South Carolina Department of Social Services Child Welfare Quality Assurance Review: Marion County Summary Report

This summary report describes the results of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) Marion County Quality Assurance Review, conducted March 17-21, 2014. The period under review was March 1, 2013 to February 28, 2014.

DSS Child Welfare Quality Assurance Reviews are conducted using the *Onsite Review Instrument* (OSRI) finalized by the federal Administration for Children & Families (ACF) in July 2008. This instrument is used to review foster care and family preservation services cases. Twenty cases were reviewed including ten foster care and ten family preservation cases.

The OSRI is divided into three sections: safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. There are two safety outcomes, two permanency outcomes, and three well-being outcomes. Reviewers collect information on a number of *items* related to each of the outcomes. The ratings for each *item* are combined to determine the rating for the outcome. Outcomes are rated as being substantially achieved, partially achieved, not achieved, or not applicable. The *items* are rated as *strength*, *area needing improvement*, or not applicable. Ratings for each of the outcomes are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Child Welfare QA Onsite Reviews – Ratings by Outcome

Outcome	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
Safety 1 Children Are, First and Foremost, Protected from Abuse and Neglect	83% (5)	0% (0)	17% (1)
Safety 2 Children are Safely Maintained in their Homes whenever Possible and Appropriate	45% (9)	10% (2)	45% (9)
Permanency 1 Children have Permanency and Stability in their Living Situations	40% (4)	60% (6)	0% (0)
Permanency 2 The Continuity of Family Relationships and Connections is Preserved for Children	60% (6)	30% (3)	10% (1)
Well-Being 1 Families have Enhanced Capacity to Provide for their Children's Needs	45% (9)	50% (10)	5% (1)
Well-Being 2 Children receive Appropriate Services to meet their Educational Needs	89% (8)	0% (0)	11% (1)
Well-Being 3 Children receive Adequate Services to meet their Physical and Mental Health Needs	45% (8)	22% (4)	33% (6)

Results for outcomes and *items* are reported by the number of cases and the percentage of total cases given each rating. In addition, the percentage of *strengths* is calculated for each *item*. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *areas needing improvement*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the *percentage of strengths*.

SECTION I: REVIEW FINDINGS

Safety Outcome 1: Children Are, First and Foremost, Protected from Abuse and Neglect

Two items are included under Safety Outcome 1. Ratings for the two items are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether responses to all accepted child maltreatment

reports received during the period under review were initiated and face-to-face contact with the child made, within the timeframes established by agency policies or State statute.

I abic 2.		
Rating	Item 1	Item 2
Strength	25% (5)	20% (4)
Area needing improvement	5% (1)	5% (1)
Not Applicable	70% (14)	75% (15)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	83.3% (5)	80% (4)

Item 2: Repeat maltreatment

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if any child in the family experienced repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are Safely Maintained in Their Homes Whenever Possible and Appropriate

Two items are included under Safety Outcome 2. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 3.

Item 3: Services to family

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children's entry into foster care or reentry after a reunification.

Table 3.

Rating	Item 3	Item 4
Strength	15% (3)	50% (10)
Area needing improvement	45% (9)	50% (10)
Not Applicable	40% (8)	0% (0)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	25% (3)	50% (10)

Item 4: Risk assessment and safety management

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children Have Permanency and Stability in Their Living Situations
Six items are included under Permanency Outcome 1. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 4.

Item 5: Foster Care reentries

Purpose of Assessment: To assess whether children who entered foster care during the period under review were re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

Item 6: Stability of foster care placement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if the child in foster care is in a stable placement at the time of the onsite review and that any changes in placement that occurred during the period under review were in the best interest of the child and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal(s).

Item 7: Permanency goal for child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

Item 8: Reunification, guardianship or permanent placement with relatives

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review, to achieve reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner.

Item 9: Adoption

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made, or are being made, to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner.

