

# **Kershaw County DSS Child Welfare Services Review August 2005**

During the week of Aug 29, 2005 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Kershaw County. A sample of open and closed foster care and treatment cases were reviewed. Also reviewed were screened-out intakes, foster home licensing records, and unfounded investigations. Stakeholders interviewed for this review included foster parents, Kershaw DSS supervisors, and representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem.

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

**Period included in Outcome Measures: August 1, 2004 to July 31, 2005**

## **Purpose**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources**

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

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

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

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Section One

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding: Substantially Achieved**

-Safety Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations. **Finding: Strength**

-Safety Item 2: Repeat maltreatment. **Finding: Strength**

Analysis of Safety Item 1 Findings

<b><u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u></b>				
<b>Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations</b> on reports of child maltreatment				
Data Time Period: 08/1/04 to 7/31/05				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective >= 99.99%*	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,403	15,790	16,401	(611.36)
Kershaw	274	273	273.97	(0.97)

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

<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Safety Item 1 : Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	100	0	0	6	0
Treatment	2	100	0	0	8	0
Total Cases	6	100	0	0	14	0

**Explanation of Item 1**

This is a “Strength” for Kershaw DSS. State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. Kershaw DSS initiated investigations timely in 273 of its 274 accepted intakes. All cases reviewed onsite were rated “Strength”.

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Analysis of Safety Item 2 Findings

**Strategic Outcome Report Findings**

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

Indicated Report Between Feb 1, 2004 and Jan 31, 2005

	Number of Child Victims	Number of Child Victims In Another Founded Rept	Number of Children Objective <= 93.90%	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	9,713	60	9,120.51	532.49
Kershaw	123	0	115.50	7.50

Note: This is a federally established objective.

**Site Visit Findings** Performance Item Ratings

**Safety Item 2 : Repeat Maltreatment.**

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	19	95	1	5	0	0

**Explanation of Item 2**

**This is a “Strength” for Kershaw DSS.** According to CAPSS data none of the 123 cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review was a victim in a previously founded report. Nineteen of the 20 cases reviewed were rated strength. The one case rated “Area Needing Improvement” involved a mother of several children with a long history of drug addiction prompting 7 reports to DSS over a 6 year period before the children were taken into custody. Stakeholders did not view repeat maltreatment as a problem for the clients of Kershaw DSS.

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Section Two

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

**Summary of Findings**                      **Overall Finding: Substantially Achieved**  
 -Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal.      **Finding: Strength**  
 -Safety Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren).      **Finding: Strength**

Analysis of Safety Item 3 Findings

<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Safety Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal.</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	80	1	20	5	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

**Item 3**

**This is a “Strength” for Kershaw DSS.** This item assesses the appropriateness of the services selected to prevent the removal of children from their family. Reviewers rated 13 of the applicable 15 cases “strength” for this item. In the cases reviewed, when DSS decided to removed children from their home, that decision was supported by the facts of the case. When DSS decided to leave children in their home after finding that abuse or neglect had occurred, the services selected to protect those children were usually, but not always, appropriate.

The two cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” involved families with a long history of drug addiction and DSS interventions. Those case histories indicated that the services had not remedied the problems before, and would not likely remedy the problems in the current case.

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Analysis of Safety Item 4 Findings

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Safety Item 4: Risk of harm.</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	100	0	0	1	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	17	89	2	11	1	0

<b>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</b>				
Measure S2.2: <b>Risk of harm to child</b> – 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 02/01/04 to 01/31/05	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective $\geq 91.50\%*$	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	14,105	1,132	12,906.08	66.92
Kershaw	210	25	192.15	(7.15)

\* This is a DSS established objective.

**Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure**

**This is an “Strength” for Kershaw DSS.** The standard for the outcome report in CAPSS is that no more than 8.5% of alleged child victims have another report within 6 months of the initial report. According to CAPSS 25 of the 210 (12%) child victims were reported again to DSS within 6 months of an unfounded determination. It must be understood that “Subsequent reports of abuse” is a proxy measure for “Risk of harm” because additional, unsubstantiated reports of abuse do not conclusively mean that risk has or has not been reduced.

Onsite reviewers are able to assess what CAPSS cannot. Onsite reviewers determine how effective the county DSS office is at managing the risks of harm that necessitate continued involvement by DSS. By this criterion, only 2 of the applicable 19 cases reviewed were rated “Area Needing Improvement”. Even though this statistically warrants a “Strength” rating, reviewers observed that foster care cases involving drug addicted parents were reported to DSS numerous times before children were taken into

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Emergency Protective Custody (EPC). Reviewers also observed that reports continued to come in on open treatment cases involving drug addicted parents.

