

**South Carolina Department of Social Services**  
**Child Welfare Quality Assurance Review: Cherokee County**  
**Summary Report**

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This summary report describes the results of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) Cherokee County Quality Assurance Review, conducted June 9-13, 2014. The period under review was June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014.

DSS Child Welfare Quality Assurance Reviews are conducted using the *Onsite Review Instrument* (OSRI) finalized by the federal Administration for Children & Families (ACF) in July 2008. This instrument is used to review foster care and family preservation services cases. Twenty cases were reviewed including 10 foster care and 10 family preservation cases.

The OSRI is divided into three sections: safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. There are two safety outcomes, two permanency outcomes, and three well-being outcomes. Reviewers collect information on a number of *items* related to each of the outcomes through case file review, the use of the Child and Adult Protective Services System (CAPSS), and case related interviews. CAPSS is South Carolina’s SACWIS, which contains all case related information. This information is detailed on the OSRI as support for rating selection.

The ratings for each *item* are combined to determine the rating for the outcome. The *items* are rated as *strength*, *area needing improvement*, or not applicable. Outcomes are rated as being substantially achieved, partially achieved, not achieved, or not applicable. Ratings for each of the outcomes are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Child Welfare QA Onsite Reviews – Ratings by Outcome**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Substantially Achieved</b>	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	<b>Not Achieved</b>
<b>Safety 1</b> CHILDREN ARE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, PROTECTED FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT	90% (9)	0% (0)	10% (1)
<b>Safety 2</b> CHILDREN ARE SAFELY MAINTAINED IN THEIR HOMES WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE	30% (6)	5% (1)	65% (13)
<b>Permanency 1</b> CHILDREN HAVE PERMANENCY AND STABILITY IN THEIR LIVING SITUATIONS	30% (3)	60% (6)	10% (1)
<b>Permanency 2</b> THE CONTINUITY OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS IS PRESERVED FOR CHILDREN	30% (3)	70% (7)	0% (0)
<b>Well-Being 1</b> FAMILIES HAVE ENHANCED CAPACITY TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN’S NEEDS	30% (6)	35% (7)	35% (7)
<b>Well-Being 2</b> CHILDREN RECEIVE APPROPRIATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	63% (5)	0% (0)	37% (3)
<b>Well-Being 3</b> CHILDREN RECEIVE ADEQUATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS	56% (9)	6% (1)	38% (6)

Results for outcomes and *items* are reported by the number of cases and the percentage of total cases given each rating. In addition, the percentage of *strengths* is calculated for each *item*. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *areas needing improvement*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the *percentage of strengths*. Appendix 1 provides more detailed analysis of issues impacting the ANI ratings.

## SECTION I: REVIEW FINDINGS

### **SAFETY OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN ARE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, PROTECTED FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Two *items* are included under Safety Outcome 1. Ratings for the two *items* are shown in Table 2.

#### **Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports received during the period under review were initiated and face-to-face contact with the child made, within the timeframes established by agency policies or State statute.

**Table 2.**

Rating	Item 1	Item 2
<i>Strength</i>	45% (9)	45% (9)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	5% (1)	5% (1)
<i>Not Applicable</i>	50% (10)	50% (10)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>90% (9)</b>	<b>90% (9)</b>

#### **Item 2: Repeat maltreatment**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if any child in the family experienced repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period.

### **SAFETY OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE SAFELY MAINTAINED IN THEIR HOMES WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE**

Two *items* are included under Safety Outcome 2. Ratings for the *items* are shown in Table 3.

#### **Item 3: Services to family**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children’s entry into foster care or re-entry after a reunification.

**Table 3.**

Rating	Item 3	Item 4
<i>Strength</i>	5% (1)	35% (7)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	60% (12)	65% (13)
<i>Not Applicable</i>	35% (7)	0% (0)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>7.7% (1)</b>	<b>35% (7)</b>

#### **Item 4: Risk assessment and safety management**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care.

### **PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN HAVE PERMANENCY AND STABILITY IN THEIR LIVING SITUATIONS**

Six *items* are included under Permanency Outcome 1. Ratings for the *items* are shown in Table 4.

