

**Berkeley County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
October 2004**

A team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Berkeley County. Open and closed foster care cases totaling 142, and open and closed treatment cases totaling 106 were reviewed. Also reviewed were screened-out intakes, foster home licensing records, and unfounded investigations.

Period included in Case Record Review: Feb 1, 2004 to July 31, 2004

Period included in Outcome Measures: August 1, 2003 to July 31, 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 Data Time Period: 08/1/03 to 07/31/04				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective >= 99.44%	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,219	14,949	16,128.17	(1,179.17)
Berkeley	739	514	734.89	(220.86)

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

Explanation of Item 1

This is an Area Needing Improvement for Berkeley DSS. State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. The outcome report above applies the 24-hour standard to all accepted reports. The agency standard allows a .66% margin of error. However, according to Berkeley DSS's data, **30% of the investigations were initiated beyond the 24-hour requirement.**

Agency policy is even more stringent – requiring that reports rated “High Risk” be investigated within 2 hours; reports rated “Medium Risk” be investigated within 12 hours; and reports rated “Low Risk” be investigated within 24 hours. Onsite reviewers, applying this more stringent standard, found that 35% of all investigations were initiated late. Reviewers noted that some of the problem was due to poor documentation and data entry rather than an actual failure to initiate investigations timely. (see Case Rating Summary, p. 21)

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 Feb 1, 2003 and Jan 31, 2004				
	Number of Child Victims	Number of Child Victims In Another Founded Rept	Number of Children Objective >= 6.10%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	9,811	62	598.47	536.47
Berkeley	493	2	30.07	28.07

Note: This is a federally established objective.

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Explanation of Item 2

This is an area needing improvement. Although the CAPSS report indicates that Berkeley DSS met the standard for this outcome ($\geq 6.10\%$), the findings of the onsite reviewers were different. Of the 240 cases reviewed, 28 (12%) were rated as an area needing improvement. Two thirds of the cases receiving this rating were foster care cases that started out as treatment cases, in which subsequent abuse resulted in the child(ren)'s removal from the home of a parent or relative.

Analysis of Safety Outcome #1 (Items 1&2)

Safety outcome #1 was "Not Achieved". For this outcome to be rated "Substantially Achieved", both measures must be rated "Strengths". However, both measures were rated Areas Needing Improvement.

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	118 (87%)	5 (4%)	13 (9%)	6
CPS Treatment	82 (78%)	20 (19%)	3 (3%)	1

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	40 (63%)	24 (37%)	78
Treatment	79 (80%)	20 (20%)	7

Explanation of Item 3

This is an "Area Needing Improvement" for Berkeley County. This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency's interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. Twenty-seven percent of the applicable cases were rated Area Needing Improvement. It is significant that over half of the applicable foster care cases received this rating. That is because reviewers found children in foster care who could have and should have been maintained in their homes with services designed to meet the needs of the children and caregivers.

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The treatment cases receiving the rating of Area Needing Improvement most often involved the failure of the agency to assess or address the needs of all of the children in the home.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	107 (77%)	32 (23%)	3
Treatment	79 (77%)	23 (23%)	4

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 02/01/03 to 01/31/04	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective <= 6.10%*	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	14,446	1,294	881.21	(412.79)
Berkeley	945	75	57.65	(17.36)

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “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.

Reviewers found that risk of harm was not adequately managed in 55 of the applicable 241 cases reviewed (23%). Most of the cases received a rating of Area Needing Improvement because of the inadequate initial investigation/assessment done. Reviewers documented cases in which a) the assessment worker did not interview the victim child until late in the case, b) case determinations were made without seeing the victim child, and c) assessments consisted of one visit with the family, case determination was done quickly and the case transferred to the treatment or foster care worker to do the bulk of the assessment.

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Analysis of Safety Outcome #2 (Items 3&4)

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 Berkeley DSS, as evidenced by the 171 of the applicable 243 cases rated “Substantially Achieved” by reviewers. However, among the 39 cases rated “Not Achieved” are families and children who could have avoided prolonged involvement with DSS had their strengths and weakness been adequately assessed and addressed during the agency’s initial intervention.

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	94 (67%)	22 (16%)	24 (17%)	2
CPS Treatment	77 (75%)	11 (10%)	15 (15%)	3

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 08/1/03 to 07/31/04	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Fos Care Episode	Number of Children Objective <= 8.60%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,153	287	271.16	(15.84)
Berkeley	143	11	12.30	1.30

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is a “Strength” for Berkeley DSS. Of the 143 children who entered care in Berkeley County during the period under review, 11 children (7.69%) had been returned home in the prior 12 months. Those 11 children are **Re-entries**. To meet the federal objective, no more than 12 of the 143 children could be re-entries. Onsite reviewers also found this to be a strength for Berkeley DSS.

