

**Region II Intensive Foster Care & Clinical Services
Child Welfare Services Review
May 2009**

During the week of May 4 - 8, 2009, a team of DSS staff from state office conducted an onsite review of child welfare services in the Region II Intensive Foster Care and Clinical Services (IFCCS) Office. A sample of open therapeutic foster care cases was reviewed. Stakeholders interviewed for this review included therapeutic foster parents, IFCCS supervisors, service coordinators, foster children, representatives from high management group homes, Mental Health, Mentor and Clinical Coordinator.

Period under Review: May 1, 2008 to April 30, 2009

Purpose

The Department of Social Services engages in a review of child welfare services in each county and regional office 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 (§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 and intensive foster care and clinical services office in the State.

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

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

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

The IFCCSCS office-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 Region II IFCCS Office for the period under review. The outcome reports reflect the performance of the Region II IFCCS Office specialize foster care program.

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 the data specific to Intensive Foster Care and Clinical Service's performance looks the way it does.

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Ratings

The standard that must be met for all items reviewed onsite is 95%. Each outcome report has its own standard. To be rated an area of **Strength** most items must meet both the qualitative onsite review standard **and** the quantitative outcome report standard.

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of two items:

- 1) Repeat Maltreatment **Strength**
- 2) Risk of harm **Strength**

Onsite Review Findings

Safety Item 1: Repeat Maltreatment

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	19	95	1	5	0	0

Explanation of Item 1: Repeat Maltreatment

This is area of **Strength** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item measures the occurrence of maltreatment among children under agency supervision during the period under review. Reviewers determined that in 95% of the cases reviewed, the children under agency supervision did not experience additional maltreatment. Reviewers found instances of children with behavioral disorders being injured while fighting other children. However, those injuries were the result of the child's behavior, and not the negligence of DSS or residential care staff.

Onsite Review Findings

Safety Item 2: Risk of Harm

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	20	100	0	0	0	0

Explanation of Item 2: Risk of Harm

This is an area of **Strength** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item assesses whether the agency's interventions reduced risk of harm to children. In all of the cases, risk of harm was adequately managed. Reviewers found that risk factors were routinely assessed by IFCCS service coordinators, supervisors and the clinical coordinator. There was consistent implementation of recommendations to address developing problems.

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of two items:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 3) Level of care | Strength |
| 4) Foster care re-entries | Strength |
| 5) Stability of foster care placement | Area Needing Improvement |
| 6) Reunification, guardianship, or permanent Placement with relative | Strength |
| 7) Adoption | Area Needing Improvement |
| 8) Permanency goal of Alternate Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) | Area Needing Improvement |

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 3: Level of Care

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	20	100	0	0	0	0

Explanation of Item 3: Level of Care

This is an area of **Strength** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates whether the agency determined the most appropriate level of care to meet the child's needs. In 100% of the cases reviewed, the children's level of care was appropriate to meet their needs.

Agency Data

Performance Measure 7: Foster Care Re-entries – Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification in the 12 month period prior to the reporting period, the percent that did not re-enter foster care within 12 months of the date of their discharge.

Objective: $\geq 90.1\%$ (National 25th percentile)

Report Period: March 1, 2008 – February 28, 2009

	Number Children Reunified During Reporting Period	Number of Children Discharged Who Did Not Re-enter Foster Care	Percent of Children Discharged Who Did Not Re-enter Foster Care	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,863	2,644	92.35%	64.1
Region II IFCCS	25	23	92.%	0.5

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Explanation of Item 4: Foster Care Re-entries

This is an area of **Strength** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item measures the frequency of children re-entering foster care within a year of discharge. To meet the minimum requirements for this item, 90.1% of children must not re-enter foster care within a year of being discharged. Agency data shows that 92% of the children did not re-enter care within 12 months of the date of discharge from a previous foster care episode.

