

**Allendale County DSS  
Child Welfare Services Review  
February 2006**

During the week of February 13-17, 2006 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Allendale 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, Allendale DSS supervisors, and representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem.

**Period included in Case Record Review: August 1, 2005 to January 31, 2006**

**Period included in Outcome Measures: February 1, 2005 to January 31, 2006**

**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: Partially Achieved**

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

-Safety Item 2: Repeat maltreatment.

**Finding: Area Needing Improvement**

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: 11/1/04 to 10/31/05				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective >= 99.99%*	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,334	15,698	16,332.37	-634.37
Allendale	24	24	24.00	0.00

\* 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 :</b> Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	100	0	0	9	0
Treatment	4	100	0	0	6	0
Total Cases	5	100	0	0	15	0

**Explanation of Item 1**

**This is a “Strength” for Allendale DSS.** State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. All 24 investigations conducted by Allendale DSS over the past 12 months initiated according to state law and agency policy. Reviewers also looked at intakes rated High and Medium risk which required response times of 2 hours and 12 hours, respectively. All of those investigations were initiated timely.

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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 Reports Between May 1, 2004 and April 30, 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	10,011	98	9,400.33	512.67
Allendale	31	0	29.11	1.89

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	8	80	2	20	0	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	16	80	4	20	0	0

**Explanation of Item 2**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Allendale DSS.** CAPSS data and onsite review findings differ for this item. According to CAPSS data none of the 31 cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review was a victim in a previously founded report within the past 12 months. There was no evidence of repeat maltreatment in 80% of the cases reviewed. However, 2 of the foster care and 2 of the treatment cases reviewed had extensive histories with DSS involving 5 to 9 agency interventions each. The histories of those cases indicated that a) prior agency interventions created only short term improvements in the functioning of those families, and that b) maltreatment was reoccurring and would likely continue to occur.

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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: Not Achieved**

-Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal. **Finding: Area Needing Improvement**  
 -Safety Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren). **Finding: Area Needing Improvement**

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	1	33	2	67	7	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	9	69	4	31	7	0

**Item 3**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Allendale DSS.** Allendale DSS caseworkers routinely participate in interagency staffings to coordinate services for the families they serve. However, protective efforts in treatment cases sometimes focused on the victim child without addressing risks to the other children in the home. Even though reviewers saw descriptions in case records of parents who were likely intellectually limited or psychologically impaired, the agency failed to obtain psychological evaluations that might determine ability to parent or ability to benefit from interventions like “Parenting Class”.

Stakeholder comments:

“There is a lot we’re lacking here. Intervention cases that go to court, DSS takes too long with the family. After 12 months, that should be long enough. DSS should not wait so long to bring the case to court; parents shouldn’t be given so long. Going to court sometimes enough to bring people around sometimes.”

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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	8	80	2	20	0	0
Treatment	3	30	7	70	0	0
Total Cases	11	55	9	45	0	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 08/01/04 to 07/31/05	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	13,359	1,119	12,223.49	(16.51)
Allendale	5	0	4.58	0.43

\* This is a DSS established objective.

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

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Allendale DSS.** 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, the risk of harm to the children in 7 of the 10 treatment cases reviewed was not reduced as a result of the agency’s intervention.

Stakeholder comment:

“Follow through on treatment plans needs to be tighter. Parents have chance after chance after chance. Closer monitoring of cases is needed – they don’t want to take the kids out of the home and go beyond what they need to do. They give parents too many chances. Kids are either in their parent’s homes or with relatives.”

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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

**Substantially Achieved**

- Finding: Strength**
- Finding: Strength**
- Finding: Strength**
- 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	4	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 11/01/04 to 10/30/05	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	3,255	242	2,975.07	37.93
Allendale	22	2	20.11	(0.11)

\* This is a federally established objective.

