



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

Final Report

Ohio Child and Family Services Review

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report
Ohio Child and Family Services Review

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) assesses State performance during a specified time period with respect to seven child welfare outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being and with respect to seven systemic factors. The Ohio CFSR was conducted the week of May 20, 2002. The assessment is based on information from the following sources:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), Office for Children and Families;
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 50 cases from three counties in the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, service providers, court personnel, legislators, and attorneys.

A key finding of the CFSR of Ohio’s child welfare programs was that the State did not achieve substantial conformity with any of the seven safety, permanency, or well-being outcomes. In addition, the State did not meet national standards for measures relating to repeat maltreatment, maltreatment of children in foster care, foster care re-entries, stability of foster care placements, the length of time to achieve reunification, or the length of time to achieve adoption.

Although the State did not meet the requirements for substantial conformity with the CFSR Outcomes, the case review process and stakeholder interviews identified several areas of strength, including the following:

- Providing services to families to prevent removal while at the same time ensuring the child's safety (item 3).
- Reducing the risk of harm to children (item 4).
- Establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner (item 7).
- Providing services to children to help them make a successful transition from foster care to independent living (item 10).
- Placing children in foster care in close proximity to their biological families (item 11) and with their siblings (item 12), when in the children's best interest.
- Promoting frequent visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13) and supporting and maintaining the parent-child relationships of children in foster care (item 16).
- Visiting children in foster care with sufficient frequency to monitor their safety and ensure their well-being (item 19).

One area of concern identified during the CFSR pertained to the agency's lack of consistency in ensuring the well-being of children and families served by ODJFS. For example, Well-Being Outcome 1—Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs—was found to be either "partially achieved" or "not achieved" in 34 percent of the cases reviewed. In these cases, reviewers determined: (1) that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents had not been adequately assessed or met (item 17); (2) that parents were not engaged in the development of case plans (item 18); and/or (3) that caseworkers did not visit parents with sufficient frequency to ensure the children's safety and to promote attainment of case goals (item 20). Similarly, the CFSR case reviews found that Well-Being Outcome 2—Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs—was either partially achieved or not achieved in 30 percent of the cases.

In addition to concerns identified with respect to child and family well-being outcomes, the CFSR revealed that the agency also is inconsistent in its efforts to achieve permanency for children in foster care. For example, Permanency Outcome 1—Children have permanency and stability in their living situations—was found to be either partially achieved or not achieved in approximately 27 percent of the cases reviewed. Both case review findings and stakeholder interviews targeted the following indicators related to permanency as areas needing improvement:

- The rate of re-entry into foster care (item 5).
- The stability of children's placements while in foster care (item 6).
- That attainment of a permanent home for children in a timely manner (items 8 and 9). A concern identified in regards to both items 8 and 9 was the impact of crowded court dockets.

With regard to the seven systemic factors, the CFSR determined that the State was in substantial conformity with statewide information system, quality assurance system, training, service array, agency responsiveness to the community, and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. The State was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of case review system, primarily because of the findings that the State was not consistent in the development of case plans or in the involvement of parents in the case planning process, and that permanency hearings were not always being held in a timely manner. Findings of the CFSR indicate that court rules do not always coincide with State law regarding ASFA requirements, and consequently, permanency hearings are not routinely held in a timely manner.

Child welfare services in the State of Ohio are delivered in a state-supervised, county-administered environment. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is the designated state agency responsible for overseeing the operation of 88 public children services agencies (PCSAs), which provide direct services to children and families. The PCSAs are created by Ohio statute and the structure of each is determined by the local governing body or county board of commissioners. Fifty-five PCSAs are located within the administrative body of the county departments of job and family services and 33 are separate children services boards. A county department of job and family services provides public assistance services, and can also administer child welfare services, child support services, adult services, and work force investment services (these counties can be termed *double combined* [20 counties],

triple combined [31 counties], or *quadruple combined* [four counties]). The children services board only provides child welfare services. With 88 counties, courts, and funding sources, each community is faced with a diverse array of strengths and challenges in the delivery of services. Additionally, there are 43 county or multi-county mental health and alcohol and drug addiction services boards and 7 counties with separate mental health boards and alcohol and drug addiction service boards.

The following is a summary of the CFSR findings regarding specific outcomes and systemic factors.

KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Status of Safety Outcome S1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that 84.4 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity. In addition, the State did not meet the national standard for either repeat maltreatment or maltreatment of children in foster care. A summary of the findings for specific items assessed under this outcome is presented below.

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

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 17 percent of the applicable cases, the agency did not respond to a maltreatment report in a timely manner. However, responses that were not timely were found only for reports classified as “non-emergencies.”

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although there was no recurrence of maltreatment in 89 percent of the cases, data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State’s incidence of repeat maltreatment for 2000 was 8.59 percent, which does not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent. Because the two measures are computed in different ways, it is necessary for both measures to meet specified criteria for an overall rating of Strength to be assigned to the item.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Status of Safety Outcome S2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 83 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity. Although the two items assessed for this outcome were rated as a Strength individually, the number of cases in which both items were rated as a Strength was not sufficient to meet the 90 percent requirement for substantial conformity.

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

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 89 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to provide services to prevent children's placement in foster care while ensuring their safety in their homes. This determination is consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment regarding the development of safety plans for each child, followed by a comprehensive risk assessment.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 85 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS was consistently effective in its efforts to reduce risk of harm to children. Case reviews indicate that in most cases, the agency effectively manages risk by removing children from their homes or by providing services while children remain in their homes. In the few cases in which reviewers determined that risk was not effectively managed, however, there was a significant lack of attention on the part of caseworkers to the potential for harm to the children.

II. PERMANENCY

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Status of Permanency Outcome 1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that 73.1 percent of the cases were rated as having substantially achieved Permanency Outcome 1, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity. In addition, the State did not meet the national standard for foster care re-entries, stability of foster placements, reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care, or adoptions occurring within 24 months of entry into foster care. Stakeholders suggested that barriers to setting and achieving permanency goals have arisen due to differences between the agency and the court.

Although Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity for this outcome, some areas of strength were identified in the CFSSR process. For example, case reviewers determined that for most cases, permanency goals were appropriate and established in a timely fashion. However, concerns were identified with respect to the lack of consistency in providing supportive services to children and families at the time of reunification and the use of long-term foster care leading to emancipation as a case goal.

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because, although there was a re-entry into foster care in only one of nine cases for which this assessment was applicable, the data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that the rate of re-entry into foster care within 12 months is 13.7 percent, which does not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because, although in 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers rated placement stability as a Strength, the State Data Profile indicated that 85.9 percent of all children in foster care for 12 months or less had no more than two placement settings, which does not meet the national standard of 86.9 percent. A key concern identified in the case review process pertained to a lack of appropriate placements for children with behavior problems. In general, the Statewide Assessment attributes many of the placement changes captured in the data to the practice of placing children on an emergency basis, usually in shelters, at the point of entry into the system and prior to making a more long-term placement decision.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 92 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner. However, although case reviews generally found strong efforts at permanency planning, there was little evidence of concurrent planning approaches or practices.

Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship or Permanent Placement with Relatives

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although reviewers rated this item as a Strength in 92 percent of the cases reviewed, the State did not meet the national standard for reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care. The Statewide Assessment posits that this finding may be due to a failure on the part of the agency to enter data on discharge reason into the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). However, information in the Statewide Assessment supports statements made by stakeholders regarding the scarcity of mental health and drug and alcohol services in many counties and the negative impact of the lack of these services on the agency's ability to reunify families in a timely manner. Stakeholders mentioned that lack of access to services, waiting lists for services, and crowded court dockets were key barriers to timely reunifications.

Item 9. Adoption

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that ODJFS had not made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner in 50 percent of the applicable cases. In addition, the State did not meet the national standard for percentage of finalized adoptions within 24 months of removal from home. The Statewide Assessment notes that adoption delays may be attributed to a variety of causes including the difficulty in finding adoptive families for children with “significant problems.” Other identified causes of delay were appeals of TPR petitions and the size of the court dockets.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in all applicable cases, reviewers determined that caseworkers were making diligent efforts to assist children in attaining the goal. However, stakeholders expressed some concerns that the goal of long term foster care leading to emancipation is inappropriate in some cases.

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Status of Permanency Outcome 2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 84.6 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although the State did not reach substantial conformity, there were many areas of strength with respect to this outcome. For example, the case review process revealed that the agency is highly effective in placing children in their home counties and communities and with their siblings, promoting visitation with parents and siblings, and supporting the relationship between children in foster care and their parents. Preserving connections for children in foster care was found to be more of a challenge for the agency, particularly with regard to keeping children connected to extended families when available placements were outside of their home communities. Also, the agency was not consistent in its efforts to seek relatives as placement resources.

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because, in 95 percent of applicable cases, children were placed in close proximity to parents or close relatives or placement in another community was justified based on the child’s needs. Information from the Statewide Assessment and the stakeholder interviews suggest that the Family to Family initiative implemented in the State is at least partially responsible for the agency’s performance on this item. The Statewide Assessment describes the Family to Family initiative as a family-centered, neighborhood-based approach to working with children, families, and communities. It is based on the premise that neighborhoods are the primary source of support for families and, therefore, are in the best position for assuring the safety and vitality of their members.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 93 percent of the cases, siblings were either placed together or the separation was deemed necessary to meet the needs of one or more of the children.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 90 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS had made, or was making, concerted efforts to facilitate visitation. In most cases, visitation occurred at least once a month with parents and siblings in foster care.

Item 14. Preserving connections

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 27 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency was not making diligent efforts to maintain children's connections to family, community, faith, and friends while the children are in foster care.

Item 15. Relative placement

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that, in 16 percent of the cases, the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. A primary problem identified was that workers were not fully exploring paternal relatives as placement options. To support relative placements, the State has created the Kinship Care Services Planning Council to develop recommendations specifying the types of services that should be included as part of a Statewide program of supportive services to kinship caregivers.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because reviewers determined that in 95 percent of applicable cases, the agency supported the parent-child relationships of children in foster care.

III. WELL-BEING

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved for only 66.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

A general finding of the CFSR process was that ODJFS is not consistent in its efforts to ensure that families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. For example, caseworkers did not consistently meet policy requirements for the conduct of visits with parents or guardians. In addition, the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents were not thoroughly assessed and/or services were not provided in 32 percent of the cases. Finally, the agency was not consistent in involving parents and children in the case planning process.

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

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 32 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS had not been effective in assessing service needs and/or providing appropriate services to children, parents, and/or foster parents. Specific problems identified in the case review process were unmet service needs, incomplete assessments, and lack of attention to fathers' service needs. Case reviewers noted that a key problem was that assessments were not sufficiently in-depth to uncover potential underlying problems, such as domestic violence or substance abuse. Information from stakeholders and the Statewide Assessment suggests that a key barrier to meeting service needs is a lack of comprehensive services in the State.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 30 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS had not involved parents or children in the case planning process when it was appropriate to do so. According to the Statewide Assessment, it has been anecdotally reported by parents and foster parents in the State that they are not involved in developing the case plan and that case planning, for the most part, is a cookie-cutter approach. The Statewide Assessment indicated that parents have reported that they are afraid to use the court process to dispute the contents of the case plan, that their public defender is unhelpful, and that the agency is unresponsive to their input.

Item 19. Worker visits with child

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 90 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and quality. In most instances, visitation met or exceeded State policy, which requires face-to-face contacts with the child at least once a month. For children in foster care, agency policy requires more frequent contact during the first month in placement.

Item 20. Worker visits with parents

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 34 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that visits with parents were not sufficiently frequent or of sufficient quality to promote the safety and well-being of the children or enhance attainment of permanency. However, in many cases worker contact with parents exceeded State requirements. According to the Statewide Assessment, Ohio guidelines for visitation between the case worker and the parents, as of December 2001,

require that caseworkers establish face-to-face contact with parents in both foster care and in-home services cases on a monthly basis and that visits involve monitoring of case plan objectives.

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 83.8 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. The general finding of the CFSR process was that the agency was not consistent in assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child.

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that in 16 percent of the cases, the educational needs of children were not adequately addressed. The key problem identified pertained to cases in which children showed evidence of school-related behavioral problems, developmental delays, learning disabilities, and/or poor school performance yet no assessment of needs was completed and services were not provided.

