: Case review data for this item reflects an area “Needing Improvement” for assessing (initially and ongoing) children’s mental health needs and provision of services to meet those identified needs.

Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child:

September 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018: 63% of the 200 applicable cases rated a “Strength” for this item while 37% rated an area needing improvement. Cases rated a “Strength” if the child’s mental health needs were assessed initially and on-going and services were provided to meet those identified needs.

Item 18	Strength	ANI	Total Applicable
FC & IH Combined	63% (n=126)	37% (n=74)	n=200
Foster Care (FC)	60.38% (n=64)	39.62% (n=42)	n=106
In-Home (IH)	66.32% (n=63)	33.68% (n=32)	n=95

The performance between foster care and in-home cases is similar for accurately assessing and providing appropriate services for the mental health needs of children.

The Practice Performance indicators for this item reflect the following:

Item 18		
Practice Description	Foster Care Performance	In-Home Services Performance
The agency accurately assessed the children's mental/behavioral health needs.	67.92% (72) of 106 applicable cases	67.37% (64) of 95 applicable cases
The agency provided appropriate oversight of prescription medications for the mental/behavioral health issues of the target child in foster care.	68.09% (32) of 47 applicable cases	0 applicable cases
The agency ensured that appropriate services were provided to the children to address all identified mental/behavioral health needs.	64.08% (66) of 103 applicable cases	69.66% (62) of 89 applicable cases

Utilizing the now discontinued Evaluation and Monitoring review tool, case review data for July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 reflects 45.61% of 239 applicable cases rated a strength. July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016: 51.15% of 174 applicable cases rated a strength.

Item 18 Report Data Response:

There are no data reports for this item.

SYSTEMIC FACTORS

A. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Item 19: How well is the statewide information system functioning statewide to ensure that, at a minimum, the state 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?

RESPONSE:

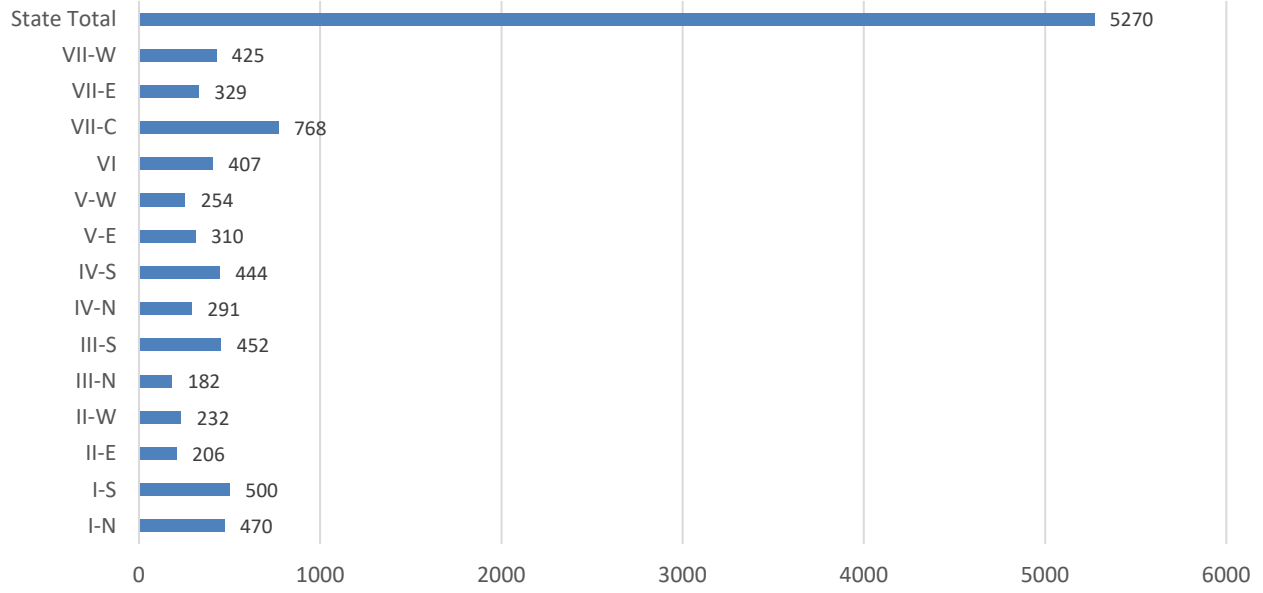
The statewide case management system, MACWIS, is a mainframe application with a Windows-based user interface. Accessibility is provided by Citrix desktop virtualization. The State is in the process of moving MACWIS to a Linux platform. All workers have tablets that provide access to MACWIS over LAN and cellular connections.

The validity of the data's accuracy is reflected in the Data Fidelity/Compliance Summary report from AFCARS, for the period ending March 31, 2018, which showed no data fidelity errors/failures that exceeded the 10% standard.

The State is currently operating a statewide information system that 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. This data is entered in MACWIS data fields and is made available in either batch reporting, sequel query, or in other online formats. The state complies with all bi-annual AFCARS data submissions and rates this item as a strength.

MACWIS can readily identify the status and demographics of all children in foster care as illustrated by the following "Children in Custody" table dated June 20, 2018, and subsequent demographic tables:

Children in Custody June 20, 2018 by Region



Race	Gender		Total
	F	M	
No race identified	3	1	4
American Indian	2	4	6
American Indian, Black	0	2	2
American Indian, Hawaiian	0	1	1
American Indian, White	0	2	2
Asian	0	7	7
Asian, Black	3	1	4
Asian, White	0	1	1
Black	1003	968	1971
Black, White	64	86	150
Hawaiian	2	3	5
Hawaiian, White	1	1	2
Undetermined	65	69	134
Undetermined, White	1	0	1
White	1488	1490	2978
White, White	1	1	2
State Total	2633	2637	5270

The table below describes the placement types and percentage of each type of placement for children in foster care on June 20, 2018.

Facility Type	Frequency	Percent	Facility Type	Frequency	Percent
No Placement identified	82	1.6	ICPC - Outgoing	3	0.1
Acute Care	62	1.2	Institution	6	0.1
Adoptive Home (Domestic)	67	1.3	Interim Placement	1	0
Chemically Dependent Group	7	0.1	Own Home - Mother	251	4.8
Child Placing Agency	1	0	Own Home- Father	103	2
CO Non-Licensed Non-Relative	19	0.4	Own Home- Other Caretaker	56	1.1
CO Non-Licensed Relative	98	1.9	Own Home- Parents	93	1.8
CO Non-Licensed Det/Trng School	10	0.2	Relative Foster Home	1367	25.9
CO Non-Licensed Shelter	3	0.1	Residential Child Caring Facility	13	0.2
Contract Facility - Non MDHS	24	0.5	Residential Treatment	164	3.1
Emergency Shelter	36	0.7	Runaway	26	0.5
Expedited Pending Relative Res	185	3.5	Specialized Residential School	1	0
Foster Home	2145	40.7	Supervised Indep. Living	9	0.2
Group Home	68	1.3	Teenage Parent Foster Home	5	0.1
ICFMR	8	0.2	Therapeutic Foster Home	251	4.8
			Therapeutic Group Home	106	2
			State Total	5270	100

For children in custody on June 20, 2018, the table below describes their permanency goals and the percentage of each type of permanency goal.

Permanency Goal	Frequency	Percent
No plan identified	120	2.3
Adoption	1864	35.4
APPLA	238	4.5
Custody w/ a Relative	177	3.4
Durable Legal Cust/Guardianship	69	1.3
Living Independently	2	0
Reunification w/Primary Caretaker or Parents	2800	53.1
State Total	5270	100

B. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Item 20: How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a written case plan that is developed jointly with the child’s parent(s) and includes the required provisions?

RESPONSE:

Overall, written case plan is an area needing improvement. MDCPS utilizes the Family Team Meeting process to develop the case plan jointly with the parents. However, available data suggests that the state continues to struggle in areas of engagement. Family engagement is an ongoing process of involving the family from the initial investigation throughout the life of the case. The caseworker must engage the family, extended family members, and formal and informal support networks through Family Team Meetings. Absent Parents present an ongoing challenge to joint development of written case plans.

Reports outlined below can be used to determine the timeliness of case plan development as well as the engagement of family members in the development of the plan. This should be considered a “Strength” as this data can be utilized to support future improvements. The state also has policy outlining expectations regarding the development of written case plans, timeframes for

development of the plans, stipulations regarding engagement of parents to develop the plan and the mandated elements that should be included in the discussion of the plan. This is considered a “Strength.” Since September 2017, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services’ Evaluation and Monitoring Unit has been conducting baseline case reviews utilizing the federal On-Site Review Instrument (OSRI). The OSRI has provided feedback related to the involvement of children and parent(s) in case planning and the use of the instrument to guide improvements is considered a strength.

Reports:

MDCPS supervisors utilize the Focus on Data site to access reports on case planning. Supervisors utilize the “Review FSP’s Due” report to track the date of the most recent Family Service Plan and the date due for the upcoming FSP. The report “Children Who Had a Permanency Plan Developed Within 30 Days of Custody” is also utilized to assess improvement in timely case planning. This report provides county and statewide summaries for a rolling year and is based on the date the FSP was approved by the supervisor. Reporting period 6/1/2017 - 5/31/2018 indicates 59.27% children had an initial permanency plan developed within 30 days of custody. This report also provides data for one month prior to the current month and that data for the same reporting period indicates that 78.31% of children had an initial permanency plan developed within 30 days of custody.

Policy:

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services’ Foster Care policy (Section D) states: “To meet the case plan requirements of 42 U.S.C. 675, §§ 471(a)(16), 475(1), 475(5)(A), (D), (H), 475A, the following are criteria to help determine the appropriateness of and necessity for placement of a child. The case plan for each child is a written document which is a discrete part of the case record and which is developed jointly with the parent(s)/ guardian(s) of the child.”

The case plan for each child:

- Is a written document which is a discrete part of the case record and which is developed jointly with the parent(s)/ guardian(s) of the child;

- Is developed within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of removal from the home.
- Includes a description of the services offered and provided to prevent removal of the child from the home and to reunify the family;
- Includes a description of the type of home or institution in which the child is placed;
- Includes a discussion of the safety and appropriateness of the placement and how DFCS will carry out the judicial determination made with respect to the child, in accordance with § 472(a)(2)(A) [42 U.S.C. 675]
- Includes a plan for assuring that the child receives safe and proper care and that services are provided to the parent(s), child and foster parents in order to facilitate the child's return to his/her own safe home or for the permanent placement of the child;
- Includes a plan for assuring that services are provided to the child and foster parents in order to address the needs of the child while in foster care;
- Includes a discussion of the appropriateness of the services that have been provided to the child under the plan;
- Where appropriate for a child 14 or over, includes a written description of the programs and services to help the child prepare for the transition from foster care to successful adulthood. With respect to a child who has attained 14 years of age, any revision or addition to the plan must be developed in consultation with the child and, at the option of the child, with up to 2 members of the case planning team who are chosen by the child and who are not a foster parent of, or caseworker for, the child. A State/Tribal agency may reject an individual selected by a child to be a member of the case planning team at any time if the agency has good cause to believe that the individual would not act in the best interests of the child. One individual selected by a child to be a member of the child's case planning team may be designated to be the child's advisor and as necessary, advocate, with respect to the application of the reasonable and prudent parent standard to the child.

- 90-day period immediately prior to the child’s 18th birthday, or such greater age as the state may elect under section 475(8)(B)(iii), whether during that period foster care maintenance payments are being made on the child’s behalf or the child is receiving benefits or services under § 477, the caseworker provides the child with assistance and support in developing a transition plan that is personalized and includes specific options on housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, and work force supports and employment services, and is as detailed as needed; and
- Includes information about the importance of designating another individual to make health care treatment decisions on behalf of the child if the child becomes unable to participate in such decisions and the child does not have, or does not want, a relative who would otherwise be authorized under State/Tribal law to make such decisions, and
- Provides the child with the option to execute a health care power of attorney, health care proxy, or other similar document recognized under State/Tribal law, and is as detailed as the child may elect.
- Documents the steps to finalize a placement when the case plan goal is or becomes adoption or placement in another permanent home in accordance with §§ 475(1)(E),(5)(E)and 475A(a)(1).
- When the case plan goal is adoption, at a minimum such documentation shall include child- specific recruitment efforts such as the use of tribal, state, regional, and national adoption exchanges including electronic exchange systems to facilitate orderly and timely placements.

(see 45 CFR 1356.21(g)(1)(2) and (4); 42 U.S.C. 675 §§ 475(1)(A)(B)(D) and 475(5)(H)

MACWIS (Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System) is available statewide for agency staff to input the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals of every family and child who are receiving services from the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services.

Evaluation and Monitoring/OSRI Data:

Reviews have been conducted (to-date) in the following Regions:

- 3-South (includes 2018 CFSR site Hinds County)
- 4-South
- 3-North
- 4-North
- 5-East
- 7-Central (includes 2018 2018 CFSR site Harrison County)
- 1-South (includes 2018 CFSR sites Pontotoc County and Union County)
- 2-West
- 5-West
- 7-East

These case reviews included foster care and in-home case types.

Well-Being Outcome 1 of the CFSR determines if families have the enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. Item 13 within that outcome measures the involvement of children and their families in the case planning process. Case review data from September 2017 through May 2018 reveal the following regarding Item 13 (*which applies to foster care as well as in-home cases*):

- 38.77% of the cases reviewed rated a Strength (n=157);
- 61.23% of the cases reviewed rated an Area Needing Improvement (n=248);

Questions A, B, and C of Item 13 asks if the agency made concerted efforts to actively involve the child(ren), mother, and father in the case planning process:

- 53.06% (156 of 294 applicable cases) were answered "Yes" with regard to the child(ren);
- 57.14% (204 of 357 applicable cases) were answered "Yes" with regard to the mother;
- 36.48% (89 of 244 applicable cases) were answered "Yes" with regard to the father.

Table 1 below reflects the agency’s performance on Item 13 of the OSRI (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning) regarding case types (foster care and in-home). This information is from case reviews conducted in Regions 3-South, 4-South, 3-North, 4-North, 5-East, 7-Central, 1-South, 2-West, 5-West, and 7-East from September 2017 through May 2018.

Table 1

Item 13 Performance	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Cases
Strength	47.2% (n=59)	35% (n=98)
Area Needing Improvement	52.8% (n=66)	65% (n=182)
Total Applicable	125	280

Table 2 below reflects the agency’s performance regarding Questions A, B, and C of Item 13 on the OSRI which measures concerted efforts by the agency to involve the child(ren), mother, and the father in case planning activities. This information is from case reviews conducted in Regions 3-South, 4-South, 3-North, 4-North, 5-East, 7-Central, 1-South, 2-West, 5-West, and 7-East from September 2017 through May 2018 and reflects the “Yes” answers from those questions:

Table 2

Item 13A, B, C: The agency made concerted efforts to actively involve the child/mother/father in the case planning process.		
	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Cases
“Yes” – Child / Children	66.23% (n=51)	48.39% (n=105)
“Yes” – Mother	58.89% (n=53)	56.55% (n=151)
“Yes” – Father	42.42% (n=28)	34.27% (n=61)

Table 3 below shows the agency’s performance (Strength/Area Needing Improvement) on Item 13 (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning) for the three 2018 CFSR sites in Mississippi (Hinds County, Harrison County, and the Pontotoc County/Union County Cluster). This information reflects foster care as well as in-home case data:

Table 3

Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning for 2018 Mississippi CFSR Sites			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Applicable
Hinds County	23.81% (n=10)	76.19% (n=32)	42
Harrison County	47.5% (n=19)	52.5% (n=21)	40
Pontotoc/Union Cluster	60% (n=9)	40% (n=6)	15

Table 4 below reflects the agency’s performance regarding Questions A, B, and C of Item 13 on the OSRI which measures concerted efforts by the agency to involve the child, mother, and father in case planning activities. This information is from case reviews conducted in the three 2018 Mississippi CFSR sites from September 2017 through March 2018 and reflects the “Yes” answers from those questions:

Table 4

Item 13A, B, C: The agency made concerted efforts to actively involve the child/mother/father in the case planning process.		
HINDS COUNTY	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Cases
“Yes” – Child(ren)	63.64% (n=7)	30.43% (n=7)
“Yes” - Mother	20% (n=2)	38.46% (n=10)
“Yes” - Father	14.29% (n=1)	20% (n=3)
HARRISION COUNTY	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Cases
“Yes” – Child(ren)	50% (n=4)	48% (n=12)
“Yes” - Mother	42.86 (n=3)	61.54% (n=16)
“Yes” - Father	40% (n=2)	33.33% (6)
PONTOTOC/UNION CLUSTER	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Cases
“Yes” – Child(ren)	50% (n=1)	71.43% (n=5)
“Yes” - Mother	66.67% (n=2)	75% (n=9)
“Yes” - Father	50% (n=1)	70% (n=7)

The data in the tables above from the baseline reviews conducted by the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit using the OSRI since September 2017 show the state needs continued improvement in this area in many locations of the state regarding its foster care and in-home cases. Often, in foster care cases, the parent from whom the child is removed is engaged in this effort, but the absent parent (oftentimes, the father) is not. Regarding in-home cases, improvement in engaging all family members needs to be an ongoing and consistent effort statewide.

Item 21: Periodic Reviews

How well is the case review system functioning to ensure that a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or administrative review?

Please provide relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information that show a periodic review occurs as required for each child no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or administrative review.

RESPONSE:

Mississippi has a designated Youth Court Judge or referee for every county within the state. The youth courts are responsible for the oversight of every child that enters state custody. Many of the courts hold a hearing and issue a resulting court order at six and twelve months after the date of custody. Mississippi's Department of Child Protection Services administers periodic reviews for all children who remain in the custody of the state within every six months. The periodic review is referred to in Mississippi as the County Conference. A report is submitted to the Youth Court as a result of each periodic review. That report is entitled "Youth Court Hearing and Review Summary" and it includes the periodic review information as well as other state and federal mandated determinations. The Youth Court can adopt the periodic review and issue a judicial finding.

The Foster Care Review Unit is responsible for conducting the periodic review process. Foster Care Review is a subdivision of the larger Continuous Quality Improvement Unit. Oversight of the program, including territory assignments fall under the duties of the Foster Care Review Director. To ensure all children receive a timely review, the FCR Director maintains a spreadsheet that lists all children who leave and enter custody. The spreadsheet is designed to calculate the due date of a county conference five months after the date of custody to ensure that the review is held by the sixth month. Monthly assignments are provided to Foster Care Reviewers by reconciling the master excel spreadsheet with the “Pending Conference Reviews Report: MWPCRMMD”.

This spreadsheet is reconciled weekly to distinguish children entering and leaving custody. The data for children entering and leaving custody is obtained from the MDCPS SharePoint/Focus on Data site. Prior to the focus on data functionality, these data were obtained from the following reports: “Children Starting Custody by Transaction Date MWZCTD2D” and “Children Leaving Custody by Transaction Date MWZCTD1D”.

Once assignments are made, the Foster Care Reviewers begin development of the monthly schedules to be compiled into County and Regional schedules. These schedules are uploaded to the MDCPS SharePoint site monthly for easy access by all MDCPS employees. MDCPS staff and supervisors directly responsible for the casework are notified of the date and time of the scheduled county conference through an electronic notification in the MACWIS system as soon as the reviewer enters the date and time of the conference. The Foster Care Reviewer enters the date and time of the conference several weeks in advance. The assigned worker and ASWS are expected to send invitations to mandated participants (*Foster Care Review Policy is attached*).

