

York County DSS Child Welfare Services Review January 2006

During the week of January 9-13, 2005 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in York County. A sample of open and closed foster care and treatment cases were reviewed. Also reviewed were screened-out intakes, foster home licensing records, and unfounded investigations. Stakeholders interviewed for this review included foster parents, York DSS supervisors, and representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem.

Period included in Case Record Review: July 1, 2005 to Dec 31, 2005

Period included in Outcome Measures: January 1, 2005 to Dec 31, 2005

Purpose

The Department of Social Services engages in a review of child welfare services in each county to:

- a) Determine to what degree services are delivered in compliance with federal and state laws and agency policy; and
- b) Assess the outcomes for children and families engaged in the child welfare system.

State law (sec 43-1-115) states, in part:

The state department shall conduct, at least once every five years, a substantive quality review of the child protective services and foster care programs in each county and each adoption office in the State. The county's performance must be assessed with reference to specific outcome measures published in advance by the department.

The information obtained by the child welfare services review process will:

- a) Give county staff feedback on the effectiveness of their interventions.
- b) Direct state office technical assistance staff to assist county staff with their areas needing improvement.
- c) Inform agency administrators of which systemic factors impair county staff's ability to achieve specific outcomes.
- d) Direct training staff to provide training for county staff specific to their needs.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

The county-specific review of child welfare services is both quantitative and qualitative.

The review is **quantitative** because it begins with an analysis of every child welfare outcome report for that county for the period under review. The outcome reports reflect the performance of the county in all areas of the child welfare program: Child Protective Services (CPS) Intake, CPS Investigations, CPS In-Home Treatment, Foster Care, Managed Treatment Services (MTS), and Adoptions.

The review is **qualitative** because it assesses the quality of the services rendered and the effectiveness of those services. The review seeks to explain why a county's performance data looks the way it does.

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Section One

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding: Partially Achieved

-Safety Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations. **Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
 -Safety Item 2: Repeat maltreatment. **Finding: Strength**

Analysis of Safety Item 1 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment Data Time Period: 01/1/05 to 12/31/05				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective >= 99.99%*	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,302	15,708	16,300.37	(592.37)
York	1,011	966	1,010.90	(44.90)

* This standard is based on state law. It is not a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 1 : Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	75	1	25	6	0
Treatment	5	83	1	17	4	0
Total Cases	8	80	2	20	10	0

Explanation of Item 1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for York DSS. State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. CAPSS data indicates that 45 of 1,011 (4%) investigations were not initiated within 24 hours of intake.

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Analysis of Safety Item 2 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure S1.2: Recurrence of Maltreatment – Of all children who were victims of indicated reports of child abuse and/or neglect during the reporting period, the percent having another indicated report within a subsequent 6 month period.

Indicated Reports Between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005

	Number of Child Victims	Number of Child Victims In Another Founded Rept	Number of Children Objective <= 93.90%	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	10,008	103	9,397.51	507.49
York	649	4	609.41	35.59

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Safety Item 2: Repeat Maltreatment.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	18	90	2	10	0	0

Explanation of Item 2

This is a “Strength” for York DSS. According to CAPSS data 4 of the 649 cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review was a victim in a previously founded report within the past 12 months. The onsite review indicated that repeat maltreatment was more likely in treatment cases than foster care, but is not a serious problem in either.

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Section Two

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding: Not Achieved

-Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal. **Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
 -Safety Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren). **Finding: Area Needing Improvement**

Analysis of Safety Item 3 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	100	0	0	7	0
Treatment	7	70	3	30	0	0
Total Cases	10	77	3	33	7	0

Item 3

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for York DSS. In each of the foster care cases reviewed the decision to bring the child into foster care was appropriate based on the circumstances during the initial investigation. Although the services provided to 70% of families in treatment cases were appropriate, they were not appropriate in 30% of the cases reviewed. When children were placed with alternative caregivers, the needs of those caregivers were not consistently assessed or addressed.