Agency Data				
Performance Measure 6: Stability of Foster Care Placements – Of all children who had been in foster care at least 8 days but less than 12 months from the time of latest removal from home, the percentage that had no more than two placement settings.				
Objective: >= 86% (federal standard)				
	FC Services Open >7 days and < 12 months	Number with No More than 2 placements	Percent with No More than 2 placements	Number Above (Below) Objective
State	3,910	2,965	75.83%	(190.4)
Region II IFCCS	45	11	24.44%	(27.7)

Explanation of Item 5: Stability of Foster Care Placement

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item measures the frequency of placement changes for children in foster care, and assesses the reasons for those changes. The federal standard is that 86% of the children in care have no more than two placements in a year. Agency data shows that 34 of 45 children (76%) had three or more placements in the past 12 months, which is below the federal standard.

Agency Data				
Performance Measure 8: Time to Achieve Reunification – Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care and had been in care for 8 days or more, what percentage were reunified in less than 12 months from the date of their latest removal from home?				
Objective: >= 75.2% (federal standard)				
	Number of Children Returned to Parents/ Caretakers	Number of Children Returned to Parents/ Caretakers after in Care < 12 months	Percent of Children Returned to Parents/Caretakers after in Care < 12 months	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,556	1,931	75.55%	8.9
Region II IFCCS	24	6	25.00%	(12)

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Explanation of Item 6: Reunification or Permanent Placement with Relatives

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the activities and processes necessary to accomplish the goal of reunification with caregivers or placement with relatives. Agency data shows that 24 of the 229 (10%) children managed by this office returned home during the period under review. Of those 24 children, six (25%) returned within a year of entering care.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 7: Adoption						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	0	0	4	100	16	0

Explanation of Item 7: Adoption

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the process within the child welfare system to achieve timely adoptions for children in foster care. Agency data shows that 53 of the 229 children managed by the Region II IFCCS office had the plan of Adoption at the time of this review. However, 40 of those 53 children were not legally free because TPR had not been completed on both parents; four of those 53 cases were in the sample for this review. All four of the children reviewed with the plan of Adoption had been in care more than 24 months. Reviewers determined that in every case involving a child with the plan of Adoption there were delays in filing petitions and hearings were continued, causing TPR actions to be granted against the parents after the children had been in care beyond 24 months of entering foster care. It should be noted here that some, but not all of the legal delays occurred while Richland, Lexington and Kershaw County DSS offices were managing the cases.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 8: Permanency Goal of Alternate Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	5	83	1	17	14	0

Explanation of Item 8: Permanency Goal of APPLA

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of services provided to children with the permanency plan of APPLA. Reviewers also rate whether the agency attempted to locate and reassess relatives or non-relatives that were willing to commit to the youth's long-term care. In 83% of the cases reviewed, children with the plan of APPLA were receiving the appropriate independent living

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skills services. However, one case was rated as an area needing improvement because a transition plan was not completed by the agency to prepare the youth for exiting foster care. Also, there was no evidence of the agency's efforts to identify a support system to assist the youth with exiting foster care.

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of five items:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 9) Placement with siblings in foster care | Strength |
| 10) Relationship of child in care with parents | Area Needing Improvement |
| 11) Relationship of child in care with parents | Area Needing Improvement |
| 12) Preserving connections | Area Needing Improvement |
| 13) Relative placement | Area Needing Improvement |

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 9: Placement with Siblings in Foster Care

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	9	100	0	0	11	0

Explanation of Item 9: Placement with Siblings in Foster Care

This is an area of **Strength** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to keep siblings together when it is appropriate to do so. In every case reviewed, the agency did a good job in keeping siblings together when it was appropriate to do so.