Report “SZTACR Timeliness of County Conference Frequency Report Detail” provides a rolling year timeframe of the timeliness of the county conference for each child who remains in custody. This report is utilized by the FCR Director to reconcile the spreadsheet and ensure all children receive a periodic review. 88.56% of the reviews were timely during the rolling year period 05-01-2017 to 04-30-2018. Several factors impacted the Foster Care Review unit’s ability to hold a conference for every child during that timeframe including, but not limited to: a lengthy data collection instrument tied to the *Olivia Y* settlement agreement, loss of Foster Care Review staff,

the number of children in custody, and a backlog of cases that were added to reviewer assignments. The Foster Care Review unit discontinued the use of the data collection instrument previously used for *Olivia Y* in March 2017. The focus for the remainder of 2017 was to address the backlog of cases that had not received a timely review. The backlog of cases was successfully addressed by December 2017 and assignments are currently made and reviews are being held on the 6-month schedule. Report SZTACR for the current month shows 92.97% of the cases had a timely periodic review (*Also known as the county conference*). We assert this item as a strength.

Item 22: How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that, for each child, a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

RESPONSE:

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services captures court detail information in the child's electronic file (MACWIS). Report "SZTPHR Timeliness of Permanency Hearing" captures the data entered by DCPS staff detailing permanency hearings. Report SZTPHR is based on the date of the court hearing. This is a rolling year report. The most recent report covers the timeframe from 1/1/2017-12/31/17. The state summary for this report indicates that 52.98% (n=4,954) children had a timely permanency hearing (and subsequent hearings). Timely and accurate data entry affects the information in this report as well as difficulties faced by county staff to obtain timely court orders. As court data is not consistently collected and stored statewide, a review of available data regarding statewide performance leads the state to assess this item as an area needing improvement.

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services collaborates with the Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts and the Mississippi Attorney General's Office to address court improvement through an ongoing workgroup. The three departments collaborate to address a variety of ongoing court related issues including, but not limited to, timely court hearings and receiving court orders timely. The Administrative Office of Courts Youth Court Division utilizes a web based application called "MYCIDS" (Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System) to manage and track court hearings and reviews. DCPS staff can access MYCIDS to obtain or view court orders that are available. Two factors that affect timely court order entry are:

youth courts not fully utilizing MYCIDS and not using MYCIDS court orders. A Jurist in Residence works directly with AOC to supplement the ongoing training for youth courts to utilize MYCIDS effectively. The Jurist in Residence works directly with courts that are not holding timely permanency hearings.

The Foster Care Review Program manages the six-month administrative review for every child in custody and remains in custody for ongoing six-month periods. These reviews take place every six months of custody. Recommendations regarding areas needing improvement are made with each review. The Foster Care Reviewer is required to check the child's paper file, the electronic file (MACWIS) and MYCIDS for all court hearings and court orders. If a permanency hearing is overdue, the Foster Care Reviewer recommends that the county petition the court for a review hearing. This recommendation, along with other areas requiring follow-up, is submitted to the county Area Social Work Supervisor.

Item 23: How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that the filing of termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions? Please provide relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information showing that filing of TPR proceedings occurs in accordance with the law.

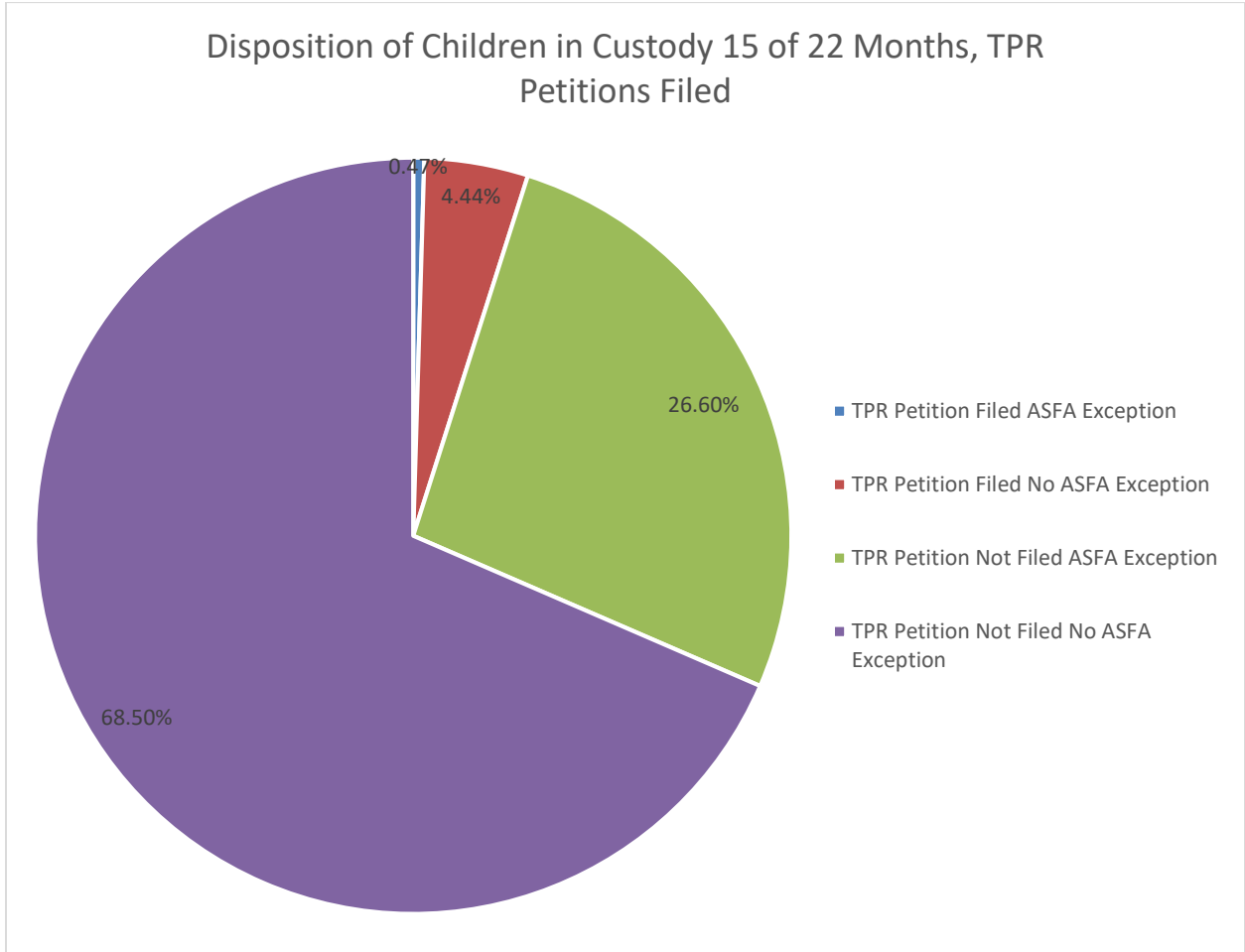
RESPONSE:

Court Petitioned for Termination of Parental Rights

We assert this item as needing as area needing improvement. Once the request for TPR has been submitted by the social worker, it is reviewed for accuracy and completeness, then transmitted to the office of the Attorney General for filing with the court. For children in custody on 02/28/2018, of those children who had been in custody at least 15 of the past 22 months, 4.91% have had a TPR Petition filed with the youth court. Another 26.6% have not had a TPR Petition filed but do have an ASFA Exception recorded in the case file, and 68.5% have not had a TPR Petition filed and do not have an ASFA Exception recorded in the case file.

There are currently no concerns or issues about documentation of TPR exceptions/compelling reasons. Region VII-E has had some issues with cases being returned by the Attorney General's office because of procedural defects or insufficient reasonable efforts being made to reunify parents with children in custody. The procedural defects include parents not receiving proper notice of adjudication hearings. Insufficient reasonable efforts have included a lack of proper documentation or a lack of support from MDCPS in assisting parents with working service plans. There have also been issues with parents not being allowed proper time to work on service agreements before Termination of Parental Rights packets are forwarded to State Office or the

Attorney General's office. These issues can cause TPR filings to be less timely, since often packets must be returned to the county for these concerns to be rectified. The TPR unit does not track the length of time from a child's permanent plan becoming adoption to the date the TPR packet is received at State Office, so information on compliance with the 30-day time period is unavailable.



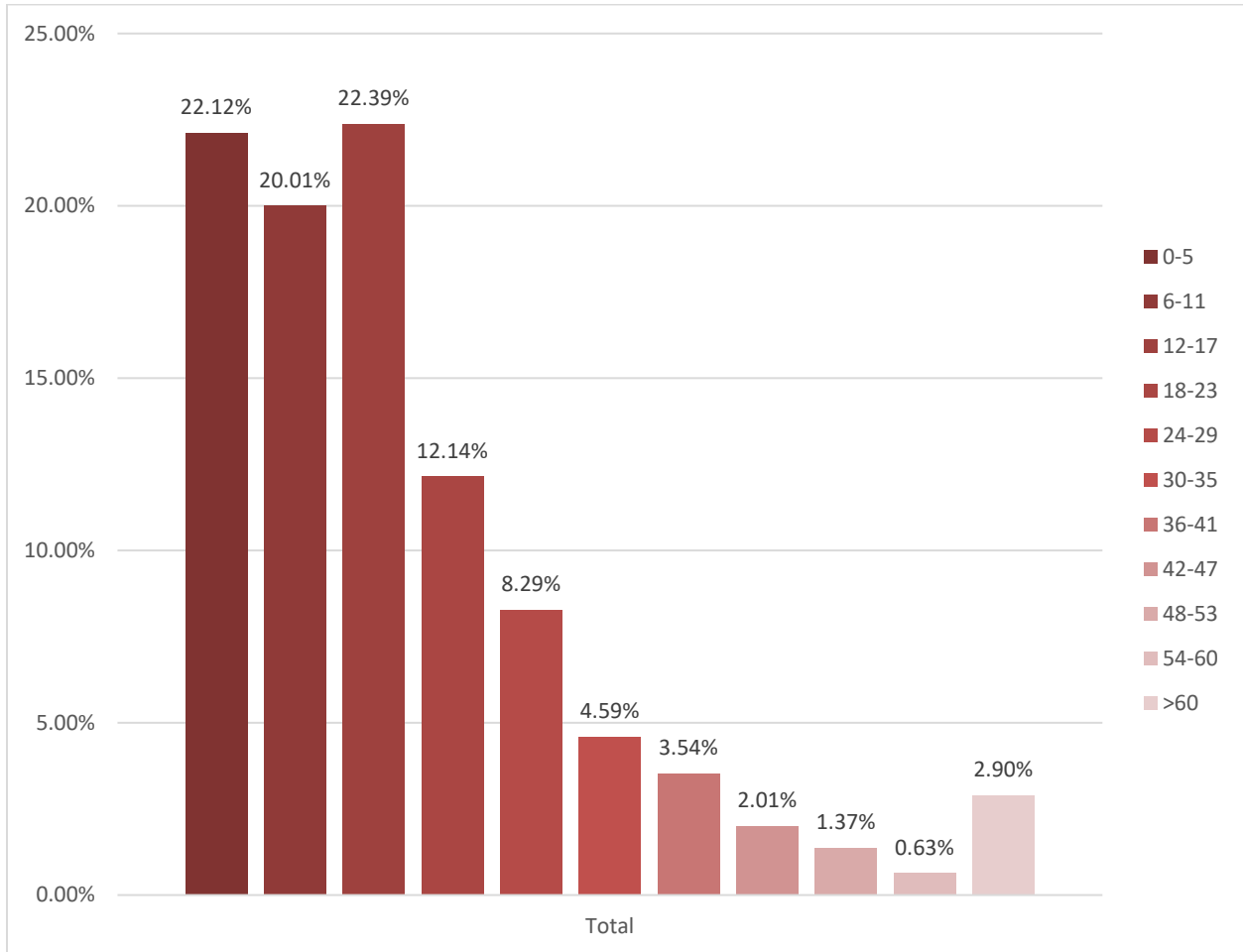
MDCPS Termination of Parental Rights Process

<p>A TPR referral may be initiated for 1 of 5 reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. when a child under 3 has been in custody 6 months, primary caretaker has not complied with the family service plan, and there are no compelling reasons to extend the 6-month timeframe 2. when a child of any age has been in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months 3. when a court has determined a child to be abandoned infant 4. when a parent has been convicted of rape, sexual battery, touching for lustful purposes, etc. 5. when a court of jurisdiction orders MDCPS to proceed with TPR 	
<p>When either of the aforementioned conditions exist, a recommendation is made to youth court in the permanency hearing. If the judge agrees with TPR recommendation, the child's permanent plan is changed to Adoption, and TPR is ordered.</p>	<p>timeframes vary depending on the situation that warranted TPR</p>
<p>The TPR Packet/Request is initiated and submitted to PSS/TPR Unit at State Office.</p>	<p>within 30 calendar days of the permanent plan becoming Adoption</p>
<p>The TPR Packet is received/reviewed in PSS/TPR Unit, and either 1) the packet is forwarded to the AG's office for processing or 2) or additional information is requested to address deficiencies in the packet. If there are no deficiencies identified, the TPR packet is forwarded to the AG's office.</p>	<p>within 5 business days of receiving the packet in PSS/TPR Unit</p>
<p>The AG's Office reviews the packet and either 1) files a petition for TPR or 2) notifies PSS/TPR Unit of legal deficiencies with the packet.</p>	<p>within 30 calendar days of PSS/TPR Unit submitting the packet to the AG's office</p>
<p>Once the petition has been filed, the AG's office requests a court hearing date.</p>	<p>Time frames vary from county to county</p>

After the court hearing is held, the AG's office provides PSS/TPR Unit with the judgment terminating parental rights.	Time frames vary due to judgments not being readily available in some counties
Once judgment is received, PSS/TPR Unit requests a legal clearance from the AG's office.	Within 3 business days of receiving the judgment in PSS/TPR Unit
The AG's office completes the legal clearance and returns it to PSS/TPR Unit.	Time frames vary, usually within 10 business days

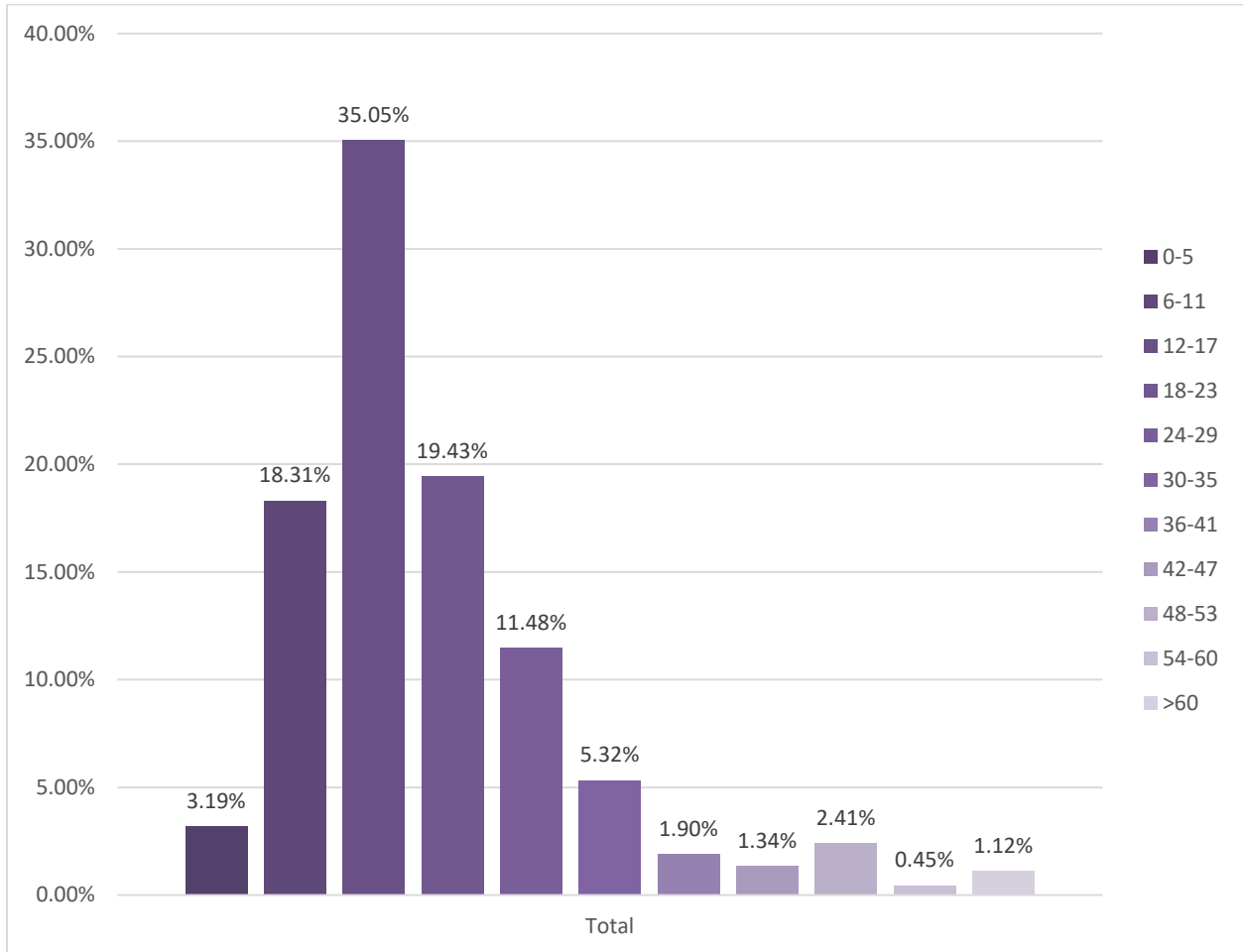
Length of Time to Begin Permanent Plan of Adoption

Of all children in custody on 02/28/2018, of those children whose permanent plan is Adoption (representing 59.65% of children in custody at least 15 of the past 22 months), 59.40% of those children had a permanent plan of Adoption initiated within 15 months of the initiation of state custody.



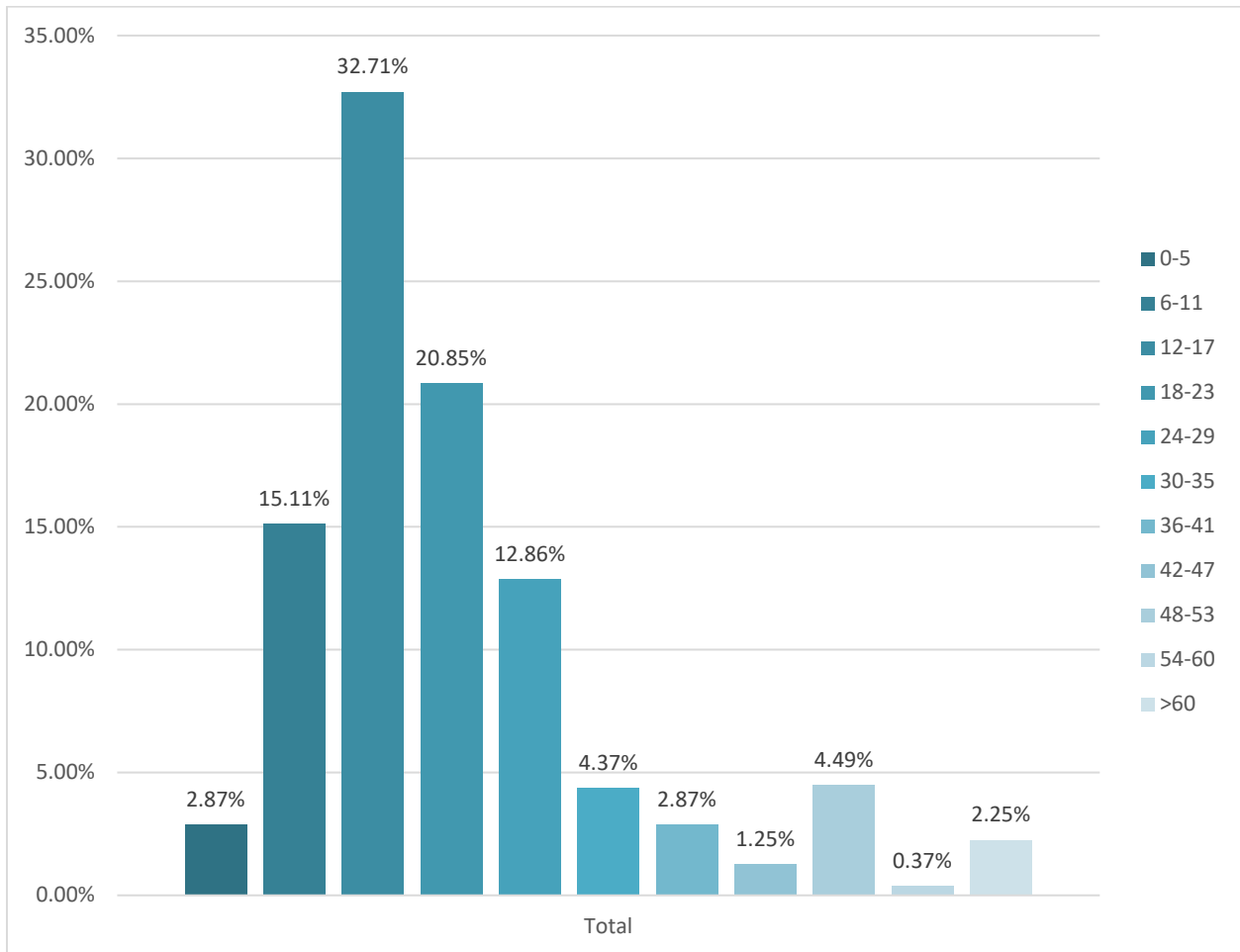
Length of Time to TPR Request Submission by Social Worker

Of all children in custody on 02/28/2018, of those children who have had a request for Termination of Parental Rights submitted for approval by the social worker (representing 23.06% of children in custody at least 15 of the past 22 months), 78.98% of those children had a request for Termination of Parental Rights submitted within 15 months of the initiation of state custody.