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3 - Not in Substantial Conformity

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in only 69.8 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

In general, the CFSR process found that ODJFS was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical or mental health needs, although in most cases, these needs were adequately addressed. The key problems identified with respect to physical health services were that health screening and services were delayed for some children, and some children were not receiving preventive care or services to meet identified health needs. The key problems identified with regard to mental health services were that (1) children had mental health needs that were not addressed, (2) mental health services were delayed (due primarily to a lack of availability of services); and/or (3) services were not provided with sufficient frequency to effectively meet the child's needs.

Item 22. Physical health of the child

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 17 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS was not adequately addressing the health needs of children in foster care and in-home services cases. Overall, reviewers found that assessments were completed in a timely manner, that medical records were in children’s case files, and that medical records were being provided to foster parents at the time of placement. The key problem identified was that the assessment of children's health needs was not adequate in a number of cases.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 32 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS was not meeting children's mental health needs. This determination is consistent with stakeholders’ perceptions that there are problems in obtaining adequate mental health services for children. The determination is not consistent with Statewide Assessment information pertaining to mental health services for children in foster care. According to this information, when a child enters substitute care, part of the comprehensive Healthcheck screening includes a psychological assessment of the child. However, evidence of this practice was not consistently found among the foster care cases reviewed for the CFSR.

KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Status of Statewide Information System – Substantial Conformity

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the factor of Statewide Information System.

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

Item 24 was rated as a Strength because the Family and Children Services Information System (FAC SIS) meets the requirement 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.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Status of Case Review System – Not in Substantial Conformity

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

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

Item 25 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although State Code and Rule require that all children in foster care have a written case plan completed within a maximum allowable time of 60 days, State data for the past three years show that the number of children who had a case plan completed within that time was 86 percent. Also, despite the implementation of family case conferences in many public children services agencies (PCSAs), parents and foster parents reported that they are not involved in case planning and that case planning is, for the most part, pro forma.

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

This item was rated as a Strength because State Code and Rule require a semi-annual review (SAR) for each child in foster care. Stakeholders commented that the required periodic reviews are generally held in a timely manner, but suggested that the local court structure has an impact on the timeliness of reviews.

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

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because court rules do not always coincide with State law regarding the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requirements, and consequently, permanency hearings are not routinely held in a timely manner.

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

Item 28 was rated as a Strength because the State has a process for the termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings in accordance with the provisions of AFSA. Stakeholders noted that the 12-month State requirement for filing for TPR exceeds the ASFA requirement of 15 months. However, some stakeholders also noted that although TPR petitions are filed within required timeframes, the hearings often are delayed because of the defense attorneys' requests for continuances.

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

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

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Status of Quality Assurance System-Substantial Conformity

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the factor of Quality Assurance System. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Item 30 was rated as a Strength because the rules of the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) set standards to ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services that protect their health and safety. The rules address the assessment of risk to the child, provision of services, training of staff, and overall agency operations. All OAC rules must be reviewed every 5 years.

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

Item 31 was rated as a Strength because the Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation (CPOE) Quality Assurance System evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

VII. TRAINING

Status of Training-Substantial Conformity

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Item 32 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because the State has a specified competency-based curriculum focusing on core job requirements for new staff. The training is provided at regional training sites statewide to maintain consistency and quality. The State also maintains an automated tracking system that can readily identify all staff who have and have not attended specific training modules. There is an ongoing evaluation component of the training at multiple levels to assess appropriateness and effectiveness of the initial training provided.

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

Item 33 was rated as a Strength because there are specific Statewide ongoing training requirements for both caseworkers and supervisors that allow for individualization of training needs based on job responsibilities and employee knowledge, skills and experience.

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

Item 34 was rated as a Strength because training is required by State rules and is made available by local agencies for both foster and adoptive parents. ODJFS monitors compliance with training requirements during on-site review of local agency records.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

Status of Service Array-Substantial Conformity

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the factor of Service Array. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Item 35 was rated as a Strength because the State offers a wide array of services to meet the needs of children and families.

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

Item 36 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the ability to deliver needed services to children and families is negatively affected by unstable and disparate funding from county to county, and extreme variation in the availability of services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment.

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

Item 37 is rated as a Strength because through means such as the analysis of individual county needs and the flexibility allowed by ProtectOHIO, services can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Status of Agency Responsiveness To The Community-Substantial Conformity

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this outcome are presented below.

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

Item 38 was rated as a Strength because ODJFS, in developing the CFSP, engages in extensive consultation with consumers, service providers, foster care providers, courts, and other public and private service agencies. Input from these sources is given careful consideration in the planning process.

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

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because the annual progress and services report that ODJFS prepares to document compliance with the provisions of CFSP is written after consultation with the representatives noted under item 38.

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

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because of the effort ODJFS makes to assure that the services and benefits of different Federal programs that serve the same population are coordinated to provide the maximum benefit.

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

Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention-Substantial Conformity

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this outcome are presented below.

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

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the licensing standards as contained in the Ohio Administrative Code are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

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

Item 42 is rated as a Strength because the licensing standards are applied uniformly statewide to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions that receive title IV-E or IV-B funds.

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

Item 43 was rated as a Strength because 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.

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

Item 44 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although Ohio has proper policies and procedures in place and has programs and initiatives to recruit potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom homes are needed, there are still not enough homes for those children.

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

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because the cross-jurisdictional resources that Ohio uses are effective in facilitating timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Ohio. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), Office for Children and Families;
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites throughout the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, service providers, court personnel, legislators, and attorneys.

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

- 23 cases were reviewed in Franklin County, 15 in Clark County, and 12 in Washington County.
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- 26 of the cases were “foster care cases” (cases in which children were in the care and custody of the State child welfare agency and in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 24 were “in-home services cases” (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained in their homes).
- In 31 of the cases, all children in the family were Caucasian; in 13 cases, all children in the family were African American; in 2 cases, all children in the family were Native American; and in 3 cases, the children in the family were two or more races. In one case, reviewers did not identify the race/ethnicity of the children.
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the **primary** reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case was the following:
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 17 cases (34%)
 - Physical abuse – 10 cases (20%)
 - Sexual abuse – 9 cases (18%)
 - Emotional maltreatment – 3 cases (6%)
 - Substance abuse by parent – 2 cases (4%)
 - Child’s behavior – 2 cases (4%)
 - Child in juvenile justice system – 1 case (2%)
 - Medical neglect – 1 case (2%)
 - Domestic violence in child’s home – 1 case (2%)
 - Mental/physical health of parent – 1 case (2%)
 - Other – 3 cases (6%)

- Among **all** reasons identified for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency, neglect (not including medical neglect) was cited in 29 cases (58%), physical abuse was cited in 21 cases (42%), sexual abuse was cited in 18 cases (36%), emotional maltreatment was cited in 12 cases (24%), substance abuse by parents was cited in 11 cases (22%), and child's behavior was cited in 11 cases (22%).
- For 15 (58%) of the 26 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in foster care during the entire period under review.

The first section of the report presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table providing the degree of outcome achievement by site, a presentation of the State's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome, and a discussion of each item examined as part of the overall outcome assessment. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

SECTION 1: OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Clark	Franklin	Washington	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	10	16	12	38	84.4
Partially Achieved:	2	3	0	5	11.1
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	0	0	2	4.4
Not Applicable:	1	4	0	5	
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:					
	National Standard	State's Percentage	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	
Repeat maltreatment	6.1%	8.59%		X	
Maltreatment of children in foster care	0.57%	.59%		X	

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1

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

- 84.4 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity;
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period; and
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing maltreatment from caretakers while in foster care.

The CFSR findings with respect to safety outcome 1 suggest that ODJFS is not consistent in its efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect. For example, there were a number of cases in which the initiation of an investigation did not meet agency policy with respect to timeliness. Case reviewers expressed concern about the large number of child maltreatment reports that are not assigned for a full assessment/ investigation and the absence of clear and consistent statewide criteria for making this initial screening decision. In addition, case reviewers noted that when reports are received on children who currently have open cases in the agency, the information in the report is passed on to the case supervisor rather than requiring assignment of the report for a full assessment. Based on these two concerns, case reviewers suggested that there may be children who are victims of repeat maltreatment who are not represented in either the Statewide data or the CFSR case review findings because no investigation/assessment is conducted.

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

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 24 of the 50 cases. Twenty-six cases were not applicable because they did not involve reports of child maltreatment during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with child welfare agency policy. In Ohio, State policy requires that for reports classified as “emergencies,” face-to-face contact with the victim must be attempted within one hour. All other reports require attempted face-to-face or telephone contact within 24 hours with a principal or collateral source and attempted face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim within 3 calendar days of receipt of the report.

The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 20 (83%) of the 24 applicable cases (10 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (17%) of the 24 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength in all cases in which the initiation of a response to child maltreatment reports occurring during the period under review was in accordance with agency policy for the risk level assigned to the report. For the four cases rated as Area Needing Improvement, reviewers noted that the agency did not respond to one or more reports of child maltreatment in accordance with the time frames established by policy. Three of these cases involved “non-emergency” reports; the “risk level” rating for the fourth case was not provided.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that the agency responds quickly to reports of abuse and neglect and that all counties have the capacity for a 24-hour response to reports. Several stakeholders praised the agency for defining domestic violence reports as high-risk situations that require an immediate response. However, some stakeholders noted that there is variation across counties with respect to the process of screening reports. Stakeholders believe that intake workers are screening out calls when an investigation/assessment may be a more appropriate response. Although it was noted that families that are not subject to a full assessment are referred for services, several reviewers were not convinced that this is a sufficient response to some of the reports that are screened out. Reviewers also questioned the appropriateness of the common agency practice of not assigning reports of suspected abuse/neglect for an investigation/assessment if there is an open case within the agency.

Another area of concern cited by stakeholders was the timeliness of reports of suspected abuse and neglect received from private agencies providing in-home services to families. Although these contractors are required to report all possible abuse or neglect situations immediately to the children's services agency, sometimes this does not happen in a timely fashion. Stakeholders from all sites reported that abuse and neglect report information from other counties is not readily accessible.

Concern also was expressed regarding another agency practice, which involves classifying some reports as "informational with contact." These reports are not assigned for a full assessment until such time as additional information signifies a suspicion of abuse or neglect. Once additional information is received, the report is assigned a priority, and at that point a full response in accordance with State guidelines is required. However, case reviewers noted that the reclassification of the report is either not being done on a consistent basis or in a timely manner, leaving some children at risk. In addition to these concerns, case reviewers noted that agency policy in one of the sites included in the on-site review does not require a full assessment in instances in which alleged sexual abuse perpetrators live outside the victim's home.

Determination and Discussion: Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 17 percent of the applicable cases, the agency did not respond to a maltreatment report in a timely manner. Although in the majority of instances, the agency responded quickly and appropriately, this did not happen consistently. However, the case review process found that inconsistencies occurred primarily when reports were classified as "nonemergencies."

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 44 of the 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had been at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report occurred within 6 months of that report. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 39 (89%) of the 44 applicable cases (20 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (11%) of the 44 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in cases in which there was no repeat maltreatment. However, most of these cases were either foster care cases in which the child entered foster care prior to the period under review, or in-home services cases that were opened prior to the period under review and did not have a substantiated or indicated report during the period under review. Among the 18 cases in which there was at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review, 5 (28%) had at least one other substantiated or indicated report within 6 months of that report. In one additional case, there were two maltreatment reports during the period under review, but they occurred more than 6 months apart.

An additional finding with respect to repeat maltreatment was that in the majority of the cases reviewed, there were multiple maltreatment reports over the life of the case. Although not all reports were substantiated or indicated, there were 15 cases that had more than 10 maltreatment reports over the life of the case and 7 cases with more than 20 reports. There were 5 cases with more than 30 reports over the life of the case.

Determination and Discussion: Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although there was no recurrence of maltreatment in 89 percent of the cases, 28 percent of those children, who experienced at least one maltreatment episode during the period under review, had another substantiated/indicated maltreatment report within 6 months. In addition, data from the State Data Profile indicate that State's incidence of repeat maltreatment for 2000 was 8.59 percent, which does not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent. Because the case review and State Data Profile measures are computed in different ways, it is necessary for both measures to meet specified criteria for an overall rating of Strength to be assigned to the item.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State's Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation System (CPOE) has examined recidivism on terminated substantiated and indicated child abuse and neglect reports since 1992 and has reported a decline in recidivism. However, stakeholders and case reviewers suggested that the State data and the case review findings may present an inaccurate perception of the number of children who are victims of repeat maltreatment because of the agency practice of not assigning a report for an assessment/investigation if there already is an open case on the child.