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 10: Relationship of Child in Care with Parents

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	11	92	1	8	8	0

Explanation of Item 10: Relationship of Child in Care with Parents

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to promote a supportive relationship between children in care and their parents, beyond the twice-minimum visitation requirement. In 92% of the cases reviewed, children were

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receiving beyond the twice-minimum visitation requirement. In those cases, children were visiting with their parents during weekly and monthly therapy sessions in addition to the twice a month visitation per agency policy. One case was rated as an area needing improvement because there were no visits between the child and the father. Although that child had been in foster care for more than a year, a diligent search for the father was not completed until May, 2009.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care with Siblings in Foster Care						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	7	86	1	14	12	0

Explanation of Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care with Siblings in Foster Care

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to promote and maintain a strong, emotionally supportive relationship between the child and his siblings in care. Reviewers found that 86% of the children under the agency's supervision had regular visits with their siblings in other placements. In one case, a child in care had no contact with their siblings for two years.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 12: Preserving Connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	12	60	8	40	0	0

Explanation of Item 12: Preserving Connections

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to preserve children's connections to the people, places and things that are important to them. In 40% of the cases reviewed, the agency did not help children maintain connections with grandparents, uncles and aunts known to the agency.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 13: Relative Placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	3	15	17	85	0	0

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Explanation of Item 13: Relative Placement

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to identify and assess relatives as potential placement resources for children in foster care. Only 15% of the cases reviewed displayed good practice in this area. Reviewers found almost no attempts by the agency to contact or assess the relatives of the non-custodial parents.

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of six items:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 14) Assessment of needs and services of foster parents | Strength |
| 15) Assessment of needs and services for parents | Area Needing Improvement |
| 16) Child involvement in case planning | Strength |
| 17) Parent involvement in case planning | Area Needing Improvement |
| 18) Worker visits with child | Area Needing Improvement |
| 19) Worker visits with parents | Area Needing Improvement |

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 14: Assessment of Needs and Services for Foster Parents

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	10	100	0	0	10	0

Explanation of Item 14: Assessment of Needs and Services for Foster Parents

This is an area **Strength** for Region II IFCCS Office. This item asks two questions: 1) Were the need and services of the foster parents assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? This was an area of strength in every case. In those cases, the needs of the foster parents were appropriately assessed by both the IFCCS service coordinators and by the therapeutic provider's clinical coordinators.

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 15: Assessment Needs and Services for Parents

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	9	75	3	25	8	0

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Explanation of Item 15: Assessment of Needs and Services for Parents

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region II IFCCS Office. This item asks two questions: 1) Were the needs and services of the parents assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? This was a strong area in 75% of the cases. However, 25% of the cases needed improvement because the office failed to address the needs of the father, mother and paramour. This was an especially significant omission in cases with a plan of reunification to the parents.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 16: Child Involvement In Case Planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	17	100	0	0	3	0

Explanation of Item 16: Child Involvement in Case Planning

This is an area of **Strength** for Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to involve the child in the case planning process. In 100% of the cases reviewed, age-appropriate children were involved in the case planning process. The children's involvement was evident in monthly face-to-face visits by the workers as well as in formal case planning meetings.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 17: Parent Involvement in Case Planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	8	73	3	27	9	0

Explanation of Item 17: Parent Involvement in Case Planning

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to involve the parents in the case planning process. In 73% of the cases reviewed, both parents were involved in the case planning process. In those cases, there were complete treatment plans for the parents and the Child and Family Assessment Endorsement sheet was signed by the parents. However, 27% of the cases needed improvement because a known parent, or paramour acting in a parental role was not included in the case planning process.

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Agency Data				
Performance Measure 14: Face-to-Face Visits With Children				
Objective: >= 100% (Agency Policy)				
	Number of Children Under Agency Supervision at Least One Complete Calendar Month	Number of Children Visited Every Month	Percent of Children Visited Every Month	Number of Children Above or (Below) Standard
Region II IFCCS	229	219	95.63%	(10)

Explanation of Item 18: Worker Visits with Child

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item measures the frequency of caseworker visits with children under agency supervision, and evaluates the quality of those visits. State law and agency policy requires that children under agency supervision be seen each month. Agency data shows that 219 of the required 229 visits were conducted (95.63%). Reviewers found that the documented quality of those visits was excellent, consistently addressing safety, permanency and child well-being issues.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Well Being Item 19: Worker Visits with Parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	8	73	3	27	9	0

Explanation of Item 19: Worker Visits with Parents

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item measures the frequency of caseworker visits with parents, and evaluates the quality of those visits. Reviewers rated 27% of the cases as needing improvement for this item. In those cases, there was no documented explanation as to why the office did not attempt monthly visits with both parents as required.