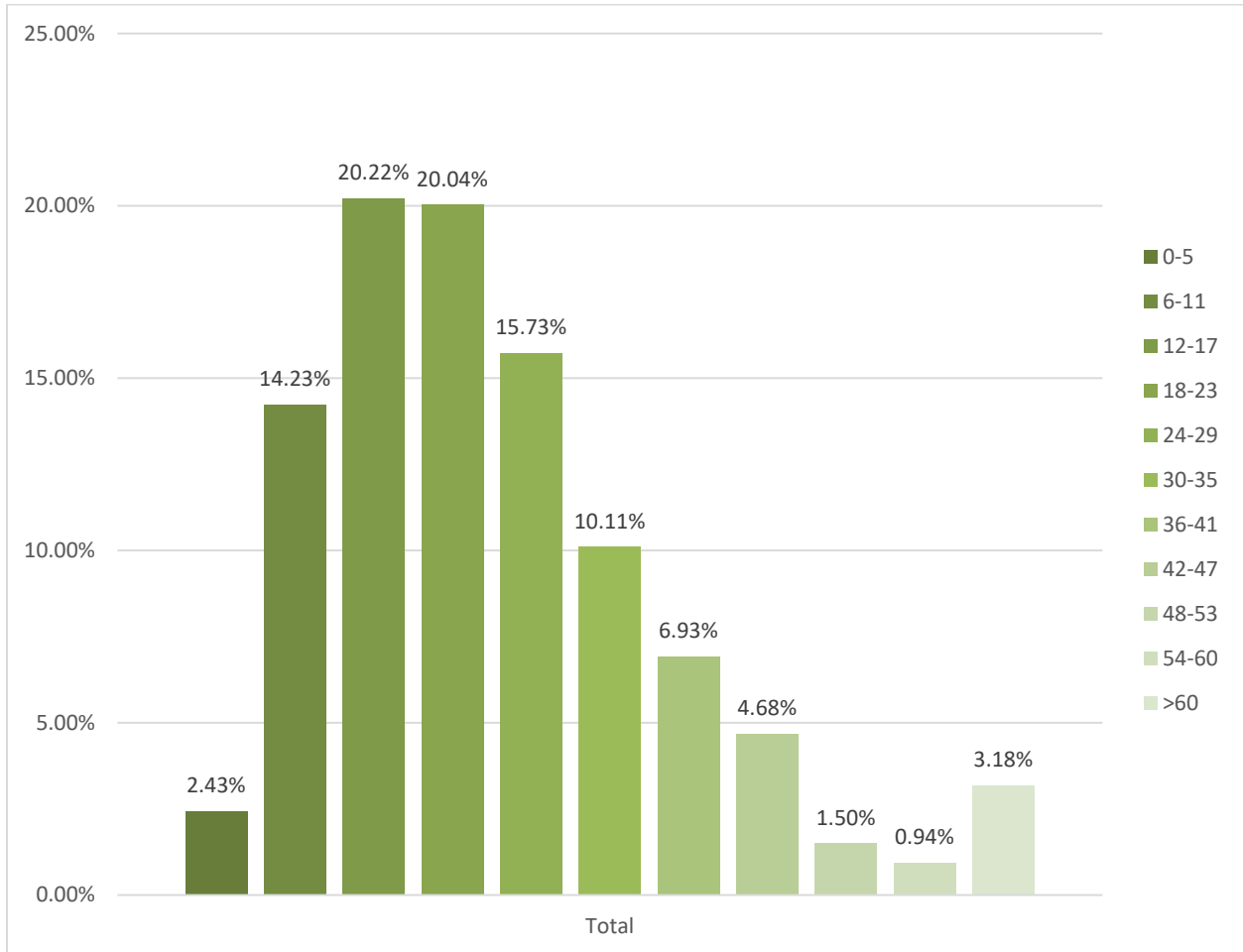
Length of Time to TPR Request Submission to AG

Of all children in custody on 02/28/2018, of those children who have had a request for Termination of Parental Rights submitted to the attorney general (representing 10.07% of children in custody at least 15 of the past 22 months), 76.34% of those children had a request for Termination of Parental Rights submitted to the AG within 15 months of the initiation of state custody, and 86.16% were submitted prior to 24 months in custody.



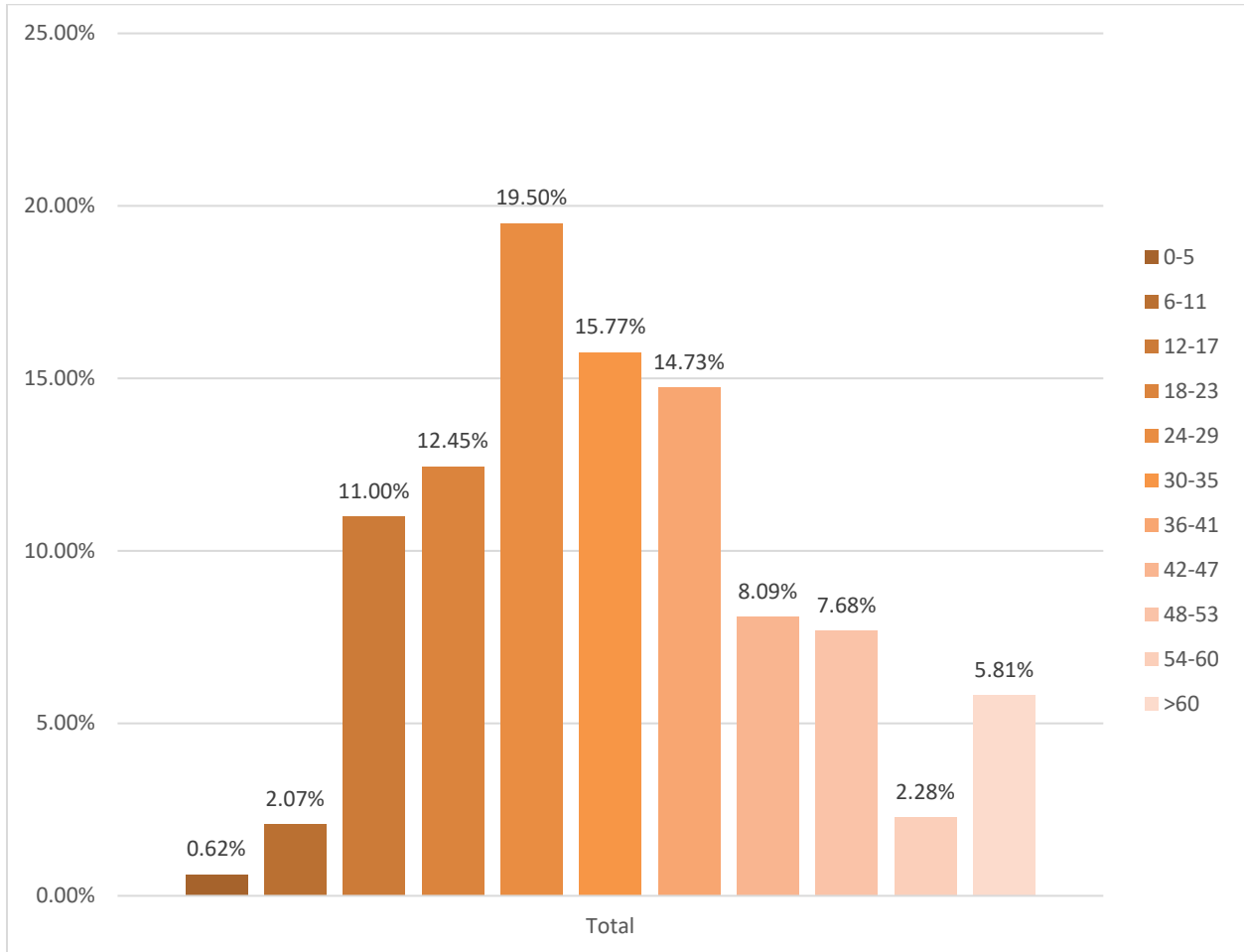
Length of Time to TPR Petition Filing

Of all children in custody on 02/28/2018, of those children who have had a TPR Petition filed with the court (representing 4.91% of children in custody at least 15 of the past 22 months), 80.98% of those had a TPR Petition filed with the court within 15 months of the initiation of state custody.



Length of Time to Termination of Parental Rights

Of all children in custody on 02/28/2018, of those children who are legally free for adoption (representing 17.29% of children in custody at least 15 of the past 22 months), 25.87% of those were legally freed within 15 months of the initiation of state custody.



Recent Events Impacting Termination of Parental Rights

MDCPS, as the Mississippi Department of Human Services' Division of Family and Child Services, operated under existing Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) statute since 2007. House Bill 1240, passed by the 2016 Mississippi Legislature changed existing statutes extensively. Changes included the process, grounds for termination, forms, and the court in some instances. Additionally, there was no stipulation for retroactivity. House Bill 1240 became law immediately upon Governor's signature, and it essentially halted all TPR activity that was in-process at that time.

Due to concerns voiced by attorneys, judges, MDCPS, and families, another bill was passed in the 2017 Mississippi Legislature's Regular Session and was signed into law. This bill opened avenues that were closed by HB 1240 to move children to TPR. As a direct result of the amended statute, both Court and MDCPS systems have been overwhelmed by the influx of TPR cases that need to be processed and heard.

As of August 2017, MDCPS had approximately 1500 children with a permanent plan of Adoption, pending TPR. In efforts to manage, monitor, and ensure movement of these cases, the Permanency Support Services Unit (PSS) has implemented the following tracking mechanisms:

- An electronic tracking process called "Footprints" has been instituted that tracks the process from submission of the TPR packet to the filing of the petition in court,
- Monthly, regional conference calls have been implemented to have the staff report to PSS where each individual child is in the process and what steps can be taken to move the case forward,
- A new TPR Unit has been developed in the Permanency Support Services unit with the expressed responsibility of processing TPR packets and ensuring that they are correct and ready for advancement to the Attorney General's office for review and filing.
- PSS is working closely with MACWIS Systems Analysts and is monitoring data through regular reporting to ensure progress.

Efforts to Improve Performance

In August 2017, to improve statewide performance on the filing of Termination of Parental Rights proceedings and to facilitate more timely adoptions, the MDCPS Adoption and Licensure Unit initiated a process of review for children with a permanency plan of Adoption. Regularly scheduled conference calls with the MDCPS regions responsible for the adoption cases were

held, and for each child where TPR had not occurred, workers clarified the status of the TPR filing, identified barriers to progress, and assigned next steps to be taken. For each child where TPR had occurred and child was legally free for adoption, they clarified the status of adoption proceedings, identified barriers to progress, and assigned next steps. In these calls, MDCPS coordinated with the Attorney General's office to ensure that TPR filings are complete and accurate and that these requests are filed with the court in a timely manner. Resulting from the first round of these efforts (from 08/15/2017 – 10/02/2017), 148 children had parental rights terminated, and the number of children with TPR filings submitted by a social worker increased by 79.

Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child?

RESPONSE:

Overall, notice of hearings is an area needing improvement. It is considered a strength that MDCPS and Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts continue to collaborate to interface the respective electronic systems to collect and share data. Improvements in the two systems, however, are needed to consistently collect and analyze data regarding notification of hearings. MDCPS does not currently have a database to collect data regarding notice of hearings.

It is considered a strength that MDCPS has written policy and process to guide notification of hearings and reviews. Mississippi Code is also cited within policy to ensure understanding of the expectations of the court as it relates to notice of hearings and reviews. Mississippi Code of 1972 Section 43-21-603(5)(e) states that if a child has been adjudicated a neglected child or an abused child, before entering a disposition order, the youth court shall consider, among others, relevant testimony and recommendations, where available, from the foster parent of the child, the grandparents of the child, the guardian *ad litem* of

the child, representatives of any private care agency that has cared for the child, the family protection worker or family protection specialist assigned to the case, and any other relevant testimony pertaining to the case.

MDCPS policy directs staff (county of responsibility worker) to invite parents and/or legal guardians, foster, adoptive or relative-care parents, and grandparents to the review hearings, and any proceedings held with respect to the child in foster care pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. Section 43-21-603(5)(e), and others who may have relevant testimony may be invited.

Section D (Foster Care) Mississippi DFCS Policy Revised 05/24/16-Final Effective 06/23/16 pages 120-121 reads:

Who Should Be Invited

DCPS is directed to invite parents and/or legal guardians, foster, adoptive or relative-care parents, and grandparents to the review hearings, and any proceedings held with respect to the child in foster care pursuant MISS. CODE ANN. § 43-21-603(5) (e). However, others who may have “relevant testimony” may be invited:

- Child
- Parent(s)-birth, legal, putative, primary caretaker, adoptive or Resource Parents
- Relatives with legal custody or other custodial adults
- Extended family members
- Assigned Worker and supervisor
- County Prosecuting Attorney
- Attorney for the child and/or GAL (Guardian Ad Litem)
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- Law enforcement officers
- Service providers
- Other witnesses

Worker’s Responsibilities for Hearings and Notification of Hearings:

(Some courts require this to be handled differently. It is advisable to check with your court for any local rules that are applicable.)

Notification Types include the following:

- Telephone Call
- Letter
- Summons and/or Subpoena
- Face-to-face notification

Documentation should be provided to the court by the caseworker regarding who provided notice and what type of notification was used.

Training:

In Clinical Supervisory Training, the roles of ASWS are addressed in the court process. This is considered a strength. Training on this topic is conducted on the morning of the third day on page 64 of the facilitator's guide. Discussion includes that the role of an ASWS is to ensure that the worker is prepared for court, the worker has prepared the families for court, and that the workers have invited the:

- Child
- Parent(s)-birth, legal, putative, primary caretaker, adoptive or Resource Parents
- Relatives with legal custody or other custodial adults
- Extended family members
- Assigned worker and supervisor
- County prosecuting attorney
- Attorney for the child and/or GAL
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- Law enforcement officers
- Service providers
- Other witnesses

There is also an activity in which the participants' role play staffing a case with a worker before court. The goal is to demonstrate appropriate topics to discuss during the staffing; to include who all has been invited and who all has been prepared for court hearings.

County Conferences:

Section D Foster Care Mississippi DFCS Policy Revised 05/24/16-Final Effective 06/23/16 pages 111-117 cover the County Conference/Periodic Administrative Review. All children/youth in the custody of the state receive a county conference/periodic review within every 6 months of custody as long as they remain in custody. The following information is noted in DCPS Policy: A County Conference is a key element in Family Centered Practice. County Conferences give the family a formal opportunity to discuss the child's permanent plan, discuss what the parents have accomplished on their own Family Service Plans and state their ideas and future plans. The COR should discuss the Foster Care Review (FCR) process with all families of children in DFCS custody, preferably during the FTM held within thirty (30) calendar days of the opening of the case or during a subsequent FTM. If the grandparents and placement providers are not present at the FTM when the FCR process is discussed, the COR Worker shall discuss the process with these parties either by phone or letter. The parent, the child, and other participants will be encouraged to share their thoughts and plans with the Reviewer and the group. Every participant will be given an opportunity to be heard and to ask questions. The Foster Care Reviewer will take notes of what is said by each participant so that a summary of what is discussed can be documented in the Youth Court Hearing and Review Summary (YCHRS) and provided to the court.

DCPS policy also outlines the federally mandated purpose of the County Conference/FCR process which includes the following:

Relevant testimony and recommendations from the Resource Parent of the child, the grandparents of the child, the GAL of the child, representatives of any private care DFCS which has cared for the child, the social Worker assigned to the case, and any other relevant testimony pertaining to the case.

As a result of the FCR, mandated determinations are made based on the administrative review of the case, comments made during the County Conference, assessments and recommendations made by the COR.

The County of Responsibility (COR) must invite the following persons through written invitation to the child's County Conference ten calendar days prior to the conference:

- All of child's parents (including alleged or putative fathers). If any parent's whereabouts are unknown, diligent efforts to locate him/her must be documented and an invitation mailed to the last known address. These efforts include but are not limited to:

- Contacting relatives;
 - Sending a letter addressed to the parent in care of a relative at the relative's address;
 - Checking with the Division of Economic Assistance (including MAVERICS) and the Division of Child Support (including METSS and Parent Locator services);
 - Searching the telephone directory and the city directory;
 - Contacting all local law enforcement offices; and
 - Using the internet to check for location of incarcerated parents (www.mdoc.state.ms.us, then select inmate search).
- The subject child(ren) (regardless of age), must be allowed to attend if they want to; however, they are not required to attend.
 - All of the child(ren)'s grandparents shall be invited to participate in the County Conference. MISS. CODE ANN. § 43-15-13(5) (f), provides that grandparents of the child(ren) should be present at the review to give relevant testimony. DCPS shall take reasonable steps, including written notice, to ensure the participation of the child, parents, caregivers, and relevant professionals in the review.
 - The child's GAL and/or child's attorney must be invited to participate in the County Conference.
 - The County of Service (COS) must be invited to participate in the County Conference if the child is placed outside the COR. The Resource Worker/Adoption Worker shall attend the conference and provide information regarding the child.
 - Any other agency staff providing services for the child.

No attorneys, except those representing the child(ren) in DCPS custody, are invited. The only attorneys permitted to attend the County Conference are the attorney for the child and/or the attorney(s) for the parents.

Exceptions to Invitations

Invitations should not be sent to parents who have voluntarily surrendered their parental rights or whose parental rights have been terminated by court action. MISS. CODE ANN. § 43-15-13 (10) refers to exception to written notice.

When the parent has voluntarily surrendered parental rights, or had parental rights terminated by court action, his/her parents (who would be grandparents to the child) do not have to be invited but the COR may choose to invite these grandparents. However, grandparents who have the child placed with them

must be invited (as placement providers) even if the parents have voluntarily surrendered their parental rights or had their parental rights terminated by court action.

"No Contact" Orders

If there is a standing judicial “no contact”, the foster child must still be invited to and allowed to attend and participate in the County Conference, but not at the same time as the County Conference to which the parents are invited. When there is a no contact order, the County of Responsibility and the Foster Care Reviewer must coordinate to schedule at a different time a separate County Conference to which the child will be invited.

