

Lee County DSS
 Review of Child Welfare Services
 Preliminary Report

Lee County Quality Assurance Review
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Onsite Review Date: May 16 - 20, 2011
 Period Under Review: May 1, 2010 to April 30, 2011

Cases Included in Review	
Foster Care	10
Treatment	10
Screened-Out Intakes	10
Unfounded Investigations	5
Foster Home Licenses	10
Total Cases Reviewed	45

Active Human Service Cases (Effective June 30, 2010)	
Total Children in Foster Care	26
Total Treatment Cases	29
Total Children in Treatment Cases	54
Total Active CPS Investigations	8
Total Foster Homes	14

Human Service Staff	Filled Positions	Vacant Positions	Extended Leave
Human Serv Coord.II	1	0	0
Human Serv Coord I	0	0	0
CPS Intake	1	0	0
CPS Invest/Asmt	1	0	0
CPS Treatment	1	0	0
Foster Care	2	0	0
Licensing	1	0	0

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Analysis of Outcome Performance

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of two items:

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1) Timeliness of initiating investigations | Strength |
| 2) Repeat Maltreatment | Strength |

Explanation of Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations

This is an area of **Strength** for Lee County DSS. State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. Agency data indicates that for the 12-month period under review, Lee County initiated 84 of its 84 investigations (100%) of alleged abuse and neglect within 24 hours. The onsite review is consistent with the agency's data.

Explanation of Item 2: Repeat Maltreatment

This is an area of **Strength** for Lee County DSS. This item measures the occurrence of maltreatment among children under agency supervision, or within a year of having their case closed by the agency. Reviewers determined that in 95% of the foster care and treatment cases, the children under agency supervision did not experience additional maltreatment. One treatment case needed improvement because the children were inside a car when the mother fired gun shots at another vehicle; the mother's actions caused one of the children to receive injuries. This incident occurred during the period under review, subsequent to the initial report.

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of two items:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 3) Services to family to protect children & prevent removal | Strength |
| 4) Risk of Harm | Area Needing Improvement |

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Explanation of Item 3: Services to family to protect children and prevent removal

This is an area of **Strength** for Lee County DSS. This item assesses whether services were adequate to protect children in their home and prevent their removal and placement into foster care. In 100% of the foster care and treatment cases reviewed, appropriate services were offered to prevent the children from coming into foster care

Explanation of Item 4: Risk of Harm

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item assesses whether the agency's interventions reduced risk of harm to children. In 100% of the foster care cases and 80% of the treatment cases reviewed, risk of harm was adequately managed. One treatment case needed improvement because a child who has behavioral problems and criminal issues was placed with various alternative caregivers such as a grandmother, various aunts, and his biological mother. There were no thorough assessments and background checks documented for all of the placements that the child has been in during the PUR. There was also no assessment of the child's three siblings who live with the mother. The child's mother stated that the child was staying with his father due to his behavior because she could not control the child and that she feared for what he would do to the other children. The child's mother also has a special needs child in the home and the agency did not address any protective mechanisms or identify a protector to ensure that the other children in the home were safe and allowed the child to move into the mother's home. Subsequently, the child ended up having an altercation with the grandmother and the special needs sibling that caused injury to the sibling and grandmother. The agency closed the case without ensuring the safety of the other children in the home and a stable placement for the target child that addresses his behavior and criminal history. In the other treatment case, custody was given to a maternal grandmother who has a long history of drug use and continues to use drugs which she is non-compliant with treatment services. The agency removed the children from the mother due to her drug use and noncompliance and placed the children with a grand mother who has the same issues. The grandmother is noncompliant with treatment services and the children are still exposed to the same issues and there is no documentation to support that the risk issues that are identified have been resolved.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
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The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of six items:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 5) Foster care re-entries | Area Needing Improvement |
| 6) Stability of foster care placement | Strength |
| 7) Permanency goal for child | Area Needing Improvement |
| 8) Reunification/ permanent placement with relatives | Strength |
| 9) Adoption | Strength |
| 10) Permanency goal of Another Planned | |

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Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) **Area Needing Improvement**

Explanation of Item 5: Foster care re-entries

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item measures the frequency of children re-entering foster care within a year of discharge. To meet the objective for this item, 90.1% of children must not re-enter foster care within a year of discharge. Agency data shows that 80.0% of the children did not re-enter foster care within 12 months of the date of their discharge from the previous foster care episode which is below the established objective.