#### **Item 5: Foster Care reentries**

Purpose of Assessment: To assess whether children who entered foster care during the period under review were re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

#### **Item 6: Stability of foster care placement**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if the child in foster care is in a stable placement at the time of the onsite review and that any changes in placement that occurred during the period under review were in the best interest of the child and consistent with achieving the child’s permanency goal(s).

**Item 7: Permanency goal for child**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

**Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review, to achieve reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner.

**Item 9: Adoption**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made, or are being made, to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner.

**Item 10: Other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA)**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure:

- That the child is adequately prepared to make the transition from foster care to independent living (if it is expected that the child will remain in foster care until he or she reaches the age of majority or is emancipated).
- That the child, even though remaining in foster care, is in a “permanent” living arrangement with a foster parent or relative caregiver and that there is a commitment on the part of all parties involved that the child remain in that placement until he or she reaches the age of majority or is emancipated.
- That the child is in a long-term care facility and will remain in that facility until transition to an adult care facility.

Table 4.

Rating	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10
Strength	15% (3)	30% (6)	30% (6)	0% (0)	10% (2)	10% (2)
Area needing improvement	0% (0)	20% (4)	20% (4)	20% (4)	20% (4)	0% (0)
Not Applicable	85% (17)	50% (10)	50% (10)	80% (16)	70% (14)	90% (18)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	<b>100% (3)</b>	<b>60% (6)</b>	<b>60% (6)</b>	<b>0% (0)</b>	<b>33.3% (2)</b>	<b>100% (2)</b>

**PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2: THE CONTINUITY OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS IS PRESERVED FOR CHILDREN**

Six items are included under Permanency Outcome 2. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 5.

**Item 11: Proximity of Foster Care Placement**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that the child’s foster care placement was close enough to the parent(s) to facilitate face-to-face contact between the child and the parent(s) while the child was in foster care.

**Item 12: Placement with siblings**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings.

**Item 13: Visiting with parents & siblings in foster care**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings is of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child’s relationship with these close family members.

**Item 14: Preserving connections**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to maintain the child’s connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, tribe, school, and friends.

**Item 15: Relative placement**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to place the child with relatives when appropriate.

**Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation.

Table 5.

Rating	Item 11	Item 12	Item 13	Item 14	Item 15	Item 16
Strength	20% (4)	30% (6)	25% (5)	20% (4)	30% (6)	10% (2)
Area needing improvement	15% (3)	15% (3)	15% (3)	30% (6)	10% (2)	20% (4)
Not Applicable	65% (13)	55% (11)	60% (12)	50% (10)	60% (12)	70% (14)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	<b>57.1% (4)</b>	<b>66.7% (6)</b>	<b>62.5% (5)</b>	<b>40% (4)</b>	<b>75% (6)</b>	<b>33.3% (2)</b>

**WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1: FAMILIES HAVE ENHANCED CAPACITY TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN’S NEEDS**

Four items are included under Well-Being Outcome 1. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 6.

**Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, & foster parents**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents (both at the child’s entry into foster care [if the child entered during the period under review] or on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency’s involvement with the family, and provided the appropriate services.

**Item 18: Child & family involvement in case planning**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made (or are being made) to involve parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

**Item 19: Caseworker visits with the child**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the child(ren) in the case are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals.

**Item 20: Caseworker visits with parents**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers of the children are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case goals.

**Table 6.**

Rating	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20
Strength	30% (6)	20% (4)	60% (12)	10% (2)
Area needing improvement	70% (14)	70% (14)	40% (8)	70% (14)
Not Applicable	0% (0)	10% (2)	0% (0)	20% (4)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	<b>30% (6)</b>	<b>22.2% (4)</b>	<b>60% (12)</b>	<b>12.5% (2)</b>

**WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN RECEIVE APPROPRIATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

One item is included under Well-Being Outcome 2. Ratings for the item are shown in Table 7.

**Item 21: Educational needs of child**

Purpose of Assessment: To assess whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children’s educational needs at the initial contact with the child (if the case was opened during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis (if the case was opened before the period under review), and whether identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

**Table 7.**

Rating	Item 21
Strength	25% (5)
Area needing improvement	15% (3)
Not Applicable	60% (12)
Total	100% (20)
% Strengths	<b>62.5% (5)</b>

**WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN RECEIVE ADEQUATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS**

Two items are included under Well-Being Outcome 3. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 8.