Item 10: Other planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA)

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure:

- That the child is adequately prepared to make the transition from foster care to independent living (if it is expected that the child will remain in foster care until he or she reaches the age of majority or is emancipated).
- That the child, even though remaining in foster care, is in a "permanent" living arrangement with a foster parent or relative caregiver and that there is a commitment on the part of all parties involved that the child remain in that placement until he or she reaches the age of majority or is emancipated.
- That the child is in a long-term care facility and will remain in that facility until transition to an adult care facility.

Table 4.

Rating	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10
Strength	5% (1)	45% (9)	35% (7)	10% (2)	10% (2)	10% (2)
Area needing improvement	0% (0)	5% (1)	15% (3)	0% (0)	30% (6)	0% (0)
Not Applicable	95% (19)	50% (10)	50% (10)	90% (18)	60% (12)	90% (18)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	100% (1)	90% (9)	70% (7)	100% (2)	25% (2)	100% (2)

Permanency Outcome 2: The Continuity of Family Relationships and Connections is Preserved for Children

Six items are included under Permanency Outcome 2. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 5.

Item 11: Proximity of Foster Care Placement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that the child's foster care placement was close enough to the parent(s) to facilitate face-to-face contact between the child and the parent(s) while the child was in foster care.

Item 12: Placement with siblings

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings.

Item 13: Visiting with parents & siblings in foster care

Purpose of Assessment: To determine if, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings is of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationship with these close family members.

Item 14: Preserving connections

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to maintain the child's connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, tribe, school, and friends.

Item 15: Relative placement

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to place the child with relatives when appropriate.

Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation.

Table 5.

Rating	Item 11	Item 12	Item 13	Item 14	Item 15	Item 16
Strength	25% (5)	25% (5)	25% (5)	40% (8)	30% (6)	5% (1)
Area needing improvement	0% (0)	0% (0)	15% (3)	5% (1)	10% (2)	25% (5)
Not Applicable	75% (15)	75% (15)	60% (12)	55% (11)	60% (12)	70% (14)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	100% (5)	100% (5)	62.5% (5)	88.9% (8)	75% (6)	16.7% (1)

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families Have Enhanced Capacity to Provide for Their Children's Needs

Four items are included under Well-Being Outcome 1. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 6.

Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, & foster parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents (both at the child's entry into foster care [if the child entered during the period under review] or on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family, and provided the appropriate services.

Item 18: Child & family involvement in case planning

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made (or are being made) to involve parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

Item 19: Caseworker visits with the child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the child(ren) in the case are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals.

Item 20: Caseworker visits with parents

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers of the children are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case goals.

Table 6.

Rating	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20
Strength	45% (9)	35% (7)	95% (19)	10% (2)
Area needing improvement	55% (11)	50% (10)	5% (1)	55% (11)
Not Applicable	0% (0)	15% (3)	0% (0)	35% (7)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	45% (9)	41.2% (7)	95% (19)	15.4% (2)

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children Receive Appropriate Services to Meet Their Educational Needs

One item is included under Well-Being Outcome 2. Ratings for the item are shown in Table 7.

Item 21: Educational needs of child

Purpose of Assessment: To assess whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children's educational needs at the initial contact with the child (if the case was opened during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis (if the case was opened before the period under review), and whether

Table 7.

Rating	Item 21
Strength	40% (8)
Area needing improvement	5% (1)
Not Applicable	55% (11)
Total	100% (20)
% Strengths	88.9% (8)

identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children Receive Adequate Services to Meet Their Physical and Mental Health Needs

Two items are included under Well-Being Outcome 3. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 8.

Item 22: Physical health of child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the physical health needs of the child, including dental health needs.

Item 23: Mental/behavioral health of child

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the child(ren).

Table 8.