Safety Outcome 2

Safety Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Clark	Franklin	Washington	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	12	15	12	39	83.0
Partially Achieved:	0	4	0	4	8.5
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	1	0	4	8.5
Not Applicable:	0	3	0	3	

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 based on the finding that this outcome was substantially achieved in 83.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Although the two items assessed for this outcome were both assigned a rating of “Strength,” the number of cases in which both items were rated as a Strength was not sufficient to meet the 90 percent “substantially achieved” requirement. For example, in a few cases, reviewers rated item 3 as a Strength because the agency provided or referred families for services to permit children to be safely maintained in their homes. However, for the same cases, reviewers rated item 4 as an Area Needing Improvement because the agency did not monitor either the family’s participation in services or progress as a result of service participation, leaving children at the same level of risk as they were at the time the case was opened.

In general, information from case reviews and stakeholder interviews suggests that ODJFS makes diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes and is effective in managing the risk of harm to children. This was particularly evident in one of the sites included in the on-site review in which all applicable cases were assigned a rating of Strength for both items. The primary concerns noted pertained to an inconsistency among caseworkers in conducting comprehensive risk assessments that identified underlying problems in the family and in monitoring families to assess progress with regard to a reduction in the risk of harm to children.

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

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: There were 35 cases for which an assessment of item 3 was applicable. Fifteen cases were excluded from this assessment because the children were in foster care for the entire review period or because there were no substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 31 (89%) of the 35 applicable cases (12 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (11%) of the 35 applicable cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

Twenty-seven cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that ODJFS assessed the family's service needs appropriately and provided or referred the family for services to meet those needs. The services provided included (but were not limited to) case management, parenting classes, parent aides, Early Start home visitation, counseling, therapy, day care, Head Start, educational advocacy, transportation, housing services, child development assessments, and literacy. Families also were provided with household items, such as furniture. Four cases were rated as a Strength because reviewers determined that children had been appropriately removed from their homes to ensure their safety and placed in foster care (2 cases) or with relatives on a voluntary basis (2 cases).

Cases were rated as 'Area Needing Improvement' for this item when reviewers determined that the agency did not adequately assess service needs or did not provide the services identified in the assessment.

Some stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that county agencies have a tendency to request that courts remove children from the home when it may be possible to maintain them safely in their homes through the provision of services. However, these stakeholders also noted that often there are insufficient services available in the community that would permit children to be safely maintained in their homes, particularly services to address mental health and drug and alcohol problems.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 89 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to provide services to ensure children's safety while preventing their placement in foster care. This determination is consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment regarding the development of safety plans. According to the Statewide Assessment, some agencies in the State engage in safety planning as the initial step in the risk assessment process and, when imminent danger exists and there are resources available for the child to remain safely in the home,

a safety plan is developed and implemented. The purpose of the safety plan is to control the conditions that are currently endangering the child. Once this is done, a comprehensive risk assessment is conducted. In addition, the Statewide Assessment noted that several key elements from the risk assessment matrix help identify if there is imminent risk and assess whether the caretaker is capable of protecting the child using available supportive services.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 4 was applicable for 47 of the 50 cases reviewed. Three cases were not applicable for this indicator because the case was opened for a reason other than a substantiated or indicated report of abuse or neglect and there was no risk of harm to the child. The assessment of item 4 required reviewers to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 40 (85%) of the 47 applicable cases (22 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (15%) of the 47 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from home and providing services to parents (17 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by removing the children from the home and seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) either prior to or during the period under review (6 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remain in the home or in a voluntary placement with relatives (17 cases).

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

- The services provided to parents and children in the in-home services cases were not adequate to reduce risk of harm to children (3 cases).
- The agency did not follow up with the family in the in-home services cases to ensure that parents were participating in services, leaving children at the same level of risk as when the case was opened (2 cases).
- There was continued risk of harm to the child during visitation with the parent (1 cases). (In this case, the children were permitted to have overnight unsupervised visits with the mother despite the fact that there is a known sexual offender present in the home and the children have alleged sexual abuse during these visits.)

- The child was reunified by court order over the objections of the agency, but the agency did not request a protective supervision order to implement a safety plan to address the existing potential for risk of harm to the child or share its objections with the court (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue identified several agency practices that were perceived as particularly effective in managing the risk of harm to the child. One practice involves having a caseworker from the intake division and the ongoing division visit families as a team during the process of transferring the case from the initial intake assessment to ongoing services. Another practice involves convening monthly team meetings between caseworkers and contracted services providers to discuss case progress. In addition, in one of the sites included in the onsite review, supervisors and staff of the agency meet on a planned, weekly basis to discuss individual cases.

Other stakeholders, however, expressed concern about the agency's approach to assessing risk. Although most of these stakeholders agreed that the agency's risk assessment methods permit a comprehensive portrait of family functioning, they suggested that the tools are complex and many caseworkers do not have the necessary level of expertise to use them effectively. Some of these stakeholders suggested that the high level of caseworker turnover in the agency further exacerbates the problem of incorrect use of the risk assessment tools. In addition, some stakeholders noted that there is a need for a separate safety assessment protocol to determine immediate risk.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 85 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS was consistently effective in its efforts to reduce risk of harm to children. Case reviews indicate that in most cases, the agency manages risk by removing children from their homes or by providing services while children remain in their homes. In the few cases where reviewers determined that risk was not managed effectively, there was a clear lack of attention on the part of caseworkers to the potential for harm to the children.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Clark	Franklin	Washington	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	8	5	6	19	73.1
Partially Achieved:	0	5	1	6	23.1
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	1	0	1	3.8
Not Applicable:	7	12	5	24	
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:					
	National Standard (percentage)	State's Data (percentage)	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	
Foster care re-entries	8.6	13.7		X	
Length of time to achieve reunification	76.2	74.0		X	
Length of time to achieve adoption	32	29.2		X	
Stability of foster care placements	86.7	85.9		X	
Length of stay in foster care*	N/A	13.7 months			

*Not used to determine substantial conformity.

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME P1

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

- 73.1 percent of the cases were rated as having substantially achieved Permanency Outcome 1, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity;
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of entries into foster care in Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 that were re-entries into care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode;
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of the child's entry into foster care;
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing no more than two placements during their first 12 months in foster care; and

- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children who experienced a finalized adoption in FY 2000 within 24 months of entering foster care.

Although Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity for this outcome, some areas of strength were identified in the CFSR process. For example, case reviewers determined that for most cases, permanency goals were appropriate and established in a timely fashion and the agency was noted to make diligent efforts to bring about reunifications in a timely manner, even though the State Data Profile indicated that the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into care did not meet State standards. Stakeholders commenting on issues relevant to this outcome noted that the agency is not consistent in providing supportive services for children at the time of reunification and that the use of planned permanent living arrangement as a case goal is not always appropriate.

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

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Nine of the 50 cases were applicable for an assessment of foster care re-entries because they involved children who entered foster care at some time during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review had occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 8 (89%) of the 9 applicable cases.
- Item 5 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (11%) of the 9 applicable cases.

The one case that was rated as an Area Needing Improvement involved an entry into foster care that was within 5 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. Reviewers noted that the re-entry occurred because the risk of harm to the child at the time of reunification was not adequately addressed and, although the court ordered the reunification contrary to agency recommendations, no safety plan was put in place to support the reunification.

Although stakeholders did not comment directly on the issue of foster care re-entries, many stakeholders expressed the opinion that the agency does not provide sufficient services and supports to families that have been reunified.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because, although there was a re-entry into foster care in only one of nine cases for which this assessment was applicable, the data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that the rate of re-entry into foster care within 12 months is 13.7 percent, which does not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent. According to information provided in the Statewide Assessment, re-entries have declined over the past few years. The

Statewide Assessment notes that parents have many problems that result in children returning to foster care and that there has been some discussion in the State about providing more supportive services to families and children at the time of reunification.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 26 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of Item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 23 (88%) of the 26 applicable cases.
- Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (12%) of the 26 applicable cases.

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 16 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review, while children in 6 cases experienced 2 placement changes.
- Children in 4 cases experienced between 3 or 4 placements during the period under review.
- No children experienced more than 4 placements during the period under review.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item if reviewers determined either (1) that a child did not experience multiple placement settings (21 cases); or (2) that a child experienced multiple placement settings, but the changes in setting were in the child's best interest (i.e., movement from a shelter to a foster home, or from a residential treatment center to a therapeutic foster home) (2 cases).

A rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item was assigned when reviewers determined that the children's placement changes did not promote goal attainment or meet service needs. In all three of these cases, the placement was noted to have disrupted because of the child's behavior. However, there was no evidence that the agency had provided foster parents or relative caregivers with services to address the child's behavior problems or that the placement was appropriate in the first place, given the child's behavior problems.

Consistent with this finding, stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that there are insufficient placements for children with behavior problems and that these children are either placed out of State to meet their treatment needs or are placed inappropriately with families that are not equipped to provide the level of care necessary.

Determination and Discussion: Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although in 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers rated placement stability as a Strength, the State Data Profile indicates that 85.9 percent of all children in foster care for 12 months or less had no more than two placement settings, which does not meet the national standard of 86.9 percent. Because these two measures are not computed in the same manner, it is necessary for both measures to meet established criteria for the item to be rated as a Strength. A key concern identified in the case review process pertained to a lack of appropriate placements for children with behavior problems.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there has been a steady decrease in placement moves over the past three years. In general, the Statewide Assessment attributes many of the placement changes captured in the data to the practice of placing children on an emergency basis, usually in shelters, at the point of entry into the system and prior to making a more long-term placement decision. The Statewide Assessment also noted that when foster families need respite services, the agency sometimes has to do a placement transfer in order to access funds to pay for the child’s care during the respite period. These situations were not found in the cases reviewed for the CFSR.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 26 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 7 was rated Strength in 24 (92%) of the 26 applicable cases.
- Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (8%) of the 26 applicable cases.

The case review found that the children in the 26 foster care cases had the following permanency goals:

- 12 children had a goal of reunification with parents or relatives.
- 6 children had a goal of adoption.
- 8 children had a goal of permanent placement leading to eventual emancipation in 7 cases and probable transfer to an adult care situation in 1 case in which the child had developmental disabilities.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the goal was inappropriate (1 case), or that decision-making regarding permanency had been unnecessarily delayed (1 case). Reviewers noted that for children who had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, the agency had either sought TPR or exceptions to TPR (compelling reasons why TPR should not be sought) were noted in the case files.

Several stakeholders commenting on this issue praised the agency's aggressiveness in pursuing permanency. Family Group Conferencing was noted by stakeholders as a common agency practice that supports moving cases quickly to permanency.

Stakeholders also suggested, however, that barriers to setting and achieving permanency goals have arisen due to differences and lack of collaboration between the agency and the court. A conference for judges is scheduled to address this issue. Stakeholders also expressed concern that at the State level, the focus of permanency efforts seems to be on adoption, with reunification receiving less attention.

Several stakeholders expressed concern about the agency's use of the goal of Permanent Planned Living Arrangements (i.e., long term foster care) leading to eventual emancipation. These stakeholders noted that although this goal is sometimes appropriate, it is used too often as an option when efforts to reunify children have failed and the child is considered to be too old for adoption.

Determination and Discussion: Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 92 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner. However, some areas needing improvement were noted by stakeholders and case reviewers. For example, although case reviews generally found strong efforts at permanency planning, there was little evidence of concurrent planning approaches or practices. In addition, although the Statewide Assessment notes that the primary permanency goal for children in foster care is reunification, followed by placement with relatives, adoption, and a planned permanency living arrangement, there were more children in the case review with a goal of permanent planned living arrangement (8 cases) than with a goal of adoption (6 cases).