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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	3,637	2,987	3153.28	(166.28)
Berkeley	170	137	147.39	(10.39)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 6: Stability of Placement			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	106 (67%)	34 (24%)	2
Treatment	X	X	X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Although both the agency’s information system, CAPSS, and onsite reviewer findings indicate that is an area needing improvement, reviewers found the problem to be greater than indicated by the CAPSS report. Reviewers found that almost one-in-four foster children experienced a disruption, or unplanned placement change during the period under review.

During interviews foster parents, GAL’s, caseworkers and supervisors all complained about the poor quality of some of the foster homes. Workers related instances in which staff refused to place children in certain foster homes – their consciences would not let them. Representatives from the foster parent association stated that there was little support for foster parents, and that there are some homes in need of immediate supervision. Specific complaints:

- a) Workers do not return telephone calls.
- b) Workers share little or no information with foster parents about the children placed in their homes.
- c) It is difficult to get Medicaid cards for children.

The president of the Foster Parent Association said that the only way they know when a new foster parent is licensed is if the new foster parent shows up at an association meeting.

These conditions contribute significantly to placement disruptions.

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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 08/03 – 07/04	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 45.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,569	1,867	1,606.05	260.95
Berkeley	176	69	79.20	(10.20)

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.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 7: Permanency goal for child			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	81 (58%)	59 (42%)	2
Treatment	X	X	X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Berkeley DSS. 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 Berkeley DSS 39% 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 42% of the foster care cases did not meet those criteria.

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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 08/01/03 – 07/31/04	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective $\geq 76.20\%*$	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,083	1,715	1,587.25	127.75
Berkeley	125	93	95.25	(2.25)

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	49 (52%)	46 (48%)	47
Treatment	X	X	X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Berkeley DSS. Here again, both the agency’s information system, CAPSS, and onsite reviewer findings indicate that is an area needing improvement. However, reviewers found the problem to be greater than indicated by the CAPSS report.

The CAPSS report captures how many children returned home within a year of entering care. Onsite reviewers evaluated children with the plan of “Return Home” (reunification) and “Placement with Relative”. Almost half of the cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement”. Cases received this rating for a host of reasons – the most common being that children had this plan for over a year without noticeable progress toward achieving it.

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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	311	55	99.52	(44.52)
Berkeley	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	18 (42%)	25 (58%)	99
Treatment	X	X	X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. At the time of this review there were 205 children in foster care in Berkeley County. During the 12-month period captured by the CAPSS report there were 340 children in foster care in Berkeley County. The fact that only 1 of those children was adopted indicates that there are serious problems.

The greatest barrier to adoptions in Berkeley County is the legal system. Probable Cause, Merit, and Permanency Planning Hearings are routinely and repeatedly continued. Supervisors and caseworkers complained that recommendations regarding their cases were not consistently supported by the agency’s legal counsel. Adoptions cannot take place under such circumstances. The continuances are frustrating the children in care, the parents of those children, the people trying to adopt those children, and the caseworkers who have to prepare for and go to court repeatedly to accomplish a task that should only involve one court appearance. This also means that the docket time is not fully utilized by the county.

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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 08/1/03 – 07/31/04	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective ≤ 15.00%	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	7,983	1,122	6,386.40	474.60
Berkeley	340	29	272.00	39.00

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	11 (48%)	12 (52%)	119
Treatment	X	X	X

Explanation

This is an Area Needing Improvement. The CAPSS report for this criteria counts the number of children with this plan and determines whether that number is 15% or less of the total foster care population. By those criteria this item appears to be a strength for Berkeley DSS. Onsite reviewers evaluated this item by answering two questions: 1) was this the correct plan for the child, and 2) was the child receiving the services needed to prepare to live independently? By those criteria over half of the applicable cases (children) were rated Area Needing Improvement.

There were two main problems: 1) foster children approaching the age of 18 with a plan of Return Home when that plan was unrealistic, and 2) foster children not receiving the assistance that they needed to prepare to live independently.

Analysis of Permancy Outcome #1 (Items 5-10)

Permanency outcome #1 was partially achieved. Item 5, Foster care re-entries, was rated a strength. The other five items were rated “Areas Needing Improvement”. In addition to the issues described under each of the items in this section, Berkeley DSS’s ability to achieve this outcome would improve if its caseworkers practiced concurrent planning; if its supervisors required their workers to practice concurrent planning.

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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	171 (70%)	33 (14%)	39 (16%)	5
CPS Treatment	X	X	X	X

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	5,943	3,991	67.15	4,160.10	(169.00)
Berkeley	340	284	83.53	238.00	46.00

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	114 (95%)	6 (5%)	22
Treatment	X	X	X

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Berkeley DSS. To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in Berkeley 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 **95%** of the cases as “Strength” for this item.