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Analysis of Safety Item 4 Findings

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 4: Risk of harm.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	5	50	5	50	0	0
Total Cases	14	70	6	30	0	0

Strategic Outcome Report Findings				
Measure S2.2: Risk of harm to child – Of all unfounded investigations during the reporting period, the percent receiving subsequent reports within six months of the initial report.				
	Number Alleged Child Victims in an Unfounded Rept 7/01/04 to 6/30/05	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective $\geq 91.50\%^*$	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	13,148	1,124	12,030.42	(6.42)
York	791	82	723.77	(14.76)

* This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for York DSS. The standard for the outcome report in CAPSS is that no more than 8.5% of alleged child victims have another report within 6 months of the initial report. According to CAPSS 82 of the 791 (10.4%) child victims were reported again to DSS within 6 months of an unfounded determination.

Onsite reviewers are able to assess what CAPSS cannot. Onsite reviewers determine how effective the county DSS office is at managing the risks of harm that necessitate continued involvement by DSS. Although the foster care cases were relatively strong in this area, half of the treatment cases reviewed showed that the risk of harm to the children in those families was not reduced by the agency’s interventions.

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Section Three

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:	Partially Achieved
-Item 5: Foster care re-entries	Finding: Strength
-Item 6: Stability of foster care placemt.	Finding: Strength
-Item 7: Permanency goal for child	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 8: Reunification, plmt w/ relatives	Findings: Strength
-Item 9: Adoption	Findings: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 10: Perm goal of other planned arrangmt	Findings: Strength

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 5 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 5: Foster care re-entries.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	100	0	0	6	0

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Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.1: **Foster Care Re-entries** – Of all children who entered care during the year under review, the percent that re-entered foster care Within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

	Number Children Entering Care 1/01/05 to 12/31/05	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Fos Care Episode	Number of Children Objective $\geq 91.40\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,230	247	2,952.22	30.78
York	100	8	91.40	0.60

* This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is a “Strength” for York DSS. According to CAPSS, 8 of the 100 children who entered foster care in York County during the period under review had been returned home in the prior 12 months. Consequently, York DSS met the federal standard for foster care re-entries.

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Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 6 Findings

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 6: Stability of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0

Strategic Outcome Report Findings				
Measure P3.2: Stability of Foster Care Placement – Of all children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, the percent that had not more than 2 placement settings.				
	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number of Children With No More Than 2 Placements	Number of Children Objective $\geq 86.70\%*$	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,712	3,013	3,218.30	(205.30)
York	125	109	108.38	0.63

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Stability of foster care placement is a “Strength”. The outcome report shows that 109 of the 125 children (87%) in care less than 12 months had no more than 2 foster care placements. Consequently, York DSS met this federally established standard.

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Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 7 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.5: Permanency Goal for Child – Of all children who have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, the percent for which a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petition has been filed.				
	Children in Care At Least 15 of Last 22 Months 1/05 –12/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective >= 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,603	1,642	1,909.59	(267.59)
York	141	52	74.73	(22.73)

* This is DSS established objective. The federal agency, Administration for Children & Families, gathers data on this measure, but has not established a numerical objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 7: Permanency goal for children.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0

Explanation of Item 7

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for York DSS. To meet the criteria established in the CAPSS report 53.00% or more of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months must have a TPR petition filed. For York DSS the percentage is 36.8 (52/141). If DSS does not pursue TPR for a child in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months, there should be compelling reason for not doing so.

During the period under review 11 TPR’s were completed on the 57 children in York County with a plan of adoption. Other comparable sized counties had more children with a plan of adoption and more completed TPR’s.

	<u>Children W/ Plan of Adoption</u>	<u>Completed TPR’s</u>
York	57	11
Anderson	105	52
Horry	82	22
Lexington	82	24
Spartanburg	80	30

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Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 8 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.3: Length of Time to Achieve Reunification – Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caregiver, at the time of discharge from foster care, the percent reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children Where Fos Care Services Closed. Last Plan Was Return Home 1/01/05–12/31/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	1,986	1,676	1,513.33	162.67
York	74	62	56.39	5.61

* This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	83	1	17	4	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for York DSS. To meet this federally establish criteria at least 76.20% of the children returned to their parents from foster care must be returned within 12 months of their removal from home. In York County 83.7% of the children were returned home within a year of removal. Stakeholders were unanimous in their praise for York DSS performance in this area. Comments included:

“They work hard to keep children safe. They do follow-up monitoring and follow the case for 3 to 6 months after the child returned home.”