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Item 8 was applicable for 12 cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives for the children in a timely manner or, if the goal had not been achieved in a timely manner, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 8 was rated as a Strength for 11 (92%) of the 12 applicable cases.
- Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement for 1 (8%) of the 12 applicable cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the agency was making or had made concerted efforts to achieve the goal of family reunification. Reviewers found that the reunification was achieved for 5 cases, and in 3 of those cases, the goal was achieved within 12 months.

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case in which the children had been in care for more than 12 months and the reviewers determined that caseworker turnover had affected continuity of services designed to promote reunification.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue had differing perceptions regarding the agency's efforts to reunify children with their families in a timely manner. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the reunification process is too abrupt and that there should be more trial home visits or an increase in visitation prior to final reunification. A few stakeholders also expressed concern about the amount of progress made by parents prior to reunification. They proposed that the agency conduct assessments of parenting competency prior to full reunification.

Other stakeholders praised the introduction of time guidelines for reunification, perceiving these guidelines as increasing the efforts of the agency to reunify children quickly. These stakeholders also praised the agency for implementing family group conferencing strategies and identified other efforts such as the Family to Family program and the foster parent mentoring program as expediting reunification. A few stakeholders mentioned that the lack of access to services, waiting lists for services, and crowded court dockets were key barriers to timely reunifications.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although reviewers rated this item as a Strength in 92 percent of the cases reviewed, data from the State Data Profile indicate that the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (74.0%) does not meet the national standard of 76.2 percent.

According to the Statewide Assessment, however, data from the State's CPOE show that the rate of reunification within 12 months from the time of the most recent removal from the home is 76 percent. The Statewide Assessment posits that this discrepancy may be due to a failure on the part of the agency to enter data on discharge reason into the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), which is the source for the data on reunification reported in the State Data Profile. The Statewide Assessment also notes that over the past three years Ohio has seen an increase in the number of children reunified with their families within 6 months and within 12 months, which was attributed to the provision of intensive services to children and families. However, information in the Statewide Assessment supports statements made by stakeholders regarding the scarcity of mental health and drug and alcohol services in many counties and the negative impact of the lack of these services on the agency's ability to reunify families in a timely manner.

Item 9. Adoption

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Six of the foster care cases were assessed for item 9. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether appropriate and timely efforts had been, or were being, undertaken, to achieve finalized adoptions. The results were the following:

- Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 3 (50%) of the 6 applicable cases.
- Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (50%) of the 6 applicable cases.

At the time of the review, adoption had been finalized in one of the 6 cases, but not within 24 months of the time of the child's removal from the home. Also, at the time of the review, four of the six children with a goal of adoption were in an adoptive placement with their foster parents.

This item was assigned a rating of Strength in cases in which reviewers determined that diligent efforts were being made or had been made to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. Cases were rated as Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that there were, or had been, unnecessary delays in attaining a finalized adoption. These included delays between filing the TPR and granting the TPR (1 case), delays in finding an adoptive placement (1 case), and delays due to lack of preparation of child and foster parents for adoption (1 case).

Several stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that most of the delays in adoption finalization are due to crowded court dockets and attorney's requests for continuances. Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that the agency has greatly increased its efforts toward completing adoptions in a timely manner over the past 10 years. In one of the sites included in the onsite review, the county used visiting judges to address the issue of court docket load.

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

- In 50 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS had not made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner.
- The State Data Profile demonstrates that the percentage of finalized adoptions in FY 2000 that occurred within 24 months of removal from home (29.2%) did not meet the national standard of 32 percent.

The Statewide Assessment notes that adoption delays may be attributed to a variety of causes including the difficulty in finding adoptive families for children with “significant problems.” Other identified causes of delay were appeals of TPR petitions and the size of the court dockets. According to the Statewide Assessment, to address the problem of court docket size, the Supreme Court of Ohio established a pool of experienced judges available for assignment to courts upon request. However, it was noted that thus far only a few courts have made this request.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Eight of the foster care cases were assessed for item 10. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements. The results of this assessment were that item 8 was rated as a Strength for all 8 (100%) applicable cases.

Although all cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item, several stakeholders expressed concern about the use of planned permanent living arrangement as a permanency goal. They noted that this goal often is established when agency efforts to reunify the child fail and the agency believes the child is too old for adoption. In five of the cases reviewed, the child’s goal became planned permanent living arrangement after reunification efforts failed because the caseworker noted that the child was bonded with biological parents and therefore adoption was not appropriate. However, there was no consideration of the possibility of open adoptions or relative adoptions that would permit the child to continue to have contact with parents and yet have a permanent home.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue also expressed concern about whether children who are about to be emancipated from the system are adequately prepared for independent living.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in all applicable cases, reviewers determined that caseworkers were making diligent efforts to assist children in attaining the goal. However, stakeholders expressed some concerns about the goal of other planned permanent living arrangement being assigned inappropriately in some cases.

Permanency Outcome 2

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Clark	Franklin	Washington	Total	Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	7	10	5	22	84.6
Partially Achieved:	1	1	2	4	15.4
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	0	0	0.0
Not Applicable:	7	12	5	24	

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 84.6 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although the State did not reach the 90 percent “substantially achieved” finding required for substantial conformity, there were many areas of strength with respect to this outcome. For example, the case review process revealed that the agency is highly effective in placing children in their home counties and communities and with their siblings, promoting visitation with parents and siblings, and supporting the relationship between children in foster care and their parents. Preserving connections for children in foster care was found to be more of a challenge for the agency, particularly with regard to keeping children connected to extended families when available placements were outside of their home communities. Also, the agency was not consistent in its efforts to seek relatives as placement resources.

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

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Of the 26 foster care cases, 19 were applicable for an assessment of item 11. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which TPR had been attained prior to the period under review with no planned involvement of parents in case planning or case goals or in which contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest. In assessing item 11, reviewers

were to determine whether the child's foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 11 was rated a Strength in 18 (95%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 11 was rated an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (5%) of the 19 applicable cases.

In the 18 cases rated as a Strength, the children were placed in the same community or county as parents or relatives (14 cases); or placement in a different county was necessary to meet the child's treatment needs (2 cases), to ensure the child's safety (1 case), or to effect placement with siblings (1 case). In the one case rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, the child was not placed in the same community or county as his parents due to a lack of placement resources. However, the child was in care for a very short period of time and received transportation to his regular school.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that ODJFS has demonstrated improvements in the area of placing children in foster care placements in their own communities. Some of these stakeholders suggested that the number of children who must change schools because of their foster care placements has decreased, although this was still considered a problem. Much of the observed improvement was attributed to the Family to Family program that has been implemented in 30 of Ohio's counties. Stakeholders noted that placement out of State usually occurs when a child needs a type of residential facility that is not found in the State.

Determination and Discussion: Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 95 percent of applicable cases, children were placed in close proximity to parents or close relatives, or placement in another community was justified based on the child's needs. Information from the Statewide Assessment and the stakeholder interviews suggest that the Family to Family initiative implemented in the State is at least partially responsible for the agency's performance on this item. The Statewide Assessment describes the Family to Family initiative (funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation) as a family-centered, neighborhood-based approach to working with children, families, and communities. It is based on the premise that neighborhoods are the primary source of support for families and, therefore, are in the best position for assuring the safety and vitality of their members.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: In 15 of the 26 foster care cases, the child had siblings who were also in foster care. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 14 (93%) of the 15 applicable cases.
- Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (7%) of the 15 applicable cases.

In 9 of the 15 applicable cases, the child was in a placement with at least 1 other sibling, and in 7 of these cases, the child was in a placement with all siblings. Reviewers determined that in six cases, the children's separation from some or all siblings was necessary to meet safety needs (4 cases) or treatment needs (2 cases) of one of the siblings. In one case, the child was in a relative placement that could not accommodate all of the siblings. In the case rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, placement of a newborn with siblings already in care did not occur where two county agencies and two court jurisdictions were involved. The newborn was placed in a different county from the siblings.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in agreement that the agency emphasizes placing siblings together. However, some stakeholders noted that placements that can accommodate large sibling groups are difficult to find and may require placing children out of their communities.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 93 percent of the cases, siblings were either placed together or the separation was deemed necessary to meet the needs of one or more of the children.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 13 was applicable for 21 of the 26 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item if the child had no siblings in foster care, if the parents could not be located, and/or if visitation was not in the best interests of the child. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine (1) whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care, and (2) whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 19 (90%) of the 21 applicable cases.
- Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (10%) of the 21 applicable cases.

The case review process revealed that visits between children and their mothers took place on a weekly basis in seven cases, twice a month in four cases, monthly in three cases, and less than monthly in five cases. In three of the five cases in which visits between the mother and child occurred on a less than monthly basis, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote greater visitation.

Fathers were far more likely than mothers to be identified as not applicable for this assessment because they could not be located or because visits between children and fathers were deemed to be not in the child’s best interest. Visits between children and their fathers took place on a weekly basis in four cases, twice a month in one case, monthly in two cases, and less than monthly in seven cases. In four of the seven cases in which visits between the father and child occurred on a less than monthly basis, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote greater visitation; in one case the father was incarcerated.

Visits between siblings occurred at least twice a month in four cases and less frequently than once a month in 2 cases.

The two cases rated as Area Needing Improvement received this rating because reviewers determined that the agency made little or no efforts to promote sibling contact when the children were placed separately.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency promotes visitation by providing family members with the necessary transportation services.

Determination and Discussion: Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 90 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS had made, or was making, concerted efforts to facilitate visitation. In most cases, visitation occurred at least once a month with parents and siblings in foster care.

Item 14. Preserving connections

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Item 14 was applicable for assessment in all 26 foster care cases. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child's connections to family, neighborhood, community, family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 19 (73%) of the 26 applicable cases;
- Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (27%) of the 26 applicable cases.

Reviewers indicated that in 16 of the 26 cases, children's primary connections had been “significantly” preserved while they were in foster care, and in 9 of the 26 cases, children’s primary connections had been “partially” preserved. In one case, reviewers determined that the child’s primary connections had been "not at all" preserved.

Two cases involved Native American children. Reviewers determined that in one case, the Tribe had been appropriately notified at the onset of the case. In the other case, however, the Tribe was not notified and the reason given was that the placement duration was expected to be very brief.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that critical primary connections were at least partially preserved while the child was in foster care. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that the child's relationships with extended family relatives had not been adequately preserved while the child was in foster care (3 cases), the child was placed out of county and lost connections to the home community (3 cases), or the Indian Tribe was not notified of the child's placement (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that the Family to Family program helps in preserving children's connections to their communities. Some stakeholders also reported that caseworkers are aware of the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) even though very few Native American children are served.

Determination and Discussion: Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 27 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency did not make diligent efforts to maintain children's connections to family, community, and heritage while the child was in foster care.

Item 15. Relative placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Twenty-five of the 26 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 15. One foster care case was determined to be not applicable for assessment because the child entered foster care in order to be placed in a treatment facility. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 21 (84%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (16%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children were already placed with relatives (4 cases) or that children were not placed with relatives but the agency had made diligent efforts to seek relatives and assess them as a placement resource (17 cases). Of the four children placed with relatives, two were placed with their maternal grandparent, and two with their maternal aunt/uncle.

Reviewers identified the following reasons for why children in foster care were not placed with a relative:

- Relative placement was considered and the relative assessed, but not approved for placement (6 cases).
- No suitable relative could be located (3 cases).
- A relative placement was tried but disrupted due to the child's behavior (2 cases).
- A relative placement was tried but disrupted due to inadequate care by the relative (2 cases).
- Relatives were unwilling to take the child (2 cases).
- Relatives were not able to adequately meet the child's level of care needs (2 cases).

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency had made no efforts to explore the possibility of relative placements (1 case), or when the agency had conducted only a limited exploration of potential relative placements, such as exploring maternal relatives but not paternal relatives (3 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue made the observation that relative placements have increased in the State and that ODJFS makes diligent efforts to search for relatives. These stakeholders noted that inquiries are made about putative and missing fathers at the initial custody meeting, and efforts are made to identify and search for paternal relatives.

