

**Dorchester County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
July 2004**

During the weeks of July 12 thru 16, and 19 thru 23, 2004 a team of fourteen DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Dorchester County. All open foster care (80 cases) and treatment (87 cases) cases were reviewed. All 55 screened-out intakes were reviewed.

Period included in Case Record Review: Jan 1, 2004 to June 30, 2004

Period included in Outcome Measures: July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004

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 includes an analysis of information obtained from agency clients, staff and stakeholders. Client and stakeholder information was obtained by interviews. The questions posed to clients and stakeholders are designed to illicit information about the quality of the services rendered and the effectiveness of those services.

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Section One

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

Item 1 (measure from CAPSS): Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment High Risk = 0 to 2 hrs. Medium Risk = 2 to 12 hrs. Low Risk = 12 to 24 hrs.* Data Time Period: 07/1/03 to 06/30/04				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective >= 99.44%	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,247	14,168	16,156.02	(1,988.02)
Dorchester	362	303	359.97	(56.97)

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

Item 2 (measure from CAPSS): 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 Report Between Nov 1, 2002 and Oct 31, 2003				
	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	9,913	58	9,308.31	546.69
Dorchester	171	0	160.57	10.43

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	52	11	9	8
CPS Treatment	65	7	6	9

Analysis of Safety Outcome #1

Safety outcome #1 was “Not Achieved”. For this outcome to be rated “Substantially Achieved”, both measures must be rated “Strengths”. The *Recurrence of Maltreatment* measure is an “Area Needing Improvement. Outcome data indicates that *Timeliness of Initiating Investigations* is an **area needing improvement** because 303 of the 362 (84%) CPS cases were investigated within mandated timeframes. State law requires that

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investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. Of the 66 cases opened during this report's review period, the investigation was initiated according to agency policy in 59 of those cases (89.4%). It should be noted that onsite reviewers examined case records, whereas the outcome reports are based on CAPSS data.

The item *Recurrence of Maltreatment* appears to be a strength according to the outcome report because none of the 171 children with an indicated report received another indicated report during the period under review. However, onsite reviewers rated 27 of the applicable 147 cases as areas needing improvement. Reviewers found instances of abuse to children in open cases that was documented as "additional information" rather than taken as a new report. Consequently, CAPSS would not capture those occurrences of repeat maltreatment.

Section Two

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

Site Visit Findings			
Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal.			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	31	15	34
Treatment	59	20	8

Explanation of Item 3

This is an "Area Needing Improvement" for Dorchester County. This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency's interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. One third of the applicable foster care cases reviewed were rated as "Area Needing Improvement". Although Dorchester DSS consistently referred families to services that are relevant to the risk factors in the home, the barriers those families face when attempting to access those services were often not addressed by DSS caseworkers.

In treatment cases reviewers found numerous cases in which children were taken into Emergency Protective Custody (EPC) by police officers when they should have been placed with other family members. Those children were placed in foster care for 2 or 3 days, then placed with the same family members who were asking for the children at the time of the EPC. This is a systemic factor that affects this outcome because it negatively impacts the children under DSS supervision.

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	57	20	3
Treatment	57	27	3

Measure: 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 01/1/03 to 12/31/03	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective $\geq 93.90\%^*$	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	15,681	1,447	14,724.46	(490.46)
Dorchester	466	46	437.57	(17.57)

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation for “Risk of Harm” measure

This is an area needing improvement. The CAPSS report and the onsite review assess this item using different criteria. The CAPSS report uses subsequent reports of maltreatment as a measure of “risk of harm”. That is a proxy measure for “risk of harm” because subsequent reports do not necessarily mean that the children who are the subjects of those reports are at risk of harm. Those reports may or may not be substantiated after CPS assessment. The onsite reviewers determine how effective the county DSS office is at managing the risks of harm that necessitate continued involvement by DSS.

In about a third of the cases reviewed two types of situations were often not managed adequately to minimize the risk of harm to children supervised by Dorchester DSS: 1) parent’s access to children placed with relatives and 2) parents who were noncompliant or minimally compliant with treatment. In about two thirds of the cases reviewed, the risk of harm to children was appropriately managed.