**Item 22: Physical health of child**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the physical health needs of the child, including dental health needs.

**Item 23: Mental/behavioral health of child**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the child(ren).

**Table 8.**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Item 22</b>	<b>Item 23</b>
<i>Strength</i>	40% (8)	30% (6)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	35% (7)	10% (2)
Not Applicable	25% (5)	60% (12)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>53.3% (8)</b>	<b>75% (6)</b>

**Table 9. Cherokee County *Percentage of Strengths* on 23 Quality Assurance Items Across Two Reviews**

Item	April 2012 (PUR 4-1-2011 to 3-31-2012)	June 2014 (PUR 6-1-2013 to 5-31-2014)
1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations	100.0%	90.0%
2. Reoccurrence of Maltreatment	100.0%	90.0%
3. Services to Family	70.0%	7.7%
4. Risk Assessment and Safety Management	80.0%	35.0%
5. Foster Care Re-Entries	100.0%	100.0%
6. Stability of Foster Care Placement	60.0%	60.0%
7. Permanency Goal for Child	30.0%	60.0%
8. Reunification, Guardianship, or Perm. Placement with Relatives	40.0%	0.0%
9. Adoption	0.0%	33.3%
10. Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	0.0%	100.0%
11. Proximity of Foster Care Placement	100.0%	57.1%
12. Placement with Siblings	100.0%	66.7%
13. Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	14.3%	62.5%
14. Preserving Connections	77.8%	40.0%
15. Relative Placement	42.9%	75.0%
16. Relationship of Child in Care with Parent	16.7%	33.3%
17. Needs and Services for Child, Parents, and Caregivers	45.0%	30.0%
18. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	47.4%	22.2%
19. Worker Visits with Child	75.0%	60.0%
20. Worker Visits with Parents	31.3%	12.5%
21. Educational Needs of the Child	75.0%	62.5%
22. Physical Health of the Child	68.8%	53.3%
23. Mental Health of the Child	71.4%	75.0%

## SECTION II: FOSTER HOME LICENSE REVIEW

As part of the Quality Assurance Review Process in Cherokee County, ten Foster Home Licenses were randomly selected from the list of all licenses issued for the county during the period under review. These licenses are reviewed using the *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Foster Home License Review Instruments*. There is one instrument for issuance of initial licenses and another instrument for the renewal of licenses. Each instrument contains a section of deficiencies, namely agency oversight, data entry, and qualitative issues. Deficiencies noted in this section may not invalidate the license but still require attention and correction by county management. Each instrument includes the appropriate agency, state, and federal requirements.

Initial License review criteria include the following *items*:

- Applications
- Autobiography information
- Financial information
- Child factor's checklists
- Initial home assessment studies
- References
- Information related to firearms and ammunition in the house
- Pet vaccination information
- Background checks
- Convictions
- Required trainings
- Medical reports
- Fire inspections/re-inspections
- DHEC/Lead inspections
- Central registry check on alternative caregiver, if applicable
- A review of any conflicts noted between file documents and CAPSS
- Completion and issuance of the 1513 prior to the license being issued
- Guidelines regarding in-ground swimming pools

Renewal License review criteria include the following *items*:

- Convictions
- Training hours
- Medical reports if a new household member has been added or if there is a change in foster parent's medical status
- Fire inspections
- FBI checks, if applicable
- Guidelines regarding in-ground swimming pools
- 1513 completed prior to issuance of the license
- Any amendments to the license, if applicable
- Documentation regarding if there are more than five children in the home
- Annual firearms location update
- Information concerning the alternative caregivers
- Safety checks of alternative caregivers
- A review of child protective service allegations
- Pet vaccination information
- A review of any regulatory infractions
- A review of any conflicts noted between file documents and CAPSS

Possible *deficiencies* found in Initial and Renewal cases include:

- Updated home studies
- Discipline Agreements
- Fire drills
- Quarterly home visits
- Disaster Preparedness Plans
- Information concerning the alternative caregivers
- Alternative caregiver forms
- Applications
- Autobiography information



- Financial information
- Child factor’s checklists
- Initial home assessment studies
- References

Areas noted as having occurred as required on the assessment are rated as *strengths*. Those *items* that were not met are rated as *area needing improvement (ANI)*. If the issue is not applicable, it is rated N/A.