Determination and Discussion: Despite the positive views expressed by stakeholders concerning ODJFS' effectiveness in placing children with relatives and the finding that in many cases, workers had made diligent efforts to locate relatives, this item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that in 16 percent of the cases, the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. A primary problem identified was that workers were not fully exploring paternal relatives as placement options. According to the Statewide Assessment, kinship care represents the most desirable out-of-home placement and is the first option for children who cannot live with their parents. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, public and private child welfare agencies are encouraged to place children who are unable to remain in their homes with suitable relatives who have been approved by the agency. To support these placements, the State has created the Kinship Care Services Planning Council to develop recommendations specifying the types of services that should be included as part of a Statewide program of supportive services to kinship caregivers.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 16 was applicable for 21 of the 26 foster care cases. A case was considered not applicable for an assessment of this item if parental rights had been terminated and parents were no longer involved with the child or if a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child’s best interests. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between the child and both of his/her parents through visitation and provision of services that promote bonding. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 20 (95%) of the 21 applicable cases.
- Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (5%) of the 21 applicable cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that (1) there was a strong bond between the parent and the child that the agency supported through facilitating frequent visitation or, (2) there was not a strong bond between the parent and the child, but the agency made concerted efforts to promote bonding through frequent visitation or services designed to strengthen the parent-child relationship. In the one case that received a rating of Area Needing Improvement, the reviewer determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate the father.

Stakeholders did not comment on this issue.

Determination and Discussion: Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because reviewers determined that in 95 percent of applicable cases, the agency supported the parent-child relationships of children in foster care.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well Being Outcome 1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Clark	Franklin	Washington	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	10	12	11	33	66.0
Partially Achieved:	2	10	1	13	26.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	1	0	4	8.0
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	0	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved for only 66.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

A general finding of the CFSR process was that ODJFS is not consistent in its efforts to ensure that families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. For example, caseworkers did not consistently meet requirements for face to face contact with parents or guardians. In addition, the service needs of children, parents and foster parents were not thoroughly assessed or services were not provided in 32 percent of the cases. Finally, the agency was not consistent in involving parents and children in the case planning process.

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

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

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

- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 34 (68%) of the 50 applicable cases (18 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 16 (32%) of the 50 applicable cases (8 of which were foster care cases).

Reviewers made the following determinations from the case records and case-related interviews:

- Children's needs were assessed in 44 of the 50 cases and services were provided in 42 cases. There were 5 cases in which reviewers determined that the services received were not appropriate to the children's needs.
- Mothers' needs were assessed and/or services provided in 35 of the 43 cases for which an assessment of mothers' needs was applicable.
- Fathers' needs were assessed and/or services provided in 18 of the 33 cases for which an assessment of fathers' needs was applicable.
- Foster parents' needs were assessed in 20 of the 22 foster family cases, and services were provided in 15 cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when there were no unmet assessment or service needs for the children, parents, or foster parents. However, in six cases, reviewers rated the item as a Strength even though they noted that there had been little or no assessment of the fathers' needs or provision of services to fathers in those cases. In these cases, reviewers noted that fathers were not fully involved with the children. Also, one case was rated as a Strength although there was no assessment of the needs of the foster parents, because the agency had provided some services.

A rating of Area Needing Improvement was assigned to cases in which reviewers made the following determinations:

- Children or parents had identified services needs that were not met during the course of the case (10 cases).
- Children's or parent's needs were either not assessed or not assessed in sufficient depth (5 cases).
- There was no follow up on service provision to assess participation or progress (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that ODJFS is effective in meeting families' needs for hard services, such as housing assistance, but is less effective when service needs are more complex, such as substance abuse treatment. This problem was attributed to a lack of adequate funding in the community for key services. One stakeholder said that the need for mental health services was so great that a high percentage (he estimated about 70 percent) of referrals made by the child welfare agency could not be addressed. Other stakeholder comments on service array are provided in the discussion of the systemic factor of Service Array in the Systemic Factors section.

Determination and Discussion: Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 32 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS had not been effective in addressing the needs and services of children, parents, and/or foster parents. Specific problems identified in the case review process were unmet service needs and incomplete assessments, specifically assessments that were not sufficiently comprehensive to identify underlying problems, such as domestic violence or substance abuse. Information from stakeholders and the Statewide Assessment suggests that a key barrier to meeting the services needs of children, parents, and foster parents is the lack of comprehensive services in the State.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 18 was applicable for all 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents (including pre-adoptive parents or permanent caregivers) and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interest. A determination of involvement

in case planning required that a parent (or child) had actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. This assessment produced the following findings:

- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 35 (70%) of the 50 cases (20 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 15 (30%) of the 50 cases (6 of which were foster care cases).

In assessing this item, reviewers made the following determinations:

- Mothers were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 38 cases. In 7 cases, the mother was not involved but should have been. There were 2 cases in which the mother was not available to participate, and 3 cases in which the mother's participation was considered to be contrary to the child's best interest.
- Fathers were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 20 cases. In 4 cases the father was not involved but should have been. There were 18 cases in which the father was not available to participate, 7 cases in which the father's participation was considered to be contrary to the child's best interest, and 1 case in which the reviewers could not tell if the father was involved in case planning.
- Children were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 22 cases. In 12 cases, children were not involved although reviewers determined that they were old enough to have been involved. There were 16 cases in which reviewers determined that the children were not old enough to participate in the case planning process.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that all relevant parties had actively participated in the case planning process. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that one or more of the key parties had not been involved in the case planning process. Reviewers noted that although it was common practice to present the case plan to the family for review once it had been developed, this did not constitute engaging families in the process of case plan development.

Determination and Discussion: Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 30 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that ODJFS had not appropriately involved parents or children in the case planning process. According to the Statewide Assessment, it has been anecdotally reported by parents and foster parents in the State that they are not involved in developing the case plan and that case planning, for the most part, is a "cookie-cutter" activity. The Statewide Assessment noted that parents reported that they are afraid to use the court process to dispute the contents of the case plan, that their public defender is unhelpful, and that the agency is unresponsive to their input. Parents also said (as noted in the Statewide Assessment), that they just agree to do whatever the agency requests in order to get their children returned. A small focus group noted that a barrier to the parents' participation is created when their attorney advises them not to speak with the agency.

Item 19. Worker visits with child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Forty-nine cases were applicable for an assessment of item 19. One case was determined to be not applicable for assessment because the family left the area and could not be located. In conducting this assessment, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 44 (90%) of the 49 applicable cases (25 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (10%) of the 49 applicable cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 26 foster care cases:

- In 6 cases, visits typically occurred once a week.
- In 2 cases visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 18 cases visits typically occurred once a month.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 23 in-home cases:

- In 2 cases, visits typically occurred once a week.
- In 4 cases visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 12 cases visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 5 cases visits occurred less frequently than once a monthly.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that (1) worker visits with children were not sufficiently frequent to meet the needs of the child (2 cases); (2) visits were of sufficient frequency but did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (1 case); or (3) worker visits were not sufficiently frequent and when they did occur, the worker did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (1 case). In one case assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement, there were no visits because the case had not been assigned to a worker for a period of six months (1 case).

Determination and Discussion: Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 90 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and quality. In most instances, visitation met or exceeded State policy, which requires face-to-face contacts with the child at least once a month, although more frequent contact is required with children during their first month in a foster care placement.

Item 20. Worker visits with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 20 was applicable for 44 of the 50 applicable cases. Cases that were considered not applicable for an assessment of this item were those in which (1) parental rights had been terminated and the parents were no longer involved in planning for the child; or (2) the parents could not be located despite diligent efforts by the agency. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker had sufficient face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers to promote attainment of the child's permanency goal or to ensure the child's safety and well being. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 29 (66%) of the 44 applicable cases (15 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 15 (34%) of the 44 applicable cases (6 of which were foster care cases).

In assessing item 20, case reviewers made the following determinations: (1) in 21 cases, parents were visited at least once a month; (2) in 12 cases, parents were visited less frequently than once a month; (3) in 10 cases, mothers were visited at least once a month but fathers were visited less frequently than once a month; and (4) in one case the father was visited monthly but the mother was visited less frequently than once a month.

Cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that visits were not sufficiently frequent to meet the needs of parents and children (9 cases); visits did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (3 cases); or the father was not included in worker visits (3 cases).

Determination and Discussion. This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 34 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that visits with parents were not sufficiently frequent or of sufficient quality to promote the safety and well-being of the child or enhance attainment of case goals. However, in many cases worker contact with parents exceeded State requirements. According to the Statewide Assessment, Ohio guidelines for visitation between the case worker and the parents,

as of December 2001, require that caseworkers establish face-to-face contact with parents in both foster care and in-home services cases on a monthly basis and that visits involve monitoring of case plan objectives.

Well Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Clark	Franklin	Washington	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	11	11	9	31	83.8
Partially Achieved:	0	4	0	4	10.8
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	1	0	2	5.4
Not Applicable:	3	7	3	13	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 83.8 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. The general finding of the CFSR process was that the agency was not consistent in assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs.

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

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 21 was applicable for 37 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for assessment were foster care cases in which the children were too young to be enrolled in school or preschool, or in-home services cases in which the children did not have needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs.

The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 31 (84%) of the 37 applicable cases (21 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (16%) of the 37 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

Reviewers reported the following additional findings with respect to this item:

- Of the 33 cases in which it was determined that educational services were needed, it was determined that services were provided in 29 cases.
- Of the children receiving educational services, 13 were in special education, 4 received tutoring, 4 received early intervention, 2 received educational advocacy, 4 had Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings, and 2 received other services.
- All but one of the relevant foster care cases had school records in the case file.
- In all of the relevant foster care cases, foster parents or relative caretakers received the children's school records at the time of placement.
- In eight cases, the children experienced multiple school changes as a result of placement changes in foster care.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item if there was evidence that the agency had assessed the children's educational needs and had provided services to meet those needs (if necessary). Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when educational needs were not fully assessed (5 cases), or educational needs were identified but not addressed with services (1 case).

Some stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency assigns a high priority to meeting children's educational needs, particularly children in foster care. Stakeholders also noted that foster parents frequently are strong advocates for children and ensure that they receive the educational services they need. Stakeholders expressed concern, however, about whether the educational needs of children in residential care are being adequately addressed.

Determination and Discussion: Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that in 16 percent of the cases, the educational needs of children were not adequately addressed. The key problem identified pertained to cases in which children showed evidence of school-related behavioral problems, developmental delays, learning disabilities, and/or poor school performance yet no assessment of needs was completed and services were not provided.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Clark	Franklin	Washington	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	7	15	8	30	69.8
Partially Achieved:	2	2	2	6	14.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	4	1	7	16.3
Not Applicable:	4	2	1	7	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

Ohio did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 69.8 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

In general, the CFSR process found that ODJFS was not consistently effective in meeting children’s physical or mental health needs, although in most cases, these needs were adequately addressed. The key problems identified with respect to physical health services were (1) that health screening and services were delayed for some children, (2) some children were not receiving preventive healthcare services, or (3) some children were not receiving services to meet identified health needs. The key problems identified with regard to mental health services were (1) that some children had mental health needs but were not receiving services to address those needs, (2) mental health services were delayed for some children, or (3) the services were provided too infrequently to be effective.

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

Item 22. Physical health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 22 was applicable for 36 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for this assessment were in-home services cases for which no physical health issues were identified. One foster care case was considered not applicable for an assessment of item 22 because the child was in foster care for one day. In assessing this item, reviewers were to

determine whether (1) children's physical health needs had been appropriately assessed, and (2) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 30 (83%) of the 36 applicable cases (22 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (17%) of the 36 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

In general, cases were rated as a Strength when the children's health needs were routinely assessed and services provided as needed. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Health screenings and services for health needs were delayed (2 cases).
- The child had specific needs for health care services that were not being met (1 case).
- There was no evidence that children were receiving preventive health care services (1 case).
- Conflict between the child's health needs and the parent/child visitation plan was not addressed (child had a serious medical condition that was aggravated by stressful visits) (1 case).
- There was no documentation of the child's health needs in the case record (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue observed that the State has helped expand the availability of health care coverage. Some stakeholders noted that obtaining optical and medical services is not a problem, although dental care can be an issue. Other stakeholders reported that there are areas of the State that lack medical providers who will take medical cards, including dentists.

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

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 23 was applicable for 41 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were foster care cases in which the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs, and in-home services cases in which the children's mental health needs were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and, (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 28 (68%) of the 41 applicable cases (18 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 (32%) of the 41 applicable cases (7 of which were foster care cases).