Time Frames for Invitations

Ten (10) calendar days prior written notice of the upcoming County Conference is required to for all parties. Copies of the invitations should be placed in the paper file. If all parents and grandparents have not been identified on either the Relationships icon in MACWIS or on Form 410 Family Resources for Children, the caseworker shall, on the copies of the invitations filed in the paper record, indicate the relationship to the child of each person invited.

DCPS does not have any quantitative data related to who was invited to the county conference. The Foster Care Reviewer does provide direct feedback and recommendations to the Area Social Work Supervisor at the conclusion of each county conference. That feedback is captured in the child’s electronic case file in a section entitled PAD (Periodic Administrative Determination). If all required participants were not notified of the county conference, recommendations to rectify this prior to the next conference are noted in the PAD.

The following is the template of the MACWIS-generated letter that is mailed to participants:

NAME OF COUNTY AND ADDRESS

Month/ Day/Year

Name of Parent/grandparents/resource parents/GAL

RE: Name of child

Dear

You are invited to attend a Foster Care Review hearing on _____Enter DATE_____. This county conference is concerning ___NAME of foster child (ren)_____, and his/her permanent plan. The hearing will be held at the _LOCATION AND TIME____ (A.M/P.M). We would appreciate your attendance and input regarding permanency plans for _____name of child(ren)_____. You may submit a letter to the address listed above if you are unable to attend and wish to make comments to be recorded for the court's consideration. This review is NOT a court hearing, however, the testimony provided during the conference will be provided to the court to aide in making decisions about the child's best interest.

Please feel free to contact our office at OFFICE NUMBER if you need additional information regarding this hearing.

Sincerely,

Worker's name Worker's title

Approved by:

Area Social Work Supervisor

cc: DHS file

Parents' Rights and Responsibilities:

Item 10 of the "NOTICE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN'S RIGHTS (PLACEMENT CASES) states, "Parents have the right to participate in your child's county conferences and court hearings". (Copy Attached)

Administrative Office of Courts Notice of Hearings:

The information below was provided by the Administrative Office of Courts (a Division of the Mississippi Supreme Court) through their MYCIDS (Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System). This information shows that 462 subpoenas were issued from October 1, 2017 to May 14, 2018 to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers in order to provide them notice of any

hearings with respect to any foster child in their care. MDCPS currently has no data collection regarding notification of hearings. Collaboration with the Administrative Office of Courts to assess the viability of interface between the MYCIDS and MACWIS systems continues as well as collaboration to ensure that all Youth Courts consistently utilize the MYCIDS system.

Of the 462 parties provided a subpoena to appear in court on behalf of the child in their care:

- 9% were provided to Adoptive Fathers
- 14% were provided to Foster Fathers
- 6% were provided to Grandmother – Maternal Custodian
- 2% were provided to Grandmother – Paternal Custodian
- 36% were provided to Guardians
- 13% were provided to Adoptive Mothers
- 19% were provided to Foster Mothers

Party Notified	Count of PARTY SUMMONS COUNT
FATHER - ADOPTIVE	40
ADJUDICATION	6
DISPOSITION	3
OTHER	6
PERMANENCY	2
SHELTER	4
(blank)	19
FATHER - FOSTER	65
ADJUDICATION	14
DETENTION	1
DISPOSITION	11
OTHER	4
PERMANENCY	8
REVIEW - PERIODIC	2
SHELTER	14
(blank)	11
GRANDMOTHER-MATERNAL CUSTODIAN	30
ADJUDICATION	6
DISPOSITION	4
OTHER	1
PERMANENCY	3

Party Notified	Count of PARTY SUMMONS COUNT
REVIEW - PERIODIC	1
SHELTER	5
(blank)	10
GRANDMOTHER-PATERNAL CUSTODIAN	10
ADJUDICATION	1
DISPOSITION	1
OTHER	2
PERMANENCY	1
SHELTER	1
(blank)	4
GUARDIAN	168
ADJUDICATION	35
DISPOSITION	30
DRUG COURT HEARING	1
OTHER	20
PERMANENCY	17
POST DISPOSITION REVIEW	3
REVIEW - PERIODIC	4
SHELTER	30
SHOW CAUSE	1
(blank)	27
MOTHER - ADOPTIVE	60
ADJUDICATION	11
DISPOSITION	5
OTHER	7
PERMANENCY	4
SHELTER	9
(blank)	24
MOTHER - FOSTER	89
ADJUDICATION	18
DETENTION	1
DISPOSITION	16
FOSTER CARE REVIEW	1
OTHER	7
PERMANENCY	13
REVIEW - PERIODIC	2
SHELTER	17
(blank)	14
Grand Total	462

C. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Item 25: How well is the quality assurance system functioning statewide to ensure that it is (1) operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

RESPONSE:

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services' Quality Assurance System has made improvements in operating from a standpoint of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) by providing supports to all regions in the state. However, this item we assert as an area needing improvement.

The staff of the **Continuous Quality Improvement Unit** is distributed throughout MDCPS offices statewide, and there is no area within Mississippi where Continuous Quality Improvement review is not conducted. We are fully operating in the jurisdictions where services included in the State's CFSP are provided.

The Continuous Quality Improvement unit is primarily tasked with reviewing, measuring, reporting, and monitoring case practice in all other areas of the agency. We believe the CQI unit is functioning well to ensure the delivery of quality services are provided to the children and families through our review and rendering case specific feedback to the county staff. This unit is made up of three review teams, data analysts, customer service specialists, support staff, and administrators. It is the responsibility of all staff in the Continuous Quality Improvement unit to work with and provide monitoring, feedback, and support to other areas of the agency, collaborate with stakeholders and outside partners for purposes of gathering qualitative data, and to be available to assist wherever needed in moving the mission of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services forward and supporting the work of the front line, direct service staff.

Continuous Quality Improvement staff are assigned throughout the state and provide expert feedback and guidance in a variety of areas. Foster Care Review Staff, Evaluation and Monitoring Staff, and Safety Review Staff are primarily located in the MDCPS county offices, working alongside field operations staff to provide review and feedback of the work of the frontline, resource and adoption unit staff. Members of the Data Reporting Unit, the Consumer Solutions Unit, and the Director of Continuous Quality Improvement are all housed at the State Office in Jackson, and provide more technical and administrative support, develop and provide reports as needed to the agency, other agencies, federal partners, and others, and provide customer service to the families that are served by the agency to ensure that every family is given the best services possible, as well as to provide customer service to the Governor's Office, Legislators, other officials, and concerned citizens.

In completing its work, the Continuous Quality Improvement unit utilizes review instruments tested for validity and reliability so that we know that what we are measuring what is intended. Continuous Quality Improvement staff are well-versed in these instruments and determine strengths in practice and areas of needed improvement based on review outcomes, data reporting, and analytical and critical thinking. We believe that if we provide services in such a way that we are doing what is right by those we serve, we will meet our obligations to these different standards and be successful in supporting Mississippi children and families.

We review casework through a variety of lenses: federal standards, agency policy, state statute, and through the lens of how well we are following our practice model of Family-Centered Practice. These standards of practice ensure that children in foster care, and that children who remain within their own homes, receive quality services that protect their safety and well-being, and that when children do enter the custody of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, they are provided services to move them to timely permanence.

The **Foster Care Review Unit** reviews the cases of every child in foster care to determine that their safety, permanency, and well-being needs are being met. When they are not, the Foster Care Reviewers report their findings immediately to the regional and county leadership for corrective actions. There is a report of findings entered into the Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System (MACWIS), and supervisors are alerted by tickler that findings have been

entered. The unit also goes one step further to ensure appropriate follow-up by e-mailing the regional director to point out trends that are occurring within the regions.

Examples can be seen below:

MACWIS Notation:

PAD	Prev Pad / General	Initial	Placement	ICPC / Dev	Mental / Educ
Well Being / Case Plan	TPR / Adop	Ind Liv / Leg Hist + Perm	Parent Info	Res Plac / Supp Info	Comm / Recommend

Reviewer Comments / Recommendations

Jacob remains in a licensed resource home of Mr. and Mrs. Tyson since 7-24-17. He was asked to be moved due the previous resource parent loss of their child. He has been seen monthly in his placement setting as well as the resource parents. Documentation indicates there has been diligent efforts to have monthly contact with the parents. FCR did not locate an up to date medical in the file or MACWIS but the resource parent stated he was recently seen for the flu about three weeks ago. He has up to date dental and vision. The FSP & CFA were not updated timely and the expected date of achievement has expired. The FSP was not signed by the youth. The documented family team meetings this PUR is not detailed in MACWIS. The parents signed the up to date FSP on 11/1/17. The initial SAR remains incomplete as well as the 15 month SAR and the court tab needs

Send to County
Date: 11/15/2017 By: BEVERLY STRONG

Lock
Date: 11/15/2017 By: BEVERLY STRONG

ASWS Case Staffing Comments

ASWS will staff the areas of concerns with the worker.

Date: 11/20/2017 By: SCHRITA ARCHIE

QA

E-Mail Notification:

Regional Director:

We have been entering a number of safety corrective actions for County. I realize there have been staffing issues there and it will take some time for them to stabilize. I do want to share the feedback from my Reviewer in that county and request some assistance from the two of you to help us reduce the number of CA's.

- *Most of the corrective actions submitted are due to a lack of documentation of contacts with foster children, resource parents (no contacts documented for a number of months). The Reviewer has noted in many of these that the worker tells her the children have been seen they just can't get the documentation in.*
- *There is no participation by parents, resource parents, grandparents in the conferences. This is an indication that letters may not be sent/participants may not be encouraged to attend. If we had more participation, we could verify that contacts are being made and that the issue is solely a documentation/time management issue. That would reduce the CA's being sent to (Regional Director) because they are no longer safety issues and we would be able to verify the contact and assessment of needs through our conversations with the parents and resource parents.*

- *The other area of practice concern is no verification of engagement/ diligent efforts being made to locate, identify, engage parents, foster parents, etc. No FTM's at all. The county could utilize the county conference for that FTM if we could just increase participation. This would at least provide a venue to discuss questions, clarify plans and provide information to our clients. The Reviewer would be able to document the discussions that have been taking place over the past five months and provide some verification of the work that is being done. The Reviewer states that most of the new workers (staff there for about a year) don't attend the FCR at all.*

We would like to support the efforts being made in County and we know this takes time after a crisis has occurred in staffing, etc. Thank you for your time and consideration to support increased participation as this is one way in which we feel we could be of assistance.

*Foster Care Review Director
MDCPS Continuous Quality Improvement Unit*

As of this date, Foster Care Review’s performance has increased to where only three percent of all children in MDCPS Custody are overdue for a foster care review conference, as seen below:



Similarly, the **Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (EMU)** also reviews cases on a random basis. These include foster care cases as well as in-home cases. The EMU reviews ensure safety, permanency, and well-being needs are being met. Each month, the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit reviews 42 cases (28 In-home cases and 14 Foster Care cases) in a different region of the state to measure for both compliance and quality of services. Furthermore, case members are

interviewed during these reviews to gain perspective and uncover the story behind the numbers. Gathering this qualitative data has shown to be most beneficial in telling the story of the casework being done within this agency. Once the review process is complete, data is extracted from the OMS by the Data Reporting Unit, and a report of findings is provided to the region under review. *An example of such a report is shown in Attachment A.*

In addition to case reviews and participant interviews, the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit has historically gathered additional stakeholder information by way of electronic surveys. Currently, that process is being re-evaluated and strengthened, so no new survey data collection is taking place. It is our intent to begin gathering survey information again once the surveys are re-developed and strengthened.

The Continuous Quality Improvement unit also assists in the monitoring and reporting on workloads and staffing needs. Workload monitoring is currently being managed by the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit, and these results are shared with field operations staff and management to help determine staffing needs and staff realignment when overstaffing is present. This feedback is vital to building the capacity to deliver services to those with whom we come into contact. The Evaluation and Monitoring unit checks workers' workloads to ensure all lines of service are in place and to determine if each worker is functioning within the established workload limits.

The Evaluation and Monitoring Unit also monitors the licensing process of relative resource providers who wish to provide foster care services to relative children who enter MDCPS custody. This monitoring and tracking of the licensing process has led to greater timeliness in the licensure process.

Both the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit and the Foster Care Review Unit consider the availability of resources to families to meet their needs, and encourage the participation of stakeholders in the review processes that they conduct.

The **Safety Review Unit** is primarily tasked with ensuring that proper policy and procedure is followed in investigations of maltreatment directed at children who are in the custody of MDCPS, and to provide Quality Assurance for all decisions to screen out a report of maltreatment of a child in MDCPS custody. By using well established review instruments, the

Safety Review Unit ensures the safety of all children in the custody of MDCPS is paramount, and that when reports of maltreatment of these children are made, they are thoroughly and completely investigated or there is a sound and appropriate reason to not investigate these reports. If the Safety Review Unit determines there is not sound reasoning to screen out (not investigate) a report, they resubmit the report for investigation by the appropriate unit. Child safety is always the determining factor.

The **Data Reporting Unit** produces regular, ongoing reports, as well as ad-hoc reports, when requested, to show practice outcomes as well as progress or regression. The recently developed online 'Focus on Data' dashboard provides near real-time feedback to all staff members on how they are performing in differing areas of practice. *Examples of the Dashboard reports are shown in Attachment B.*

The data dashboard criteria selections provide information at the statewide level, and can also be drilled down to regional, county, unit, supervisor, or worker-level detailed reporting.

Additionally, the Data Reporting Unit is responsible for the management of all federal reporting, as well as the tracking of Performance Improvement Plans related to federal reporting as a corrective measure. MDCPS (formally MDHS) had for years been out of compliance with AFCARS Element 57, regularly failing to meet its standard, but because of AFCARS PIP Monitoring conducted by the Data Reporting Unit, our agency has passed the previous three reporting periods for Element 57. On-going monitoring leads us to believe that we will continue to be successful in this element as we move forward.

The **Consumer Solutions Unit** serves the agency in managing inquiries, consumer complaints and issues, concerns brought to our attention by elected officials, and by providing customer service and support to all who contact our agency seeking resolution or assistance with an issue or problem. The Consumer Solutions Unit routes calls and e-mails to appropriate parties within the agency, and they maintain a record of all interactions. When a complaint or concern is made, consumer solutions acts as a liaison to ensure that all issues are resolved and that the reporting party is apprised of actions taken.

All units within Continuous Quality Improvement area monitor for corrective actions by way of Footprints Tracking, SmartSheet Tracking, or AFCARS Improvement Plan Monitoring. When

issues are identified or reported to any of the Continuous Quality Improvement units, those issues are entered into one of the corrective action tracking mechanisms and are monitored until they are resolved appropriately. If an area of practice is not performing to an appropriate standard, that area is monitored until improvement has occurred, and often, the CQI Staff offers itself to assist in monitoring and helping to correct areas of needed improvement, regardless of the area of practice. It is our plan, however, to incorporate a more standardized mechanism of corrective action tracking into our forthcoming Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) when it is developed.

Evaluation of implemented measures is done by way of ongoing data reports, follow up reviews within the regions, and on-going foster care reviews. The data dashboard also can give staff a snapshot of how progress is or is not being made, so viewing these reports following the implementation of a measure can indicate the effectiveness of the implemented activity over a certain period.

We are aware that we need to strengthen our mechanism of monitoring performance improvement following reviews, and are working now to develop the capacity to monitor this as we move forward. It is our goal to regularly show progress in all areas of practice, and to give meaningful feedback and monitoring oversight to case practice so that performance is improved across the state.

In summary, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services has solid Quality Assurance practices in place to measure performance, provide feedback, identify strengths and areas of needed improvement, and track progress. However, MDCPS could still improve ongoing monitoring of Program Improvement Plans. As MDCPS has recently become our own agency, separate and apart from the oversight of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, we have expanded the roles of our Quality Assurance System. We are working diligently to provide information and follow up to all other areas of the agency to improve practice and provided the greatest services to those we serve. Because we do have areas needing improvement within the Quality Assurance System, these units will continue to serve as the driving force for such improvements throughout the agency.

D. STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

Item 26: How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that initial training is provided to all staff who delivers services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions?

RESPONSE:

The Office of Professional Development has aggressively revised and upgraded its approach and practice of providing training, workforce development and technical assistance to all MDCPS staff and providers. MDCPS asserts this area as a “Strength.”

Prior to February 28, 2018, all classroom training (including Pre-Service training for new employees) was delivered through contractual agreement with the University of Mississippi and Professional Development training coordinators around the state. The Office of Professional Development does not conduct provider training as MDCPS staff holds all case management responsibility for all open cases.

Beginning March 1, 2018, the structure of the office changed by merging the Practice Model Coaching team with the Training Coordinators. Therefore, for training purposes, the state has been divided into six substructures (areas) to better meet the training needs of staff. The areas encompass the regions as follows:

- Area 1 – Regions 1-North and 1-South
- Area 2 – Regions 2-East, 2-West and 4-North
- Area 3 – Regions 3-North, 3-South and 5-West
- Area 4 – Regions 4-South and 5-East
- Area 5 – Regions 6 and 7-West
- Area 6 – Regions 7-Central and 7-East

This merger was designed to give added support and continuity of support for staff as they come on board with the agency. In addition to this change, Professional Development now reports to the Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Human Resources. The joined team will deliver

all agency training moving forward. This office prepares MDCPS employees to assume their responsibilities and enhances their knowledge, skills, and abilities through many training opportunities. MDCPS has made a commitment to training and developing staff by providing training, workshops, coaching, mentoring and other learning opportunities to challenge and motivate them to perform their job responsibilities to the best of their ability. As a major part of the Pre-Service training, required of all newly hired caseworkers and supervisors, there is oversight from Professional Development on the new hires understanding and knowledge of the material. Each week in classroom training there is a competency based test administered to ensure staff have gained the knowledge taught in each week. In addition, in the On-the-Job-Training (OJT) weeks, a member of the Professional Development team meets with the new hire during the week to ensure they have grasped the knowledge and competencies required of each week. OJT is not complete until the trainee has shown they have the competencies for each week. As a part of this process, the new hire, the assigned Professional Development team member and the supervisor meet weekly to ensure that the transfer of knowledge is happening for the new hire. In addition, this begins the process of staffing with the supervisor to know what is going on with each new hire. OJT for each week is not marked complete in the learning management system until this is completed. In addition, following the completion of OJT, a member of the Professional Development team provides support to the new hire as they take their first cases to ensure they are supported in this process. In January 2018, MDCPS Professional Development launched a new Learning Management System (*Cornerstone*) to track and deliver training statewide. In addition, Cornerstone has the capacity to allow each participant to evaluate each training topic that is delivered. This is completed electronically and is a confidential process. An evaluation is linked to each learning object to gather data related to effectiveness, knowledge gained as well as instructor skills. An evaluation will be required of each participant of each learning object administered. Since the Cornerstone process began in January 2018, we have made minor adjustments along the way to improve the quality of the data. We will review the training evaluations quarterly and make necessary adjustments.

At the core of all MDCPS staff training is the Mississippi Child Welfare Practice Model. The focus of the Practice Model revolves around the family. At its most fundamental level, the practice model is concerned with assuring child safety and managing the risk of harm. The activities comprising the other components are designed to protect the child and support the

family's capacity to care for the child safely and appropriately, while also meeting the child's needs for permanency, stability, and well-being. It is important that the agency emphasize and support all components simultaneously. While each of the practice model components includes unique skills and activities and requires systemic supports to function, they are also highly interrelated and should be implemented in an integrated manner to be effective in improving outcomes for children and families. The components of the practice model encompass specific activities, roles, and responsibilities affecting the work of caseworkers, supervisors, Regional Directors, service providers, resource parents, and State Office support staff.