Additionally, the percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for each *item*. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Results of the review are noted in Table 10.

### Foster Home Licensing Findings for Cherokee County

**Initial License Cases.** Two foster care issuances for initial/standard license were reviewed. Both of the cases reviewed were rated as *ANI* because all of the licensing requirements were not met prior to authorization of the license issuance. Information for the ratings was obtained by reviewing the case file and from CAPSS. Issues identified that led to the rating of *ANI* for both cases include:

**Documentation:**

- Documentation was not located in the file to verify the agency reviewed safety guidelines regarding access to the in-ground swimming pool with the foster parents.

**Firearms:**

- There was not documentation to support that ammunition was stored separately from the firearm.

**Renewal License Cases.** Seven of eight cases reviewed were rated as *ANI* because all of the licensing requirements were not met prior to authorization of the license renewal. Information for the ratings was obtained by reviewing the case file and from CAPSS.

**Table 10. Summary of Ratings for Initial and Renewal Cases**

Rating	Initial	Renewal
<i>Strength</i>	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	2 (100%)	7 (87.5%)
Total	2 (100%)	8 (100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>0 (0%)</b>	<b>1 (12.5%)</b>

Issues identified that led to the rating of *ANI* for seven cases include:

**Background Checks:**

- There was not documentation to support that SLED, sex offender registry checks, and/or FBI checks were completed for all individuals.

**Medical Records:**

- Documentation of medical statements for all family members was not located in the file.

**Fire Safety:**

- Documentation did not include verification of annual fire inspections.

**Training:**

- Documentation of verification of the completion of all required 28 training hours was not located in the case file.

**Firearms:**

- The case file did not include documentation regarding whether the family had firearms and, if so, whether firearms and ammunition were stored according to agency policy and procedures.
- There was no documentation verifying that firearms and ammunition were stored appropriately in separate, locked locations.

**Safety Concerns:**

- There was no documentation verifying if the family had an in-ground swimming pool on their property.
- Documentation was not located in the file to verify the agency reviewed safety guidelines regarding access to the in-ground swimming pool with the foster parents.
- There was no documentation to verify that the agency addressed CPS allegations with the family.

**Pet Vaccination Records:**

- Documentation confirming that pet vaccinations were up-to-date was not located in the case file.

**Deficiencies found in Initial and Renewal Cases.** Deficiencies were noted for nine of the ten files reviewed. Issues identified by the reviewers include:

**Initial Case Deficiencies****Alternative Caregiver:**

- Documentation did not include identification of an alternative caregiver/ babysitter.

**Renewal Case Deficiencies****Fire Drills:**

- Documentation verifying that fire drills were conducted within 24 hours of a child's placement was not located in the case file.
- Documentation verifying that quarterly fire drills were conducted while children were placed in foster homes was not located in the case file.

**Documentation:**

- Documentation regarding licensing issues addressed during quarterly visits could not be located in the case file.

**Safety:**

- Documentation did not provide verification that quarterly home visits were either timely or completed at all.
- All discipline agreements were not located in the case file.
- All disaster plans were not located in the case file.

**Alternative Caregiver:**

- Documentation did not include identification of an alternative caregiver/ babysitter.

### SECTION III: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE NO ACTION REPORTS REVIEW

A review of ten no action reports was completed to determine whether agency policy and procedures were followed. The reports were randomly selected from the list of reports on which no action was taken by the county during the period under review. The *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Review No Action Reports Instrument* was used to conduct the review. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and fourteen questions regarding the no action decisions and processes (see Table 11).