**Explanation**

**Foster Care Re-entries is a “Strength” for Allendale DSS.** According to CAPSS, 2 of the 22 children (9%) who entered foster care in Allendale County during the period under review had been returned home in the prior 12 months. Technically, Allendale DSS did not meet the federal standard for foster care re-entries. However, the numbers are so small that they are not statistically significant. Onsite reviewers found that children did not generally re-enter foster care within 12 months of returning home. Most re-entries were of children who were returned to their families 18 months ago or longer.

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Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 6 Findings

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 6:</b> Stability of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0

<b>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</b>				
Measure P3.2: <b>Stability of Foster Care Placement</b> – 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	3,736	3,024	3,239.11	(215.11)
Allendale	25	23	21.68	1.33

Note: This is a federally established objective.

**Explanation**

**Stability of foster care placement is an “Strength”.** The outcome report shows that 23 of the 25 children (92%) in care less than 12 months had no more than 2 foster care placements. This exceeds the standard of 86.7%. Onsite reviewers found that foster care placements were stable. Children with more than two moves within a 12 month period had psychological or behavioral disorders and were managed by MTS.



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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 02/05 –01/06	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,601	1,662	1,908.53	(246.53)
Allendale	11	3	5.83	(2.83)

\* 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	9	100	0	0	1	0

**Explanation of Item 7**

**This is a “Strength” for Allendale 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 Allendale DSS the percentage is 27.2 (3/11). 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.

Onsite reviewers rated this item based on two criteria: 1) Was the permanency goal appropriately matched to the child’s need? and 2) Was the agency acting to cause the goal to be achieved timely? Staff of Allendale DSS had no problem determining the appropriate goal for the foster children in their care. Most of the children in foster care eventually return home to their parents or relatives. Those who do not return home receive excellent independent living services. The outcome data shows that TPR complaints were not filed on as many children as appropriate. That deficiency affects the rating for Item 9, more than this item.

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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 02/01/05–01/31/06	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,012	1,691	1,533.14	157.86
Allendale	8	8	6.10	1.90

\* 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	4	100	0	0	6	0

**Explanation**

**This is a “Strength” for Allendale 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 Allendale County all of the children returned home in the past year had been in care less than a year. In addition to good casework, this was made possible by the level of communication and cooperation among agency service providers in the county. Almost all stakeholders talked about the level of coordination achieved by regular interagency staffings on cases.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 9 Findings

**Strategic Outcome Report Findings**

Measure P3.4: **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	365	53	116.80	(63.80)
Allendale	0	0	0.00	0.00

Note: This is a federally established objective.

**Site Visit Findings** Performance Item Ratings

**Permanency Item 9: Adoption.**

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	0	0	2	100	8	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** The outcome report shows that no adoptions were completed within the past 12 months. Other internal reports show that no TPRs were completed within the past two years. The table in Item 7 shows that TPR petitions were not filed for the cases that should have had petitions. The two cases reviewed with a plan of adoption typified the problem. The case histories in both cases were such that TPR/Adoption should have been at least the concurrent plan from the beginning. The agency spent too much time trying to rehabilitate parents with histories that should have indicated that the prognosis for parenting the children was poor.

Significantly, reviewers found children in CPS treatment cases that should have been in foster care with concurrent plans of adoption.

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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 02/01/05 – 01/31/06	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	8,105	1,067	6,889.25	148.75
Allendale	33	2	28.05	2.95

\* 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	3	100	0	0	7	0

**Explanation-\***

**This is a “Strength” for Allendale DSS.** The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan (APPLA – Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement). Approximately 6% of the children in Allendale DSS custody have this plan. Allendale DSS excelled in this area. Two of the 3 youth reviewed with the plan of APPLA were in college – one in his senior year of a four-year college, the other in a technical college. The third youth was employed and working on his GED.

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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

**Partially Achieved**

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Findings: Strength**
- 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 02/01/05 – 01/31/06	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	6,022	3,891	64.61	4,215.40	(324.40)
Allendale	33	5	15.15	23.10	(18.10)

\* 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	78	2	22	1	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Allendale DSS.** To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in Allendale County. The outcome report indicates that 15% (5/33) of the children in care were placed in the county. At the time of the onsite review the county had only 6 foster homes. Three of those six homes were closed soon afterward because they failed to meet the requirements to maintain their licenses. Of the remaining 3 homes one was licensed to keep a relative. So, Allendale DSS effectively only had 2 available foster homes to serve the 33 children in care. The result is that most of Allendale’s children are placed out of county and away from their families.