Cornerstone tracks all attendance and registration as well as delivers online training. This system allows us the opportunity to survey staff on their training as well as pull data for determining next steps. Historically, surveys have been in written format which made it difficult to gather solid reports. The Pre-Service training program is completely delivered by the Office of Professional Development. All newly hired frontline and supervisory staff are required to attend 270 hours of Pre-Service Training prior to obtaining a caseload. Only staff who successfully complete pre-service training may continue their employment with MDCPS. Any former MDCPS caseworker or supervisor who returns to the agency within five years does not have to repeat Pre-Service and their training requirement is waived. Pre-Service training is currently delivered in a model that combines on-the-job training (OJT) and classroom instruction. We are in the pilot phase of adding several online components, via Cornerstone, to the existing curriculum.

Completion of training for Week 1 is OJT followed by a week of classroom training. This cycle continues for a total of four week of OJT and 4 weeks of classroom training. A concern identified through surveys is that staff was not adequately prepared for the MACWIS system because they did not learn the system until the final week of training. To remediate this problem and provide more training in the case management system, MACWIS training has been interwoven into the classroom training. This will provide staff the opportunity to be involved in learning how to utilize the MACWIS case management system from the first week of classroom training and throughout their learning process. The pilot of this new schedule began in April 2018.

Training new hires is a partnership with the front-line supervisor, and involves frequent communication between the new hire, trainer and supervisor. When new staff is involved in the

OJT weeks, they are partnered with a caseworker who has completed Pre-Service training as well as their supervisor and a Training Coordinator. This team works weekly to ensure the experiences assigned in the material are complete and shadowing opportunities are in place to give the new hire an opportunity to see the casework being done while they are in a learning environment. Training staff and field supervisors share the major responsibility for this task. The competencies are outlined in each week of training. This guides the coaching for the new hire. The performance appraisal system is set up through Human Resources and is completed during the first 6 months of hire and then each year.

Each week of classroom training is concluded with a competency based exam that must be passed with a score of 70% or higher. If the new hire is unable to pass the test on the first attempt, they can retest. Failure to pass the test on the second test is grounds for termination.

The topics covered in each week of training are as follows:

- Week 1 OJT
 - **Building the Worker's Support Systems:** Orientation to the Agency's Mission, Vision, Values and MDCPS Code of Ethics; Orientation to the County Office/Agency; Orientation to Child Welfare Case Employee Duties; Orientation to the Roles within the County Office; Orientation to Employee Safety; Orientation to Office Safety Protocol; Meet Training Mentor; Meet OJT Coordinator and Practice Coach; Orientation to Job Shadowing
 - **On-line Courses:** Ethics, Strengths Based and Family Centered Practice, Child Maltreatment (Safety/Risk), Child Development
 - **Applying Policy to Practice:** Review MDCPS Policy Manual, Sections A and B; Review MDCPS Safety Manual; Review State of MS Employee Handbook
 - **Review of Practice:** Review of and Document Intake Reports; Review of initial assessment/investigation; Safety Assessment, Checklist and Plan for Children Risk Assessment

- Week 2 Classroom
 - **What is the Job of the Child Welfare professional?** Intake and investigation
- Week 3 OJT
 - **Applying Policy to Practice:** Read MDCPS Policy B and C; Documentation overview; CFA; Case planning and case management; supervision overview; CFA Practice Guide; Practice Model Guides
 - **On-line Courses:** Engagement; Strengths and Needs Assessment; Timely Case planning; Visualizing the Family and its support system
 - **Review of Practice:** Review CFA; In-home and/or custody case review; Observe weekly staffing; Observe family team meeting;
- Week 4 Classroom
 - **Prevention and In-Home Services**
- Week 5 OJT
 - **Building the Worker's Support Systems:** Orientation to meeting the needs of children in foster care and foster care review.
 - **Applying Policy to Practice:** Review policy sections C, D, E and H; Review working with the educational system practice guide
 - **On-line Courses:** Documentation; Cultural competency; Overview of court
 - **Review of Practice:** Review family team meetings, court reports, court hearings, home visits and visitation
 - **Working with clients:** Observe resource parents/employee engagement; visit a home; attend shelter hearing; attend adjudication/disposition hearing
- Week 6 Classroom
 - **Placement and Foster Care**
- Week 7 OJT
 - **Building the Worker's Support Systems:** Orientation to creating and maintaining connections and adoption

- **Applying Policy to Practice:** Review MDCPS Volume IV, Sections D, E and G; Review mobilizing appropriate services timely practice guides; review preserving and maintaining connections practice guide
- **On-line Courses:** Time management; Father involvement
- **Review of Practice:** Documentation of service provider; employee engagement; resource home evaluation; documentation of review hearing and permanency hearing
- **Working with Clients:** Observe service provider and employee engagement; resource home evaluation; attend a review hearing and a permanency hearing; go out on an afterhours call with a training mentor;
- Week 8 Classroom
 - **Permanency**

The Professional Development team is in weekly communication with the Human Resources team to ensure all newly hired staff is filtered in to the appropriate Pre-Service training class. HR sends weekly reports of agency hiring transactions that include newly hired staff are assigned in a class based on their hire date. This ensures all staff that needs to attend Pre-Service training is enrolled. The SmartSheet is utilized to track the matriculation of staff from initial training through completion. Completion of OJT and test scores are maintained in this database and certificates of completion are not issued until all tests are successfully passed, and OJT is complete.

Therefore, 100% of staff has completed training. In the July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017 year, 413 staff successfully completed the Pre-Service program. From July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018, we had 216 staff to successfully completed the program.

Item 27: How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that ongoing training is provided for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP?

Staff, for purposes of assessing this item, includes all contracted/non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

Staff, for purposes of assessing this item, a/so include direct supervisors of all contracted/non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

RESPONSE:

The Office of Professional Development delivers all required agency training including a new, revamped ongoing staff development and training. The provision of ongoing staff training is assessed as a Strength.

Prior to February 28, 2018, all classroom training was delivered through a contract with the University of Mississippi. Beginning March 1, 2018, the Office of Professional Development team expanded to include the Practice Model Coaches. The merged team will deliver all agency training moving forward. The required training, following initial training, for a supervisor is Clinical Supervisory Training (CST). This 40-hour class must be completed within 90 days of the supervisor being hired or promoted into the position. MDCPS's ongoing training requirement is that all caseworkers receive 20 hours of training and supervisors receive 12 hours for the period covering January 2018 – December 2018. Failure to complete these training requirements may result in disciplinary action. Compliance with the ongoing training requirements is tracked through Cornerstone with the enhanced capacity to drill down to county level to determine completion of the requirement. This is a new requirement and is being tracked through

Cornerstone. We will not have the data on this item until the end of the year. The training year runs from January 1 to December 31, 2018.

In addition to completion of the course, a test must be passed with a score of 70% or higher. The structure of the CST training is as follows:

Day One: What is the Job of the Child Welfare Supervisor? OJT Responsibilities; ASWS Role in the Investigation/Assessment, Family Team Meeting, Comprehensive Family Assessment

Day Two: Family Service Plans, Family Team Meetings, Case Staffing, Indirect/Direct Observation, Quality Visits Documentation, and Custody Cases

Day Three: Court, ICPC, Termination of Parental Rights, Reunification, Supervisory Administrative Review, and County Conference

Day Four: Administrative Duties of Supervisors, Independent Living Services, Performance Development System, Performance Improvement Plans, Trauma PTSD and Self-Care

Day Five: Administrative Duties of Supervisors, SEPF Folder (State employee personnel folder) and Personnel Folder (Setting up and maintaining), and a final test.

Prior to January 2018, ongoing training hours were tracked through a statewide tracking system operated by the State of Mississippi, not MDCPS. In this data system, we did not have the ability to produce reports. To remedy this problem MDCPS has procured a learning management system called Cornerstone that was launched January 1, 2018. Several online trainings have been created and are in the review process and several have already been launched in the first quarter of 2018. In 2018, mandatory training has been launched related to CARA (Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act), Adoption, Licensure, Active Shooter, State Personnel Board, and Termination of Parental Rights.

In the final quarter of 2017, the following ongoing training opportunities were delivered statewide: Self-Care, Mental Health, and Human Trafficking. For the period January through March 2018, the following ongoing training opportunities were delivered: Don't Take my Baby,

Exploring Protective Capacities in Parents and Caretakers; and Understanding Cultural Diversity in Child Welfare.

Further, MDCPS has continued to work with the Court Improvement Project and delivered training in Fall 2017 with the AOC (Administrative Office of Courts). Court training was also revised and delivered across the state as an ongoing training topic. Each of these court trainings further developed skills and collaboration with the court. In addition, the Mississippi Attorney General's Office developed and delivered training statewide specifically related to the new Termination of Parental Rights law in.

Training topics are chosen in partnership with the MDCPS Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations to meet the ever-evolving needs of the caseworkers and supervisors assigned to our 84 county offices statewide. With Cornerstone, we can now track and produce the needed reports as well as produce evaluation reports to determine the effectiveness of the training. The previous inability to provide reports and gather information in a uniform process created difficulty in making recommendations or knowing the level of involvement from the field and this has successfully been addressed and resolved through implementation of Cornerstone. MDCPS now has access to the data and can make more informed decisions about training needs.

Item 28: How well is the staff and provider training system functioning to ensure that training is occurring statewide 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 needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children?

RESPONSE:

MDCPS requires its foster and adoptive parents to complete between 15-20 hours of pre-service training prior to becoming licensed, and 10 hours of ongoing training yearly after licensure. We consider our foster and adoptive parent training program as a "Strength."

Currently, MDCPS is contracting with two providers to offer pre-service training to our foster and adoptive parents. The Family Resource Center of North Mississippi (FRC) provides this training in North Mississippi, and Mississippi Community Education Center (MCEC) provides this training in Central and South Mississippi. Training topics include the following:

- Characteristics of Children Served
- Separation and Attachment
- Developmental Stages
- Behavior Management
- Adoption Issues
- Child Safety Course
- First Aid/CPR
- Travel and Finance

Since contracts began July 1, 2017 and were renewed on January 1, 2018, FRC has provided pre-service training to approximately 479 foster and adoptive parents. MCEC has provided pre-service training to approximately 3,857 foster and adoptive parents. The county and contract agencies work together to create a schedule that works for all agencies. Each region has two pre-service trainings scheduled a month. Locations are rotated so training is accessible to all counties of each region, with consideration given to the geographic location of those attending a particular session. In larger counties, there is a justification for two trainings a month but in some smaller regions, one training per month is sufficient. Trainings, however, are scheduled for twice a month for a backup in case registered families need a second option. If there is a barrier that arises, such as no facility available, lack of needed equipment, etc. these barriers are worked out ahead of time between county and agency so a smooth learning environment is created for the participants. These pre-service trainings are available for non-relatives and expedited relative families to attend together. The pre-service training is the same for both sets of foster parents. Through work groups, the Permanency Support Unit in the MDCPS state office manages the entire process with involvement from county-level staff. MDCPS has one person designated to train our staff and our providers as well as to manage any

changes that are needed to forms/processes that were created. These processes and policy changes are also reviewed by Public Catalyst who monitors our changes and offers suggestions as they see fit. MDCPS has successfully developed and amended to comply with policy requirements as well as meet the needs of our foster care training practices.

Participants have provided feedback during Parents as Tender Healers (PATH) training indicating that many of the topics covered prior to their having a child placed in their home would be more effective if received once they become foster parents. For Expedited Relatives, however, who already have a foster child in their home, these trainings were rated as much more effective because they could ask questions, while in training, about real life applications and experiences. The fact that non-relative foster parents and Expedited Relative foster parents are in the same training is beneficial because they can all learn from each other and give feedback to each other on what works best for their families. We also have received feedback that prospective foster parents need various methods of training to learn and that their schedules do not always fit with ours. Some learn better face to face and some learn better by online training. We have taken that advice and tried to make PATH more manageable while adhering to their busy lifestyles.

The county staff and FRC/MCEC have tried to be flexible in the times of the day/weekend that they provide training to better meet the needs of the foster family instead of just the needs of the staff. We have been offering training during week nights, weekends, and only have trainings during the day when we have people who work shift work and cannot attend at those other times.

The Department continues to use the PATH curriculum as its pre-service training, but parts of the training are now provided in-person. In October 2017, the Department began updating the PATH curriculum to offer a combination of in-person and online formats. The online portion was created and identified by the Department as PREP – Parental Roles in Establishing Permanency. The Department piloted the new PATH/PREP combination format from April until June 2018. During that time, we changed some

things that were not working, such as computer glitches and registration issues. We saw the volume of families needing training and we determined whether more staff would be needed to enter these families in the online system for training. We determined it preferable for a participant to have a walk-through inspection of their home conducted and their fingerprint screen completed prior to moving forward to online/face-to-face training. Previously, MDCPS was expending time and resources to train applicants prior to determining if they could pass licensure. Because of this, staff now conduct “walk through” checklist inspections of the homes before training, ruling out some families who could not be licensed. This has allowed MDCPS to concentrate training and preparation on families more likely to successfully complete the licensure process. We also offered on-line evaluations in May 2018 to determine how prospective foster parents rated the new online training. We had 12 respondents from May 1-18, 2018. Of those respondents, 50% rated the training as Excellent, 33.30% rated the training as Average, and 16.70% rated the training as Fair.

When asked what aspects of the training had the greatest impact on them, respondents stated:

- *“Where it talks about the resource family and biological family working together with social services because it’s so important for that child to remain connected to their birth family.”*
- *“All of the training since this was my first time hearing most of it”*
- *“True stories about life in foster care”*
- *“Teamwork- it was great to see how the social workers, foster parents, and the child’s family work as a team for the child to benefit. After all, it is about what is best for the child”*
- *“Explanation of how children feel trauma after they arrive at the foster home and many of the things we, as resource parents, can expect”*
- *“The videos”*
- *“The fact that children have baggage and it makes me sad”*
- *“Legalities, it showed me how the system worked”*

- *“It was long but well worth it. My wife and I feel less fearful about caring for our children”*
- *“The finance and travel could be explained better. I would suggest perhaps a point by point video going over the travel and expense form for on-line tutorial” (this is on-line already and is then discussed face to face)*
- *“So much of this was covered in the face to face sessions, it was a bit redundant”*
- *“The multiple-choice questioning needs work. The answers were shuffled which made the “All of the above” and “None of the above” move around” (this has been corrected)*
- *“I am learning things I did not know “*
- *“Great course”*
- *“Good course”*

On July 1, 2018, MDCPS rolled out the new online version of PREP and the new PATH format statewide. Staff will continue to evaluate the training portion of licensure to ensure we are making changes as needed and address issues and problems as they arise. These evaluations will be gathered quarterly, with the next feedback available on October 1, 2018.

MDCPS offers in-person and online ongoing training opportunities for foster and adoptive parents, at no cost, to assist them in meeting their annual ten (10) hour requirement. Five of these hours must be in person trainings and the other five hours can be done on line. The Licensure Unit completes the Re-licensure process every two years. However, yearly we require foster parents to verify to our staff that they have 10 hours of training. MDCPS also conducts a home environment checklist of their home and completes background checks for all household members over 14 years old. Licensure staff is reminded that a home is due for a yearly review because that home turns red on their workload status in MACWIS. Staff also have standardized checklists that must be completed when a walk through is done as well as the insertion of training hours in our system. This is done each year to make sure that training hours are timely received. If the

foster family is not able to get the hours needed by their renewal date, they are placed on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) and given a deadline to receive these hours. If there is a child already in their home, the home remains open and the child remains in the home in the interim. If the remedial deadline is not met, however, the foster child is then removed from the home. If there are no children in the home, the home is placed in a “Not Accepting Placement” status until the family is in compliance.

MDCPS partners with Mississippi State University (MSU) for in-person, ongoing training and contracts with Northwest Media for the online ongoing training. Topics for both include: establishing a healthy home environment, parenting skills, fostering children who identify as LGTBQ, budgeting with foster board payments and adoption assistance maintenance payments, child development and human behavior.

The partnership with MSU began in February 2018 and offers in-person training to the Department’s foster and adoptive parents on a quarterly basis. Trainings are offered on a quarterly basis in conjunction with online webinars offered by experts that cover pertinent topics. These trainings are free to foster and adoptive parents as well as MDCPS staff. Feedback will be solicited from all participants to ensure training needs are being met.

Additionally, MDCPS offers online, ongoing training through Northwest Media. Foster and adoptive parents access the training by visiting www.FosterParentCollege.com. By visiting this site, foster and adoptive parents can access prepaid training on a variety of topics.

We are collaborating with the National Council for Adoption to receive feedback from licensed foster/adopt parents at various stages in the process of fostering. A survey is distributed to foster parents when they attend the first session of PATH training. This notifies them of the research project and how they can participate. We subsequently e-mail surveys each month to foster/adopt parents at the following intervals: 1) after they have completed training, 2) 1 to 3 weeks after their first placement, 3) three months after

placement, 4) after removal, 5) at adoption and 6) when choosing to stop fostering. We will receive the results of these surveys by December 2018 and then quarterly after that. This feedback will help assess how we need to support and recruit foster parents in the future.

The **Congregate Care Unit** has begun making improvements to provider training. We are collaborating with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and other agencies (as needed) to develop a curriculum for therapeutic providers. We are currently researching evidence-based therapeutic foster care training curriculums. In conjunction with the Department of Mental Health, we have developed a survey to present to the providers so we can identify additional areas of training needs. This new curriculum should be provided to therapeutic foster parents after October 1, 2018, as this is the providers new contract period and will be included as part of that contract.

During the Finance and Travel training, foster/adopt parents receive information about the Independent Living program/services and Educational Training Voucher requirements. There are currently three (3) Independent Living Program Administrators placed strategically throughout the state to address technical assistance needs of MDCPS staff and training needs of MDCPS resource and adoptive parents.

In asserting our foster and adoptive parent training efforts to be a “Strength,” MDCPS has updated our previously outdated curriculum for all foster and adoptive parents. We have moved toward an automated system so our staff can easily find documents/processes needed to do their job. This helps with consistency and statewide implementation. We have one person in the Permanency Support Unit to answer all foster/adoptive parent and staff questions related to these processes. This staff person is also responsible for modifying any tools/forms we are using to better meet our needs and for ensuring any changes are reflected in the DocuSign and SharePoint systems as well. We have been able to offer more training opportunities in each region since we have condensed what trainings foster parents attend face-to-face. The online learning modules have tests at the end that evaluate the learning of the participant. Additionally, we are

partnering with the National Adoption Council to get a broader range of feedback through responses from our current foster parents. This is enabling us to adapt and improve our training and support processes to meet the ongoing and evolving needs of our licensed and prospective foster and adoptive families.

E. SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Item 29: How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that the following array of services is accessible in all political jurisdictions covered by the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)?

- 1. Services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs;**
- 2. Services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment;**
- 3. Services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable; and,**
- 4. Services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.**

RESPONSE:

Overall, service array and resource development are areas needing improvement. MDCPS provides services to address the safety, permanency and well-being of families and children through internal service provision and in collaboration with other child and family service providers. We have identified many of the services and initiatives below. Improvements are needed in the areas of collecting, analyzing and sharing of data on the services outlined below.

1. Services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs:

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services assesses the strengths and needs of children and families through two core formalized assessment tools. The Safety and Risk Assessment is completed during all open investigations. This tool is used to help assess the safety and risk of children and to determine if ongoing services are needed with the family. If it is determined that ongoing services are needed, an in-home services case is to be opened or appropriate referrals are made for the identified services. When an ongoing service cases are opened, the Child and Family Assessments (CFA) are completed. This tool helps to identify areas to be addressed within the family to mitigate harm and/or risk factors and is listed as tasks/goals in the Family Service Plan (FSP). Together the CFAs and FSPs are jointly developed with the family, within 45 days of case opening, and updated every 90 days thereafter for as long as the case remains open. In addition, staff may reach out to other professionals including educators, medical professionals and mental health providers who may be involved with the child and family to gain information when completing an assessment. On April 10, 2018, 79% of all open cases were up-to-date on review FSPs. MDCPS rates this item as a “Strength.” Further, the individualization of the identified services rates a “Strength.”

