

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

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This summary report describes the results of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) McCormick County Quality Assurance Review, conducted January 27-31, 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. Four cases were reviewed including 3 foster care and 1 family preservation case, which were all of the eligible cases listed in the universe.

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. The ratings for each *item* are combined to determine the rating for the outcome. Outcomes are rated as being substantially achieved, partially achieved, not achieved, or not applicable. The *items* are rated as *strength*, *area needing improvement*, 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> <i>Children Are, First and Foremost, Protected from Abuse and Neglect</i>	0% (0)	50% (1)	50% (1)
<b>Safety 2</b> <i>Children are Safely Maintained in their Homes whenever Possible and Appropriate</i>	25% (1)	25% (1)	50% (2)
<b>Permanency 1</b> <i>Children have Permanency and Stability in their Living Situations</i>	33% (1)	67% (2)	0% (0)
<b>Permanency 2</b> <i>The Continuity of Family Relationships and Connections is Preserved for Children</i>	100% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
<b>Well-Being 1</b> <i>Families have Enhanced Capacity to Provide for their Children’s Needs</i>	50% (2)	50% (2)	0% (0)
<b>Well-Being 2</b> <i>Children receive Appropriate Services to meet their Educational Needs</i>	100% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
<b>Well-Being 3</b> <i>Children receive Adequate Services to meet their Physical and Mental Health Needs</i>	75% (3)	25% (1)	0% (0)

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*.

## 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>	0% (0)	25% (1)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	50% (2)	25% (1)
<i>Not Applicable</i>	50% (2)	50% (2)
Total	100% (4)	100% (4)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>0% (0)</b>	<b>50% (1)</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>	25% (1)	50% (2)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	75% (3)	50% (2)
<i>Not Applicable</i>	0% (0)	0% (0)
Total	100% (4)	100% (4)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>25% (1)</b>	<b>50% (2)</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 (APPLA)**

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
<i>Strength</i>	25% (1)	0% (0)	75% (3)	50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	25% (1)	75% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)
Not Applicable	50% (2)	25% (1)	25% (1)	50% (2)	100% (4)	75% (3)
Total	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>50% (1)</b>	<b>0% (0)</b>	<b>100% (3)</b>	<b>100% (2)</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>0% (0)</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
<i>Strength</i>	75% (3)	25% (1)	75% (3)	75% (3)	75% (3)	25% (1)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (2)
Not Applicable	25% (1)	75% (3)	25% (1)	25% (1)	25% (1)	25% (1)
Total	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>100% (3)</b>	<b>100% (1)</b>	<b>100% (3)</b>	<b>100% (3)</b>	<b>100% (3)</b>	<b>33.3% (1)</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
<i>Strength</i>	75% (3)	100% (4)	75% (3)	25% (1)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	25% (1)	0% (0)	25% (1)	50% (2)
Not Applicable	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)
Total	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (4)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>75% (3)</b>	<b>100% (4)</b>	<b>75% (3)</b>	<b>33.3% (1)</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
<i>Strength</i>	50% (2)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	0% (0)
Not Applicable	50% (2)
Total	100% (4)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>100% (2)</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>	75% (3)	75% (3)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	25% (1)	0% (0)
Not Applicable	0% (0)	25% (1)
Total	100% (4)	100% (4)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>75% (3)</b>	<b>100% (3)</b>

## SECTION II: FOSTER CARE LICENSE REVIEW

There were no foster home licenses reviewed for this county. There were no foster homes licensed by or located in McCormick County listed in the universe.

## SECTION III: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE SCREEN-OUT REVIEW

A review of five screened-out allegations was completed to determine whether the reports were screened out according to agency policy. These were all of the reports screened out by the county during the period under review. The *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Review Screen-Out Report Instrument* was used to conduct the review. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and seven questions regarding the screened-out decisions and processes (see Table 9).