Rating	Item 22	Item 23
Strength	35% (7)	55% (11)
Area needing improvement	40% (8)	20% (4)
Not Applicable	25% (5)	25% (5)
Total	100% (20)	100% (20)
% Strengths	46.7% (7)	73.3% (11)

SECTION II: FOSTER HOME LICENSE REVIEW

As part of the Quality Assurance Review Process in Marion County, ten Foster Home Licenses were randomly selected from the list of all licenses issued for the county during the period under review. These licenses are reviewed using the *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Foster Home License Review Instruments*. There is one instrument for issuance of initial licenses and another instrument for the renewal of licenses. Each instrument contains a section of deficiencies, namely agency oversight, data entry, and qualitative issues. Deficiencies noted in this section may not invalidate the license but still require attention and correction by county management. Each instrument includes the appropriate agency, state, and federal requirements.

Initial License review criteria include the following *items*:

- applications
- autobiography information
- financial information
- child factor's checklists
- initial home assessment studies
- references
- information related to firearms and ammunition in the house
- pet vaccination information
- background checks
- convictions
- required trainings
- medical reports

- fire inspections/re-inspections
- Disaster preparedness plans
- DHEC/Lead inspections
- alternative caregiver forms
- Central registry check on alternative caregiver, if applicable
- a review of any conflicts noted between file documents and CAPPS
- Discipline agreements
- Completion of the 1513 and issued prior to the license being issued
- Guidelines regarding in-ground swimming pools

Renewal License review criteria include the following *items*:

- convictions
- training hours
- medical reports if a new household member has been added or if there is a change in foster parent's medical status
- updated home studies
- discipline agreements
- fire inspections and drills
- quarterly home visits
- disaster preparedness plans
- FBI checks, if applicable
- Guidelines regarding in-ground swimming pools
- 1513 completed prior to issuance of the license

- Any amendments to the license, if applicable
- Documentation regarding if there are more than five children in the home
- annual firearms location update
- information concerning the alternative caregivers
- safety checks of alternative caregivers
- a review of child protective service allegations
- pet vaccination information
- a review of any regulatory infractions
- a review of any conflicts noted between file documents and CAPSS

Possible *deficiencies* found in Initial and Renewal cases include:

- updated home studies
- discipline agreements

- fire drills
- quarterly home visits

- disaster preparedness plans
- information concerning the alternative caregivers
- discipline agreements
- disaster preparedness plans
- alternative caregiver forms

- applications
- autobiography information
- financial information
- child factor's checklists
- initial home assessment studies
- references

Areas noted as having occurred as required on the assessment are rated as *strengths*. Those *items* that were not met are rated as an *area needing improvement (ANI)*. If the issue is not applicable, it is rated N/A.

Additionally, the percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for each *item*. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Results of the review are noted in Table 9.

Foster Home Licensing Findings for Marion County

Initial License Cases. No issuances for initial/standard licenses were reviewed.

Renewal License Cases. Seven of the ten cases reviewed were rated as *area needing improvement* because all of the licensing requirements were not met prior to authorization of the license renewal. Issues identified in Section Two that led to the rating of *ANI* for the seven cases include:

i divide di danimian y di matimigo nen m		
Rating	Initial	Renewal
Strength	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
Area needing improvement	0 (0%)	7 (70%)
Total	0 (0%)	10 (100%)

0 (0%)

3 (30%)

Table 9. Summary of Ratings for Initial and Renewal Cases

% Strengths

Background Checks:

• Central registry, SLED, sex offender registry checks, and/or FBI checks were not completed or completed in an untimely manner.

Safety:

- The agency failed to complete two annual fire inspections during the re-licensure period.
- There was no documentation that a fire violation was corrected.

Deficiencies found in Renewal Cases. Deficiencies were noted in five of ten files reviewed. Issues identified by the reviewers include:

Fire Drills:

- Records did not include verification that fire drills were conducted regularly.
- Records did not include verification that fire drills were conducted within 24 hours of a child's placement.

Safety:

- All discipline agreements were not located in the case file or were not signed.
- Quarterly home visits were untimely or not completed at all.
- All disaster plans were not located in the case file.

Section III: Child Protective Service Screen-Out Review

A review of ten screened-out allegations was completed to determine whether the reports were screened out according to agency policy and procedures. The reports were randomly selected from the list of reports screened out by the county during the period under review. The *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Review Screen-Out Report Instrument* was used to conduct the review. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and seven questions regarding the screened-out decisions and processes (see Table 10).