For the 41 applicable cases, reviewers noted that children's mental health needs were "significantly assessed" in 29 cases, "partially assessed" in 7 cases, and "not at all assessed" in 3 cases. Reviewers also reported that mental health needs were "significantly met" for 29 cases, "partially met" for 5 cases, "not at all" met for 3 cases, and "none identified" in 4 cases.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength if mental health needs were "significantly" assessed and the children's mental health needs were "significantly" met. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that assessments and services were provided only partially or not at all. The following problems were found in cases rated as Area Needing Improvement:

- Service needs were identified but not met (7 cases).
- There was a considerable delay in providing a mental health assessment or needed services (4 cases).
- Mental health services were not provided with sufficient frequency to meet the child's needs (2 cases).

All stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that there are significant problems in the State pertaining to obtaining mental health services for children because of the scarcity of services. Stakeholders noted that in some areas, no services are available, and in areas where services are available, there often are long waiting lists before families can access services. In one of the sites included in the onsite review, stakeholders reported that the agency is able to provide services without a wait, although private providers do have waiting lists for their services.

Determination and Discussion: Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 32 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children's mental health needs were not being adequately addressed by ODJFS. This determination is consistent with stakeholders' perceptions that there are problems in obtaining adequate mental health services for children. The determination is not consistent with Statewide Assessment information pertaining to mental health services for children in foster care. According to this information, when a child enters substitute care, part of the comprehensive Healthcheck screening includes a psychological assessment of the child. However, evidence of this practice was not consistently found among the foster care cases reviewed for the CFSR.

SECTION 2: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

STATUS OF STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the factor of Statewide Information System. Findings with respect to the item assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item has been rated as a Strength because the Family and Children Services Information System (FACSIS) meets the requirement 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.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Family and Children Services Information System (FACSIS), established in 1986, supports child welfare services in Ohio. Eighty-three of 88 counties run a microcomputer version called Micro-FACSIS. The remaining counties, those with the largest populations (Cuyahoga, Hamilton, Franklin, Summit, and Lucas), have their own locally-developed systems. Each county-run system interfaces with FACSIS by extracting data via a modem. FACSIS maintains demographic information on families including the family’s history of abuse and neglect, information on children’s placements and custody status, information on court hearings, and information on licensing. County social workers collect data using paper forms. Agency clerks transfer the data from these forms to the computer data entry screens.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, FACSIS provides management information, compliance data, case tracking services, and data to support program evaluation, assessment, family/foster home licensing, and a Title IV-E payment system. It can track risk assessment completion, compliance with the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), compliance with provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), and State legislative changes. The Statewide Assessment also notes, however, that FACSIS does not provide automated decision-making support and it is unclear how much of the information in FACSIS is actually used by managers and caseworkers for decision making. Although specific case events are entered into the system, information is not integrated or organized throughout the life of a case. Data entered into the system are not easily accessible for data reporting and analysis. Also, statewide directories of foster homes, adoptive homes, and the numbers of children needing foster and adoptive placement are not available online for use by counties.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that because FACSIS is an event-driven system with limited integration of case information, strong data integrity is lacking. To address this concern, ODJFS is in the process of implementing software that will allow the PCSAs to identify the children behind the data.

In addition to FACSIS, the Statewide Assessment reported that in July 2000 the Family Assessment and Planning Tool (FAPT) was introduced for use by child welfare caseworkers. It reflects Ohio child welfare practice and procedures in an effort to support cost-effective and prompt delivery of services. It does not automate all casework practice, but addresses the functionality of casework assessment and planning, guiding the worker through family risk assessments and case plans. The application has resulted in automation of several forms, integration of case information, recording of historical case information, and paperwork reduction. The FAPT does not replace or interface with FACSIS. It is used voluntarily by 71 counties. As of March 2002, approximately 23,000 families have been entered in the database.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue generally were in agreement that FACSIS has many limitations. Stakeholders noted that FACSIS data are not consistent; that different counties use different systems, which makes aggregating data difficult and open to error; that the reports generated are not of high quality or meaningful for management or decision-making purposes; and that the case plan, risk assessment, and semi-annual review (SAR) data must be reentered into a separate system that does not link to the statewide system. Stakeholders also reported that counties cannot access information (i.e. child abuse and neglect reports) from one another on families that have resided in other counties, and that information from service providers is not always entered in a timely manner. Finally, stakeholders noted that some providers have their own information systems and therefore entering information into the agency's system becomes an extra burden for them.

There is general agreement among State agency personnel and external Stakeholders that the State needs a SACWIS system that is user-friendly and that is useful for planning purposes at both the State and local levels. Advantages of a SACWIS system include the ability to check readily for abuse and neglect reports across county lines. A SACWIS system would allow for foster care re-entries to be tracked more accurately across county lines. A Request For Proposal for a SACWIS vendor was released December 11, 2002.

Despite the concerns expressed by many stakeholders, most expressed the opinion that FACSIS can be used to track information regarding a child’s length of placement, family demographics, and service planning. Stakeholders internal to the child welfare agency noted that the agency operates a help desk and has staff dedicated to training on the system. Internal stakeholders also noted that efforts are currently underway to generate management reports from the FACSIS system.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

STATUS OF CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Ohio is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Findings with regard to specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 has been assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although State Code and Rule require that all children in foster care have a written case plan completed within a maximum allowable time of 60 days, State data for the past three years show that the number of children who had a case plan completed within that time was 86 percent.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Ohio Code and Rule require that caseworkers prepare written case plans with specific elements for each child receiving services from a PCSA or private child placing agency (PCPA). When there is court involvement with the family, case plans are to be completed no later than 30 days from the date the complaint was filed or the child was first placed away from his or her home, or prior to the hearing, whichever occurs first. When there is not enough information available to complete elements of the plan, a maximum of 30 additional days is allowed to gather the necessary information.

All PCSAs must enter the completion dates of the case plans into FACSIS. According to the Statewide Assessment, in the past 3 years, approximately 86 percent of the children reported to FACSIS had a case plan completed within 60 days of entering foster care. However, no statewide data are available to demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of case planning.

The Statewide Assessment also noted that, despite the implementation of family case conferences in many PCSAs, parents and foster parents reported that they are not involved in case planning and that case planning is, for the most part, pro forma. Parents also indicated that they are afraid to use the court process to dispute the contents of the case plan and that they perceive the public defender as not helpful and the agency as not responsive to their opinions.

The perceptions of stakeholders interviewed as part of the onsite review process are consistent with the information reported in the Statewide Assessment regarding the lack of parent involvement in the case planning process. In addition, the case review process found that in 30% of the cases reviewed, parents and children did not participate in the case planning process. Some stakeholders also indicated that the case plan is too complex a document and that it is often difficult for families to understand. Also its structure is not designed to measure a family's progress. Despite these identified concerns, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the case planning process is improving and that caseworkers are moving away from a "cookie cutter" approach.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because State Code and Rule require a semi-annual review (SAR) for each child in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, many PCSAs have set SARs on a 5-month review schedule to ensure that the 6-month requirement is met and to further expedite movement toward permanency, however FACSIS data for 2001 showed that a SAR had been completed for approximately 86 percent of children who had been in placement for longer than 6 months.

During the SAR, an agency staff person without line authority would be part of the review process. This person generally is silent during the process and plays a low-key role in the process. Case specific external stakeholders are invited to be part of the process, however the meeting is facilitated by the worker of record. This meets the guideline given by the State, which is silent as to the role of the third party.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in agreement that the reviews are generally held in a timely manner, but suggested that the local court structure has an impact on the timeliness of reviews. In addition, most expressed the opinion that the reviews have a positive impact on expediting permanency for children. A few stakeholders expressed concern about whether all relevant parties were provided with sufficient notification about upcoming reviews.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because court rules do not always coincide with State law regarding ASFA requirements.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Ohio policy requires that a permanency hearing occur every 12 months for children in the custody of an agency. At the hearing, the court must approve the permanency plan and the time schedule for attaining permanency. Because the State agency has only recently implemented a mechanism for collecting information regarding 12-month reviews, statewide data regarding the percentage of children who have had hearings is not available. However, according to the Statewide Assessment, the State expects that the percentage of children experiencing timely permanency hearings will increase as courts institutionalize hearings into their systems.

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue said that permanency hearings are relatively new for the State and that court rules do not always coincide with State law regarding ASFA requirements. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that permanency planning hearings are perfunctory and that the courts are not playing as large a role as they could in focusing the child welfare agency on expediting permanency. A few stakeholders suggested that during the permanency hearings, the court tends to focus more on parental rights than on the child's best interest. The child welfare agency should continue to work closely with the courts to ensure that court practices are consistent with Federal requirements.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because the State has a process for the termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of AFSA.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Ohio State policy requires that if a child has been in the temporary custody of an agency for 12 or more months of a 22 consecutive month period, the agency shall file a motion for permanent custody or Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) unless exceptions are noted, such as:

- The agency believes there is a compelling reason not to request TPR and that it is not in the best interest of the child to file for permanent custody.
- The services required in the case plan have not been available or provided.
- The agency has already been granted permanent custody.
- The child has been returned home pursuant to court order.

Several stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that the 12-month State requirement for filing for TPR exceeds the ASFA requirement of 15 months. However, some stakeholders also noted that although TPR petitions are filed within required timeframes, the hearings often are delayed based upon defense attorneys' requests for continuances. Stakeholders indicated that many caseworkers use the exception that "the services required in the case plan have not been available or provided" to delay filing for TPR, particularly when the service involves substance abuse treatment.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was assigned a rating of Strength because Ohio provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Ohio policy requires that ODJFS notification be provided to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care of any review or hearing held with respect to the children in their care. Most of the local agencies assume responsibility for this task, although some courts assume this responsibility for the annual hearings. The Statewide Assessment also notes that training for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers that is made available through Ohio’s Child Welfare Training Program, emphasizes their ability to participate in all reviews and court hearings.

Stakeholders reported that foster parents, adoptive parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers are notified in writing by either the court or agency of the various hearings. In one of the counties included in the onsite review, foster parents reported that they receive notification and usually attend the hearings. Foster parents report that they have an opportunity to be heard at hearings.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

STATUS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the factor of Quality Assurance System. Findings with respect to the specific items assess for this factor are presented below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item is rated as a Strength because Ohio has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the rules of the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) set standards to ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services that protect their health and safety. The rules address the assessment of risk to the child, provision of services, training of staff, and overall agency operations. All OAC rules must be reviewed every 5 years.

The Statewide Assessment also noted that local agencies can impose additional or higher standards for their own agency to ensure quality service provision. For example, the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), an advocacy group comprised of 85 PCSAs, developed "Child Protective Services Standards for Effective Practice" in 1996. It also created a standards oversight committee responsible for reviewing progress with implementation of standards, identifying barriers to implementation, and identifying additional standards. It is currently reviewing and revising its standards. In addition, to assist PCSAs in providing quality services, ODJFS offers to reimburse agencies for a portion of costs incurred for achieving accreditation of their programs by the Council on Accreditation (COA) for Child and Family Services.

Stakeholders confirmed that the standards for effective practice are being redeveloped and updated. They note that although the majority of counties use these voluntarily, there is no monitoring system. Most counties do strategic planning and incorporate the standards as they identify standards that relate to the achievement of goals. A stakeholder noted that 8 counties are accredited and the State is moving towards all counties being accredited.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated a Strength because The Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation (CPOE) Quality Assurance System evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Ohio established rules for the creation of the CPOE system in 1997. CPOE reviews of PCSAs take place on-site every eighteen months and focus on key delivery processes and essential client outcomes within a continuous quality improvement framework. The CPOE process uses core indicators that provide necessary information to support county practice and management. In each review stage, a core set of indicators is chosen. The review identifies the strengths or weaknesses for each core indicator and the PCSA and ODJFS develop strategies for improvement and identify technical assistance needs. The on-site review process concludes with a detailed report of the findings of the review. After receiving the report, the PCSA

creates a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to address areas of concern identified in the report. ODJFS monitors the agency’s progress in achieving the goals in the plan.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, ODJFS releases two reports based on the CPOE process. The Outcome Indicator Report, which is released twice a year, contains statewide and county-specific data pertaining to selected outcome indicators that focus on safety and permanency. Using this report, each PCSA can measure its performance against historical data and compare itself to the State or other PCSAs. At the end of the year, ODJFS releases a Comprehensive Annual Report that provides a summary of CPOE findings. According to the Statewide Assessment, since implementation of the CPOE system, ODJFS has experienced improvements in its ability to achieve better outcomes for the children and families served.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue praised the CPOE process and expressed the opinion that it helps protect the health and safety of children. Several stakeholders reported that the majority of the counties look forward to the CPOE reviews and have incorporated the reviews into their 5-year strategic planning process. Stakeholders noted that recently, specific benchmarks have been added to the CPOE review. These benchmarks were perceived as promoting consistency across counties and giving counties tangible goals to focus on in their improvement efforts.