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Analysis of Permanency Item 9 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.4: Length of Time to Achieve Adoption – Of all children who exited from foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children With Finalized Adoption W/in Past 12 Months	Number of Children Where Adoption Was Finalized Within 24 Months of Entering Care	Number of Children Objective $\geq 32.00\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	359	52	114.88	(62.88)
York	12	0	3.84	(3.8)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 9: Adoption.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	0	0	2	100	8	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. To meet this federally established objective 32% of the adoptions in a county must be completed within 24 months of the children entering care. The outcome report shows that none of the 12 adoptions completed during the 12-month period under review were completed within 24 months of the children entering care. Contributing to this problem was the relatively low number of TPR’s completed during the past 12 months – 11 (see Item 7, page 10). Both of the children managed by the Adoptions unit had been in care nearly 4 years.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 10 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.6: Permanency Goal of “Other Planned Living Arrangement” – Of all children in foster care, the percent with a permanency goal of emancipation (Indep Liv Services) or a planned permanent living arrangement other than adoption, guardianship, or return to family.				
	Number of Children In Care at Least One Day 1/01/05 – 12/31/05	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective >= 85.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,073	1,032	6,862.05	178.95
York	215	15	182.75	17.25

* This is a DSS established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	100	0	0	8	0

Explanation-*

This is a “Strength” for York DSS. The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan (APPLA – Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement). Only 7% of the children in York DSS custody have this plan. Both of the cases reviewed onsite with the plan of APPLA involved youth with severe behavioral problems and who were receiving appropriate independent services.

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Section Four

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

Not Achieved

- Item 11: Proximity of placement
- Item 12: Placement with siblings.
- Item 13: Visiting w/ parents & siblings
- Item 14: Preserving connections
- Item 15: Relative placement
- Item 16: Relationship of child w/ parents

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Findings: Area Needing Improvement**
- Findings: Area Needing Improvement**
- Findings: Area Needing Improvement**

Analysis of Permanency Item 11 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P4.1: **Proximity of Foster Care Placement** – Of all children in foster care during the reporting period (excluding MTS and Adoptions children), the percent placed within their county of origin.

	Number of Children In Care 11/01/04 – 10/31/05	Number of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Percent of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Number of Children Objective >= 70.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	6,001	3,888	64.79	4,200.70	(312.70)
York	218	101	46.33	152.60	(51.60)

* This is a DSS established objective.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	100	0	0	3	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for York DSS. To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in York County. The outcome report indicates that 46% (101/218) of the children who entered foster care during the 12 month period under review were placed in the county. Which means that the majority (54%) of York DSS’s foster children were placed out of county. Relevant to this issue is that half of York’s foster children are in therapeutic placements funded by ISCEDC. This is a disproportionately high percentage.