2. Services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment:

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services uses a Safety Checklist during the initial assessment (investigation) with a family to determine safety issues within the physical home environment. This tool is used to bring awareness and attention to safety issues such as gun safety, car seat safety, water safety and other areas within the home that could potentially cause safety concerns. The Safe Sleep protocol was implemented in Fall 2016 with families that had children 18 months and younger. The goal is to identify unsafe sleep situations and assist the family in correcting any unsafe sleep situations as part of prevention of co-sleeping fatalities. There is no data available to support the effectiveness of this intervention. The safety of each

child in the home is individually and collectively assessed during investigations and monthly through ongoing casework. To make reasonable efforts to prevent removal, MDCPS also uses safety plans that allow the agency and families to provide alternative living arrangements to reduce harm and risk in unsafe living situations for a limited time with the infusion of the supports from service providers.

3. Services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable:

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services receives support from local boards of supervisors within all 82 Mississippi counties. The amount of the financial support varies from county to county, however. These funds allow counties around the state to provide informal support to children and families. These allocations have been used to meet an array of needs so that children can remain safely in their homes. More specifically, county funds have been used to assist families in the community who are experiencing financial difficulties with paying utilities, food or for housing/rental assistance. In addition, these funds have been used to assist with purchasing furniture such as beds to ensure appropriate sleeping; drug screenings to support the verification that a parent is free of illegal substances; intake fees for assessments at local mental health or outpatient substance abuse clinics as well as other identified family needs as presented. These families may or may not have cases with MDCPS.

Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services recently began focusing on children being “Safe at Home.” In concert with our vision: *Mississippi’s children will grow up in strong families, safe from harm and supported through partnerships to promote family stability and permanency*, the agency has adopted the operational philosophy that removing children from their home should not be a first option. Core activities were developed to successfully achieve the goals of Safe at Home: Use of Available Federal Funds, Safety Assessments and Ensuring Services are In Place, In-Home and Prevention Services, Partnerships with the Courts and Ensuring Reasonable Efforts, and Promoting Permanency in Foster Care. These core activities will augment the agency’s ongoing Strategic Planning Process and staff responsibilities related to these Core Activities will be reinforced through internal agency training for all MDCPS staff as well as interagency training with agency partners who service families and children across the

state. This over-arching goal is to prevent children from unnecessarily entering foster care and to utilize in-home and community based services to avoid and prevent unnecessary and avoidable trauma to at-risk children and their families.

MDCPS has specifically collaborated with Mississippi Department of Human Services and the Families First for Mississippi program as well as the Family First Resource Centers located throughout the state to increase prevention services as part of the Safe at Home initiative.

MDCPS has contracted with Canopy and Youth Villages to provide a family preservation and reunification program called In-Circle.

MDCPS offers in home family support services internally through the DORCAS program. The purpose of the Dorcas In-Home Family Support Program is to provide family-driven, youth-guided interventions to improve the stability of enrolled families and their ability to provide adequate care for the children for whom they are responsible. These interventions increase families' access to and utilization of community resources and assistance. The goal is to reduce the likelihood of removal or other disruption of their living arrangement. As of April 3, 2018, the Dorcas In-Home Family Support Program has served 28 families. There were 71 children and 37 adults served through this program. The numbers are comparable to the previous year's numbers of 32 cases and 101 children served. The Dorcas program is expected to serve at least 40 families during this fiscal year.

4. Services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency:

Each of MDCPS's 14 regions is staffed with licensure specialists, adoption specialists, supervisors, and bureau directors who focus on the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents at the county and state level. All of the Resource Unit staff (both Licensure and Adoption) work hand-in-hand to provide recruitment, pre-service training, in-service training, and home studies in order to license foster/adoptive homes across the state. Adoption Specialists also work with all children/youth in care whose permanent plan includes adoption.

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services understands the importance of finding the most appropriate, family-like placement setting. If a child must enter foster care, the agency seeks family or fictive kin first to provide care to the child(ren). These families are afforded the

opportunity to become licensed relative foster parents through the expedited licensing process. The training is abridged, to expedite the supports offered with being fully licensed and to maintain the child with relatives; hopefully to expedite permanency, but still fully trains the family in providing care for the child(ren).

MDCPS further understands that there are times when family placements are not possible therefore; the agency is conducting a rigorous foster parent recruitment effort throughout the state through Rescue 100 events. The goal of Rescue 100 is to develop and maintain an adequate pool of family-like placements to meet the placement needs of children in care. In calendar year 2017, 469 new regular foster homes and 531 new relative foster homes were licensed. All efforts are expended to ensure that children are placed as close to their home of origin to maintain connections and can have regular visits with parents to support reunification efforts.

When reunification is no longer an option, other permanency options are explored including adoption. MDCPS closely tracks children, when their permanent plan changes to adoption, to ensure that they are achieving permanency timely. Although a manual process, in the fall of 2017, MDCPS identified the children with a plan of adoption and begin tracking them through regional calls to get a status and address barriers known that is preventing the case for moving forward to TPR and adoption. These calls have proven to be effective in getting children to permanency sooner. In SFY 2017, 302 children were permanently connected with a family through adoption. As of April 10, 2018, MDCPS superseded SFY17 and had 471 adoptions finalized.

Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services utilizes additional services and resources to ensure permanency, regardless of type of permanency (reunification, durable legal custody, Adoption, APPLA). Those services include:

- **MYPAC Services** to stabilize placement, and reduce placement disruptions
- **Local Mental Health** for assessments and to address behavioral concerns for child(ren) in care placed in a foster home
- **Respite Services** – contracted through Southern Christian Services for Resource Parents
- **CAP (Correction Action Plan)** - to correct minor policy violations with resource families

- **Ongoing training** - 10 hours yearly; 20 hours for re-evaluation of license
- **Ongoing advocacy and support** - through one-on-one contact with CPS staff (Frontline, Resource and Adoption)
- **Adopt US Kids Website** (National Data-base) - recruitment of permanent homes for all children free for adoption with no identified families
- **Heart Gallery** – recruitment for permanent families (through visuals of children free and history of their experience with foster, etc.)
- **Wendy’s Wonderful Kids** (Wendy’s Foundation) - child specific recruitment for hard to place children (teenagers and children with major behavioral issues and medically fragile) in collaborations with Mississippi Families for Kids and Southern Christian Services
- **Placement Committee Meetings** (Regional, Multi-Regional and State Placement) – children without an identified family are discussed and matched with a forever family
- **Adoption Status Meetings** - these meetings are held monthly throughout the state for all children with a plan of adoption. The collaborative meeting with various disciplines (Adoption Unit, Resource Unit, Frontline Staff, Regional Directors, and Attorney General’s Office
- **Independent Living Services** were previously provided through a sub-contract through Southern Christian Services. The services are now provided internally through our Youth Transition Support Services. Each region of the state has a designated Youth Transition Navigator whose role is to provide intensive support to youth 14-21. This includes assisting youth with the development of an Independent Living Plan that supports the participants’ capability to acquire basic life skills in their progress from dependency toward self-sufficiency.

Item 30: How well is the service array and resource development system functioning statewide to ensure that the services in item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency?

RESPONSE:

Overall, Individualized Services is an area “Needing Improvement.” MDCPS considers both the internal services provided to families and children and the increased collaboration with community resources as a “Strength.” However, improvements are needed to collect information regarding the effectiveness of the services. The agency has partnered with the Center for Support of Families to develop a data plan to track the implementation of a new Safe at Home initiative and this has the potential to provide insight into service array and resource development.

MDCPS utilizes the Family Team Meeting (FTM) and Comprehensive Family Assessment (CFA) tool to gain a deeper understanding of the individual needs of families and children served by the agency.

Individualized services for children and families are provided through a number of specialized programs:

The MDCPS **Interpreter Unit** provides interpreter services to all MDCPS staff and clients statewide. This unit consists of five interpreter staff who cover the state of Mississippi: (3) interpreters, (1) LEP monitor and (1) Division Director. The interpreter unit has staff assigned to each region within the state. Anytime a worker needs interpreter services, they call the interpreter assigned to their region. The assigned interpreter and FPS worker work together to ensure each LEP client receives services in a timely manner. The interpreter unit also provides all interpretation/translation needs for the MDCPS client/worker and assist for the life of the MDCPS case. Additionally, all interpreter staff rotate being on call with MCI on a monthly basis. Currently, MACWIS does not track interpreter services for the agency. Although MACWIS does not track this data, all information recorded for this reporting period is tracked manually by each MDCPS interpreter. For the upcoming fiscal year, the MDCPS interpreter unit will continue to manually track all known interpreter usage until MACWIS system allows for recording of required information. Currently, interpreters submit a monthly county activity record and the LEP Monitor ensures that each interpreting need is recorded in MACWIS. Staff records all data and updates the spreadsheet with monthly list of interpreting needs/sessions to include total usage each month. From July 2017 to February 2018, the interpreter unit has received a total of 775 referral requests for interpreter services and have interpreted for 354 families. On average, our interpreters provide translation/interpretation services to 25 families per month. On April 30,

2017, the state did an assessment for determining the linguistic needs of MDCPS clients. The state determined Spanish to be the language most likely to be encountered in the delivery of services to its clients. Information was gathered from the following data sources: U.S. Census Bureau, current Limited English Proficient (LEP) files, and the Mississippi Department of Education's local school system reports.

Additionally, MDCPS contract staff provides interpreter services for the following languages: Spanish, American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

MDCPS' **Education Unit** collaborates closely with Mississippi Department of Education and local education agencies to ensure that our children's educational needs are met. MDCPS Education Unit is currently working with education officials to develop and provide additional training to MDCPS staff about IEPs, FERPA, Special Education and IDEA. Therapeutic Placement and Congregate Care staff collaborate with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and contract providers to ensure that ADA accommodations are made for children in care. The Department of Mental Health recently assisted the agency with several placements and applying for IDD Waiver Services for youth in care who have developmental disabilities. The Education Unit works closely with frontline staff to ensure that every child is receiving some type of educational instruction and that it is specific to their need.

The MDCPS **Nursing Unit** schedules visits with children identified as medically fragile and focuses on information provided to the agency by Magnolia Health Plan regarding children who are non-compliant with their EPSDT screenings. Regional contacts are identified to work directly with the nursing unit to help them identify barriers in getting the screenings completed and helping them become compliant and complete follow-up care.

The **Youth Transition Support Unit** utilizes Transitional Navigators to work closely with Education Liaisons and direct service caseworkers to meet the needs of youth ages 14-21 identified as most at-risk.

The **Dorcas In-Home Family Support Program** provides family-driven, youth-guided interventions to improve the stability of enrolled families and their ability to provide adequate care for the children for whom they are responsible. These interventions increase families' access

to and utilization of community resources and assistance. The goal is to reduce the likelihood of removal or other disruption of their living arrangement. As of April 3, 2018, the Dorcas In-Home Family Support Program has served 28 families this year. There were 71 children and 37 adults served through this program. The numbers are comparable to the previous year's numbers of 32 cases and 101 children served. The Dorcas program is expected to serve at least 40 families during this fiscal year.

MDCPS launched a new program in 2018 for family preservation and family reunification services. The "In-Circle" Family Support Services Program is administered by MDCPS and services delivered to all 82 counties statewide through contractual agreement with Canopy and Youth Villages. In-Circle is an intensive, in-home and community-based family preservation, reunification and support services program for families with children who are at risk of out-of-home placement. It is designed to help break the cycle of family dysfunction by strengthening families, keeping children safe, and reducing foster care and other forms of out-of-home placements. The primary goal of the program is to remove the risk of harm to the child rather than removing the child by. Strategies to meet program goals include:

1. Reducing unnecessary out-of-home placements,
2. Preventing and/or reducing child abuse and neglect,
3. Improving family functioning,
4. Enhancing parenting skills,
5. Increasing access to social and formal and informal concrete supports,
6. Addressing mental health and substance use issues,
7. Reducing child behavior problems, and
8. Safely reunifying families.

On April 4, 2018, MDPS recorded 1,401 families had been served through this program -- exceeding the service goal of 800.

Through collaboration with the Families First for Mississippi, classes are provided for parents to teach methods of increasing positive parenting behaviors, increasing family problem solving and behavioral strategies, and how to increase family functioning. The goal is to help youth and parents build positive, rewarding and satisfying relationships with their children; promote a sense

of pride and well-being within the communities; and, provide positive youth development programs to youth to reduce at-risk behaviors, and teen pregnancies in Mississippi.

F. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Item 31: How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that, in implementing the provisions of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and developing related Annual Progress and Services Reports (APSRs), 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, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP?

RESPONSE:

MDCPS rates this item as a “Strength.” The state readily and consistently engages its stakeholders with its major initiatives, goals, and objectives that are in pursuant to the CFSP and APSR. This is done to increase communication, understanding, and collaboration strategies across service systems with the goal of strengthening families and communities. The department continues to meet regularly through monthly, bi-monthly, and as needed meetings with its stakeholders including the Administrative Office of the Courts, Children Advocacy Centers of Mississippi, Tribal partners, representatives from mental health, education, state universities, and others to discuss the progress and/or barriers to the goals, objectives, interventions identified under the 2015-2019 CFSP.

For the development of the state’s APSR, the MDCPS Division of Federal Reporting contacts its stakeholders to request quarterly and periodic updates about any joint initiatives, service delivery information, successes, any perceived barriers, and strategies for improvement. These collaborative efforts are integrated throughout the APSR narrative. As Mississippi works toward implementing and completing the collaboration strategies identified in the 2015-2019 CFSP, the periodic updates provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of each strategy. This also serves

as an internal/ external feedback loops to ensure that these activities were joint activities, each entity fulfilled their obligations, and initiatives were completed by established target dates. MDCPS also shares the Program Instructions and APSR with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) and its stakeholders.

Monthly Caseworker Visit Support through partnership the Center for the Support of Families

MDCPS and the Center for the Support of Families (CSF) collaborate on the delivery of the state's Practice Model and compliance with the provisions of the *Olivia Y* Settlement. For the current period under review, CSF participated in regular leadership meetings with MDCPS centered on training and coaching needs, supported the MDCPS's initiative *Safe at Home*, led regional implementation of the practice model learning cycle, supported the professional development needs of MDCPS, and explored other how CSF could support MDCPS meet their goals. Furthermore, MDCPS utilizes its Monthly Caseworker Visit Formula Grants to fund the following CSF efforts:

- **Safe at Home** - Between February 1, 2018, and June 15, 2018, CSF worked with MDCPS in their efforts to develop a theory of change to support the new Safe at Home approach to child welfare practice: focusing on keeping children out of foster care whenever safely possible and achieving timely permanency to avoid trauma to children and families. CSF facilitated planning sessions with state office leadership to develop an initial set of core activities for State Office, Regional and Bureau-level leadership, and Field Operations supervisors and caseworkers. Five core activity areas were developed to successfully achieve the goals of Safe at Home: 1) Use of Available Federal Funds, 2) Strengthening Safety Assessments and Ensuring Services are in Place, 3) In-Home and Prevention Services, 4) Partnerships with the Courts and Ensuring Reasonable Efforts, and 5) Promoting Permanency. CSF has begun to help MDCPS develop a data plan to track implementation of Safe at Home goals and to quantify its impact on children and families in Mississippi. This plan is focused on the work happening within the counties and regions in Mississippi as well as through contracted service providers and partner agencies.

- **Supporting an Annual Statewide Leadership Meeting** - CSF continued planning efforts associated with the 2018 statewide supervisor's meeting for 325 MDCPS staff, which occurred on June 6-8, 2018, entitled *Safe at Home*. CSF assisted MDCPS in identifying two keynote speakers, developing the agenda which included a panel of judges and representatives from in home and prevention agencies, and creating a facilitation guide and structure for the breakout sessions with participants.
- **Coaching Support** -CSF provided coaching support in all 14 regions throughout the state during this timeframe. Onsite coaching activities included: individual coaching, group coaching, participation in regional meetings, observation and feedback in staffings, observation and feedback in unit meetings and shadowing. In addition to having an onsite presence in the regions each month, CSF also provided the regions off site support including routine communication, group coaching via webinar, as well as providing data analysis and other materials as requested to support improvement efforts. CSF collaborated with MDCPS State Office and Regional Leadership to determine: what assistance the seven regions need who completed the PMLC during the last contract period to sustain their PMLC learnings; the details for beginning the PMLC with the three regions that will participate during 2018; and the support needed for four regions that still need to address barriers preventing the regions from participating in the PMLC during 2018.
- **Practice Model Learning Cycle (PMLC)** - CSF facilitated the participation of the next three regions to participate in the Mississippi Practice Model Learning Cycle (PMLC), which is a development and learning model that includes preparation activities, virtual learning modules, and structured practice application opportunities, which began in February 2018 and will be completed in October 2018. This work included pulling baseline data for three regions from Data Reports and EMU case reviews, developing a schedule for delivery unique to each region, and preparing CSF staff for implementation. In addition to the three regions participating, one region engaged their court system who asked to also receive the training, so CSF staff and regional leadership are delivering the PMLC to the judge, judicial staff, attorneys and CASA. By the end of this period, the three regions have completed the first four of seven modules. Finally, CSF is

coordinating with Mississippi's Professional Development Department to migrate the PMLC website to MDCPS's Cornerstone site, for monitoring participation in the PMLC components as well as evaluation activities.

- **Capacity Assessments and Strategic Planning** - CSF coaches continued to support Regions IV-S, VI, VII-C, and VII-E efforts to monitor and refine the strategies identified in their capacity assessments, which in turn helped inform CSF's coaching support for the remainder of 2018 with the goal of these regions being prepared to participate in the PM Learning Cycle during a future time period. The capacity assessments contain information about capacity concerns such as shortage of caseworkers, shortage of supervisors, overdue investigations, backlogs of pending resource family applications without home studies, and need for a regional leadership structure prepared to oversee implementation of the PM Learning Cycle. CSF developed a template for these regions to use to monitor their progress in these key areas, both through data collection as well as identifying and implementing strategies to address deficiencies. At the end of this time period, state office leadership began preparing for meetings with these four regions in order to review progress made over this 5-month period.
- **State Office Support** - CSF staff facilitated and participated in regular leadership onsite meetings and calls with MDCPS Leadership, centered on training and coaching needs as well as how CSF could support MDCPS meet their goals. CSF staff also participated in more specific state office support efforts, including, the *Safe at Home* Initiative. State Office support during this timeframe also included management support, assisting MDCPS Leadership to use data to track progress and inform MDCPS activities, and assist MDCPS with their planning associated with the upcoming work. During this timeframe, CSF staff participated in regular monthly face-to-face status update meetings with MDCPS leadership to coordinate our work with the Department for our contract year and to identify needs and monitor progress on project activities. CSF staff also participated in more specific state office support efforts, including preparing for and facilitating a site visit with Tennessee in March, with a focus on child welfare financing, keeping children safely at home, class action litigation in child welfare and building the

capabilities of the child welfare workforce and updating materials promoting the practice model.

- **Reasonable Efforts Virtual Training-**During the review period of February 1, 2018- June 15, 2018, CSF, at the request of MDCPS, developed a virtual training on Reasonable Efforts to support one of the departments identified priorities. The training, designed with the adult learner in mind, was centered on three modules (Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal and Strengthen the Family, Reasonable Efforts to Return the Child Home, and Reasonable Efforts to Achieve Permanency Swiftly). Each module contains five practice scenarios or activities where users have the opportunity to practice five key behaviors associated with the module, as well as find additional supporting materials including policy references, resources for workers on the topics of the activities, and resources for supervisors, including staffing note sheets on how to monitor fidelity to the key behaviors. In addition, the training provides additional overall information on Reasonable Efforts, include the federal and state statutes; Why Reasonable Efforts is Important to the Courts, MDCPS, Parents and Children; How Reasonable Efforts Connects to MDCPS's Practice Model; General Resources and a Glossary. CSF completed virtual training development at the end of May 2018 and developed one-page guidance for Regional Directors and Supervisors to support and monitor implementation of the Reasonable Efforts Virtual Training, which is scheduled to begin in July 2018.
- **Professional Development-** February 1, 2018 through June 15, 2018, at the request of MDCPS Leadership, CSF continued work supporting the MDCPS professional development division as they transitioned training activities, including pre-service training, from an outside vendor to an in-house operation. To this end, CSF reached out to other states who deliver pre-service as possible resources for MDCPS to talk to as the transitions to pre-service in house occur and facilitated a call between MDCPS and Tennessee professional development leadership, who provided recommendations and lessons learned from Tennessee as they moved their training in-house.