Table 10. Summary of Item Ratings for Screen-Out Review

	Yes	No	NA	Total
1. Illegal substance use alleged AND reason for safety threatened with harm	1	9	0	10
2. Use of CAPSS and/or other systems for prior involvement	8	2	0	10
3a. Maltreatment tab in CAPSS completed	8	2	0	10
3b. If "No" is selected, was there an explanation	7	2	1	10
4. Contact with necessary collaterals prior to screen-out decision	5	2	3	10
5. Another intake referral on same perpetrator and/or child within 12 months	4	6	0	10
6. Intake Supervisor ensured consultation with another supervisory-level authority	1	3	6	10

^{*}Note: A single case may have more than one issue identified.

The percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for the cases reviewed. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of

strengths and the number of ANIs. The number of strengths is divided into this total to determine the percentage of strengths. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 11.

Table 11. Summary of Ratings for Screen-Outs Review

Rating	Was this case screened-out according to agency policy?
Strength	5 (50%)
Area needing improvement	5 (50%)
Total	10 (100%)
% Strengths	5 (50%)

Five cases were determined to be screenedout in violation of agency policy and

procedure. Issues identified that led to the rating of ANI include:

- The maltreatment tab in CAPSS was not thoroughly completed. The intake worker failed to follow-up with a FSS worker to complete the tab.
- No documentation was found that the intake supervisor consulted a supervisory-level authority prior to making a decision not to investigate a new intake referral.
- The agency's inquiry of the family's prior history was insufficient, which changed the risk matrix results.
- The agency did not contact the child's doctor to confirm or deny the medical condition of a child.

SECTION IV: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES UNFOUNDED REPORTS REVIEW

Five unfounded reports were reviewed to determine whether the reports were unfounded in accordance with agency policy and procedures. The five unfounded reports were randomly selected from the list of all reports unfounded by the county during the period under review. The review was conducted using the *South Carolina Department of Social Services Quality Assurance Review Unfounded Report Instrument*. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and items regarding three primary areas (see Table 12):

- Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment,
- Repeat maltreatment, and
- Risk assessment and safety management.

Table 12. Summary of Item Ratings for Unfounded Review

	Yes	No	N/A	Total
1A. Investigation not initiated in accordance with timeframes and requirements	0	5	0	5
1B. Face-to-face contact not made in accordance with timeframes and requirements	1	4	0	5
1C. Delays in investigation initiation or face-to-face contact beyond control of agency	0	1	4	5
2A. At least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report	1	4	0	5
2B. One substantiated or indicated maltreatment report within six months before or after	0	1	4	5
2C. Repeat maltreatment involving the same or similar circumstances	1	0	4	5
3A. Initial assessment of risk to the children and family in the home	3	2	0	5
3B. Initial assessment in accordance with established timeframe	4	1	0	5
3C. Ongoing assessment(s) of risk to the children and family in the home	2	3	0	5
3D. Safety concerns that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency	4	1	0	5

^{*}Note: A single case may have more than one issue identified.

The percentage of *strengths* is calculated for each decision to unfound. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of *ANIs*. The number of *strengths* is divided *i*nto this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 13.

Table 13. Summary of Ratings for Unfounded Review

Rating	Were cases unfounded according to agency policy?
Strength	0 (0%)
Area needing improvement	5 (100%)
Total	5 (100%)
% Strengths	0 (0%)

Reasons that all five unfounded cases reviewed violated agency policy and procedure include:

- The agency did not complete ongoing risk assessments throughout the life of the investigation. (3 cases)
- The agency failed to make face-to-face contact with the minor within the required time frame. (1 case)
- The agency did not complete a risk assessment of the family home in a timely manner. (1 case)

APPENDIX 1. SUMMARY OF ISSUES CAUSING AREA OF NEEDED IMPROVEMENT (ANI) RATINGS FOR APPLICABLE CASES

The following is an overview of strengths and weaknesses that were found in the cases for Marion County during the review conducted March 17-21, 2014. The period under review was March 1, 2013 to February 28, 2014.