Explanation of Item 6: Stability of foster care placement

This is an area of **Strength** for Lee County DSS. This item measures the frequency of placement changes for children in foster care, and assesses reasons for those changes. The objective is that at least 86% of the children in care have two or fewer placements within 12 months. Agency data shows that 94.1% of Lee County children had two or fewer placements which is above the established objective.

Explanation of Item 7: Permanency goal for children

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the appropriateness of permanency goals for children in foster care and the timeliness of those permanency decisions. In 90% of the foster care cases reviewed, the agency quickly identified the appropriate goal. One case needed improvement because the agency's goal of APPLA was established when the child was 5 years old and the child is now 12 years old. Even though the child has multiple health problems and will never be self sufficient, the agency has no documentation to support there efforts of locating a forever home for the child or that the child was assessed annually for adoption as per policy.

Explanation of Item 8: Reunification or permanent placement with relatives

This is an area of **Strength** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the activities and process to accomplish the goal of reunification with caregivers or placement with relatives. Agency data measures whether 75.2% of children (with a plan of reunification) are reunified in less than 12 months. For Lee County children with this plan, 91.7% were reunified within 12 months, which is above the established objective.

Explanation of Item 9: Adoption

This is an area of **Strength** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the process within the child welfare system to achieve timely adoptions for children in foster care. Agency data shows that Lee County DSS completed three adoptions in State Fiscal Year 2010. There were three adoption cases (42.9) that were finalized within 24 months of the child entering care, which is above the national percentile of 36.6%.

Explanation of Item 10: Permanency goal of APPLA

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of services provided to children with the permanency plan of APPLA. Reviewers also rate whether the agency attempted to locate and reassess

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relatives or non-relatives that were willing to commit to the youth's long-term care every six months. In 90% of the cases reviewed, youth with the plan of APPLA were receiving the appropriate Independent Living services and had an identified resource to help them achieve the goal of APPLA. One case reviewed needing improvement because the case documentation does not reflect that the agency was working with the target child regarding establishing independent living skills. The target child has medical issues that will impact his ability to obtain self sufficiency. Additionally, the county has not attempted to identify an adult who will support the youth transitioning into adulthood.

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of six items:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 11) Proximity of foster care placement | Strength |
| 12) Placement with siblings in foster care | Strength |
| 13) Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care | Area Needing Improvement |
| 14) Preserving connections | Area Needing Improvement |
| 15) Relative placement | Area Needing Improvement |
| 16) Relationship of child in care with parents | Area Needing Improvement |

Explanation of Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement

This is an area of **Strength** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to keep children close enough to their families so that essential relationships can be maintained. One measure used to evaluate this item is the percentage of children who are placed within the county. The objective is that at least 70% of the children in care be placed within the county. Agency data shows that 78.3% of the Lee DSS children were placed within the county, which surpasses the established objective.

Explanation of Item 12: Placement with siblings in foster care

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to keep siblings together when it is appropriate to do so. In all of the cases (100%) reviewed, siblings group were not kept together when appropriate. The reviewers were unable to determine a specific reason as to why the siblings were not placed together.

Explanation of Item 13: Visiting with siblings in foster care and with parents

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to ensure that visits occur between children in foster care and their siblings and parents. Improvement was needed in 56% of the cases reviewed because the agency either failed to arrange visits as required between siblings and with children and

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their mothers and fathers or failed to assess the appropriateness of such visits. Reviewers found that in the majority of the cases reviewed, the needs of the children were not taken into consideration when visits were requested. In addition, one case needed improvement a child requested to visit with her brother but there is no documentation of the agency's efforts to establish visitation as per policy.

Explanation of Item 14: Preserving Connections

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to preserve children's connections to the people, places and things that are important to them. In 71% of the cases reviewed, agency efforts were present to help children maintain their relationships with family and significant people in their lives. Cases needing improvement because the documentation identified people with whom the children previously lived with such as relatives and others, but there were no efforts by the agency to help the children stay in contact with those persons.