**Table 11. Summary of Item Ratings for No Action Reports Review**

	Yes	No	NA	Total
1. Illegal substance use alleged AND reason for safety threatened with harm	2	8	0	10
2. Use of CAPSS and/or other systems for prior involvement	5	5	0	10
3a. Did the intake worker thoroughly complete the Sufficiency tab in CAPSS	10	0	0	10
3b. If question 1 or 2 is answered no, did worker provide explanation	1	0	9	10
4a. Maltreatment tab in CAPSS completed	8	2	0	10
4b. If yes to maltreatment, did worker provide an explanation	2	0	8	10
4c. If yes to maltreatment, did supervisor provide additional information	2	0	8	10
5. Safety factors documented on Intake Assessment not discovered by intake worker	2	8	0	10
6. Assessment made utilizing SCDSS Risk Matrix	10	0	0	10
7a. Risk Matrix results included statements contradictory to allegation	9	1	0	10
7b. Risk Matrix results failed to include all statements that support allegation	8	2	0	10
8. Contact with necessary collaterals prior to screen-out decision	3	1	6	10
9. Another intake referral on same perpetrator and/or child within 12 months	5	5	0	10
10. Intake Supervisor ensured consultation with another supervisory-level authority	0	5	5	10

\*Note: A single case may have more than one issue identified.

The percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for the cases reviewed. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 12.

**Table 12. Summary of Ratings for No Action Reports Review**

Rating	Were agency policy and procedures followed?
<i>Strength</i>	0 (0%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	10 (100%)
Total	10 (100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>0 (0%)</b>

In ten cases, agency policy and procedures were not followed. Information for the ratings was obtained by reviewing the case file and from CAPSS. Issues identified that led to the rating of *ANI* include:

- Statements documented in the Risk Matrix were contradictory to the documentation of the allegations.
- The agency failed to include, in the Risk Matrix and/or other documentation, statements that supported allegations made by the reporter.
- A family’s prior history with the agency was not accurately documented.
- Information regarding prior CPS involvement did not include thorough documentation specifying all history of individuals involved in the case.

- Documentation indicating a thorough completion of the Maltreatment Tab in CAPSS by the intake worker could not be located as required.
- There was no documentation to support that the agency made, or attempted to make, any direct contact with all indicated and appropriate collateral contacts.
- As indicated by documentation, the allegations made, and the case file, the allegation met the legal definition of maltreatment, but the agency failed to accept the report.
- Documentation under the Records Check Tab did not verify that the agency discovered all intake referrals received on the family that were noted in the history file.
- The report documentation alleged that the person responsible for the child used illegal substances and that the minor child's safety level was threat of harm, but the agency failed to accept the report.
- Documentation indicated that Safety Factors existed, which were not documented by the agency during the intake process as required. .
- Documentation did not support that the intake worker researched CAPSS and/or other agency systems for prior CPS involvement.

## SECTION IV: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES UNFOUNDED REPORTS REVIEW

Five unfounded reports were reviewed to determine whether agency policy and procedures were followed. The five unfounded reports were randomly selected from the list of all reports unfounded by the county during the period under review. The review was conducted using the *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Review Unfounded Report Instrument*. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and items regarding three primary areas (see Table 13):

- Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment,
- Repeat maltreatment, and
- Risk assessment and safety management.

**Table 13. Summary of Item Ratings for Unfounded Review**

	Yes	No	N/A	Total
1A. Investigation not initiated in accordance with timeframes and requirements	0	5	0	5
1B. Face-to-face contact not made in accordance with timeframes and requirements	0	5	0	5
1C. Delays in investigation initiation or face-to-face contact beyond control of agency	0	0	5	5
2A. At least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report	0	5	0	5
2B. One substantiated or indicated maltreatment report within six months before or after	0	0	5	5
2C. Repeat maltreatment involving the same or similar circumstances	0	0	5	5
3A. Initial assessment of risk to the children and family in the home	5	0	0	5
3B. Ongoing assessment(s) of risk to the children and family in the home	4	1	0	5
3C. Safety concerns that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency	2	3	0	5

\*Note: A single case may have more than one issue identified.

The percentage of *strengths* is calculated for each decision to unfound. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 14.

**Table 14. Summary of Ratings for Unfounded Review**

Rating	Were agency policy and procedures followed?
<i>Strength</i>	3 (60%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	2 (40%)
Total	5 (100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>3 (60%)</b>

Information for the ratings was obtained by reviewing the case file and from CAPSS. Reasons that two unfounded cases reviewed violated agency policy and procedures include:

- Documentation did not provide sufficient verification of ongoing risk and safety assessments with children in their homes.
- There was no documentation supporting whether or not the minor child was interviewed alone during a face-to-face visit.
- Documentation did not support that the agency had a mother complete a drug screen, which was a service indicated to be necessary per the reason for agency involvement.
- There was no documentation to support that the agency made direct contact with all indicated and appropriate collateral contacts.