Section Three

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding:**

- Item 5: Foster care re-entries
- Item 6: Stability of foster care placemt.
- Item 7: Permanency goal for child
- Item 8: Reunification, plmt w/ relatives
- Item 9: Adoption
- Item 10: Perm goal of other planned arrangmt

**Partially Achieved**

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

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 5 Findings

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

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**Strategic Outcome Report Findings**

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

	Number Children Entering Care 08/01/04 to 07/31/05	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Foster Care Episode	Number of Children Objective $\geq 91.40\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,153	248	2,881.84	23.16
Kershaw	47	8	42.96	(3.96)

\* This is a federally established objective.

**Explanation**

**Foster Care Re-entries is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Kershaw DSS.**

According to CAPSS, 8 of the 47 children (17%) who entered foster care in Kershaw County during the period under review had been returned home in the prior 12 months. Although half of the cases reviewed were rated “Not Applicable” because they entered care beyond the period under review, reviewers observed that children were re-entering foster care from relative placements. Sibling groups with challenging issues (mental retardation, behavioral problems) were placed with relatives who did not always have the financial or other supports needed to care for those children. Stakeholders complained that “DSS will put children with relatives without checking on the relative.”

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 6 Findings

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

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**Strategic Outcome Report Findings**

Measure P3.2: **Stability of Foster Care Placement** – Of all children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, the percent that had not more than 2 placement settings.

	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number of Children With No More Than 2 Placements	Number of Children Objective $\geq 86.70\%*$	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,660	2,956	3,173.22	(217.22)
Kershaw	50	39	43.35	(4.65)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

**Explanation**

**Stability of foster care placement is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** The outcome report shows that 39 of the 50 children (78%) in care less than 12 months had no more than 2 foster care placements. This falls short of the standard of 86.7%. The placement changes occurred with teenaged foster children. Kershaw DSS generally placed older foster children out-of-county in children’s homes. Those children then exhibited behavioral problems associated with being separated from their families and communities. Those behavioral problems caused those children to be moved. Kershaw DSS did not have sufficient foster homes willing to care for older children.



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Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 7 Findings

<b><u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u></b>				
Measure P3.5: <b>Permanency Goal for Child</b> – 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 08/04 –07/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,550	1,633	1,881.50	(248.50)
Kershaw	25	13	13.25	(0.25)

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

<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 7:</b> Permanency goal for children.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0

**Explanation of Item 7**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Kershaw DSS.** To meet the criteria established in the CAPSS report 53.00% or more of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months must have a TPR petition filed. For Kershaw DSS the percentage is 52 (13/25). If DSS does not pursue TPR for a child in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months, there should be compelling reason for not doing so.

Stakeholders were unanimous in attributing the weakness in permanency planning to Kershaw DSS’ propensity for moving children out of foster care into inappropriate relative placements.

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Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 8 Findings

<b><u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u></b>				
Measure P3.3: <b>Length of Time to Achieve Reunification</b> – 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 08/01/04–07/31/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,033	1,689	1,549.15	139.85
Kershaw	28	27	21.34	5.66

\* This is a federally established objective.

<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 8:</b> Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	75	1	25	6	0

**Explanation**

**This is a “Strength” for Kershaw DSS.** To meet this federally establish criteria at least 76.20% of the children returned to their parents from foster care must be returned within 12 months of their removal from home. In Kershaw County 96% of the children returned home within a year of removal. Stakeholders acknowledge that children entering foster care are quickly returned home. However, some of those children are returned to homes where the risks were not reduced and have to re-enter foster care.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 9 Findings

<b><u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u></b>				
Measure P3.4: <b>Length of Time to Achieve Adoption</b> – 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	348	65	111.36	(46.36)
Kershaw	2	0	.64	(0.64)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 9: Adoption.</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	67	1	33	7	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** To meet this federally established objective 32% of the adoptions in a county must be completed within 24 months of the children entering care. The outcome report shows that neither of the 2 adoptions completed during the 12-month period under review were completed within 24 months of the children entering care.

Pre-teen and teenaged children are placed out-of-county in group homes where adoption is not an option for them. If those children are not placed in foster homes where they can form relationships with foster parents, they will not be adopted. Consequently, when the children (living in group homes) are assessed by the Adoptions unit the children tell the workers that they do not want to be adopted.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 10 Findings

<b><u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u></b>				
Measure P3.6: <b>Permanency Goal of “Other Planned Living Arrangement”</b> – 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 05/01/04 – 04/30/05	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective >= 85.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,041	1,045	6,834.85	161.15
Kershaw	68	7	57.80	3.20

\* This is a DSS established objective.