Explanation of Item 15: Relative Placement

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to identify and assess relatives as potential placement resources for children in foster care. Fifty-eight percent of the cases reviewed needed improvement because the agency did not consistently assess maternal and paternal relatives as placement options. For instance, one case needed improvement because even though the agency assessed the mother's friend and a niece and determined they were not suitable for placement, there were other relatives who were identified, but no documentation that they assessed. The documentation supports that other relatives were very interested in obtaining custody of the child, but the agency failed to assess for placement and informed the relatives to go through the adoption process.

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

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to promote a supportive relationship between children in care and their parents, beyond the twice-minimum visitation requirement. In 75% of the cases reviewed, the agency promoted a supportive relationship with the children and their parents. Improvement was needed in one of the cases reviewed because reviewers found no evidence of the agency's additional efforts in supporting the parent-child relationship by failing to offer the parents any other types of visits or contact above the required twice a month contacts such as letter writing, telephone contact, etc.

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
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The agency's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of four items:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 17) Needs and services of child, parents and caregivers | Strength |
| 18) Child and family involvement in case planning | Area Needing Improvement |

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19) Worker visits with child

Area Needing Improvement

20) Worker visits with parents

Area Needing Improvement

Explanation of Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents and caregivers

This is area **Strength** for Lee County DSS. This item asks two questions: 1) Were the needs of the child, parents, and caregivers assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? In 100% of the foster care and 90% of the treatment case reviewed, the agency adequately assessed the needs of the child, parents and foster parents. One of the treatment cases needed improvement because there was also a lack of the agency's efforts to assess the needs of the noncustodial fathers.

Explanation of Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to involve parents and children in the case planning process. Reviewers found that 37% of the foster care and 11% of the treatment cases needed improvement because the parents and the age- appropriate children were not involved in the case planning process. The agency did a good job of involving the mothers in case planning, however this rating was affected by the agency's failure to engage the children's fathers.

Explanation of Item 19: Worker visits with child

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item measures the frequency of caseworker visits with children under agency supervision, and evaluates the quality of those visits. State law and agency policy require that children under agency supervision be seen each month. Agency data indicates that 100% of the foster children were seen every month during the last 12 months. However, in the in-home treatment cases, Agency data indicates that 77.3% of the children were seen monthly. Reviewers found in several of the cases reviewed, that were missed visits and the content of the visits did not always address safety, permanency and well-being. Also the majority of the visits were not conducted in the children's home.

Explanation of Item 20: Worker visits with parents

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item measures the frequency of caseworker visits with parents, and evaluates the quality of those visits. In 100% of the foster care and 80% of the treatment cases, the parents were seen or there were documented efforts of the agency by contacting the parents by correspondence, telephone calls, etc. to assess for attainment of case goals and ensure the children's safety and well-being. Improvement was needed in the in-home treatment cases due to the agency's failure to visit both parents and identified caregivers monthly during the period under review.

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

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educational needs.

The agency's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of one item:

21) Educational needs of the child **Strength**

Explanation of Item 21: Educational needs of the child

This is an area **Strength** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and attend to the educational needs of children under agency supervision. In 100% of the foster care and treatment cases reviewed, the county was assessing and attending to the educational needs of the children. One foster care case was rated an area needing improvement because the agency failed to assess and attend to educational needs of the child.

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

The agency's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of two items:

22) Physical health of the child **Area Needing Improvement**

23) Mental health of the child **Area Needing Improvement**

Explanation of Item 22: Physical health of the child

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and attend to the medical needs of children under agency supervision. In 20% of the foster care and 40 % of the treatment cases needed improvement because there was no documentation to support that the agency assessed for physical health and dental issues and ensured that the identified needs were attended to. There were also identified medical needs and no direct contact with the providers by the agency was documented or were there copies of the medical records in the file.

Explanation of Item 23: Mental health of the child

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and meet the mental health needs of children under agency supervision. In 85% of foster care and treatment cases reviewed, the mental needs were assessed and attended to. Improvement was needed in the majority of cases reviewed because of the lack of documentation indicating that identified problems such as counseling were addressed and attended to.