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Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	54	9	14	3
CPS Treatment	52	16	16	3

Analysis of Safety Outcome #2

Safety outcome #2 was “Not Achieved” because the two related items “Services to family to protect children” and “Risk of harm” were both rated as “**Areas Needing Improvement**”. It should be noted that there is some good casework being done to ensure the safety of most of the children served by Dorchester DSS, as evidenced by 106 of the applicable 161 cases rated “Substantially Achieved” by reviewers. However, among the 30 cases rated “Not Achieved” are children at serious risk.

Section Three

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

CAPSS Measure: 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 07/1/03 to 06/30/04	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Fos Care Episode	Number of Children Objective >= 91.40%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,161	301	2,889.15	(29.15)
Dorchester	138	14	126.13	(2.13)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Dorchester County. Of the 138 children who entered care in Dorchester County during the period under review, 14 children (10%) had been returned home in the prior 12 months. Those 14 children are **Re-entries**. To meet the federal objective, no more than 12 of the 138 children could be re-entries.

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Measure: 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	3,688	2,955	3,197.50	(242.50)
Dorchester	151	131	130.92	0.08

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 6: Stability of Placement			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	62	15	3
Treatment			X

Explanation

“Stability of Foster Care Placement” is an “Area Needing Improvement”. It must be noted that the data from the agency’s information system, CAPSS, is different from the findings of the reviewers for two reasons. 1) The CAPSS report displays placement changes that have been entered into the system, and does not display reasons for those placement changes. 2) Onsite reviewers accessed CAPSS, the case record and the case worker to determine if placement changes occurred and the reason for those placement changes.

Reviewers found that one-in-five foster children experienced a disruption, or unplanned placement change during the period under review.

Measure: 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 07/03 – 06/04	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective $\geq 45.00%*$	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,584	1,886	1,612.80	273.20
Dorchester	41	11	18.45	(7.45)

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

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 7: Permanency goal for child			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	47	33	0
Treatment			X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Dorchester County. The CAPSS report and the onsite reviewers consider related, but different information to rate this item. To meet the criteria established in the CAPSS report 45.00% or more of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months must have a TPR petition filed. In Dorchester DSS 27% of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. Statewide 52% of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. As a state, DSS met this objective.

Onsite reviewers rated this item based on two criteria: 1) Is the permanency goal appropriately matched to the child’s need? and 2) Is the agency acting to cause the goal to be achieved timely? Reviewers found that 41% (33/80) of the foster care cases did not meet those criteria.

Measure: 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 07/01/03 – 06/30/04	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,110	1,760	1,607.82	152.18
Dorchester	111	106	84.58	21.42

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	39	24	17
Treatment			X

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Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Dorchester County. The CAPSS report captures how many children returned home within a year of entering care. By that reports criteria this appears to be a “Strength” for Dorchester County. Onsite reviewers evaluated children with the plan of “Return Home” (reunification) and “Placement with Relative”. Thirty percent of the cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement”. Reviewers found that this was often not the appropriate plan for the child. Reviewers found children with a plan of “Return Home” even when the whereabouts of the parents was unknown, and when the parents had a history of not complying with treatment services.

Measure: 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	299	52	95.68	(43.68)
Dorchester	1	0	0.32	(0.32)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 9: Adoption			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	2	16	62
Treatment			X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Most of the cases rated by reviewers as “Area Needing Improvement” involved children who should have had a plan of Adoption, but who had some other plan. Consequently, the number “1” representing the number of children with a finalized adoption within the past 12 months, should be a much larger number. The explanation for Item 8 above apply to this item also.

The foster parents, Guardians Ad Litem, and Foster Care Review Board representatives interviewed as part of this review all expressed their concern and frustration with the delays in the adoption process in Dorchester County. They described instances in which hearings were continued because of case workers showing up in court unprepared to present their case. They described an instance in which a review date was cancelled by

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the FCRB because no worker or supervisor was available to present any of the cases scheduled for review on that day.