- The agency failed to address all documented safety concerns to include a child's suicidal ideations.
- Documentation was not located in the case file to verify that any referrals were made for a family during the investigation.

**SECTION V: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES REVIEW**

A review of five allegations was completed to determine whether agency policy and procedures were followed for reports referred to Family Support Services (FSS). The reports were randomly selected from the list of reports referred to a Community-Based Prevention Services Provider by the county during the period under review. The *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Review Community-Based Prevention Services Assessment Instrument* was used to conduct the review. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and sixteen questions regarding the referral to the (FSS) Community-Based Prevention Services Provider and processes (see Table 15).

**Table 15. Summary of Item Ratings for Assessment**

	Yes	No	NA	Total
1. Illegal substance use alleged AND reason for safety threatened with harm	1	4	0	5
2. Use of CAPSS and/or other systems for prior involvement	3	2	0	5
3a. Did the intake worker thoroughly complete the Sufficiency tab in CAPSS	5	0	0	5
3b. If question 1 or 2 is answered no, did worker provide explanation	0	0	5	5
4a. Maltreatment tab in CAPSS completed	4	1	0	5
4b. If yes to maltreatment, did worker provide an explanation	3	0	2	5
4c. If yes to maltreatment, did supervisor provide additional information	0	0	5	5
5. Existing Safety Factors not seen by intake worker or documented	1	4	0	5
6. Assessment made utilizing SCDSS Risk Matrix	5	0	0	5
7a. Results of SCDSS Risk Matrix contradicted allegation made by reporter	5	0	0	5
7b. Did results fail to include statements to support allegations made by reporter	4	1	0	5
8. Agency contacted collaterals for Community-Based Prevention Services	1	3	1	5
9. Additional intake referral made on same perpetrator AND/OR child	1	4	0	5
10. Family received community-based prevention services	0	1	4	5
11. Community-based provider entered an account in CAPSS	5	0	0	5
12. Family accepted services from Community-Based Prevention Services Provider	0	5	0	5

\*Note: A single case may have more than one issue identified.

The percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for the cases reviewed. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 16.

**Table 16. Summary of Ratings for FSS Review**

Rating	Were agency policy and procedures followed?
<i>Strength</i>	0 (0%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	5 (100%)
Total	5 (100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>0 (0%)</b>

Information for the ratings was obtained by reviewing the case file and from CAPSS. In five cases reviewed, agency policy and procedures were not followed. Issues identified that led to the rating of *ANI* include:

- Documentation did not verify that all indicated and appropriate collateral contacts were made.
- Statements documented in the Risk Matrix were contradictory to the documentation of the allegations.
- Per an evaluation of available documentation and information, the agency failed to thoroughly research the CAPSS system for the family's history of involvement with the agency and/or failed to document all of the history noted in the file at the time of intake.
- The Risk Matrix documentation failed to include statements that supported the documentation of the allegations.
- All relevant statements were not documented in the Risk Matrix.
- Documentation indicated that Safety Factors existed which were not discovered and/or noted by the agency at the time of intake as required.
- The allegation documentation noted that the parents and person responsible for the child used illegal substances and the reporter had reason to believe that the child's safety was threatened with harm, but the agency chose to unfound the case without any reasoning to justify documented.
- The Maltreatment Tab documentation was not thoroughly completed.
- All previous intake referrals were not documented.



## SECTION VI: VOLUNTARY CASE MANAGEMENT REVIEW

A review of four allegations was completed to determine whether agency policy and procedures were followed for reports referred to Voluntary Case Management (VCM). The reports were randomly selected from the list of reports referred to a Community-Based Prevention Services Provider by the county during the period under review. The *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Review Community-Based Prevention Services Assessment Instrument* was used to conduct the review. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and sixteen questions regarding the referral to the VCM Community-Based Prevention Services Provider and processes (see Table 17).