One factor contributing to this problem is the lack of foster homes in York County. Another problem appears to be a lack of coordination between the York DSS and Rock Hill MTS offices to ensure that the MTS office manage the children needing the most intensive case management.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 12: Placement with siblings						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	83	1	17	4	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. It was apparent that the agency attempted to place siblings together when resources and circumstances made that possible. However, documentation in one case indicated that two members of a sibling group were placed out of the county in a group home because there was no foster home willing to take all of the children.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	67	2	33	4	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The cases rated Area Needing Improvement involved sibling groups not placed together because one or more sibling was placed out of county in a therapeutic placement. When those situations occurred, visiting between siblings was not planned, and often did not occur. The other situation that caused cases to be rated Area Needing Improvement involved the lack of planned visits between children in foster care and their non-custodial fathers.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	63	3	37	2	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. Five of the applicable 8 cases reviewed were rated “Strength” for this item. Those five children were placed within the county and were able to maintain their relationships with the people and places that were important to them. The 3 cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” involved children separated from their siblings because of the child’s need for a therapeutic placement. Those files contained no documented effort by the agency to help those children visit, call, or otherwise maintain their relationships with the separated siblings. Also absent in the documentation were efforts by the agency to help to children visit, call or maintain their relationships with any relatives other than their parents.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 15: Relative placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	67	3	33	1	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. In 67% of the cases reviewed there was evidence that both maternal and paternal relatives were assessed as placement options for the children in foster care. In three of the cases reviewed there was no evidence that those assessments occurred. In one of those cases there no was evidence of a diligent search for a mother whose last known residence was in Texas.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	57	3	43	3	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in promoting or maintaining a strong emotionally supportive relationship between children in care and their parents. Four of the applicable 6 cases were rated “Strength” because in those cases provisions were made for parents to be involved in their children’s lives beyond the minimum visitation required by policy. The cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” showed no evidence of the agency’s attempts to work with the fathers of children.

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Section Five

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 17: Needs & services
- Item 18: Involvement in case planning
- Item 19: Worker visits with child
- Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)

Not Achieved

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Findings: Area Needing Improvement**

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0
Treatment	3	30	7	70	0	0
Total Cases	11	55	9	45	0	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for York DSS. This item asks two questions: 1) Were the needs of the child, parents, and foster parents assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? Foster care cases were more likely to be rated “Strength” than treatment cases. Reviewers found that needs were accurately identified in treatment cases and plans written, but often there was no follow up to determine if clients had accessed needed services, or if clients had encountered problems. In almost every treatment case reviewed dictation showed that assigned caseworkers changed two or more times during the period under review.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	50	4	50	2	0
Treatment	6	60	4	40	0	0
Total Cases	10	56	8	44	2	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. Performance in this area was inconsistent. The county routinely conducts family meetings as part of its case planning process. However, children placed out of the county were usually not involved in case planning – unless the case was managed by MTS. Cases managed by the Adoptions unit did not consistently involve age-appropriate children in the case planning process. The most glaring omission was the failure of the agency to assess or involve fathers of the children in both CPS treatment cases and foster care cases.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 19: Worker visits with child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	3	30	7	70	0	0
Total Cases	13	65	7	35	0	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) were York DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) did the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? The answer to both questions in foster care cases was a resounding “Yes”. The situation was different with treatment cases. Reviewers noted that in treatment cases caseworkers assessed and monitored the safety of the victim child rather than all of the children in the household. Often, in treatment cases some of the children in a sibling group would be removed from the home and placed with a relative, other siblings would be placed with another relative. As caseworkers changed, one caseworker would begin to track one set of siblings in one of those homes, with no mention of the other children for the duration of the life of the case.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	75	2	25	2	0
Treatment	6	60	4	40	0	0
Total Cases	12	67	6	33	2	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for York DSS. Workers focused on making face-to-face visits with the mothers of the children. They did not consistent see, or attempt to see the fathers whether those fathers lived in the house or not. When children had parents who lived in another state, reviewers saw cases in which the agency did not make reasonable efforts to communicate with those parents.

Stakeholders said:

“They try to visit monthly, but sometimes miss due to resistance of clients. The more difficult cases are seen more often. Also will miss due to turnover in staff and caseload not covered.”

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Section Six

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

Substantially Achieved

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	100	0	0	3	0
Treatment	5	71	2	29	3	0
Total Cases	12	86	2	14	6	0

Explanation

This is a “**Strength**” for York DSS. This item asks two questions: 1) Did DSS assess the educational needs of the children under their supervision, and 2) Were identified educational needs addressed? Client records showed that caseworkers regularly met with the children and school officials at the schools. Educational issues were addressed in supervisory staffings with caseworkers. School records were in case files.

The 11 stakeholders asked about York DSS’s performance in this area all said that the agency did a good job attending to the educational needs of the children in their care.

The school representative said:

“They [DSS] do a much better job now than they used to in this district. They attend IEP meetings and advocate for the children.”