Unfounded Investigations

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	Yes	No
Was the investigation initiated timely?	5	5
Was the assessment adequate?	2	3
Was the decision appropriate?	2	3

This is an **Area Needing improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the agency's investigative process and determines if decisions were supported by the facts of the cases. All five investigations were initiated in a timely manner. Three of the investigations lacked documentation in the file and CAPSS to support the agency's decision to unfound the cases. The assessments were inadequate because the agency failed to conduct thorough investigations that supported the decision to unfound the cases.

In one case, an altercation occurred between the parents in which the mother hurt her thumb. The Paramour was arrested & charged with criminal domestic violence. The assessment was not adequate because there was no documentation to support that the mother was referred for an assessment for CDV and an alcohol assessment because she admitted being intoxicated during the CDV. Additionally, there were other children in the home at the time of incident and the children were not assessed. The agency has unfounded the case, but there is no assessment of whether the mother' paramour will return to the home and whether or not the children are safe and the mother can act as a protector.

In the second case, the child had a bruise on his right buttock which appeared to be a hand print. Even though a forensic was completed on the child to support that no physical abuse occurred regarding the allegation reported, there were identified issues noted from the investigation that were not addressed prior to unbounding of the case. There were references to domestic violence, a lack of supervision as to when the injury occurred, and a lack of assessment and interviews of all parties involved in the incident such as the grandparents, the father, and other children. There was also no interview with the child who actually caused the injury to the victim child. There was also no home visit or assessment of the father's home where the children allegedly lived. Documentation indicates that the above issues are ongoing with this family and other parties involved and there was not enough information gathered to obtain necessary information for the assessment to ensure the child's safety and support case finding.

In the third case, the allegation was that a 20 year old brother was fighting with the mother and the victim child who is 11 years old. The assessment is not adequate because there is a prior incident involving the 20 year old assaulting the 11 year old victim child two weeks prior to the second reported incident. In addition, the agency failed to contact the adult child (20 year old) regarding the incident, his living arrangements and his understanding of the No Trespassing Order against him since he has been released from

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jail. The mother is also a victim and there was no protector or documentation of safety that was implemented to ensure that the child would be protected from any harm prior to support the agency's finding.

Screened Out Intakes			
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	Yes	No	Cannot Determine
Was the Intake Appropriately Screened Out?	8	2	0
			Not Applicable
Were Necessary Collaterals Contacted?	6	3	1
Were Appropriate Referrals Made?	2	2	6

Explanation of Item 25: Screened Out Intakes

This is an **Area Needing Improvement for Lee County DSS**. This item evaluates the process by which the agency screens out reports of abuse and/or neglect. Reviewers determined that 8 of the intakes were appropriately screened out, and the necessary collaterals were contacted in 6 of the 10 cases reviewed regarding the reported allegations.

In one intake, allegedly the mother smokes crack heavily on a daily basis and the mother is pregnant. However, the report should have not been screened out because the allegation as written meets the definition of Child Abuse and Neglect and should have been investigated to determine if there were any safety concerns with the children in the home. The mother has a prior history with the agency of drug use and there is no documentation to support the children in the home was safe. Additionally, it is not clear in the documentation whether the reporter was asked about the safety of the children in the home. The agency screened out the intake because the mother was possibly not pregnant and she was not in her third trimester.

In the second intake, the allegation was that the family began an assessment at mental health and the child has a history of taking pills in excess, cutting herself, threatening to kill herself, and mental health services. However, based on the family's history with DSS, the child's mental health status and the child's behavioral issues in school warranted the report to be accepted for an investigation to determine whether the victim child and the other child in home were at risk of being maltreated. Additionally, there is documentation that support that the mother was not compliant with the scheduled mental health appointments for the child and that the child was having school problems as well.

In the third intake, a ten years old female has been the victim of physical abuse by her biological mother. The mother and child got into an altercation during which time the mother allegedly beat the child down like a grown up. Mother also allegedly choked the

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child. Incident was allegedly reported to a relative who cares for the child. The report was screened incorrectly because the allegation has written meets the definition of Child Abuse and Neglect and should have been investigated to determine if there were any concerns with the child. The collaterals that were contacted indicated that there may be possible retaliation from the school because the mother is suing the school for expelling her daughter and this is why the report was screened. The collateral information was provided to the agency by the alleged perpetrator only supports that there is a lawsuit not that no abuse or risk issues are present to the child. The reporter listed in the system is anonymous so there is no way to support that the school made the report in retaliation as indicated by the agency. There were no collaterals contacted to verify the safety of the child other than law enforcement; who stated that they did not have a report. According to the information, the child was last seen at school in December 2010 and there was also no contact with the child's school to verify the above information.