<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 10:</b> Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	50	1	50	8	0

**Explanation-\***

**This is a “Strength” for Kershaw DSS.** The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan. Approximately 10% (7/68) of the children in Kershaw DSS custody have this plan. Both cases managed by Managed Treatment Services (MTS) had this case plan. Stakeholders said that MTS did “an excellent job” of working with children with this plan.

It should be noted that the MTS cases show that there is confusion regarding this permanency planning language. MTS Total Service Plans (TSP) and court orders showed case plans of Independent Living. However, Independent Living is not a case plan. It is a set of services. The case plan is Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA).

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Section Four

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding:**

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

**Not Achieved**

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

Analysis of Permanency Item 11 Findings

**Strategic Outcome Report Findings**

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

	Number of Children In Care 08/01/04 – 07/30/05	Number of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Percent of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Number of Children Objective >= 70.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	5,873	3,801	64.72	4,111.10	(310.10)
Kershaw	68	42	61.76	47.60	(5.60)

\* This is a DSS established objective.

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<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	88	1	12	2	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Kershaw DSS.** To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in Kershaw County. The outcome report indicates that 62% (42/68) of the children in care were placed in the county. Almost every child over age 12 is placed out of county.

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 12: Placement with siblings</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	43	4	57	3	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** Stakeholders and onsite reviewers observed the same thing – sibling groups were separated more often than kept together. Kershaw DSS did not have enough foster homes willing or able to accept sibling groups.

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<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 13:</b> Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	50	4	50	2	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** The rating for this item was affected by two factors, a) the number of children placed out-of-county, and b) the number of sibling groups separated by placement. If children in those circumstances managed to visit one another it was due to their own efforts or the efforts of the group home staff. Kershaw DSS generally did not attend to this need.

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 14:</b> Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	57	3	43	3	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. The cases managed by MTS and the Adoption units were rated “Strength”. The cases managed by county Kershaw DSS staff were rated “Area Needing Improvement”.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 15: Relative placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. Eighty percent of the cases reviewed were rated “Strength” because Kershaw DSS consistently did a good job of identifying and finding the relatives of children in foster care. However, the assessments of those relatives should have determined if they were both willing and able to care for the children. In some cases there was not enough assessment of the relative’s ability to care for the children.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	29	5	71	3	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in promoting or maintaining a strong emotionally supportive relationship between children in care and their parents. This was a particularly weak area for Kershaw DSS. The agency focused on the policy mandated twice-a-month visits within the DSS office. If, because of a child’s young age or because of relationship problems, more than the minimum was needed, it was not provided. Reviewers saw records with parent letters to the worker requesting visits with their child. Children placed out of county contributed to this problem.



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Section Five

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding:**

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

**Partially Achieved**

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

**Site Visit Findings**      Performance Item Ratings

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

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	70	3	30	0	0
Treatment	7	70	3	30	0	0
Total Cases	14	70	6	30	0	0

**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 Kershaw DSS. The 14 cases rated **“Strength”** indicates that the appropriate parties are thoroughly assessed in most cases. The 6 cases rated **“Area Needing Improvement”** generally involved an inadequate response by the agency to identified needs. The need for financial assistance for relatives given custody of children was sometimes ignored.

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

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. There was clear evidence of child and family involvement in case planning in foster care cases managed by MTS and Adoptions. However, there was no evidence of family involvement in case planning in foster care cases managed by county DSS staff. Stakeholders said that case plans are sometimes mailed to the parents. Generally, parents are told what they must do. They are not asked for their input. Treatment cases are more likely to have parental involvement. However, non-custodial parents (fathers) are usually ignored, even when they are involved in the child’s life. One parent said that her worker didn’t go over the treatment plan with her until two weeks before the hearing(foster care case/permanency planning hearing).

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Well Being Item 19: Worker visits with child</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	18	90	2	10	0	0

**Explanation**

This is a “**Strength**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) were Kershaw DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) did the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? When a face-to-face visit was missed with a child in foster care it was because the child had runaway from his/her placement. Staff managing treatment cases showed diligent effort to see all of the children in the family every month. Monthly face-to-face contact with children in foster care was well documented and focused on permanency planning or well-being issues.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Well Being Item 20:</b> Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	29	5	71	3	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	11	65	5	35	3	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Kershaw DSS. Workers managing CPS treatment cases maintained consistent contact with the parents of the children. Face-to-face visits were well documented. Foster care cases managed by MTS and Adoptions units were either rated “Strength” or “Not Applicable”. All but one of the foster care cases managed by county foster care staff was rated “Area Needing Improvement.” This pinpoints the problem. Worker face-to-face visits with the parents of children in foster care was sporadic. In some cases those visits only occurred when initiated by the parent.