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 12: Placement with siblings</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	50	2	50	6	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** It was apparent that the agency attempted to place siblings together when resources and circumstances made that possible. The siblings that were placed together were placed in group homes. The siblings that were placed apart were placed in foster homes in other counties. Allendale DSS does not have enough foster homes to keep children together and keep them within the county.

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<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	86	1	14	3	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** The cases rated Area Needing Improvement involved a teen in therapeutic placement, being managed by MTS. This youth’s father expressed interest in establishing a relationship with his son, but there is no documented evidence that the agency provided this father with the information or opportunity to make it happen.

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	88	1	12	2	0

**Explanation**

**This is a “Strength”.** This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. Seven of the applicable 8 cases reviewed were rated “Strength” for this item. Those seven children were placed either within the county or in adjacent Beaufort County and were able to maintain their relationships with the people and places that were important to them. The 1 case rated “Area Needing Improvement” involved a youth managed by MTS who has adult siblings and a grandfather in Georgia. Though the youth expressed a desire to maintain contact with those family members, the agency has not helped him do so.

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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	5	56	4	44	1	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. In 56% of the cases reviewed there was evidence that both maternal and paternal relatives were assessed as placement options for the children in foster care. In 4 of the applicable 9 cases reviewed there was no evidence that paternal relatives were assessed. Stakeholders stated that “relative placement takes precedent over foster care” in Allendale DSS. It is likely that the problem is a failure to document those assessments of relatives, rather than a failure to assess relatives.

<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	6	86	1	14	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. Six of the applicable 7 cases were rated “Strength” because in those cases provisions were made for parents to be involved in their children’s lives beyond the minimum visitation required by policy. One case was rated “Area Needing Improvement” because the agency failed to support the child’s non-custodial father’s attempts to maintain his relationship with his son.



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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)

**Not Achieved**

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- 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	30	3	30	0	0
Treatment	2	20	8	80	0	0
Total Cases	9	45	11	55	0	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Allendale DSS. 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? Assessments of CPS treatment cases were significantly weaker than those of foster care cases for three reasons.

1. Workers did not assess the protective capacity of the single mothers with whom DSS had intervened multiple times over several years. Consequently, the proscribed treatment activities did little or nothing to improve the mother's ability to protect and care for her children.
2. Fathers were generally ignored, even when the agency knew how to contact the fathers.
3. Assessments sometimes focused on the victim child, with very little attention given to the other children in the home who often had conditions that contributed to the family's dysfunction.

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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	7	70	3	30	0	0
Treatment	4	40	6	60	0	0
Total Cases	11	55	9	45	0	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. Workers were more likely to involve children and parents in foster care cases in case planning than children and parents in treatment cases. However, performance was inconsistent. Some records contained copies of letters mailed to non-custodial fathers, inviting and encouraging them to participate in planning for their children. Other records showed no indication that fathers were contacted or considered. Workers were more likely to involve age-appropriate children in foster care in case planning than children in treatment cases.

<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	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	6	60	4	40	0	0
Total Cases	16	80	4	20	0	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) were Allendale DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) did the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? All of the foster care cases rated “Strength” because all children were seen monthly and the focus of those visits were on treatment-related issues. Only 6 of the 10 treatment cases were rated “Strength”. Several treatment cases involved large sibling groups – five or more children. In the 4 treatment cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” visits were sporadic. In one treatment case the child was not seen for 4 months.

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<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Well Being Item 20:</b> Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	83	1	17	4	0
Treatment	5	50	5	50	0	0
Total Cases	10	63	6	37	4	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Allendale DSS. This was a generally strong area in foster care cases. However, in treatment cases the focus was almost exclusively on mothers. In half of the treatment cases fathers were appropriately ruled out for agency involvement – i.e. refused to respond to agency attempts to engage him, could not be located, etc. In the other cases, the workers simply did attempt to contact or communicate with the children’s fathers.

