

Region IV Adoptions - Florence Office
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2010

During the week of February 22 - 26, 2010, a team of DSS staff from adoption regional offices and state office conducted an onsite review of child welfare services in the Region IV Adoptions office. A sample of open and closed cases was reviewed.

Period under Review: February 1, 2009 to February 26, 2010.

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 (§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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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.

In that this is an evaluation of the performance of a regional adoptions office, ratings are based on the actions that occurred from the time the adoptions office assumed case management.

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

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

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) Repeat Maltreatment | Strength |
| 2) Risk of Harm | Area Needing Improvement |

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Safety Item 1: Repeat Maltreatment						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	10	100	0	0	0	0

Explanation of Item 1: Repeat Maltreatment

This is an area of **Strength** for Region IV Adoptions. This item measures the occurrence of maltreatment among children under agency supervision. None of the cases reviewed had children who experienced maltreatment during the period under review. The adoptions office did an excellent job of protecting children from repeat maltreatment while under the agency's supervision.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Safety Item 4: Risk Of Harm						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	9	90	1	10	0	0

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Explanation of Item 2: Risk of Harm

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item assesses whether the agency's interventions reduced risk of harm to children. Risk was properly managed in 90% of the cases reviewed. The case needing improvement involved a child sexually acting out with his brother. The child was given a forensic examination, which did not recommend any treatment at that time. However, the child continued the sexual acting out behavior and the agency has not followed up with services for the child.

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

The office's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of four items:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 3) Stability of foster care placement | Strength |
| 4) Permanency goal and concurrent planning | Strength |
| 5) Adoption | Area Needing Improvement |
| 6) Recruitment | Strength |

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 3: Stability of Foster Care/Adoptive Placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	9	90	1	10	0	0

Explanation of Item 3: Stability of Foster Care Placement

This is an area of **Strength** for Region IV Adoptions. This item measures the frequency of placement changes for children in foster care, and assesses the reasons for those changes. None of the children managed by this office experienced more than two placements during the period under review. The pre-adoptive placement of one of the children in the sample disrupted. However, in nine of the cases reviewed Region IV did an excellent job keeping children stable in their placements.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 4: Permanency Goal and Concurrent Planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	10	100	0	0	0	0

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Explanation of Item 4: Permanency Goal and Concurrent Planning

This is an area of **Strength** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the appropriateness of permanency goals for children in foster care and the timeliness of those permanency decisions. The permanency plan was appropriate for all of the cases reviewed.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 5: Adoption						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	4	44	5	56	1	0

Explanation of Item 5: Adoption

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the process within the child welfare system to achieve timely adoptions for children in foster care. Though none of the children reviewed could have had their adoptions completed within 24 months of entering foster care, reviewers did not factor delays that occurred prior to the office assuming case management into their ratings. Four dominant trends caused delays in permanency for the children.

1. The children's special medical and behavioral needs caused pre-adoptive parents to want the agency's continued support, and made parents reluctant to complete their adoptions.
2. Children who entered care from the county were not staffed with the adoption's office timely, which extended the time county offices had case management prior to transfer to the Adoptions office.
3. Delay in filing the complaint within 60 days of the adoptive parents signing the agreement.
4. Delay with identifying adoptive resources for children and competing recruitment packets.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 6: Recruitment						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	2	100	0	0	8	0

Explanation of Item 6: Recruitment

This is an area of **Strength** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's recruitment efforts on behalf of children with the plan of adoption. Evidence of effective recruitment existed in all cases reviewed.

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

The office's performance on this outcome is based on the rating of four items:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 7) Placement with siblings in foster care/adoptive setting | Strength |
| 8) Relationship of child in care with siblings | Area Needing Improvement |
| 9) Preserving connections | Area Needing Improvement |
| 10) Relative placement | Area Needing Improvement |

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 7: Placement with Siblings in Foster Care\Adoptive Setting

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	6	100	0	0	4	0

Explanation of Item 7: Placement with Siblings in Foster Care/Adoptive Setting

This is an area of **Strength** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to keep siblings together when it is appropriate to do so. In every case siblings were either placed in the same home, or if they were not placed together the case record explained that the children had special needs that prevented them from being placed together.