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Section Six

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding:**

**Partially Achieved**

<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	83	1	17	4	0
Treatment	5	63	3	37	2	0
Total Cases	10	71	4	29	6	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Kershaw DSS. This item asks two questions: 1) Did DSS assess the educational needs of the children under their supervision, and 2) Were identified educational needs addressed? Educational issues were assessed in every case reviewed. In most cases (71%), the agency adequately followed up on any identified educational issues. However, four of the cases reviewed showed some deficiencies. In treatment cases, the educational issues of the child initially reported to the agency were addressed, but in some cases, the educational issues of the other children in the home were not assessed. In general, the cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” identified educational issues in the assessment process, but did not document attempts by the agency to determine if the school was addressing those issues (examples: no direct contact with the school, no copies of IEP’s, etc.).

Stakeholders were unanimous in praising the agency’s attention to educational issues. School officials said that they work with foster parents around the educational issues of the children in their care. In those instances the foster parents act as agents of DSS. However, if the efforts of those foster parents was not documented in the DSS case record, they could not contribute to the rating of this item.

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Section Seven

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding:**

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

**Not Achieved**

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

**Site Visit Findings**      Performance Item Ratings

**Well Being Item 22:** Physical health of the child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0
Treatment	5	50	5	50	0	0
Total Cases	13	65	7	35	0	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Kershaw DSS. The problem here was lack of documentation. Half of the treatment files contained no medical information on the children, even when the circumstances of the case warranted close monitoring of the children’s physical health (example: children with seizures, ADHD, etc.). Although not as prevalent, lack of documentation was also a problem with the foster care cases.

Reviewers could not determine if the work was done and not documented, or if the work was not done.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 23: Mental health of the child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	88	1	12	2	0
Treatment	2	22	7	78	1	0
Total Cases	9	53	8	47	3	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Kershaw DSS. It was evident that the mental health needs of children in foster care were consistently attended to, but not the mental health needs of children in treatment cases. This was a particular concern for reviewers because many of the treatment cases involved children who were exposed to domestic violence and were placed with relatives. In some instances caseworkers documented the behavior problems of those children, but did not document a mental health assessment, or a referral for an assessment

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**Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses**

**This is an area needing improvement.** Licensing records were well maintained.

1. All foster home licenses were current and were renewed on time.
2. Quarterly visits were conducted according to policy and documented in CAPSS.
3. Inspections and background checks completed according to policy.
4. No unlicensed homes identified.

However, Kershaw DSS had only 25 foster homes to serve its 44 children and very few of those homes accept older children or sibling groups.

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Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

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

**This is a “Strength” for Kershaw DSS.** Assessments were thorough. Schools, medical professionals and other appropriate collaterals were contacted as part of the assessments. The decisions to unfound the reviewed investigations were supported by the available evidence.

NOTE: Two of the 5 cases reviewed had initial face-to-face times dated prior to the intake time. Conversation with the supervisor and assessment worker revealed how this data entry error happens. When intakes are taken after hours and on weekends the intake and assessment information is entered in CAPSS the next business day. The worker entering that data enters the date and time of the intake as well as the date and time of the initial f:f at the same time.

Section Ten – Screened Out Intakes

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Cannot Determine</b>
Was Intake Appropriately Screened Out?	10	0	0
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Were Necessary Collaterals Contacted?	1	0	9
Were Appropriate Referrals Made?	2	0	8

**Explanation:** Not all calls to the Dept. of Social Services alleging abuse or neglect meet the legal definition of abuse or neglect. Those calls are screened out, and not investigated. The table above contains the findings of a reviewer who examined 10 screened out intakes.

**This is a strong area for Kershaw DSS.** It was evident that case histories in CAPSS were used to help make decisions to accept or screen out reports at intake. All screen-out decisions were appropriate based the available information and the application of agency policy

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**Case Rating Summary**

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

Performance Item or Outcome	Perf. Item Ratings			Outcome Ratings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	N/A*	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	N/A*
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0	0
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	6 (100%)	0	14				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				16 (80%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	5				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	17 (89%)	2 (11%)	1				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	5 (100%)	0	5				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	6				
Item 9: Adoption	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	7				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	8				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				5 (50%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	2				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	3				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	2				
Item 14: Preserving connections	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	3				
Item 15: Relative placement	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	3				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				13 (65%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	14 (70%)	6 (30%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	2				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	13 (76%)	4 (24%)	3				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				10 (71%)	4 (29%)	0	6
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	6				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				10 (50%)	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	0
Item 22: Physical health of the child	13 (65%)	7 (35%)	0				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	9 (53%)	8 (47%)	3				