VII. TRAINING

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

STATUS WITH RESPECT TO TRAINING

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Findings with respect to items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 was rated as a Strength because the State has a specified competency-based curriculum focusing on core job requirements for new staff provided at regional training sites statewide to maintain consistency and quality. The State also maintains an automated tracking system that can readily identify all staff who have and have not attended specific training modules. There is an ongoing evaluation component of the training at multiple levels to assess appropriateness and effectiveness of the initial training provided.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Ohio established the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP) in 1985. Its mission is to provide a comprehensive, competency-based, in-service training system that provides high quality, culturally responsible, family-centered, job-related training for staff in public child welfare agencies. Core training for child welfare workers involves a 15-day curriculum. All core workshops offered through the OCWTP have standardized Ohio-specific curricula. All PCSA caseworkers complete a minimum of 90 hours of in-service training during their first year of employment. These training requirements can only be fulfilled by taking courses offered through the OCWTP. According to the Statewide Assessment, the training program tracks participants' attendance.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the State provides an outstanding training program. They noted that core training is provided by the State and is of consistent quality across counties. They also noted that caseworkers, supervisors, and managers all participate in training. Some stakeholders indicated that the State is responsive to expanding training topics when necessary. Recently, for example, changes to the curriculum were made in response to a need for more training on alcohol/substance abuse treatment services, sexual abuse treatment, and adoption by foster parents. Stakeholders also praised the State for incorporating into the core training ongoing procedures for evaluating its content and effectiveness. The key concern identified with respect to training was the need for some local agencies to have training specific to their environments, which currently is not available in the State training program.

Another concern expressed by stakeholders pertained to the absence of a standard training curriculum for staff of private provider agencies. Although private agency staff can attend State training on a "space-available" basis, there often are not enough slots to accommodate all of the State employees. Also, the agencies in the private sector do not receive IV-E funding to pay for any private training they provide for their staff.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 was rated as a Strength because there are specific Statewide ongoing training requirements for both caseworkers and supervisors that allows for individualization of training needs based on job responsibilities and employee knowledge, skills and experience.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, all caseworkers are required to complete 36 hours of in-service training annually after their first year of employment. Supervisors are required to complete 60 hours of in-service training during their first year as a supervisor and 30 hours each year thereafter. Training may be from OCWTP, through college courses, or by attendance at National Association of Social Workers (NASW)-sponsored conference or other approved conferences. All workers engaged in the provision of adoption services are required to be certified as adoption assessors and participate in mandatory training offered by ODJFS.

According to the Statewide Assessment, in order to respond to the ongoing training needs of caseworkers and supervisors, OCWTP piloted two programs in 1998 and 1999—Advanced Skill Building Programs for Supervisors (a 9-month program) and Advanced Skill Building for Caseworkers (a 3-month program). The training effort for caseworkers is designed to provide them with an opportunity to learn and apply advanced knowledge and skills to improve their efforts in building relationships with children and families and engaging children and adults.

The Statewide Assessment also noted that the OCWTP is nationally recognized for excellence in training and that several States and Canadian provinces have used it as a basis for developing their training systems. In addition, in 2001, OCWTP surveyed PCSA directors, administrators/managers, line supervisors, and caseworkers to determine satisfaction with training offered by OCWTP. The survey found that all levels of staff viewed the training as effective at increasing knowledge and skill.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in agreement that ODJFS supports ongoing training designed to ensure that staff enhance their abilities and knowledge. These stakeholders also agreed that the State makes available specialized training on specific topics when necessary, including training in risk assessment and in substance abuse assessment. A few stakeholders noted that OCWTP provides cross-training for staff of other community agencies, such as TANF. Stakeholders also noted that training needs specific to county administrators are in the process of being identified and addressed.

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

X Strength ____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 was rated as a Strength because training is required by State rules, made available by local agencies for both foster and adoptive parents and ODJFS monitors compliance with training requirements during on-site review of agency records.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Ohio requires that foster caregivers operating a family home have at least 12 hours of training before certification and an additional 12 hours of training before a child can be placed in the home. There is an annual continuing training requirement of 20 hours for family foster caregivers. Specialized foster caregivers operating either treatment foster homes or foster homes serving medically fragile children are required to complete 36 hours of pre-placement training and 30 hours of annual continuing training. In addition, agencies are required to develop and implement a written training plan for each foster caregiver that specifies the training courses the caregiver must complete during the certification period. The training plan must include a description of the specific criteria used by the agency to determine whether the caregiver has demonstrated a minimum level of competency in all areas of the training curricula.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, PCSAs and PCPAs are required to offer their own training to foster parents. Although ODJFS does not have data to determine the effectiveness of training provided by PCPAs, a survey conducted in 2000 of PCSA executives regarding the foster parent training program found that 64.4 percent agreed with the statement that the specific needs of their foster parents were being met, 11 percent disagreed, and 24.4 percent did not know or were undecided.

In addition to the foster parent training, the Statewide Assessment reported that training is required for adoptive parents on the adoption process, child development, separation and loss, cultural issues, dealing with behavioral challenges, and caring for children who have been sexually abused. To determine the effectiveness of training offered for adoptive parents through OCWTP, PCSA executives were surveyed in 2000. The findings were the following: 55.5 percent of respondents stated that they believe that the training needs of their adoptive parents were met, 11.1 percent disagreed, and 33.3 percent did not know or were undecided.

The Statewide Assessment also noted that childcare workers in residential facilities receive a minimum of 20 hours of orientation within the first 30 days of employment and an additional 32 hours in the first year. After the first year, staff must receive 24 hours of training annually. The majority of training offered to childcare staff is provided by counties and private agencies.

Also noted in the Statewide Assessment was that ODJFS requires training to help adoptive and foster care parents, workers in group homes, and case managers understand the issues confronting adolescents preparing to live independently.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue verified that the State requires training for foster parents and adoptive parents and that ODJFS monitors compliance with training requirements during its on-site agency review of records. They noted that the majority of families participate in a combined “foster/adopt” training. Several stakeholders reported that there is a great deal of mentoring among foster parents and there is a newsletter produced by the agency designed to keep foster parents up to date on training opportunities and issues.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

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

STATUS WITH RESPECT TO SERVICE ARRAY

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of service array. Findings pertaining to the specific items relevant to this factor are presented and discussed below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 was rated as a Strength because the State offers a wide array of services to meet the needs of children and families.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State offers a comprehensive array of services to meet the physical, mental, psychological, substance abuse, behavioral, therapeutic, and environmental needs of the children and families it serves in the child welfare system. At a minimum, the State mandates that PCSAs provide the following services either directly or through an arrangement with a community services provider:

- Case management
- Therapeutic services
- Homemaking or home health aide
- Counseling
- Protective day care
- Diagnostic services
- Emergency shelter
- Substitute care
- Adoption
- Information and referral
- Life skills
- Unmarried parent services

The State also has implemented efforts to support kinship care arrangements that are outside of the foster care system based on recommendations from the Kinship Care Services Planning Council. These efforts include: the Kinship Navigator program, to provide information about community services to kinship caregivers; Information and Referral through the Help Me Grow program; the Kinship Care Advisory Board; and the Kinship Caregiver Power of Attorney and Authorization Affidavit, legislation (not yet passed) that would allow kinship caregivers access to health care for children and to be able to enroll children in school.

According to the Statewide Assessment, however, PCSAs are concerned about the lack of placement resources for children age twelve and older and the scarcity of behavioral health services for children. As a result, some children have had to be placed out of State in order to have their treatment needs met.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue verified that the State has a wide array of services to meet the needs of children and families served by the child welfare system. However, stakeholders also noted that there are long waiting lists for many of the services, particularly mentoring, mental health, and substance abuse treatment services for women. Some stakeholders reported that there is a significant service gap in the area of dental services because there are only a few dentists who will accept Medicaid payments. Another service gap identified was a secure facility for juvenile sex offenders. Other stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of culturally appropriate services for the growing Hispanic and Somalian populations. With regard to this issue, stakeholders noted that

simply using translators does not mean that services will be culturally appropriate. Instead, caseworkers need a greater knowledge of cultural issues to be able to assess risk and provide effective interventions. Stakeholders in one county raised concerns that the county has lost \$7.5 million in TANF block grant flexible spending dollars. This translates into 34 program/service cuts. Service cuts include mental health services, counselors at the high school who identify students with depression and who are at risk for suicide, a program that helps children learn by alternative learning styles (Kids on Campus program), school clothes for children, and some funding for the School Outreach Prevention Project (SOPP).

Several stakeholders praised specific services available to families, such as parenting education, homemaker services, and family preservation services. A few stakeholders identified a program called Help Me Grow as having the potential to contribute to attaining permanency, safety, and well being for children. Another program—Family to Family—was described as effective in building service capacity at local community levels. Another program praised by some stakeholders is the SOPP (School Outreach Prevention Project) program, providing services to children and their families at home and school. There are eleven prevention specialists in the program. All six school districts within the county are served. The program focuses on children in grades kindergarten through 8. It also has an abstinence (teen pregnancy prevention) program aimed at the middle school level, the “RSVP” program. Other programs receiving praise from stakeholders were Family and Children First, ProtectOHIO, and Family Stability.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because unstable and disparate funding from county to county, and insufficient availability of services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, negatively affect Ohio’s ability to deliver needed services to children and families

According to the Statewide Assessment, the intensity and variety of available supportive services and the method of delivery vary from county to county and are based on the county’s individual needs. With 88 counties, courts, and funding sources, each community is faced with a diverse array of strengths and challenges in the delivery of services. Additionally, there are 43 county or multi-county mental health and alcohol and drug addiction services boards and 7 counties with separate mental health boards and alcohol and drug addiction service boards. ODJFS has conducted a number of evaluations to assess the availability of services across the State. According to the 1998 Statewide Child Protection Services Needs Assessment study conducted by Hornby-Zeller Associates, Inc., of the more than 60 services examined, there were only nine that were not adequately available statewide. Of these nine services, those with the greatest shortfall in client capacity were intensive family preservation, medical/physical exams, and

alcohol and other drug residential treatment. There were, however, particular geographic areas where more services were needed. In the large (and some medium-sized) counties there were inadequate drug and alcohol assessments, psychological and mental health assessments, alcohol and drug treatment, protective day care, and transportation services. In response to the study, \$4,000,000 was allocated by the legislature to ODADAS for the prioritization of substance abuse services for families involved in the child welfare system.

The Statewide Assessment also discussed the systemic barriers to the provision of mental health and substance abuse services. For example, as pointed out in the Statewide Assessment, although basic mental health and substance abuse services are provided in each county, most counties are not able to maintain a full spectrum of care (e.g., detoxification, outpatient, inpatient, residential treatment, etc.). Consequently, the PCSAs have to make arrangements for clients to travel significant distances in order to access necessary services. This was noted to be of great concern to the State because the lack of local services often limits the ability of family members to participate in treatment and consequently may negatively impact the effectiveness of treatment.

All stakeholders commenting on this issue confirmed information provided in the Statewide Assessment concerning the variation in service array across counties in the State. Some stakeholder noted that in rural areas, and in the Appalachian areas in particular, the necessity to travel long distances to access services and the correlating need for transportation services, present significant challenges to efforts on the part of local child welfare agencies to access services for children and families.

Stakeholders in the sites included on the onsite review identified a number of service gaps specific to their communities, including housing, placement resources for juvenile sex offenders, mental health services, independent living services, inpatient alcohol/drug treatment, residential treatment for girls, therapeutic foster care, wraparound/community-based services, transitional services for the MRDD population, services for the developmentally delayed, treatment resources for adult and youth sexual abusers, residential facilities, childcare, and transportation. One stakeholder identified a need for therapists who understand the issues of separation and loss that children experience as part of being in foster care or in an adoptive placement.