**Table 9. Summary of Item Ratings for Screen-Out Review**

	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	5	0	0	5
3. Maltreatment tab in CAPSS completed	2	3	0	5
4. Contact with necessary collaterals prior to screen-out decision	1	0	4	5
5. Another intake referral on same perpetrator and/or child within 12 months	2	3	0	5
6. Intake Supervisor ensured consultation with another supervisory-level authority	0	2	3	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 10.

Four of five were determined to be screened-out in violation of agency policy.

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

- The Maltreatment tab in CAPSS was not thoroughly completed and no explanation was provided.
- There was no documentation to indicate that a supervisor consulted with another supervisory-level individual, when appropriate, prior to making the decision to screen out.
- Information was provided demonstrating that there was a safety factor placing a child in harm, but no safety factors were indicated in the CPS assessment.
- The agency had an extensive history with the family which was not appropriately or adequately assessed and addressed.

**Table 10. Summary of Ratings for Screen-Outs Review**

Rating	Was this case screened-out according to agency policy?
<i>Strength</i>	1 (20%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	4 (80%)
Total	5 (100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>1 (20%)</b>

## SECTION IV: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES UNFOUNDED REPORTS REVIEW

Five unfounded reports were reviewed to determine whether the reports were unfounded in accordance with agency policy. 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 11):

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

**Table 11. 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	1	4	0	5
1C. Delays in investigation initiation or face-to-face contact beyond control of agency	0	1	4	5
2A. At least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report	1	4	0	5
2B. One substantiated or indicated maltreatment report within six months before or after	0	1	4	5
2C. Repeat maltreatment involving the same or similar circumstances	0	1	4	5
3A. Initial assessment of risk to the children and family in the home	4	1	0	5
3B. Initial assessment in accordance with established timeframe	4	1	0	5
3C. Ongoing assessment(s) of risk to the children and family in the home	0	5	0	5
3D. Safety concerns that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency	3	0	2	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 12.

**Table 12. Summary of Ratings for Unfounded Review**

Rating	Were cases unfounded according to agency policy?
<i>Strength</i>	0 (0%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	5 (100%)
Total	5 (100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>0 (0%)</b>

Reasons that all five unfounded cases reviewed violated agency policy include:

- The agency decided to unfound the case prior to the mother's completion of a drug screen, thereby failing to properly address risk to the children. The mother stated she had unsuccessfully attempted to contact the provider, but the agency failed to follow-up on this with the provider. The mother disclosed to the agency that she had a history of depression and suicidal ideations, and had received mental health services in the past. However, there were no medical records in the case file or noted in the documentation.
- The agency was involved with a family following the death of a two-month-old infant. The agency failed to complete ongoing assessments of the home during the six weeks that the case was opened and closed the case prior to receiving the autopsy reports detailing the death of the infant. Review of case documentation revealed that the family had extensive

history with the agency; the mother had a history of substance abuse, physical violence, and had stated that she was going to kill her children.

- The agency failed to refer a two-year-old child to BabyNet services at the time of investigation.
- The agency did not make timely contact with the children. When the agency was made aware, by the mother, of the family's new address, the agency failed to request assistance from law enforcement in the new county regarding conducting a well check. Contact was not made with all children for over a month. The mother did not complete a drug screen for over two weeks following the request. The initial and ongoing assessments were poor as well as risk and safety assessments were not thorough. The reason for agency involvement was never adequately addressed as the agency failed to complete any comprehensive assessments of the mother, children, or their father.
- A mother was known to have taken her child and relocated to another state before the agency had unfounded an open case against her. The agency was aware that the mother was going to relocate, but failed to obtain a forwarding address and therefore did not complete ongoing assessments of risk and safety. The child had disclosed that an adult family member had touched her inappropriately and a forensic interview was scheduled, but the mother and child did not show up for the appointment. The agency did not follow-up with a diligent search to obtain contact information for the mother to ensure that the child received indicated services. The case was prematurely unfounded, 19 days into the 45-day timeframe without conducting any appropriate collateral contacts.