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 8: Relationship of Child in Care with Siblings

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	8	87	1	11	1	0

Explanation of Item 8: Relationship of Child in Care with Siblings

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to maintain an emotionally supportive relationship between the child and his or her minor siblings in a different placement. In 89% of the cases the agency supported the relationship between separated siblings. In one of the cases where the relationship between siblings was not supported workers documented the child's requests to see the siblings but failed to take steps to ensure visits occurred.

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<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 9: Preserving Connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	5	56	4	44	1	0

Explanation of Item 9: Preserving Connections

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to preserve children's connections to the people, places and things that are important to them. This did not occur in 44% of the cases. In those cases the agency failed to assess which relationships might be important for the child to maintain. The agency's position is that the adopting parents will make that decision. However, the agency failed to assess the relationships that children had and provide the information to the adopting parents.

<u>Onsite Review Findings</u>						
Permanency Item 10: Relative Placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	5	80	1	20	5	0

Explanation of Item 10: Relative Placement

This item is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to identify the child's maternal and paternal relatives, and assess each as a potential placement for the child. In 80% of the records reviewed adoptions specialists completed home studies or background checks on relatives to assess their ability to parent the child in care. However, in 20% of the cases there was no documentation to support that the agency assessed the maternal or paternal relatives for placement. Historically, adoptions specialists rely on county DSS offices to complete these assessments. However, in this case the assessment was not done by the county or the adoptions office.

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

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

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 11) Assessment of adoptive parents and service delivery | Strength |
| 12) Adoptive Parent/ Child involvement in case planning | Area Needing Improvement |
| 13) Worker visits with child | Strength |
| 14) Worker visits with adoptive parents | Strength |

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 11: Assessment of Adoptive and Service Delivery

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	10	100	0	0	0	0

Explanation of Item 11: Assessment of Adoptive Parents and Service Delivery

This is an area of **Strength** for Region IV Adoptions. This item asks two questions: 1) Were the needs of the adoptive parent assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? In every case reviewed, adoptive parents received thorough assessments and services tailored to meet their needs.

Onsite Review Findings

Permanency Item 12: Adoptive Parent and Child Involvement in Case Planning

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	9	9	1	10	0	0

Explanation of Item 12: Adoptive Parent and Child Involvement in Case Planning

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's efforts to involve the adoptive parent and the child in the case planning process. In 90% of the cases, age-appropriate children and pre-adoptive parents were involved in the case planning process. This was an area needing improvement in one of the cases because focus was on working with the adoptive mother in the case planning process, but not the adoptive father.

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Agency Data				
Performance Measure 14 Face-to-Face Visits with Children (<18 years of age) Of all children in foster care and treatment for at least one full calendar month during the reporting period, what percentage of children had a documented face-to-face visit every full calendar month during the reporting period? Report Period: 3/1/2009 to 2/28/2010				
Objective: >= 100% (Agency established objective)				
	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 (Below) Objective
Foster Care	185	185	100%	0

Explanation of Item 13: Worker Visits with child

This is an area of **Strength** for Region IV Adoptions. This item measures the frequency of caseworker visits with the child, and evaluates the quality of those visits. Agency data shows that all of the children were seen every month of the period under review. Reviewers observed cut-and-paste dictation of monthly visits, with little or no variation from month to month.

Well Being Item 14: Worker Visits with Adoptive Parents						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	9	100%	0	0	1	0

Explanation of Item 14: Worker Visits with Adoptive Parents

This is an area of **Strength** for Region IV Adoptions. This item measures the frequency of caseworker visits with adoptive parents, and evaluates the quality of those visits. In each of the cases reviewed the frequency of visits with adoptive parents was sufficient to address the assessed needs of each family. The frequency of contact increased or decreased as circumstances changed.