**Table 17. Summary of Item Ratings for Assessment**

	Yes	No	NA	Total
1. Illegal substance use alleged AND reason for safety threatened with harm	0	4	0	4
2. Use of CAPSS and/or other systems for prior involvement	2	2	0	4
3a. Did the intake worker thoroughly complete the Sufficiency tab in CAPSS	4	0	0	4
3b. If question 1 or 2 is answered no, did worker provide explanation	0	0	4	4
4a. Maltreatment tab in CAPSS completed	4	0	0	4
4b. If yes to maltreatment, did worker provide an explanation	4	0	0	4
4c. If yes to maltreatment, did supervisor provide additional information	2	0	2	4
5. Existing Safety Factors not seen by intake worker or documented	1	3	0	4
6. Assessment made utilizing SCDSS Risk Matrix	3	0	1	4
7a. Results of SCDSS Risk Matrix contradicted allegation made by reporter	4	0	0	4
7b. Did results fail to include statements to support allegations made by reporter	3	1	0	4
8. Agency contacted collaterals for Community-Based Prevention Services	1	0	3	4
9. Additional intake referral made on same perpetrator AND/OR child	1	3	0	4
10. Family received community-based prevention services	0	1	3	4
11. Community-based provider entered an account in CAPSS	4	0	0	4
12. Family accepted services from Community-Based Prevention Services Provider	3	1	0	4

\*Note: A single case may have more than one issue identified.

The percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for the cases reviewed. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 18.

**Table 18. Summary of Ratings for VCM Review**

Rating	Were agency policy and procedures followed?
<i>Strength</i>	0 (0%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	4 (100%)
Total	4 (100%)
% <i>Strengths</i>	<b>0 (0%)</b>

Information for the ratings was obtained by reviewing the case file and from CAPSS. In four cases reviewed, agency policy and procedures were not followed. Issues identified that led to the rating of *ANI* include:

- The information in and/or the documented results of the Risk Matrix included contradictory information.
- The Risk Matrix documentation failed to include statements that supported the documentation of the allegations.
- The Risk Matrix documentation identified a Risk Factor that was not consistent with the documentation of the allegation made by the reporter.
- The agency failed to document a previous screened out intake referral.
- The agency failed to document a thorough research in CAPSS as required.
- Documentation indicated that all existing Safety Factors were not discovered/documentated at the time of intake.

## **APPENDIX 1. SUMMARY OF ISSUES CAUSING AN AREA NEEDING IMPROVEMENT (ANI) RATING FOR APPLICABLE CASES**

The following is an overview of *strengths* and *area needing improvement* that were found in the cases for Cherokee County conducted June 9-13, 2014. The period under review was June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014.

### **Positives:**

*Items 5 (Foster Care reentries) and 10 (Other planned permanent living arrangement)* were identified as *strengths* of the agency; all applicable cases reviewed were rated as *strength* with no *area needing improvement* (ANI).

### **Concerns:**

The following examines the *items* that had the highest ANI ratings.

- *Item 3 (Services to family)* - 12 of 13 (92.3%) applicable cases rated as ANI
  - The agency did not make concerted efforts to provide appropriate services to the family to prevent the child(ren) from entering foster care. (11 cases)  
Individuals to whom services were not provided:
    - Mother (9 cases)
    - Father(s) (3 cases)
  - The agency failed to document the completion of thorough assessments of individuals, to include: (4 cases)
    - Father(s) (2 cases)
    - Alternative caregivers (2 cases)
    - Mother (1 case)
  - Diligent searches were not conducted when the whereabouts of the following individuals were unknown: (2 cases)
    - Mother (1 case)
    - Children (1 case)
  - The agency failed to seek court intervention when parents were not participating with treatment plans and goals to prevent behaviors that affect risk/safety that have the potential to lead to possible foster care. (1 case)
- *Item 4 (Risk assessment and safety management)* - 13 of 20 (65%) applicable cases rated as ANI
  - The agency did not make concerted efforts to conduct all assessments related to risk and safety. (12 cases) The agency failed to assess:
    - Child(ren) (6 cases)