CAPTA - Juvenile Justice Transfer Efforts

MDHS Division of Youth Services is the division that administers probation, aftercare services, and institutional programs for juveniles who have been adjudged delinquent in the Mississippi Youth Courts or are at risk of becoming delinquent. MDCPS and the MDHS, Division of Youth Services (DYS), Community Services Director meet quarterly to discuss and track the status of youth that have been identified as “cross-over” youth. This is a joint effort that targets open protective cases for clients that have been transferred to the state juvenile institution, Oakley Youth Development Center (OYDC). Additionally, we verify those cases from the Community Services Monthly probation/parole caseload report. DYS monthly caseload report identifies the total number youth that are on probation, parole, and institutional commitments. DYS submits a quarterly report to MDCPS for review to assist with identifying crossover cases and issues. Currently, there is no jointly established policy or procedure for identifying and tracking youth that are considered dual or cross over youth. MDCPS, MDHS, DYS and Mississippi State University collaborated to define “crossover” and adopt a crossover youth practice model for the state through a crossover youth proposal grant opportunity. Unfortunately, the proposal application was not selected for funding. Although the proposal application was not awarded, the proposal process identified the need for a crossover youth practice model.

Court Improvement Program (CIP) Workgroup

Court Improvement Workgroup continues to meet on the third Tuesday of each month. This workgroup consists of Court Improvement Coordinator staff from AOC, the Office of the Attorney General, MDCPS Staff and MDHS, Division of Youth Services’ Community Services Director. Attending from MDCPS are Directors of Contracts and Legal, Field, Foster Care Review Unit, Permanency and Placement, Federal Reporting, and Training, as well as the Tribal and Legislative liaison for the agency. The focus of this group is to strengthen court processes with collaboration and/or cross-training

between Mississippi Supreme Court, AOC's Court Improvement Program, Mississippi's Commission on Children's Justice, Youth Court personnel, Tribes, and MDCPS Staff to improve permanency outcomes of children within the child welfare system through collection and analysis of data in the Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System (MYCIDS). Some of the key agenda items consisted of the following:

- Statistical Data on Termination of Parental Rights, Impact of TPR legislation, and Court Improvement
- Annual Indian Child Welfare Act Conference and Joint Tribal Efforts
- Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility and Court Improvement regarding language for court orders, training judges on Foster Care Eligibility
- Collaboration efforts between CPS and MDHS DYS to identify and track juvenile justice transfers on a quarterly basis
- Measures taken to teach social workers about the "reasonable efforts" requirement of TPR including training initiatives
- Barriers with the Mississippi Youth Court Information Data System program and collaborative efforts on how to resolve these issues
- Ongoing progress with Parent Representation in Mississippi pilot counties

Other collaborative mechanisms consist of MDCPS interactions with MBCI through quarterly meetings and on an as needed basis to discuss any issues that may arise. During the quarterly meeting held on September 27, 2017 MDCPS provided its ICWA policy to the MBCI and AOC for review and feedback prior to the release of this policy. As stated in the 2018 APSR, MDCPS use these meetings to address specific child/family circumstances and to consult with MBCI Social Services. These quarterly meetings with Tribal representatives provide the opportunity for ongoing dialogue, as well as opportunities for collaboration and participation in community events held by each agency. MDCPS regional staff is active in supporting and sharing feedback from the Tribe and facilitating meetings for direct feedback to MDCPS State Office. For the development of each Annual Progress and Services Report, MBCI Children & Family Services

Program personnel and court liaisons are also contacted to provide the following: program information, successes, perceived barriers, and strategies for improvement.

Adoption and Foster Care Support Services through Faith-Based and Volunteer Services

The Office of Therapeutic Services created the Bureau of Faith-Based and Volunteer Services on August 1, 2017. This focal area was created to provide awareness to churches regarding the following needs within the foster care system:

- Prevention Services
- Foster Family Recruitment
- Heart Gallery
- Encourage Foster Care Support/Ministry
- Oversee and Coordinate Foster Parent Support Groups

The Director of Faith-Based and Volunteer Services Director met and engaged local churches to assist with increasing community awareness about the critical need for foster homes, resources for foster families, birth families and children in custody. These collaborative meetings were held in the following regions: 3-North, 3-South, 4-South, 5-East, 5-West, 6, 7-East, 7-Central and 7-West. Additionally, the Director set up presentations with Q&A sessions to discuss foster home recruitment and retention in child welfare and how they can best support the state. Additional areas of discuss included ways these ministries could create and host foster parent support groups at their local churches.

The following multi-faith ministries collaborated with MDCPS: Pear Orchard Presbyterian Church (Madison County); True Vine Missionary Baptist Church (Rankin County); Central United Methodist Church, New Horizon, Common Ground Church, and Soul City Church (Hinds County); Venture Church (Forrest County); Broadway Baptist Church (Desoto County); Lauderdale County Baptist Association (Lauderdale County); Church of the King and Lemoyne Baptist Church (Harrison County); Lincoln County Baptist Association (Lincoln County). In addition, the director met with local CPS staff in Pearl River, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, George, and Greene Counties to further the discussions for foster parent support groups.

Currently, MDCPS works with 43 foster parent support groups across the state. The current breakdown of the number of foster parent support groups by region is as follows:

- I-North – 4
- I-South – 2
- II-East – 3
- II-West – 4
- III-North – 3
- III-South – 2
- IV-North – 3
- IV-South – 3
- V-East – 6
- V-West – 5
- VI – 3
- VII-East – 1
- VII-Central – 3
- VII-West – 1

Teen Advisory Board

The Mississippi Teen Advisory Board (TAB) meetings are held monthly and guided by a Transition Navigator. Teen advisory board curriculum and meeting structure is provided by the MDCPS, Youth Transition Support Youth Engagement Director. A TAB is established in all the MDCPC regions. Each regional board held an initial meeting where they identified their overall initiative and each subsequent meeting has been centered on a youth led development of goals and tasks necessary to support and drive their initiatives using MDCPS Foster Care Policy and current practice. Each regional board is preparing to present their initiatives to the state level Teen Advisory Board for inclusion in the TAB Management Team presentation. The current initiatives in development are improving access to services, creating and implementing leadership skills among foster youth based on individual strengths, and creating a more "normalization" of youth in care. Specifically, during the reporting period, members of the TAB were divided into small groups and assigned sections of the new Youth Assessment/Transitional Living Plan (TLP). Youth were instructed to identify any concerns with questions, wording and ease of understanding. Then each group presented their suggestions to the entire group. Their suggestions were to change Carnegie units to credits; make LGBTQ question optional; and to be more specific in questions about gang related activity using more common/slang terms.

Item 32: How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that the state’s services under the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population?

RESPONSE:

MDCPS rates this item as a “Strength.” MDCPS heavily depends on the coordination and integration of services from its stakeholders to help with the development and revision of its policies and programs that supports the agency’s vision and mission. MDCPS continues to collaborate with other agencies by establishing Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) that strengthen and aid in coordinating services or benefits with other federally assisted programs that serve the same population. A Memorandum of Understanding has been developed with MDCPS and the Division of Medicaid, Mississippi Department of Human Services, the Office of the Attorney General, Department of Mental Health, the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi Department of Health, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and contractual agreements are in place with Baptist Children’s Village, Mississippi State University, Casey Family Programs, and the University of Mississippi Medical Center. These cooperative arrangements are examples how the MDCPS is partnering statewide to ensure services, funding, and efforts are not duplicated. Please see the descriptions below for the above-mentioned MOU’s:

- **Medicaid-** Medicaid Eligibility for MDCPS Children and Provision of Medical Assistance for Refugees in Mississippi
- **ASPHA-** National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise system for the real-time electronic exchange of case files between the 52 states and jurisdictions that are members of AAICPC
- **Baptist Children’s Village-** Residential Child Care Facility

- **NSPARC**- National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center at Mississippi State University (NSPARC) for software development, data warehousing, data analysis, communication, training, strategic planning, project management
- **Mississippi Department of Education** - Mississippi Department of provides Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in accordance with IDEA for children in the custody of MDCPS
- **Mississippi Department of Human Services** - To identify blended responsibility services and minimize impact of operations of MDHS and MDCPS
- **Casey Family Programs** - Child Welfare Initiative agreement and strategy plan
- **University of Mississippi Medical Center**-Basic guidelines for the Children's Safe Center and Forensics Division of the Department of Pediatrics
- **Division of Medicaid** - MDCPS to have access to Medicaid beneficiary-centric health information
- **Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians** – MDCPS assists the Tribe's Children and Family Services office
- **Office of the Attorney General** - Legal services provided to MDCPS by the Office of the Attorney General

ICWA Compliance

MDCPS and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians continue to coordinate and collaborate on services promoting cultural awareness, understanding, and implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Additionally, MDCPS annually participates in the development of the annual ICWA conference. The Annual ICWA Conference was convened on August 10, 2017, and was attended by Tribal and State Judiciary, Tribal Social Services, Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, out-of-state tribal representatives and speakers, as well as service providers. The focus of the conference was an introduction to the new ICWA regulations, ICWA Basics and Ethics, Perspective on Raising Native American Children, Child Endangerment, and

How ICWA Cases Proceed in Court. Quarterly meetings were also held between the Administrative Office of Courts, MDCPS and Tribal Social Services on September 27th, 2017, and November 29, 2017, to discuss cases where collaboration between the Tribe and MDCPS were necessary.

CAPTA/CARA Performance Improvement Plan

MDCPS continues to engage in a high degree collaboration and coordination through partnering with medical providers, MS Department of Mental Health, Families First for Mississippi, and MS Department of Health to develop policy and practice for CAPTA/CARA compliance. In June of 2017, MDCPS notified the Office of the Children's Bureau of its decision to develop and submit a program improvement plan due to the state's non-compliance with sections 106(b)(2)(B)(ii) and (iii) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), as amended by the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (CARA). MDCPS submitted its PIP on August 10, 2017 to the Children Bureau outlining the strategies and target dates for full compliance by June 30, 2018. On September 5, 2017, MDCPS received written notification from the Children's Bureau approving the state's PIP for implementation with the submission of 90 progress reports. MDCPS submitted its first Progress report on December 4th. Prior to the approval of the PIP, the state had already implemented Strategy 1 and met the associated target dates for that strategy. There was an initial delay with the implementation of Strategy 2 due to more external stakeholder input with policy and procedural development. By March 5th, the deadline for the 2nd 90-day progress report, MDCPS had made great developments in revising its intake and assessment policy, hosting several multi-disciplinary meetings with the MS Department of Mental Health, Families First for Mississippi, and MS Department of Health to develop a multi-systemic system of care to refer infants and their families to these agencies, finalizing its CARA policy, and developing MOU's to share data for CARA-mandated reporting.

The focus of those meeting continues be on coordinating a multi-systemic system of care to refer families to the partnering agencies and organization, data collection and sharing as mandated for CARA reporting. Additionally, those meeting help identify agency strengths and limitations in regards referring and treating infants and their families facing substance use disorders. Another

focal point of those meeting is to develop a monitoring system to ensure CARA federal regulations are carried out effectively. All parties agreed that this is a great opportunity to ensure there are no gaps or barriers in providing services to infants and their families. Ultimately, this demonstration of coordination will help MDCPS be compliant with the CAPTA/CARA requirements by June 30, 2018.

Some examples of bi-directional coordination consist of the Director of Alcohol and Drug Services at DMH agreeing to work closely with MDCPS to ensure families get the treatment needed. During that time, the director discussed a number of DMH initiatives going on across the state to assist individuals with substance use disorders. Representatives from the Dept. of Health also discussed the number of services provided to children and their families through their agency. They provided information about the Perinatal High-Risk Management/Infant Services System (PHRM/ISS) program. This program provides case management services to high-risk pregnant women and their babies less than one year old. PHRM/ISS provides enhanced access to health care, nutritional and psychosocial support, home visits, and health education, to name a few of their many services provided. Additionally, the Director of Addiction Services at Families First of Mississippi stated how the Families First program strengthens families of all backgrounds and life circumstances by connecting families to resources and equipping families with skills needed to solve problems and make healthy choices. Families First also assist with ensuring families have access to needed services and by advocating for strong parenting skills and reducing out of wedlock pregnancies. These services are designed to stimulate employment, support family financial stability, promote literacy, and increase graduation rates while continuing to support positive youth development, promoting positive father involvement as well as providing parenting education and parenting skills development.

Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)

MDCPS and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) continue to collaborate and coordinate the following statewide events listed below to ensure that the state's services under the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs:

- As stated previously, AOC participates in the Court Improvement Workgroup. The focus of this workgroup group is to strengthen court processes with collaboration and/or cross-training between Mississippi Supreme Court, AOC's Court Improvement Program, Mississippi's Commission on Children's Justice, Youth Court personnel, Tribes, and MDCPS Staff to improve permanency outcomes of children within the child welfare system through collection and analysis of data in the Mississippi Youth Court Information Delivery System (MYCIDS).
- July 16-19, 2017 - Four Youth Court Judges, the Chief Justice for the Tribe, Youth Court Judge for the Tribe, and the Jurist in Residence for the State of Mississippi attended the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in Washington, D.C.
- August 10, 2017 - The Annual Indian Child Welfare Conference was held in Choctaw, MS. 160 judges, court personnel, tribal Elders, prosecutors, Commissioner of Child Protection Services and staff, Attorney General's staff, representative from the Supreme Court of Mississippi and service providers attended. Training on the basics of ICWA was presented by Tribal Star speakers. The summary of the meeting can be found at: <https://courts.ms.gov/Newsite2/news/newsletters/MS%20Courts%2010.17%20for%20website.pdf>
- August 10-12, 2017 - Ten parent attorneys from the pilot counties and new counties attended the National Association of Counsel for Children in New Orleans, LA.
- August 14, 2017 - Mississippi Supreme Court Justice, Mississippi Judicial College Director, AOC CIP Director, Jurist in Residence and Youth Court Judges participated with a multidisciplinary team, Quarterly Meeting of the Commission on Guardianships, to address challenges to timely guardianship for children.
- August 18, 2017 - AOC participated in the Title IV-E Review Exit Conference at Child Protection Services. Some court orders lack required IV-E language. Training was planned for the Annual Judges and Referees Conference in September 2017 on the subject. Because of the deficiencies, a Justice, Jurist in Residence and Director of the Mississippi Judicial College met with Michigan's judiciary to determine how

Mississippi can draw down more IV-E dollars. This was sponsored by Casey Family Programs.

- September 1, 2017 - Quarterly Parent Representation Task Force met to discuss expansion of parent attorney project into Jackson County, to deepen parent attorney project in Forest County serving all children and not limited to Zero-to-Three population, and to deepen project in Rankin County to add a social worker to the parent attorney project. Transition from the Parent Representation Task Force to the Office of State Public Defender for existing pilot sites was accomplished, and the institutionalization of the Task Force was agreed to by all parties. As of October 2017, Jackson County hired a parent attorney and a parent representation program manager. Between November 2017 and January 2018, twenty-two clients were represented, four cases were closed and eighteen are ongoing. Two referrals did not meet the indigence requirements. Safety/Risk Training was provided by the Office of State Public Defender on January 18-19, 2018 to county youth court judges and court personnel interested in becoming parent representation sites. The event was well attended, and each county developed a plan of action to implement parent representation and request funding from the Boards of Supervisors. The Parent Representation Task Force met following the training to assess the training, participation and make plans for additional trainings in other locations.
- February 2018 - Mission First Legal Aid Office hired Resource Counsel to mentor parent attorneys and provide training resources. Pearl River County was approved as a new parent representation site with one-time matching funds from Casey Family Programs and Pearl River County Board of Supervisors. On February 27-28, 2018, the Parent Representation Task Force met to finalize plans for the Three Branch Government Convening sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation at the Mississippi Capitol February 28, 2018. Legislators, Casey Family Program Representatives, Kellogg Grant Manager, the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court, Justice of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals Judge, Office of State Public Defender representatives, CIP Director, Youth Court Judges, Juris in Residence and Parent Representatives attended. The explanation and request for additional funding for parent representation was well

taken. As of March 2, 2018, the Parent Representation Task Force became a subcommittee of the Mississippi Children's Justice Commission.

- September 8, 2017 - The AOC Youth Court Programs Director was appointed to the Children's Justice Act Task Force. The CJA works to create and support Multidisciplinary Teams throughout the State, reviews the Child Death reports, supports awareness campaigns and looks for solutions to causes of child death, and provides training for Child Advocacy Centers in Mississippi. Meetings are held monthly. The next meeting was November 20, 2017 and subcommittees presented proposed amendments to statutes to provide confidentiality for forensic interview documents.
- September 21-22, 2017 - The mandatory Youth Court Judges and Referees Conference was held. The emphasis of the training was ABA training on Safety Assessments for Judges and Attorneys and language requirements for Title IV-E court orders required for a foster child to be eligible for the funds. CIP Training Grant was used to provide 75 curriculum booklets for the Safety Assessment and Bench cards.
- October 25-26, 2018 - The AOC Youth Court Programs Director, Jurist-in-Residence, Mississippi College School of Law Mission First Director and a Youth Court Judge attended the Casey Family Programs Conclave II in Kansas City, Missouri, to participate as the Mississippi Judicial Engagement Team model. The focus is to provide training to judges to promote involvement in solving the issues affecting children in the child welfare system. Out of state judiciary are invited to a training scheduled for February in Mississippi regarding judicial engagement with the child welfare system.
- August and December 2017 - Quarterly meetings were held between the Tribe, CPS and AOC to discuss whether collaboration was occurring and how it could be improved. Cases were also staffed.
- January 18-19, 2018 - Training on Safety Assessments was held sponsored by the Office of State Public Defender, AOC, ABA, Mississippi College School of Law and Casey Family Programs. 125 participants attended. A follow up meeting of the Parent Representation Task Force was convened following the training to evaluate the success of the training and next steps. Plans for the meeting with Legislators scheduled for

February 2018 were finalized. The purpose of the meeting with legislators is to obtain funding statewide for parent representation.

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)

MDCPS coordinates with the Division of Medicaid, Department of Health, Mississippi Department of Human Services and the Department of Mental Health to continue its efforts to provide refugee resettlement services to Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) and Adult Refugees. This collaboration also enlists the needed additional administrative oversight to review the effectiveness of program services and federal spending. In March 2018, MDCPS began monthly refugee resettlement meetings with its stakeholders and contracted provider, Catholic Charities, to discuss recommendations for program improvement and best practices and areas of technical assistance. These monthly meetings are being established to address areas of noncompliance that resulted from an on-site federal review on May 15-19 by the Office of Refugee Resettlement of Mississippi's URM program.

Further examples of the intrastate coordination for the URM program include:

- Mississippi Department of Human Services – Role involves making eligibility determination for Refugee Cash Assistance, TANF and SNAP formerly Food Stamps. Required documentation is submitted to the MDHS, Office of Field Operations to make and accurate determination based on TANF requirements; income and household size. Adult refugees may qualify for TANF and SNAP benefits by applying for assistance at the county offices. They will be required to follow all program requirements as other recipients in the respective programs.
- Mississippi Department of Health – Requires and screens all refugees are screened for TB. Additionally, MSDH will assist MDCPS with drafting its annual refugee resettlement state plan that requires the governor's signature for ORR approval.