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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**

**Site Visit Findings** Performance Item Ratings

**Well Being Item 21:** Educational needs of child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	100	0	0	3	0
Treatment	5	71	2	29	3	0
Total Cases	12	86	2	14	6	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Allendale 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? The answer to both questions was “Yes” for all the reviewed foster care cases. Even though 71% of the reviewed treatment cases were rated “Strength”, deficiencies were noted in a failure of the worker to follow-up on identified educational needs of certain children within sibling groups.

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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	7	70	3	30	0	0
Total Cases	15	75	5	25	0	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Allendale DSS. The medical needs of 75% of the cases reviewed were handled properly. Two foster care cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement” because significant medical information from prior treatment cases was not shared with current care providers. Although the medical needs of children in treatment cases were generally attended to, there were significant lapses. For example, a worker would document bruises on a child without documented explanation or follow up. Those types of lapses caused 3 treatment cases to be rated “Area Needing Improvement”.

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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	5	100	0	0	5	0
Treatment	6	75	2	25	2	0
Total Cases	11	85	2	15	7	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Allendale DSS. The mental health needs of all foster children reviewed were appropriately attended to. Mental health assessments were done timely and identified needs were attended to. The mental health needs of most (75%) of the children in treatment cases were appropriately attended to. The two treatment cases with deficiencies involved parents and children with multiple medical, developmental, and psychological conditions that reduced the family’s ability to function on its own. Those complex cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement” because the mental health needs of some, but not all family members were being adequately addressed by service providers.

**Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Allendale DSS. Only 5 of the 33 children in foster care are placed within the county. Eleven of the 23 children in care are members of two large sibling groups. All eleven children were placed in Helping Hands Children’s Home so that they could be kept together. At the time of the onsite review the county had 6 licensed foster homes. All six foster home records were reviewed. Three of those homes were closed soon after the review. One of the remaining three foster homes was caring for a foster child who was a relative and was not available to care for other foster children.

**Strengths**

1. Quarterly visits done timely and the checklist was used to address relevant issues.
2. All inspections completed and current.

**Areas Needing Improvement**

1. Three of the 6 licenses were renewed with temporary licenses for not meeting training hours. That is a violation of policy. No children were in those homes.
2. One home recently licensed for 2 children ages 3-6; not much flexibility.
3. One home licensed only to care for a grandchild. The capacity to care for the children within the county does not exist.

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Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Investigation initiated timely?	5	0
Was assessment adequate?	3	2
Was decision appropriate?	4	1

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Allendale County DSS.** Assessments in two of the five cases reviewed did not contain needed information from other relevant parties – medical, school, etc. In one of those cases, the victim child stated that she was afraid of the grandmother who cared for her when the father was at work. The decision to unfound that case is questionable.

Section Ten – Screened Out Intakes

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

**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 an “Area Needing Improvement” for Allendale County DSS.** Of the 15 intakes taken during the six month period under review, only two were screened out. The type of physical neglect alleged in the report warranted investigation.

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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.				16 (80%)	0	4 (20%)	
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	5 (100%)	0	15				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	16 (80%)	4 (20%)	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				11 (55%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	0
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	9 (31%)	4 (31%)	8				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	0				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	4 (100%)	0	6				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	9 (100%)	0	1				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	4 (100%)	0	6				
Item 9: Adoption	0	2 (100)	8				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	3 (100%)	0	7				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				6 (60%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	1				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	5				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	3				
Item 14: Preserving connections	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	2				
Item 15: Relative placement	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	1				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	3				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				8 (40%)	10 (50%)	2 (10%)	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	9 (45%)	11 (55%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	0				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	16 (80%)	4 (20%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	10 (63%)	6 (37%)	4				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				12 (86%)	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	6
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	12 (86%)	2 (14%)	6				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				14 (70%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	0
Item 22: Physical health of the child	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	0				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	11 (85%)	2 (15%)	7				