- Residence of the child, to include a group home (4 cases)
    - Alternative caregiver(s) (3 cases)
    - Father(s) (3 cases)
    - Mother (2 cases)
    - Adults living in the home (1 case)
  - All safety-related documents were not completed or could not be located. (2 cases) Documents include:
    - A court order confirming a custody transfer (1 case)
    - Alternative caregiver forms (1 case)
  - The agency failed to address all known safety concerns present for the child(ren). (3 cases) Cases that noted specifics detailed:
    - The suicidal tendencies of a mother and criminal domestic violence present in the home were not addressed. (1 case)
    - A target child did not feel safe in a group home placement and made this known to the agency. (1 case)
    - A child with therapeutic needs was placed in a home not equipped to meet his/her needs, putting him/her at risk of harm. (1 case)
  - The agency failed to ensure services provision for the following individuals: (3 cases)
    - Mother (1 case)
    - Father (1 case)
    - Child living in a group home (1 case)
  - The agency did not document the completion of all appropriate background checks on alternative caregivers. (3 cases)
  - The agency failed to seek court intervention for a father's noncompliance with his treatment plan. (1 case)
- *Item 8 (Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives) – 4 of 4 (100%) applicable cases rated as ANI*
  - The agency did not make concerted efforts to achieve the goal of reunification in a timely manner. (3 cases)
  - The agency did not make concerted efforts to achieve the goal of guardianship and permanent custody with a relative in a timely manner. (1 case)
  - The agency failed to establish the goal of reunification in a timely manner. (1 case)
- *Item 9 (Adoption) – 4 of 6 (66.7%) applicable cases rated as ANI*

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to achieve adoption in a timely manner. (4 cases) Cases that provided specific reasoning noted the following issues:
  - There were unaddressed gaps in the adoption timeline covering a five month period. (1 case)
  - A child was in foster care for 35 months as a result of legal challenges experienced by the county. There were delays in filing the TPR and completing the ICPC home study. (1 case)
  - A child was in care for seven consecutive years. The initial placement was not an identified adoptive resource placement for the target child's special needs. (1 case)
  - A child was in care for five years. At the time of the review, TPR/adoption had not been finalized. A concurrent goal of reunification was documented as being established during the period under review. (1 case)
  
- *Item 14 (Preserving connections)* – 6 of 10 (60%) applicable cases rated as ANI
  - The agency failed to make concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections to his/her extended family and/or community. (6 cases)
  
- *Item 16 (Relationship of child in care with parents)* – 4 of 6 (66.7%) applicable cases rated as ANI
  - The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote, support, and maintain positive relationships between the child and family. (4 cases)  
Specific relationships affected include:
    - Child and father (4 cases)
    - Child and mother (3 cases)
  
- *Item 17 (Needs and services of child, parents, & foster parents)* – 14 of 20 (70%) applicable cases rated as ANI
  - Ongoing informal assessments were not conducted for the following individuals: (8 cases)
    - Father(s) (7 cases)
    - Mother (4 cases)
    - Child(ren) (2 cases)
  - The agency did not make concerted efforts to provide any services for the following individuals: (5 cases)
    - Mother (4 cases)
    - Father (1 case)

- Assessments were not conducted for the following individuals initially as required: (5 cases)
  - Father(s) (3 cases)
  - Mother (2 cases)
  - Child(ren) (1 case)
  - Foster Parent (1 case)
- The agency failed to provide appropriate services to meet the needs of the following individuals: (3 cases)
  - Father (2 cases)
  - Mother (1 case)
- *Item 18 (Child & family involvement in case planning)* – 14 of 18 (77.8%) applicable cases rated as *ANI*
  - The agency failed to make concerted efforts to involve the following people in the case planning process: (14 cases)
    - Father (8 cases)
    - Mother (7 cases)
    - Child(ren) (1 case)
    - Paramour (1 case)
  - Diligent searches were not conducted when the whereabouts of the following individuals were unknown: (2 cases)
    - Mother (1 case)
    - Father (1 case)
- *Item 20 (Caseworker visits with parents)* – 14 of 16 (87.5%) applicable cases rated as *ANI*
  - The frequency of visitation between the agency and the following individuals was insufficient to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and to promote achievement of case goals: (13 cases)
    - Father(s) (12 cases)
    - Mother (6 cases)
    - Paramour (1 case)
  - The quality of visitation between the agency and the following individuals was insufficient to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and to promote achievement of case goals: (7 cases)
    - Mother (5 cases)
    - Father (4 cases)