Measure: 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 07/1/03 – 06/30/04	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective >= 80.00%	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,020	1,112	6,416.00	492.00
Dorchester	190	1	152.00	37.00

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Dorchester County. The CAPSS report for this criteria is not accurate. CAPSS shows 1 child in foster care with the goal of Emancipation. Onsite reviewers found 9 children (11%) with this plan. Six of those nine cases was rated a “Strength” because it was the appropriate goal for the youth in foster care and because independent living services were being delivered to prepare the youth for this goal.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	41	33	6	0
CPS Treatment				X

Analysis of Permanency Outcome #1

Permanency outcome #1 was partially achieved. Item 10, Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement, was rated a strength. The other five items were rated “Areas Needing Improvement”.

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Section Four

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

Measure: 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 07/1/03 – 06/30/04	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	5,560	3,749	67.43	3,892.00	(143.00)
Dorchester	187	132	70.59	130.90	1.10

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Dorchester DSS. To meet this objective 70% of the children (or 130 children) in care must be placed in Dorchester County. Onsite reviewers could examine “Proximity” more accurately than CAPSS because reviewers could determine if a foster child remained close to his/her family even when placed in an adjacent county. Reviewers rated **96%** of the cases as “Strength” for this item.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 12: Placement with siblings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	35	10	35
Treatment			X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Dorchester County. Reviewers found that, of the 45 foster children with a sibling in foster care, 35 children were placed with their siblings and 10 were not. In each case, the children not placed together were part of sibling groups of 4 or more children. Smaller sibling groups were placed together.

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	41	28	11
Treatment			X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Dorchester DSS. Generally, children in foster care are visiting their parents and sibling placed separately. However, the 28 cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” did not visit monthly. In those cases visits were sporadic, several weeks or months apart. Most case records did not contain a Visitation Plan. Representatives from the Dorchester County Foster Parent Association talked about foster parents’ efforts to arrange visits for the children in their care. Caseworkers usually documented the visits that they (the caseworker) arranged. Dictation did not indicate that caseworkers asked foster parents about visits arranged by foster parents.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 14: Preserving Connections			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	53	21	6
Treatment			X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Dorchester DSS. This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. Normally, when children in foster care are placed within the same county or near their family, the Preserving Connections item is a strength. The main reason Proximity is a criteria is so that children’s connections can be maintained. Reviewers rated 53 of the cases a “Strength” for this item. The 21 cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” often focused on preserving the child’s relationship with the custodial parent (usually the mother), but gave little attention to preserving the child’s relationship with the non-custodial parent (usually the father), or the child’s relationship to other significant people in the child’s life – grandparents, aunts, cousins, etc.

However, attention was given to keeping children in their same schools, whenever possible.

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 15: Relative placement			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	23	48	9
Treatment			X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Dorchester DSS. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. It was evident from the case records and interviews with caseworkers that several caseworkers did not know how to search for the relatives of children in foster care. The available tools, Child Support Enforcement and Westlaw database search, were rarely used. Relatives identified in the case record were not consistently looked for, found, or assessed.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	36	32	12
Treatment			X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Dorchester DSS. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in promoting or maintaining a strong emotionally supportive relationship between children in care and their parents. Representatives of the Foster Parents Association described their efforts to involve parents in the activities of the children in their care. Had those efforts been explored by caseworkers during home visits and documented, more of the cases reviewed would have received a rating of “Strength”.

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Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	39	32	6	3
CPS Treatment				X

Analysis

Permanency outcome #2 was Partially Achieved. One item, Proximity of foster care placement, was rated a “Strength”. The other five items were rated “Areas Needing Improvement”. The only reason Proximity is important in regard to this permanency outcome is so that the other items can be accomplished, so that children in foster care can maintain relationships with their communities and the important people in their lives. Although there is clearly effort by Dorchester caseworkers to preserve those relationships, it is not done consistently.

Section Five

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

Site Visit Findings			
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	47	33	0
CPS Treatment	39	44	4

Explanation

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? This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Dorchester DSS. Forty seven percent of the applicable cases were rated Area Needing Improvement. In those 77 cases there appeared to be a disconnect between the assessment of needs and the treatment plans. Since clients were rarely involved in the case planning process their ability to understand, access, or benefit from requirements was often not taken into consideration. Little attention was given to non-custodial parents in the assessment and treatment processes.