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 12: Placement with siblings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	65 (79%)	17 (21%)	51
Treatment	X	X	X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. It appears that every effort is made by caseworkers and supervisors to place sibling groups together. That is why 79% of the applicable cases were rated “Strength”. However, this item is adversely affected by the same problems described under item 6 – Stability of foster care placement. The poor management of the foster homes is causing children to experience unnecessary moves. Caseworkers have not been able to keep all sibling groups together as they move from foster home to foster home.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	70 (59%)	48 (41%)	22
Treatment	X	X	X

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Generally, children in foster care are visiting their custodial parent and siblings placed separately. However, Berkeley DSS does not do a good job of working with non-custodial parents (usually fathers) either to arrange visits, or to document why such visits are not in the child’s best interest.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 14: Preserving Connections			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	92 (67%)	45 (33%)	5
Treatment	X	X	X

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. The matter of foster children’s faith is not addressed in the case records, regardless of the child’s age. A child’s faith is not discussed with foster parents. This is left to the foster parent’s discretion.

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It is likely that foster parents do much to help the children in their care maintain relationships with people who are important to them. However, caseworkers either do not consistently ask about such matters or do not consistently document that activity.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 15: Relative placement			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	63 (47%)	71 (53%)	9
Treatment	X	X	X

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. There are plenty of examples of Berkeley DSS handling this matter well, as evidenced by the “Strength” rating given to 47% of the cases reviewed. However, like item 13 above, Berkeley DSS’s performance in this area is adversely affected by the way the agency deals with non-custodial parents (usually fathers). Paternal relatives were not consistently looked for, found, or assessed as placement options for children in care.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	57 (51%)	55 (49%)	29
Treatment	X	X	X

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. The Foster Parents interviewed 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”. Again, the relationships and rights of non-custodial fathers are not consistently attended to.

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Analysis of Permanency Outcome 2 (Items 11-16)

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 Berkeley caseworkers to preserve those relationships, it is not done consistently.

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	71 (51%)	58 (41%)	11 (8%)	2
CPS Treatment	X	X	X	X

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	76 (53%)	67 (47%)	1
CPS Treatment	76 (72%)	30 (28%)	

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 Berkeley DSS. There are several reasons for this overall rating. More foster care cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement” because the needs of foster parents were frequently ignored. Reviewers also found instances in which the therapy being given did not address the specific needs of the child. In those +cases, therapy was a perfunctory activity.

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	28 (21%)	104 (79%)	10
CPS Treatment	46 (43%)	60 (57%)	

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. Berkeley 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 69% of the applicable cases reviewed, case planning was a paperwork process that had little to do with the individual needs of the clients.

The effect of this practice is to have more parents of children under agency supervision who are not invested in treatment, and who are more likely to be deemed “non-compliant”.

Site Visit Findings			
Item 19: Worker visits with child			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	100 (71%)	40 (29%)	1
CPS Treatment	77 (73%)	29 (27%)	

Explanation

This is a “**Area Needing Improvement**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) are Berkeley DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) do the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? Most of the 40 foster care cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” were because no face-to-face visit occurred during one or more months during the period under review. Since this number is consistent with the published Exception Reports. For the month of May alone, Berkeley DSS submitted 19 exception reports for children not seen that month.

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Site Visit Findings			
Item 20: Worker visits with parents			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Foster Care	29 (26%)	82 (74%)	31
CPS Treatment	72 (69%)	33 (31%)	1

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for both foster care and treatment cases. However, the failure to visit and engage parents of children in foster care is far more prevalent than with parents involved in treatment cases. The 31 cases rated “Not Applicable” are absent parents, parents whose rights have been terminated, or parents the agency has been relieved of serving by the court. That means that Berkeley DSS is failing to engage the parents in the 82 foster care cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” in some way. Non-custodial fathers are most likely to be ignored. This impacts all permanency planning issues – the search for paternal relatives, reaching agreements at Merit Hearings, TPR attempts, etc.

Analysis of Well Being Outcome #1 (Items 17-20)

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”. For every treatment case, and for every child in foster care with a plan of “Return Home”, the reason for DSS’s involvement is to enhance the family’s capacity to provide for their children’s needs. Berkeley DSS failed to substantially accomplish this in 63% of the cases reviewed.

It should be noted that no case was rated Partially or Not Achieved because of a parent’s non or minimal compliance. This outcome focuses on the agency’s efforts to engage children and parents in corrective actions, and assess their progress.