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of one item:

20) Educational need of the child **Strength**

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<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Well Being Item 20: Educational Needs of Child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	19	95	1	5		0

Explanation of Item 20: Educational Needs of the Child

This is an area of **Strength** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and meet the educational needs of children under agency supervision. This was an area of strength for 95% of the cases reviewed. Reviewers found that workers made direct contact with guidance counselors, Behavioral Interventionist and teachers. In addition, there were copies of grade reports, attendance records and recent IEP plans in case records.

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

The county's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of two items:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 21) Physical health of the child | Strength |
| 22) Mental health of the child | Strength |

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Well Being Item 21: Physical Health of the Child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	19	95	1	5	0	0

Explanation of Item 21: Physical Health of the Child

This is an area of **Strength** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and address the physical and dental health needs of children under agency supervision. In 95% of the cases reviewed, there were dental and medical records as evidence of the children's physical and dental health needs being assessed and met.

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Onsite Review Findings

Well Being Item 22: Mental Health of the Child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Region II IFCCS	20	100	0	0	0	0

Explanation of Item 22: Mental Health of the Child

This is an area of **Strength** for the Region II IFCCS Office. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and meet the mental health needs of children under agency supervision. In 100% of the cases reviewed, the children's mental health needs were assessed and being met. Copies of therapist and provider progress notes were in case records.

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Region II IFCCS Office Summary Sheet				
Performance Item or Outcome		Performance Item Ratings		
		Strength	Area Needing Improvement	N/A*
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				
Item 1: Str	Repeat maltreatment	19/20=95%	1/20=5%	0
Item 2: Str	Risk of harm	20/20=100%	0	0
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				
Item 3: Str	Level of care	20/20=100%	0	0
Item 4: Str*	Foster care re-entries	1/1=100%	0	19
Item 5: ANI	Stability of foster care placement	18/20=90%	2/20=10%	0
Item 6: *Str	Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	18/20=90%	2/20=10%	0
Item 7: ANI	Adoption	0	4/4=100%	16
Item 8: ANI	Permanency goal of Alternate Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)	5/6=83%	1/6=17%	14
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				
Item 9: Str	Placement with siblings in foster care	9/9=100%	0	11
Item 10: ANI	Relationship of child in care with parents	11/12=92%	1/12=8%	8
Item 11: ANI	Relationship of child in care with siblings in foster care	7/8=86%	1/8=14%	12
Item 12: ANI	Preserving connections	12/20=60%	8/20=40%	0
Item 13: ANI	Relative placement	3/20=15%	17/20=85%	0
Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				
Item 14: Str	Assessment of needs and services for foster parents	10/10=100%	0	10
Item 15: ANI	Assessment of needs and services for parents	9/12=75%	3/12=25%	8
Item 16: Str	Child involvement in case planning	17/17=100%	0	3
Item 17: ANI	Parent involvement in case planning	8/11=73%	3/11=27%	9
Item 18: *ANI	Worker visits with child	20/20=100%	0	0
Item 19: ANI	Worker visits with parent(s)	8/11=73%	3/11=27%	9
Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				
Item 20: Str	Educational needs of the child	19/20=95%	1/20=5%	0
Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				
Item 21: Str	Physical health of the child	19/20=95%	1/20=5%	0
Item 22: Str	Mental health of the child	20/20=100%	0	0

The objective is that 95% of cases be rated "Strength."

Str = Strength

ANI = Area Needing Improvement

* = Rating based on agency data, not onsite review findings