Stakeholders also described divergent resources in their communities. According to stakeholders, one of the sites included in the onsite review lost \$7.5 million in TANF block grant flexible spending dollars, which resulted in 34 program cuts. Stakeholders in another site expressed the opinion that their county is resource rich and has a successful demonstration site for the IV-E waiver program.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 was rated as a Strength because through means such as the analysis of individual county needs and the flexibility allowed by ProtectOHIO, services can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

According to the Statewide Assessment, services can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families. In 1997, Ohio received a Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, which is called ProtectOHIO. Since the inception of the waiver, 14 Ohio counties have been able to take advantage of considerable flexibility in spending limited funds on a wide range of child welfare services. This has enhanced the ability of these counties to individualize services to families.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that the State’s practices of having flexible funding available and of pooling funds across systems have enhanced the ability of ODJFS to meet the individual service needs of children and families. This has been demonstrated through local and State cluster funds that are administered through local and State Family and Children First Councils. An example provided by stakeholders is the Family Incentive Funding that is used to support the Lice Busters Program in one of the sites. One county agency subsidized a bus system to supplement the city transit system. The bus operated during off-hours and on weekends so that clients could get to jobs and social services.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

STATUS OF AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 was rated as a Strength because, by its extensive consultation with and attention to the concerns of consumers, service providers, foster care providers, courts, and other public and private and family-service agencies, the State involves them in the development of the Child and Family Services Plan.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Ohio's Family and Children First (OFCF) initiative, created by the Ohio General Assembly in 1992, guides the activities identified and implemented in Ohio's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). In 1999 a draft of the CFSP was sent to a variety of community stakeholders for review and comment, including representatives from mental health services, juvenile corrections, alcohol and drug addiction services, and children's advocacy associations. The Statewide Assessment also noted that many activities and programs included in the CFSP are the result of recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse, which is a multi-disciplinary task force that reviews and evaluates the State's handling of child abuse and neglect cases and makes recommendations to ODJFS. Activities that are planned or have been implemented as a result of recommendations by the task force include expedited appeals of TPRs and the establishment of family drug courts for parents who abuse or neglect their children because of substance abuse or addiction.

Also, according to the Statewide Assessment, another partner in the development of the CFSP is the Supreme Court of Ohio. The Court and ODJFS work together to plan and develop activities and programs that are funded by the Court Improvement Project and the Children's Justice Act and that are designed to improve family law procedures for dependent, neglected, and abused children.

Another type of collaborative effort has evolved from the CPOE, which is the child welfare monitoring process implemented by ODJFS. A major component of CPOE is interviews with community partners including juvenile court judges, staff from private child placing agencies, foster parents, prosecutors, mental health providers, family services providers, and drug and alcohol treatment providers.

Finally, the Statewide Assessment also identifies the Child Welfare Reform Shareholders Group, formed in 1999, as a partnership designed to assist ODJFS in improving quality services to children, support families, and strengthen communities. In addition to the 43 members of the group, more than 400 Ohioans participated on nine subcommittees. Members include parent advocates, foster parents, representatives from the General Assembly and State agencies, county commissioners, staff from public and private child-serving agencies, childcare providers, juvenile court judges, and personnel from statewide advocacy organizations.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue generally praised ODJFS for its collaboration with the community and noted that Ohio has a very inclusive process for involving all parties in the CFSP. One stakeholder expressed the opinion that the community perceives the agency to be open to comment and criticism and willing to work with other agencies and organizations. A few stakeholders noted that the agency maintains the perspective that all taxpayers are its constituency. As a result, there is a lot of reaching out to the community and community members are encouraged to attend board meetings.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 was rated as a Strength. The State provides an annual progress and services report that describes Ohio’s compliance with the provisions of its Child and Family Services Plan. The report is written after consultation with the above-named representatives. The State provides, as appendices, several additional reports that give a comprehensive view of the child welfare agency’s programs and initiatives.

The Statewide Assessment notes that annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP are made available to the public. Stakeholders noted that the State includes multiple State and county stakeholders and parents in the review of progress reports.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 was rated as a Strength because of the effort ODJFS makes to assure that the services and benefits of different Federal programs that serve the same population are coordinated to provide the maximum benefit.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (OBES) and the Ohio Department of Human Services (ODHS) merged to form the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services on July 1, 2000. This merger was in recognition of the need to better coordinate employment and training programs with other human service or social service programs. Benefits of the merger include greater flexibility for program customization and control by local communities, improved efficiency through elimination of multi-agency duplication, and increased effectiveness and accountability through setting of outcome goals and measurement of performance standards.

The Statewide Assessment also noted that one strategy used to coordinate the services of the CFSP with the services and benefits of other public and private agencies serving the same general population is the establishment of county family services planning committees. These committees, required by the Ohio Administrative Code, serve as advisory boards to the county commissioners regarding the family services provided in the county. Committees are composed of consumers of family services, representatives of PCSAs, personnel from child support enforcement agencies, members of the Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) county councils, staff from public and private colleges and universities, and representatives from labor organizations and other public and private entities that provide family services. The committees meet at least once a year to review services, establish goals, and make recommendations for the implementation and administration of programs and the use of Federal, State, and local funds.

Most of the stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that there is a great deal of coordination of programs at the State level. These stakeholders focused on the agency’s collaboration with schools and the education system, the police department, and other State agencies. In one site, stakeholders noted that the county is developing a child advocacy center to improve coordination of services among child welfare, police, mental health, and other relevant agencies. Despite the generally positive perception of the agency’s efforts to coordinate service delivery with other agencies, some stakeholders identified specific barriers to coordination and collaboration including turnover of personnel in leadership positions, variation in available financial resources among agencies, different funding sources (i.e., Medicaid and Title IV-E), and differences in the structure and mandates of child welfare, mental health, and alcohol/drug addiction services.

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

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

STATUS WITH REGARD TO FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Ohio is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Findings for the items pertaining to this factor are presented below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 was rated as a Strength because the licensing standards as contained in the Ohio Administrative Code are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the legal standards for family foster and adoptive homes and the licensing requirements for residential facilities are in Ohio Administrative Code Sections 5101:2-7-02 through 5101:2:7-15.

Stakeholders noted that standards are in existence for foster homes and child care institutions. Some concerns were raised about uniform application of standards; most stakeholders indicated that efforts are underway to increase consistency. Stakeholders reported that rules are reviewed every 5 years; license recertification takes place every 2 years and includes all original safety standards. The licensing agency visits a random sample of foster homes.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 was rated as a Strength because the licensing standards are applied uniformly statewide to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions that receive title IV-E or IV-B funds.

According to the Statewide Assessment, foster homes are recommended for licensing to the department by public and private agencies. The State ensures that licensing standards are applied uniformly through the monitoring process. Relatives are required to meet the same licensing requirements as non-relatives in order to receive foster care payments. Relatives who choose not to be licensed must meet the same requirements as non-relatives when the PCSA approves a relative placement.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that although individual foster homes are licensed for a 2-year period, child welfare agencies are required to conduct some activities annually. An example of this type of activity is an evaluation of support services provided to the caregivers by the agency. Some private and public agencies complete a full licensing review annually. In addition to the re-certification inspection, private agencies and all residential facilities are inspected at least twice during each 2-year period. At least one inspection is unannounced. A complaint or allegation against a facility requires an investigation that must be initiated within 3 days.

Another method to insure that standards are applied uniformly is the standardization of the training requirements for foster homes, adoptive homes, and caregivers. A few stakeholders commenting on this issue questioned whether standards are uniformly applied.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 was rated as a Strength because 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.

The criminal background checks required by section 2151.86 of the Ohio Revised Code were in effect before the enactment of ASFA and are more stringent. Because of this, the State opted out of the ASFA provision. Ohio policy requires a criminal background check for applicants for foster care, adoption, and residential child care employment.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although Ohio has proper policies and procedures in place and has programs and initiatives to recruit potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom homes are needed, there are still not enough homes for those children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, ODJFS requires that agencies have written policies describing strategies for foster caregiver recruitment. Procedures must ensure that the placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement. Public and private agencies responsible for foster family recruitment or adoptive placements are required to have diverse methods for disseminating information regarding the children served; strategies to reach all parts of the community for recruitment; strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial, and economic communities; and strategies for dealing with language barriers.

The Statewide Assessment noted that 27 percent of the adoptive families approved within the past 6 years who still have open home studies or cases are of a minority race. Minority children represent 51 per cent of children in temporary commitment and 55 per cent of children in permanent commitment. Consequently, there is a need to increase the number of minority foster and adoptive families.

As described in the Statewide Assessment, there has been an increase in the percentage of African American children adopted from 1998 (41% of children who were adopted) to FY 2000 (50% of children who were adopted). The Statewide Assessment attributed this increase to the State's Child Specific Recruitment Pilot Project, designed to find permanent homes for some of Ohio's "difficult to place" waiting children. Under this program, monetary incentives are given to agencies that find permanent homes for specified children. The list of eligible children was developed to ensure that it represented the race and ethnicity of the pool of waiting children and included only children who had been in public custody for at least 2 years, were age 10 or older, or were members of a sibling group of 3 or more children.

Another response by ODJFS to the need to find families for waiting children is the AdoptOHIO. This program, which was initially implemented in 1997, provides a fee for services to agencies that place children in adoptive homes and improve the Ohio adoption photo listing books and website. Of 88 counties, 52 have AdoptOHIO agreements. Sixty-two percent of the waiting children in custody of agencies with AdoptOHIO agreements at the beginning of the fiscal year were African-American. Fifty percent of the children adopted from those agencies were African-American. This compares to rates of 21 percent and 9 percent respectively for children who were in the custody of non-AdoptOHIO agencies. Rates of adoption of sibling groups are also higher in AdoptOHIO agencies.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that the State provides funds to counties to recruit foster/adoptive homes, to conduct child specific recruitment, and to use a State vendor to conduct media campaigns targeting minority media outlets (i.e., minority newspapers, urban radio). Other recruitment strategies noted by stakeholders included an adoption website, community education, booths at community fairs, and contacts with churches.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because the cross-jurisdictional resources that Ohio uses are effective in facilitating timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, one way that Ohio has tried to find permanent homes for its waiting children is through interjurisdictional adoptions. Ohio maintains a web page available to any potential foster or adoptive parent throughout the United States. The web page contains photo listings of children available for adoption and information about the adoption process. Everyone who inquires about Ohio children available for adoption receives information about the adoption process. Families are considered for match regardless of geographic location.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that Ohio is in the process of becoming a member of the National Adoption Center, which maintains the nation's largest web site for waiting children. The State expects that use of the site will provide access to many more families to Ohio children and will result in an increase in the number of adoptions.

Ohio is a member of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance and provides reciprocity to all States. However, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, it can be difficult to facilitate an adoption through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that the State does support and encourage interjurisdictional adoptions. Although some stakeholders complained that cross-jurisdictional placements tend to slow the permanency process, others said that they were not aware of any problems.

XI. DETERMINATION OF SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY

For each outcome and systemic factor listed below, mark “Y” where the State is determined to be in substantial conformity and “N” where the State is determined not to be in substantial conformity. For each outcome or systemic factor marked “N,” place a check beside the performance indicator, listed by item number in this form, that has been determined to be an area needing improvement.

Outcomes

I. Safety

N Outcome S1

x Item 1

x Item 2

N Outcome S2

Item 3

Item 4

II. Permanency

N Outcome P1

x Item 5

x Item 6

Item 7

x Item 8

x Item 9

Item 10

N Outcome P2

Item 11

Item 12

Item 13

x Item 14

x Item 15

Item 16

III. Child and Family Well-Being

N Outcome WB1

x Item 17

x Item 18

Item 19

x Item 20

N Outcome WB2

x Item 21

N Outcome WB3

x Item 22

x Item 23

Systemic Factors

IV. Y Statewide Information System

Item 24

V. N Case Review System

x Item 25

Item 26

x Item 27

Item 28

Item 29

VI. Y Quality Assurance System

Item 30

Item 31

VII. Y Training

Item 32

Item 33

Item 34

VIII. Y Service Array

Item 35

x Item 36

Item 37

IX. Y Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Item 38

Item 39

Item 40

X. Y Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Item 41

Item 42

Item 43

x Item 44

Item 45