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	16	57	7
CPS Treatment	18	66	3

Explanation

This is an **“Area Needing Improvement”** for Dorchester DSS. Dorchester DSS caseworkers generally do not involve parents or age appropriate foster children in the case planning process. The general practice is for the caseworker to write a plan for the child and family at her desk, have the supervisor sign the plan, and file the plan in the case record. In 88% of the applicable cases reviewed, case planning was a paperwork process that had little to do with the individual needs of the clients. Reviewers found files in which there was no case plan, files in which the case plan had recently been written although the case had been open for several months, and case plans that had never been shared with the clients.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 19: Worker visits with child			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	60	19	1
CPS Treatment	32	51	4

Explanation

This is a **“Area Needing Improvement”** for Dorchester DSS. This rating is based on two questions: 1) are Dorchester DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) do the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? Onsite reviewers found that visits with children in foster care occurred according to state law in 76% of the cases. Visits with parents and children in treatment cases complied with agency policy in only 38% of the cases. During visits with parents and children caseworkers often documented serious risk factors that were observed or learned. However, no action followed those visits to address those risk factors or remove the children from the risks.

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 20: Worker visits with parents			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	19	48	13
CPS Treatment	23	60	4

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Dorchester DSS. Several cases rated as an “Area Needing Improvement” involved worker visits with the mother, but not with the father, even though the father was the perpetrator, even when the father still lived in the home. Another reason cases received this rating was because workers visited with parents in the office and at other locations, but went months without visiting the parents in the home. The main reason 72% of the applicable cases was rated Area Needing Improvement was because visits with parents did not occur.

Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	21	52	7	0
CPS Treatment	19	30	35	3

Analysis of Well Being Outcome #1

Well being outcome #1 – Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs – was Not Achieved. None of the four objectives associated with this outcome received a rating of “Strength”. To substantially achieve this outcome 148 of the 164 applicable cases (90%) would have to receive that rating. Currently, only 24% of the applicable cases are rated Substantially Achieved. Reviewers determined that frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with parents and children was not sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals.

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Section Six

Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	33	10	15	22
CPS Treatment	41	7	16	23

Measure: Educational Needs of the Child – Of all children that aged out of foster care, the percent that graduated from high school.				
	Number of Children Aged Out 07/1/03 – 06/30/04	Number Completing 12 th Grade or Higher	Number of Children Objective $\geq 90.00\%*$	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	349	107	314.10	(207.10)
Dorchester	1	0	0.90	(0.90)

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Analysis of Well Being Outcome # 2

Well being outcome # 2 – Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs – was Partially Achieved. The CAPSS-based report indicates the number of children who aged out of foster care and received a high school diploma. Since there was only one child who aged out of care, the percent could only be either 100% or 0%. However, the onsite review instrument rates this outcome on a different set of criteria: whether the educational needs of children were being assessed and addressed. This allows for the rating of the agency’s handling of all school-aged children, not just those graduating from high school. The 45 cases rated Not Applicable involved pre-school aged children.

Sixty percent (74/123) of the applicable cases were rated Substantially Achieved, 30 percentage points below the 90% needed for this outcome to be rated Substantially Achieved. Significant are the 31 cases rated Not Achieved. This means that the educational needs of those children were either not assessed, or assessed and needs identified but not attended to by the caseworkers.

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Section Seven

Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	38	19	21	2
CPS Treatment	32	19	30	5

Analysis of Well Being Outcome # 3

Well being outcome #3 – Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs – was Not Achieved. The two item evaluated for this outcome are:

- a) Physical health of the child; and
- b) Mental health of the child.

Both items were rated Areas Needing Improvement. Reviewers determined if the physical and mental health of children in the cases under review was assessed, and if identified needs were addressed. If assessment of these needs did not occur, the item was rated as Not Achieved. If assessment identified a need, but no evidence that the identified need was addressed in the treatment plan or in service delivery, the item was rated as not achieved. Partial and inconsistent attempts to address identified needs were rated Partially Achieved.