- Mississippi Department of Mental Health -Shares and discusses monitoring findings and corrective actions plans on the joint service providers and notifies the state of their certification status as a therapeutic provider.
- Mississippi Division of Medicaid - MDCPS has an active MOU with the (DOM) to provide Medicaid health care coverage to eligible refugees for medical assistance consistent with the Refugee Assistance Act, and all other applicable state and federal regulations. MDCPS Reimbursement is 100 percent from the federal funds awarded in the ORR grant.
- Office of the Attorney General - Assists MDCPS in obtaining Chancery Court Orders to extend a youth's stay in the URM program up to age 21, if the youth requests to remain. Pertinent information is submitted to the AG's Office for the request to be made to the court on behalf of the youth. If granted, the child can remain until emancipation.
- John H. Chaffee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood – Assures Independent Living Program (ILP) services are available to URM participants. Independent Living services are currently provided through a sub-contract through Southern Christian Services and only one (1) URM participant meets the criteria for these services. This program helps adolescents acquire basic life skills in their progress from dependency toward self-sufficiency. Youth are eligible for Independent Living Services based on the following criteria:
 - Youth in care, ages 14 until their 21st birthday, are eligible for all Independent Living Services except for criteria placed on the Educational and Training Voucher program;
 - Youth who leave custody, ages 18 to their 21st birthday, and are eligible for after-care services until their 21st birthday;
 - Youth who enroll in post-secondary educational and vocational programs may be eligible based on the criteria detailed in the Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) Program section.

- The Director of Independent Living Services also hosted a Youth Computer Camp and nine (9) URM participants also attended.

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

Item 33: How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds?

This area is assessed as a “Strength.” The MDCPS system of licensing is uniform and consistent for all families by using the same licensure documents and processes. The agency has trained our staff on the processes and made sure all current forms are uploaded for easy access. Any old or outdated forms should have been destroyed and staff are reminded to only use the accurate forms found on line. When MDCPS staff review these homes and find inconsistencies, leadership addresses them quickly with that worker and supervisor for corrective action to be taken.

MDCPS has created standardized forms/packets to be used by all staff, with all families that are being licensed by our agency. We have two ways in which a licensure worker can use these forms. We have an automated DocuSign system that allows our licensure/front line staff to sit down with our prospective foster parents and complete paperwork with electronic signatures. DocuSign is accessible by all staff on their state issued tablets and, assuming our families have an email address and internet access, can be completed quickly and thoroughly while we are going over things. There are a few forms in our packet that must be signed and then completed by someone else, such as References and Medical forms. We have hard copies of these forms that we hand them while at their home or while they are completing training. We also have those same forms as PDF files on our electronic SharePoint system for anyone who cannot electronically complete the packets in their homes.

A listing of Non-Relative Homes licensed in the prior month is generated monthly. A thorough review of each home's casefile is conducted by regional supervisors using a checklist to ensure all documents are completed, signed and filed in the agency's SharePoint "Resource Library." Expedited Relative Homes are tracked by our Evaluation and Monitoring Unit, from the date they are entered in our system, to make sure they are completed within 90 days. They check for accurate forms being uploaded into SharePoint and, if there are any discrepancies, notify the Licensure staff of any deficiencies. These reviews create Footprint Heat Tickets that are sent out and cannot be closed until all documents are filed properly in the SharePoint folder for that home. Staff is alerted when the home's licensure case is at 30, 45, 60, 75, 85, and 90 days old. Both reviews check for items required for IV-E/IV-B payments to these foster homes and to ensure the foster home license certificate matches the date of official approval. Additional checks include: fingerprint results/background checks and any justifications, as well as the home review standardized checklist. Expedited and non-relative home licensures are reviewed on four levels before marked as complete/approved: Worker, Supervisor, Regional Supervisor/Bureau Director and the Review Team.

Item 34: How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that 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?

A "Strength" rating is asserted for this item.

MDCPS has adopted a Criminal Background Checks policy for the Foster and Adoptive Family Unit to ensure the state complies with all federal requirements for criminal background clearances relating to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements. Policy states before an applicant can become licensed, the licensure and adoption specialist is required to conduct a screening of all resource parents and household members 14 years of age and older. The screening process includes a federal, state, and local background check, along with a Child

Abuse Registry Check. When we place a child in an Expedited Placement with their relative, these checks are to be done by the County of Responsibility worker for all household members over the age of 14, prior to leaving that child in the home. On a Non-Relative home, where no child is currently placed, the screening process is begun upon receipt of application. Before a potential foster family has completed Orientation and begun online training, a fingerprint check and walk-through inspection of the home has been completed.

All State and Federal background checks are conducted through the Mississippi Department of Public Safety's Fingerprint Unit which provides background results within 24 to 48 hours after fingerprints after submission. A local background check is conducted through law enforcement agencies in cities where the applicant has lived for the past five years. For relative placements (where the child can be placed in the home prior to expedited licensure), the relative must have had a local background check completed and approved prior to MDCPS placing the child in the home. Fingerprints and Child Abuse Registry checks are then completed for the relative's home during the process of the expedited licensure. Prior to licensure, all applicants or persons residing in the home who have been convicted of a crime or who have a pending indictment of any crime are evaluated in accordance with the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-248) and Mississippi Code, Annotated Section 43-15-6, to determine their fitness to provide services as a resource parent. Adam Walsh disqualifiers for resource homes are felony convictions for: child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, crimes against children (including pornography), violence (including rape, sexual assault, homicide, but not including assault/battery), and felony convictions for assault/battery and/or drugs committed in the last 5 years. Any applicant disqualified to receive payment on behalf of a child is disqualified from MDCPS licensure. Criminal history convictions not applicable to Adam Walsh are addressed in Mississippi Code Annotated Section 43-15-6. The relevance of the conviction, time elapsed since the conviction, patterns of convictions, severity of convictions, input from the applicant, and potential safety risks related to the conviction are all considered as related to the best needs of the child. Any convictions not disqualified under the Adam Walsh Act/Mississippi Code and those five to 10 years prior are evaluated by the Regional Area Social Work Supervisor as well as the Bureau Director of Licensure. A justification form is reviewed to determine if this history would likely be a risk/safety factor in the future. Evaluation is done on a case-by-case basis and

in context with additional information provided on the offense. No foster homes have been approved for applicants failing the fingerprint screening.

Additionally, the Department began requiring social media and internet background searches for foster and adoptive parents on July 1, 2017. As part of the licensure process, specialists are now required to conduct a search on social media and the internet and record any findings of inappropriate behavior, derogatory imagery, and inappropriate sexual content.

Policy specifically requires MDCPS to conduct a fingerprint check and complete a background/social media/internet/MAWIS check on anyone over 14 years of age who moves into a foster home after licensure is granted. If that person has significant criminal history, licensure staff have safety plans created with the family to ensure any child in that home is safe. A Corrective Action Plan is created with the family in which specific tasks are outlined and deadlines given. If the person is deemed unsafe to be around a child, and the family is not willing to make changes to create a safe environment, MDCPS requests court approval to move the child to close their foster home (revoke licensure).

Strengths and concerns regarding this factor: Fingerprint-based checks are available and conducted statewide via Live Scan systems. The electronic fingerprint live-scan systems are designed for ease of use and for capturing high quality fingerprint images, helping to ensure superior acceptance rates and accurate criminal history information which increase the timeliness of return. The assistance from the Department of Public Safety helps to ensure the criminal history information we receive is accurate and available timely. The utilization of digital signatures has been implemented to speed up the process of getting criminal history information to licensure staff, supervisors, and other agency personnel involved in making a resource home licensure decision.

One identified barrier is the delay that can occur when scheduling applicants for fingerprinting. Even though live-scan laptops are available for MDCPS employees to use remotely, the scanned fingerprints and related information must be submitted from a live-scan fingerprint base station strategically located in the region. Barriers to timeliness include: the availability of applicants to schedule the fingerprinting; the applicant has multiple arrests; the court or arresting agency does not respond timely to requests for dispositions; or additional information is needed from an applicant and the applicant does not respond timely.

Foster and Adoptive parents (and anyone over 14 in the home) must be fingerprinted every five years. The MDCPS information technology support unit, along with the Fingerprinting Unit, is in the process of creating a way to automate the notification to the worker/supervisor when new fingerprints are due. Currently, during the relicensing process, the worker reviews the last date of fingerprints for all household members to determine if new fingerprints are needed. Since we re-license homes every two years, MDCPS will begin fingerprinting our foster families every four years to ensure compliance with the federal/state five-year requirement.

From June 2017 to April 2018, there were a total of 4,080 foster home applicants fingerprinted and processed by the Fingerprint Unit. The 4,080 applicants included the following: 2,456 non-relative resource applicants, 1,339 relative resource applicants, 46 Interstate Compact applicants, 40 Adoption applicants, and 199 youth aged 14 or older.

Month	Non-Relative Resource Applicant	Relative Resource Applicant	ICPC	Adoption	Youth in the home	Total
Jun-17	188	193	4	2	19	406
Jul-17	187	86	3	6	14	296
Aug-17	251	163	5	9	54	482
Sep-17	266	159	3	5	25	458
Oct-17	202	123	7	0	0	332
Nov-17	226	96	7	4	13	346
Dec-17	185	115	5	5	18	328
Jan-18	229	102	0	0	10	341
Feb-18	242	102	5	1	23	373
Mar-18	274	104	2	4	11	395
Apr-18	206	96	5	4	12	323
Total:	2456	1339	46	40	199	4080

Item 35 - How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the 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 is occurring statewide?

A “Strength” rating is asserted for this item.

MDCPS developed a recruitment and retention plan for field operations where each region/county has specific duties assigned to complete each month and specific goals for newly developed foster homes in each county/region. In 2017, MDCPS had a goal to license 300 non-relative homes. That goal was exceeded by 169 new homes. In 2018, MDCPS has the goal of licensing 400 non-relative homes. This goal was set and approved by Public Catalyst, the agency’s court-appointed monitor, and was consistent with the Modified Settlement Agreement in the *Olivia Y* lawsuit. Regional licensure staff confirm the number of new non-relative foster homes licensed each month and completes a review of those homes. In that review, the staff check that all licensing standards and IV-E requirements are met prior to the initial licensing. The new homes are then posted to the new MDCPS Placement Matching Tool that became operational in 2018. The online tool allows staff to search for an available foster home by entering the child’s gender and age as well as their home county (geographic location). The tool searches based on the demographics entered and matches that child with available homes for the requested age range and gender. The staff then evaluates available options to determine which home would be the best match.

As of July 2018, MDCPS has licensed 173 new non-relative homes.

Foster home recruitment events/efforts are reported quarterly by the county Licensure staff, State Office Permanency Support Unit, county staff, and Rescue 100 Unit how well each region/county is progressing toward their recruitment goals. See attached for an example of this quarterly update.

The Permanency Support Services Unit at State Office supports the field staff in their recruitment and retention efforts for resource parents. The Permanency Support Services Unit distributed “How You Can Help” recruitment brochures statewide. The brochures contain basic information about steps involved in becoming resource parents and gives contact information including the foster/adoption information hotline, email address, and website. The unit is also training our contract agencies on the new curriculum for PREP/PATH and has already conducted a Train the Trainers session for our licensure and adoption staff. New manuals for the updated PREP/PATH curriculum should be ready to distribute by August 2018.

To further support statewide recruitment efforts, MDCPS Executive Management and Permanency Support Services Directors have been interviewed by several media to appeal to foster and adoptive parents.

Additionally, the Continued Quality Improvement Unit reviews all expedited relative homes developed from the time a foster child enters the home until the relative's home is licensed or closed. Data is collected and reported to licensure unit staff and leadership regarding any safety issues as well as any documentation that is lacking in those homes during the process of licensure. Further, once the home is fully licensed, a thorough case review is conducted to assure time frames are met and the family meets all standards set out in IV-E regulations.

On July 1, 2017, the Department implemented new processes and forms for its expedited and non-expedited licensing. Additionally, MDCPS began using two new home study formats developed by the Department in collaboration with its court monitor. The new processes, home studies, and forms are electronic and completed via DocuSign by agency staff and foster and adoptive parents. These changes have yielded significant improvements in the licensure process as it relates to service delivery and the timeliness of services. This also provides a way to ensure completion of all documents and is expected to help with consistency for all homes approved. Checklists have been reconstructed for guidance to ensure that each newly developed home has all required information and documentation required for IV-E compliance.

Report SZRESL

As of May 5, 2018, the Department had approximately 2742 licensed resource homes. Of that number 39.50% (1083) are relative homes and 60.50% (1659) are non-relatives.

MDCPS' MEPA (Multi Ethnic Placement Act) states, "Neither race, color, nor national origin (RCNO) of a child or prospective caregiver may be considered in the placement selection process for a foster child unless an individualized assessment reveals that such consideration is in the child's best interest. Culture may not be used as a proxy for RCNO and placements may not be delayed or denied on the basis of RCNO of the child or the provider." MDCPS asserts a strength rating for this item.

MDCPS recruits prospective foster and adoptive families from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Any prospective families interested may apply. Race, color, and national origin are not considered in licensure determinations. MDCPS' current pool of foster and adoptive families represents a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The tables below display the demographics of our current foster family population as of May 15, 2018. (*FH means foster home and RFH means relative foster home*).

Type of Home	Race							Grand Total
	AMIAN	ASIAN	BLACK	HAWAI	OTHER	UNDET	WHITE	
FH	4	1	563	5		580	734	1887
RFH		1	273	1	2	90	515	882
Grand Total	4	2	836	6	2	670	1249	2769

	Race							Grand Total
	AMIAN	ASIAN	BLACK	HAWAI	OTHER	UNDET	WHITE	
FH	0%	0%	30%	0%	0%	31%	39%	100.00%
RFH	0%	0%	31%	0%	0%	10%	58%	100.00%
Grand Total	0%	0%	30%	0%	0%	24%	45%	100.00%

Gender	# of Children in Custody as of 5/15/2018
F	2649
M	2682
Total	5331

Race	# of Children in Custody as of 5/15/2018
AMIAN	10
ASIAN	10
BLACK	2104
HAWAI	6
NA	4
UNDET	142
WHITE	3055
Total	5331

In addition to Licensure Unit and county office recruitment of new foster homes, MDCPS in January 2018 launched a concentrated statewide effort to involve churches and other faith-based groups in identifying, training, licensing and supporting new foster families. Rescue 100 works daily as a collaborative effort between the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, the courts and churches representing all denominations across the state of Mississippi. These organizations work together to streamline the training and licensing process for foster families. Rescue 100 recruits, trains and equips foster families through online training courses and a 1-day training to expedite licensing their homes so they can care for children in need of a stable and loving home environment. Orientation sessions and training are held throughout the year in all parts of the state.

Throughout 2018, Rescue 100 recruitment efforts, orientation sessions and training will continue to be offered each month to residents of all 82 counties through regionally targeted outreach campaigns. As of July 1, Rescue 100 had trained and completed initial background screenings for more than 200 new foster families.

Item 36: How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide?

The agency assesses this area as “Needs Improvement.”

Although the agency identifies areas needing improvement, the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) Division works to maintain compliance with the federal ICPC Articles and Regulations, the Mississippi law, Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services policy and practice, as well as the laws, policy and practices of other states within the Compact. This area can be improved to better serve the children and families across jurisdictional sections.

A “Strength” for the agency, in this area, is the staff’s combined years of experience with child welfare practice. The ICPC Division currently operates with three staff members having a combined total of 23 years of experience. The staff includes one (1) Division Director, one (1) Program Manager, and one (1) Program Specialist. Additional staff is needed and would enable the division to be fully equipped with a framework to properly process cases, communicate with constituents, offer guidance, and handle difficult predicaments.

Currently, the Division Director processes all private adoptions, out-going cases and completed home studies for approval/denial. Duties of the Program Manager include processing residential treatment placements, 100B forms for verification of placements/changes/closures; status updates to cases and manages the ICPC email. The Program Specialist processes all incoming ICPC home study request, all supervisory reports and manages the mail received through U.S. mail or FedEx.

MDCPS uses NEICE (National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise) to quickly and securely exchange data and documents required by the Interstate Compact on the Placement of

Children (ICPC) to place children across state lines. All staff member processes mail that is received through the NEICE system because requests can be received by each individual person.

In addition to case management, the ICPC Division's staff members are also on various committees under the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC). There are fifteen (15) committees under the body of AAICPC. The committees in which the MS ICPC Division participate include: The Annual Business and Conference Planning Committee, Data Collection Committee, New ICPC Committee, Nominations Committee, Parental Placement Committee, Training Committee and NEICE Committee. These committees require meetings in the form of teleconferences and webinars that range from bi-weekly to quarterly.

In 2017, Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services entered into a Border Agreement with Alabama Department of Human Resources to effect more timely and efficient movement of interstate placement. The counties in Mississippi are: George, Greene and Jackson. The counties in Alabama are Mobile and Washington. This agreement initiated a more expeditious process of assessing the appropriateness of a prospective caregiver's home within these neighboring counties. The goal is to establish, more border agreements and expedite cross jurisdictional placements.

Cross-Jurisdictional resources for placement are identified through the Adopt US Kids website, Mississippi Heart Gallery (MHG) on MDCPS' website and Facebook, and inquiries from other sources. Families who are interested in children in MDCPS' custody submit inquiries and are screened as potential placements. Overall, this system of identifying cross-jurisdictional placements is functioning well as the agency is receiving a continuous flow of out of state inquiries regarding children in care featured on these sites.

ICPC Data Tracking

Presently, Mississippi does not have an efficient way of tracking quantitative data regarding the percentage of home studies completed within 60 days. Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System (MACWIS) does not provide a mechanism for adequate tracking of ICPC cases or a report on the time it takes to complete home study requests. The majority of data

collection is done with a Microsoft Access spreadsheet, manual counts and through The National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) database system.

Based on the available data, during FY 2018, there were 2,513 ICPC cases handled either for placement of children from other states into Mississippi or placement of Mississippi children in other states for parental or foster care. This number includes denials, approvals, Regulation 7 Priority Placements (expedited referrals that must be completed in 20 workdays), disruptions, terminations, status updates and 136 residential treatment facility placements. Also, during FY 2018, 209 ICPC adoption cases were handled, which includes public and private adoptions resulting in an approximate total of 2,722 cases, which concludes to 907 cases per staff member.

Collaboration

ICPC Division continues its partnership with the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), Division of Youth Services (DYS), Interstate Compact on Juveniles (ICJ), private adoption agencies, and attorneys for processing of private adoptions. ICPC also collaborates with the Administrative Office of the Courts court improvement programs for educational training as well as collaborating with judges to work through barriers to permanency. ICPC also has been working with the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC) Training Committee on how to introduce the “New Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children” to the legislative body within the state. This process was also discussed during the AAICP Annual Training and Child Welfare Conference which was held on May 2017, in Portland, Maine and the conference in Seattle, Washington in April 2018. The AAICPC developed a more definitive approach to presenting the new proposed compact to legislators.

Attorney General’s Office

The ICPC Division regularly seeks legal advice and assistance from the attorney general’s office when dealing with situations beyond the scope of the division’s daily policies and procedures. ICPC requires legal guidance on what can/ cannot be done on a case to remain in compliance of MDCPS policy, state and federal law. We also have participated on conference calls and trainings with judges and attorneys to assist in resolving issues that the judicial system may see as barriers

to a child being placed. The ICPC Division has collaborated with this office in order to obtain a clearer interpretation of child welfare law and prevention of any child safety concerns.

Private Agencies and Attorneys

The ICPC office also collaborates with various adoption attorneys and licensed adoption agencies in Mississippi to help facilitate private adoption for permanency. Some of the attorneys and agencies include Young Wells Williams. P.A, Attorney Craig Robertson, New Beginnings, Bethany Christian Services, Acorn Adoption, 200 Million Flowers, Lifeline Children Services and Beacon House Adoptions.