Foster Home Licenses

Explanation of Item 26: Foster Home Licenses

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Lee County DSS. This item evaluates the process by which the agency ensures that all foster homes comply with licensing requirements. Three of the ten foster home licenses reviewed were invalid. In one of the cases reviewed, the current license was issued with only two reference letters in the record that indicated that they knew the foster parents for at least three years. According to licensing requirements; references must know the foster parents for at least three years. **(Section 950, G 8b)** In two of the other cases reviewed, the adoptive children's medical records were not found in the file. According to licensing requirements, medical records are required on all household members. **(Section 950, G7)**

CAPSS was consistent with information in the files. Quarterly Home visits were completed as required and consistently. Documentation in the case record was thorough. Reviewers identified the following practice issues listed below, but they do not reflect the validity of the issuance of the license.

- Safety checks were not completed on required household members annually.
- Discipline Agreement and Disaster Preparedness forms are not completed annually as required

Systemic Issues

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Foster Care and Treatment Case Rating Summary	
Performance Item or Outcome	Performance Item Ratings

1. Limited quality Mental Health services for clients in Lee County.
2. Limited transportation for client in the county.

Review Team

Dequanna Brockington	Supervisor/Williamsburg DSS
John Taylor	CPS/TA State Office
Letha McAllister	Review Coordinator
Kathy Wilkins	Review Coordinator/MEPA
Zelda Kollock	Review Coordinator/ Stakeholder Interviews
Cordelia Cooper	Review Coordinator/ Stakeholder Interviews

The objective is that 95% of cases be rated “Strength.”

Str = Strength

ANI = Area Needing Improvement

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		Strength	Area Needing Improvement	N/A*
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				
Item 1*: STR	Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	10/10 = 100%	0	10
Item 2: STR	Repeat maltreatment	19/20 = 95%	1/20 = 5%	0
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				
Item 3: STR	Services to family to protect children in home and prevent removal	12/12 = 100%	0	8
Item 4: ANI	Risk assessment and safety management	18/20 = 90%	2//20/% = 10%	0
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				
Item 5: * ANI	Foster care re-entries	2/2 = 100%	0	8
Item 6:* STR	Stability of foster care placement	9/10 = 90%	1/10 = 10%	0
Item 7: ANI	Permanency goal for child	9/10 =90%	1/10 = 10%	0
Item 8: STR	Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	1/1 =100%	0	9
Item 9: * STR	Adoption	4/7 = 57%	3/7 = 43%	3
Item 10: ANI	Permanency goal of Alternate Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)	3/ 4 = 75%	1/ 4 = 25%	6
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				
Item 11:* STR	Proximity of foster care placement	7/7 = 100%	0	3
Item 12: STR	Placement with siblings	6/6 = 100%	0	4
Item 13: ANI	Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	4/9 = 44 %	5/9 = 56%	1
Item 14: ANI	Preserving connections	5/7 = 71%	2/7 = 29%	3
Item 15: ANI	Relative placement	4/9 = 44%	5/9 =56%	1
Item 16: ANI	Relationship of child in care with parents	3 /4 = 75%	1/ 4 =25%	6
Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				
Item 17: STR	Needs and services of child, parents, caregiver	9/20 = 95%	1/5 =10%	0
Item 18: ANI	Child and family involvement in case planning	13/17 = 77%	4/17/ 23%	3
Item 19: ANI	Worker visits with child	14/20 = 70%	6/20/ =30	0
Item 20: ANI	Worker visits with parents	11/13= 85%	2/13 =15%	7
Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				
Item 21: STR	Educational needs of the child	16/16 = 100%	0	4
Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				
Item 22: ANI	Physical health of the child	14/20 = 70%	6/20 = 30%	4
Item 23: ANI	Mental health of the child	12/14 =86%	2/14 = 14%	6

* = Rating based on agency data, not onsite review findings