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

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

15) Educational need of the child **Area Needing Improvement**

Well Being Item 15: Educational Needs of the Child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	9	90%	1	10%	0	0

Explanation of Item 15: Educational Needs of the Child

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and address the educational needs of children under agency supervision. This is a relatively strong area for the Region IV Adoptions office. The office fell short of the 95% performance objective because of one of the cases in the review sample in which the worker relied on information from the pre-adoptive parents about the child's performance in school without ever making direct contact with the school.

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

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

16) Physical health of the child **Area Needing Improvement**

17) Mental health of the child **Area Needing Improvement**

Well Being Item 16: Physical Health of the Child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Cases	7	70	3	30	0	0

Explanation of Item 16: Physical Health of the Child

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and meet the physical and dental health needs of children under agency supervision. The main reason this area needs improvement is because in 30% of the cases the

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workers relied on information from pre-adoptive parents about the child's health without verifying the assessment with information from the medical provider.

Well Being Item 17: Mental Health						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%		%	#	%
Total Cases	5	56	4	44	1	0

Explanation of Item 17: Mental Health of the Child

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's ability to assess and meet the mental health needs of children under agency supervision. The main reason this area needs improvement is because in 44% of the cases, workers relied on information from pre-adoptive parents about the child's mental health without verifying the assessment with information from the mental health provider.

Adoption Assessments

	Yes	No
Was the assessment completed with 90 days of the referral?	4	6
Was the assessment adequate?	9	1
Was the decision appropriate?	9	1

Explanation of Item 18: Adoption Assessments

This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Region IV Adoptions. This item evaluates the agency's process for assessing children for adoption services and determines if decisions were supported by the facts of the cases. This was a relatively strong area for the Region IV Adoptions office. The office fell short of the 95% performance objective because of a case in the review sample in which the assessment did not support the decision to rule out adoption for the child.

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REGION IV ADOPTIONS 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.			
Str	Item 1: Repeat maltreatment	10/10 = 100%	0
ANI	Item 2: Risk of harm	9/ 10 = 90%	1/10 = 10%
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.			
Str*	Item 3: Stability of foster care/adoptive placement	9/ 10 = 90%	1/ 10 = 10 %
Str	Item 4: Permanency goal and concurrent planning	10/ 10 = 100%	0
ANI	Item 5: Adoption	4/9 = 44%	5/9 = 56%
Str	Item 6: Recruitment	2/2 = 100%	0
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.			
Str	Item 7: Placement with siblings in foster care/adoptive setting	6/ 6 = 100%	0
ANI	Item 8: Relationship of child in care with siblings	8/ 9 = 87%	1/9 =11%
ANI	Item 9: Preserving connections	5/ 9 = 56%	4/ 9 = 44%
ANI	Item 10: Relative placement	4/5 = 80%	1/5 = 20%
Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.			
Str	Item 11: Assessment of adoptive parents and service delivery	10/ 10 = 100%	0
ANI	Item 12: Adoptive Parent/Child involvement in case planning	9/10 = 90%	1/ 9 = 10%
Str*	Item 13: Worker visits with child	9/10 = 90%	1/ 10 = 10%
Str	Item14: Worker visits with adoptive parents	9/ 9 = 100%	0
Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.			
ANI	Item 15: Educational needs of the child	9/10 = 90%	1/10 = 10%
Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.			
ANI	Item 16: Physical health of the child	7/10 = 70 %	3/ 19 = 30 %
ANI	Item 17: Mental health of the child	5/9 = 56%	4/ 9 = 44%
Adoption Assessments			
ANI	Item 18: Adoption Assessments	9/10 = 90%	1/10 = 10%

The objective is that 95% of the cases receive a “strength” rating.

Str = Strength

ANI = Area Needing Improvement

* = Rating based on agency data rather than file review.