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	36 (25%)	85 (60%)	21 (15%)	0
CPS Treatment	56 (53%)	38 (36%)	12 (11%)	0

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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	67 (66%)	25 (24%)	10 (10%)	40
CPS Treatment	60 (76%)	10 (13%)	9 (11%)	27

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 08/1/03 – 07/31/04	Number Completing 12 th Grade or Higher	Number of Children Objective $\geq 90.00\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	351	113	315.90	(202.90)
Berkeley	9	4	8.10	(4.10)

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 shows that 4 of the 9 children who aged out of foster care during the period under review graduated from high school. That number fell short of the agency-established 90% standard.

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 aging out of foster care. The 67 cases rated Not Applicable involved pre-school aged children.

Reviewers found that the educational needs of 70% of the children involved in both foster care and treatment cases was adequately assessed and addressed. Cases were rated Partially or Not Achieved for a variety of reasons. One involved a foster mother who would not allow the foster child to attend summer school because it inconvenienced the foster mother. Other cases involved children with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) from past years, but no current IEP, and no explanation. Some cases simply did not mention the child’s school performance and contained no school records.

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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	84 (60%)	27 (20%)	27 (20%)	4
CPS Treatment	61 (60%)	20 (20%)	20 (20%)	5

Analysis of Well Being Outcome # 3 (Items 22&23)

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 there was 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.

Most of these cases rated “Not Achieved” in Berkeley DSS involved failure to follow up on identified needs. Caseworkers usually got children to mental health and medical professionals for assessments. It is possible that foster parents are attending to the mental health and medical needs of the children in their care. But caseworkers are not consistently monitoring or documenting those activities.

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Section Eight – Screened Out Intakes

Appropriately Screened Out?	Yes	No	Cannot Determine
	12	2	1

Appropriate Collaterals Contacted?	Yes	No	Not Applicable
	3	1	11

Appropriate Referrals Made?	Yes	No	Not Applicable
	4	2	9

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. Fifteen screened out intakes were reviewed.

Analysis

This is an Area Needing Improvement.

Most (80%) of the screened out intakes were appropriate. The two intakes screened out inappropriately involved mental illness, domestic violence and small children in the home.

Intake and assessment staff may need training on how this particular combination of factors creates high risk for infants and small children.

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Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	Yes	No
Investigation Initiated Timely?	11	4
Assessment Adequate?	6	9
Case Decision Appropriate?	10	5

Analysis

This is an Area Needing Improvement.

1. Some investigations were not initiated within 48 hours. Risk levels assigned to cases was inappropriate in some cases, allowing worker 24 hours to respond when they should have seen victim child within 2 or 12 hours.
2. Assessments were judged inadequate in 9 of the 15 cases reviewed. Workers not interviewing children until late in the case. Case determinations made without seeing victim child.
3. Decision to unfound case deemed inappropriate in 5 of the 15 cases reviewed, mainly because of the poor assessments upon which the decision was based.

Section Nine – Foster Home Licensing Records

Foster Home Licensing Areas of Concern:

1. 20 of 100 open case records reviewed. In 8 of those 20 (40%) cases the licenses were invalid because required tasks on the checklist did not occur.
2. Foster parent spouse not on license and not assessed.
3. Children placed without regard for what home is licensed for – noncompliance with age, sex, number of children specifications.
4. New licensing regulations not understood – what is done annually vs. what is done every two years.
5. There were minor to major problems with all 20 licenses reviewed.
6. Caseworkers and supervisors complained of licensed foster homes that are unsuitable. Their consciences will not allow them to place children in those homes.
7. Licensing staff carry foster care caseloads. They do not have sufficient time to attend to licensing requirements.

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Case Rating Summary

The numbers below represent the combined totals of open and closed cases reviewed.
142 foster care & 106 treatment cases were reviewed. Total: 248 cases.

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.				200-83%	25-10%	16-7%	7
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	60-65%	33-35%	155				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	212-88%	28-12%	8				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				171-70%	33-14%	39-16%	5
Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	119-73%	44-27%	85				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)	186-77%	55-23%	7				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				59-42%	72-51%	10-7%	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	57-98%	1-2%	84				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	106-76%	34-24%	2				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	81-58%	59-42%	2				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	49-52%	46-48%	47				
Item 9: Adoption	18-42%	25-58%	99				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	11-48%	12-52%	119				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				71-51%	58-41%	11-8%	2
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	114-95%	6-5%	22				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	65-79%	17-21%	51				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	70-59%	48-41%	22				
Item 14: Preserving connections	92-67%	45-33%	5				
Item 15: Relative placement	63-47%	71-53%	9				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	57-51%	55-49%	29				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				92-37%	123-50%	33-13%	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	152-61%	97-39%	1				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	74-31%	164-69%	10				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	177-72%	69-28%	1				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	101-47%	115-53%	32				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				127-70%	35-19%	19-11%	67
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	127-70%	54-30%	67				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				145-60%	47-20%	47-20%	9
Item 22: Physical health of the child	168-71%	68-29%	12				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	111-63%	64-37%	73				

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