Positives:

Items 5 (Foster Care reentries), 8 (Reunification, guardianship or permanent placement with relatives), 10 (Other planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA)), 11 (Proximity of Foster Care Placement), and 12 (Placement with siblings) were identified as strengths of the agency; all of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as strength with no area needing improvement (ANI). Item 19 (Caseworker visits with the child) was also rated as strength for the agency with 95% of all applicable cases reviewed were rated as strength.

Concerns:

The following examines the *outcomes* and *items* that had the highest negative ratings.

- Item 3 (Services to family) 9 of 12 (75%) applicable cases rated as ANI
 - Appropriate services were not provided to family. (7 cases)
 - Specific members of the family effected include:
 - Mothers (4 cases)
 - Fathers (1 case)
 - Specfic services that were not provided to the family include:
 - Parenting, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse and psychological services (1 case)
 - Drug screens (2 cases)
 - o The risk and safety assessment was not completed for the father. (1 case)
 - The agency did not provide appropriate services and intervention to the family in a timely manner. (2 cases)
- Item 4 (Risk assessment and safety management) 10 of 20 (50%) applicable cases rated as ANI
 - Risk and safety concerns were not adequately assessed or addressed. (8 cases)
 - Assessments were not comprehensive, ongoing, and/or timely. (6 cases)
 - Background checks were not completed. (2 cases)
 - The safety plan was not updated. (1 case)
- Item 9 (Adoption) 6 of 8 (75%) applicable cases rated as ANI

- The permanency plan of adoption was not completed in a timely manner. (6 cases) Cases that provided a specific reasoning for not completing adoption in a timely manner included the following totals:
 - TPR complaint not filed timely. (2 cases)
 - An adoption resource was not identified within the 24 month period.
 (2 cases)
 - The agency failed to communicate and assist foster parents in completing the adoption application. (1 case)
- Item 16 (Relationship of child in care with parents) 5 of 6 (83.3%) applicable cases rated as ANI
 - The agency failed to invite parents to activities outside of visitation. (4 cases)
 Activities included:
 - Medical appointments (3 cases)
 - Dental appointments (2 cases)
 - School activities (2 cases)
 - The agency failed to conduct a diligent search for father. (1 case)
- Item 17 (Needs and services of child, parents, & foster parents) 11 of 20 (55%) applicable cases rated as ANI
 - The agency failed to assess parents. (8 cases) Individuals specifically not assessed included:
 - Fathers (7 cases)
 - Foster parents (1 case)
 - o The agency failed to conduct diligent searches for the father. (2 cases)
 - Services were not provided for mothers. (4 cases)
 - The agency did not provide adequate incentive for the father to engage in services. (1 case)
 - o Identified services were not provided by the agency in a timely manner. (1 case)
- Item 18 (Child & family involvement in case planning) 10 of 17 (58.8%) applicable cases rated as ANI
 - o The agency failed to involve the following in the case planning process:
 - Fathers (4 cases)
 - Mothers (2 cases)
 - The agency failed to do a diligent search for the father to involve him in case planning. (2 cases)
 - The agency failed to involve the child in case planning process. (2 cases)
- Item 20 (Caseworker visits with parents) 11 of 13 (84.6%) applicable cases rated as
 - The frequency of visits was insufficient. (8 cases)
 - o The quality of visits was insufficient. (2 cases)

- o The agency failed to conduct diligent searches. (1 case)
- Item 22 (Physical health of child) 8 of 15 (53.3%) applicable cases rated as ANI
 - The agency failed to to assess the target child for physical and/or health needs. (6 cases)
 - o There were records missing in the case file. (5 cases)
 - Specific records that were missing include:
 - Dental health records (4 cases)
 - Physical health records (1 case)
 - There was no documentation of contact between the agency and providers.
 (2 cases)