Reviewers found that the physical and mental health needs of 44% (70/160) of the children in applicable open cases were properly managed by DSS caseworkers. Significant are the 38 cases rated Partially Achieved and the 51 cases rated Not Achieved. Most of these cases involved failure to follow up on identified needs. Initial physical examinations and Mental Health assessments are done consistently by local and in-house service providers. The Mental Health worker located in the DSS building is seeing foster children with consistency. However, there is not sufficient effort to ensure that children in treatment cases with identified Mental Health needs get their needs met. Children in treatment cases who were possibly traumatized by their abuse are not consistently assessed.

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Section Eight – Screened Out Intakes

Appropriately Screened Out?	Yes	No	Cannot Determine
	32 = 58%	9 = 16%	14 = 26%

Appropriate Collaterals Contacted?	Yes	No	Not Applicable
	3 = 5%	11 = 20%	41 = 75%

Appropriate Referrals Made?	Yes	No	Not Applicable
	2 = 4%	18 = 33%	35 = 63%

Explanation

Not all calls made to DSS meet the legal definition of child abuse or neglect. Each DSS office must have an intake process that accurately determines which calls should be accepted for investigation and which should be screened out. All of the screened out intakes from Jan 1, 2004 to June 30, 2004 were reviewed to determine if the screen-out decisions were appropriate.

Analysis

This is a problem area for Dorchester DSS. Reviewers determined that 58% of the screen-out decisions were appropriate. Sixteen percent (16%) of the intakes that were screened out should have been accepted for investigation. In 26% of the intakes, reviewers found that the reason for the screen-out decision was not entered into the information system CAPSS.

It is significant that in 20% of the intakes the appropriate collateral contacts were not made. Information obtained from such contacts (schools, law enforcement, etc.) is often needed before an intake decision can appropriately be made.

It is also significant that in 33% of the intakes appropriate referrals were not made. When citizens report situations in which parents are not willfully abusing or neglecting their children, but the children's needs are not being met, referrals to other service providers should be made.

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Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	Yes	No
Investigation Initiated Timely?	6	1
Assessment Adequate?	6	1
Case Decision Appropriate?	7	

Analysis

This is a strength for Dorchester DSS. The case decision in all seven unfounded cases reviewed was appropriate. However, reviewers noted that the protective capacity of the primary caregiver was not always assessed or addressed in documentation.

Section Nine – Closed Cases

Analysis

This is a problem area for Dorchester DSS. Ten closed treatment and foster care cases were reviewed to determine if the decision to close cases was done appropriately. In 7 of the 10 cases the decision to close the case was not supported by documentation in the record. One of the ten closed cases was reopened within 5 months because of another substantiated case of abuse. Two other cases were flagged by reviewers because there was evidence that the children were still at risk.

The high percentage of inappropriate closures (70%) was because of a) the failure of the agency to consistently see the victim child, b) the failure of the agency to assess risk to the other children in the home, and c) the failure of the agency to determine if risk factors to the children were reduced prior to closing the cases.

**Dorchester County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
July 2004**

Case Rating Summary

The numbers below represent the combined totals of all open cases reviewed.
80 foster care & 87 treatment cases were reviewed. Total: 167 cases.

Performance Item or Outcome	Perf. Item Ratings			Outcome Ratings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improve - ment	N/A*	Substan- tially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	N/A*
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				117-70%	18-11%	15-9%	17-10%
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	59	7	101				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	120	27	20				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				106-63%	25-15%	30-18%	6-4%
Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	90	35	42				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)	114	47	6				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				41-51%	33-41%	6-8%	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	42	3	35				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	62	15	3				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	47	33	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	39	24	17				
Item 9: Adoption	2	16	62				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	6	3	71				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				39-49%	32-40%	6-8%	3-3%
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	69	3	8				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	35	10	35				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	41	28	11				
Item 14: Preserving connections	53	21	6				
Item 15: Relative placement	23	48	9				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	36	32	12				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				40-24%	82-49%	42-25%	3-2%
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	86	77	4				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	34	123	10				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	92	70	5				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	42	108	17				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				74-44%	17-10%	31-19%	45-27%
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	74	48	45				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				70-42%	38-23%	51-31%	7-4%
Item 22: Physical health of the child	80	79	8				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	70	56	41				