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Section Seven

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 22: Physical health of the child
- Item 23: Mental health of the child

Not Achieved

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 22: Physical health of the child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	5	63	3	37	2	0
Total Cases	14	78	4	22	2	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for York DSS. The medical needs of 78% of the cases reviewed were handled properly, which means that York caseworkers usually did a good job of gathering information about the physical health of children and following up on identified issues. Lapses were more prevalent in treatment cases than in foster care cases. Three cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement” because staff failed to follow up on identified medical issues that were directly related to the agency’s involvement in the case.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 23: Mental health of the child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	86	1	14	3	0
Treatment	4	57	3	43	3	0
Total Cases	10	71	4	29	6	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for York DSS. The mental health needs of most (86%) of the foster children reviewed were appropriately attended to. However, the mental health needs of nearly half (43%) of the children in treatment cases were not appropriately attended to. Within sibling groups some, but not all of the children were assessed. When mental health issues were identified, they were not consistently followed-up on. The agency’s failure to follow up on the needs of children in treatment cases with mental health issues who were placed with relatives created risks of disrupting those placements.

Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses

At the time of the review York DSS had 56 foster homes. At any given time York DSS had approximately 131 children in foster care. During the course of a year 215 children entered foster care. The 56 licensed foster homes were not adequate to serve those children, creating a reliance on group home and out-of-county placements.

Strengths

1. All licenses up-to-date in CAPSS
2. Quarterly visits done timely
3. Detailed disaster plans
4. Training hours well documented

Areas Needing Improvement

1. CAPSS printout of central registry checks not in files
2. No documentation of fire drills
3. Alternate caregivers not interviewed
4. No evidence of supervisory review of cases

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Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Investigation initiated timely?	3	2
Was assessment adequate?	5	0
Was decision appropriate?	4	1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for York County DSS. Assessments were thorough. Schools, medical professionals and other appropriate collaterals were contacted as part of the assessments. The two investigations that were not initiated in a timely manner were both given a medium risk rating but were not initiated within 12 hours as required by agency policy. However, they were initiated within 24 hours so the errors will not appear on an outcome report. In one instance the worker did not find the family home on the initial attempt, but did not try to contact the family again until 6 days later.

The one inappropriate decision to unfound involved a mother fleeing West Virginia to SC. West Virginia DSS had an indicated case on this mother.

Section Ten – Screened Out Intakes

	Yes	No	Cannot Determine
Was Intake Appropriately Screened Out?	9	1	0
	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Were Necessary Collaterals Contacted?	2	0	8
Were Appropriate Referrals Made?	1	0	9

This is a “Strength” for York County DSS. The decisions to screen out these referrals generally showed a good application of state law and agency policy. The one exception involved a mother who had been reported twice within two months with different allegations. Reviewer felt that intake worker should have pended this decision so that a search of food stamp & Medicaid records could be done to find an address on this woman.

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Case Rating Summary

The performance and outcome ratings below show the number of cases receiving that rating, followed by the percent of the total that number represents. Not Applicable (N/A) cases do not factor in the percentage.

Performance Item or Outcome	Perf. Item Ratings			Outcome Ratings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	N/A*	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	N/A*
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				16 (80%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	10				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				14 (70%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	10 (77%)	3 (23%)	7				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	14 (70%)	6 (30%)	0				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0	
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	4 (100%)	0	6				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	5 (83%)	(17%)	4				
Item 9: Adoption	0	2 (100)	8				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	2 (100%)		8				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				6 (67%)	3 (33%)		1
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	7 (100%)		3				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	4				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	4				
Item 14: Preserving connections	5 (63%)	3 (37%)	2				
Item 15: Relative placement	6 (67%)	3 (33%)	1				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	3				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				11 (55%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)	
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	2				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	13 (65%)	7 (35%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	12 (67%)	6 (33%)	2				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				12 (86%)	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	6
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	12 (86%)	2 (14%)	6				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				14 (74%)	2 (11%)	3 (15%)	1
Item 22: Physical health of the child	14 (78%)	4 (22%)	2				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	6				