

# Florence County DSS Child Welfare Services Review February 2005

During the week of February 7-11, 2005 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Florence 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, Florence DSS supervisors, and representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem.

**Period included in Case Record Review: August 1, 2004 to Jan 31, 2005**

**Period included in Outcome Measures: Feb 1, 2004 to Jan 31, 2005**

## **Purpose**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources**

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

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

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

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Section One

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding: Partially Achieved**

-Safety Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations. **Finding: Area Needing Improvement**  
-Safety Item 2: Repeat maltreatment. **Finding: Strength**

Analysis of Safety Item 1 Findings

**Strategic Outcome Report Findings**

**Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations** on reports of child maltreatment  
Data Time Period: 02/1/04 to 1/31/05

	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective $\geq 99.99\%*$	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,149	15,258	16,147.39	(889.39)
Florence	346	318	345.97	(27.97)

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

**Site Visit Findings** Performance Item Ratings

**Safety Item 1 :** Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	100	0	0	8	0
Treatment	2	100	0	0	8	0
Total Cases	4	100	0	0	16	0

**Explanation of Item 1**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Florence DSS.** State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. The outcome report indicates that, for the 12-month period under review, Florence DSS failed to initiate investigations of alleged abuse and neglect within 24-hours twenty-eight times. Only four of the 20 case records read by onsite reviewers had intakes within the period under review. Investigations were initiated timely for each of those four cases.

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Analysis of Safety Item 2 Findings**

**Strategic Outcome Report Findings**

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

Indicated Report Between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004

	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	8,935	61	8,389.97	484.04
Florence	121	0	113.62	7.38

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	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	20	100	0	0	0	0

**Explanation of Item 2**

**This is a “Strength” for Florence DSS.** According to CAPSS data none of the 121 cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review were victims in a previously founded report. None of the 20 cases reviewed onsite were cases of repeat maltreatment. Consequently, Florence DSS met the federally established standard for this item.

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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: Partially Achieved**

-Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal.

**Finding: Strength**

-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	5	83	1	17	4	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	14	88	2	12	4	0

**Item 3**

**This is a “Strength” for Florence DSS.** This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency’s interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. Reviewers rated 14 of the applicable 16 cases “strength” for this item. That is because, in 88% of the cases, services to protect children in the home were appropriately applied.

In two of the 16 applicable cases, the agency did not initiate services that addressed the risk factors to the children in the home. In both cases the caseworkers documented issues that needed attention to ensure the safety of the children in the home, but services to address those specific needs were not initiated.

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Analysis of Safety Item 4 Findings

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Safety Item 4: Risk of harm.</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	7	78	2	22	0	0
Total Cases	16	84	3	16	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 07/01/03 to 06/30/04	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective >= 91.50%*	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	14,225	1,071	11,664.50	1,489.50
Florence	272	22	223.04	26.96

\* This is a DSS established objective.

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

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** The standard for the outcome report in CAPSS is that no more than 8.5% of alleged child victims have another report within 6 months of the initial report. According to CAPSS, Florence DSS met the objective for this item. It must be understood that “Subsequent reports of abuse” is a proxy measure for “Risk of harm” because additional, unsubstantiated reports of abuse do not always mean that a child remains at risk.

Onsite reviewers are able to assess what CAPSS cannot. Onsite reviewers determine how effective the county DSS office is at managing the risks of harm that necessitate continued involvement by DSS. By this criteria, 3 of the 19 applicable cases reviewed (16%) were rated Area Needing Improvement. In each of those 3 cases the children remained at risk because DSS did not accurately assess the protective capacity of the custodial adult(s). In the foster care case this led to ex-parte removals of the child from its family the agency had tried to work with as a treatment case. In the 2 treatment cases, ex-parte removals seem imminent.

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Conversely, 15 of the 19 cases were rated Strength. That is because, in most instances, clients served by Florence DSS benefit from the assessment and planning that is done in the Family Meetings and Family Group Conferences that are a routine part of casework practice.

**Section Three**

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding:**

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

**Partially Achieved**

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

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	8	100	0	0	2	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 02/01/04 to 01/31/05	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Fos Care Episode	Number of Children Objective >= 91.40%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,249	260	2,969.59	19.41
Florence	28	0	25.59	2.41

\* This is a federally established objective.

**Explanation**

**Foster Care Re-entries is a Strength for Florence DSS.** According to CAPSS, none of the 28 children who entered care in Florence County during the period under review had been returned home in the prior 12 months. None of the cases reviewed onsite involved a child re-entering foster care.

It should be noted here that the number of children in foster care in Florence County has declined by approximately 60% since January 2003. At the start of Jan 2003 there were 122 children in foster care in Florence County. By the end of Dec 2003 there were 80 children in foster care. The number of children in foster care continued to decline until reaching its current plateau, averaging 40 children in care. The decline in the number of children entering foster care was the result of improvements in casework practices stemming from several agency initiatives. The reduced number of children entering care simultaneously placed greater demand on in-home treatment services and the Florence DSS unit overseeing those services.

The success of this effort is seen in the fact that more children are being managed within their families without increasing the foster care re-entry rate in Florence County.

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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	3,677	3,029	3,187.96	(158.96)
Florence	30	27	26.01	0.99

Note: This is a federally established objective.

**Explanation**

**Stability of foster care placement is a “Strength”.** The outcome report shows that 27 of the 30 children (90%) in care less than 12 month had no more than 2 foster care placements. This surpassed the standard of 86.7%. Onsite reviewers not only counted the number of moves children in foster care experienced, but looked at the reasons for those moves. Only one case reviewed onsite involved a child with multiple placement changes during the period under review. This was an older child with emotional and behavioral disorders for whom an ISCEDC funded placement should have been sought earlier in the case history.



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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 02/04 –01/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,636	1,934	1,927.08	6.92
Florence	65	38	34.45	3.55

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

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

**Explanation**

**This is a “Strength” for Florence 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. In Florence DSS 58.46% (38/65) of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. Consequently, the objective for this item was met.

Onsite reviewers rated this item based on two criteria: 1) Is the permanency goal appropriately matched to the child’s need? and 2) Is the agency acting to cause the goal to be achieved timely? Eight of the ten cases reviewed onsite were rated “Strength” for this item. The two cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” each had a plan of Return Home. (See explanation for Item 8 below)

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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 02/01/04–01/31/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,021	1,652	1,540.00	112.00
Florence	12	6	9.14	-3.14

\* 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	7	78	2	22	1	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Florence 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 Florence County 50% of the children returned home within a year of removal. The agency average is that 82% of the children entering foster care return home within one year.

One of the two case rated “Area Needing Improvement” involved a child in foster care since November 2002 with a plan of Return Home. The case had an upcoming permanency planning hearing in which DSS intended to recommend extending the plan of Return Home for six more months. The other case was similar in that the parent was not making progress on the treatment plan, yet DSS had not practiced concurrent planning by referring the child for an adoption assessment.

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This suggests that children in foster care for more than a year or two in Florence County may have the wrong permanency plan.

Analysis of Permanency Item 9 Findings

<b><u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u></b>				
Measure P3.4: <b>Length of Time to Achieve Adoption</b> – Of all children who exited from foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children With Finalized Adoption W/in Past 12 Months	Number of Children Where Adoption Was Finalized Within 24 Months of Entering Care	Number of Children Objective $\geq 32.00\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	334	65	106.88	(41.88)
Florence	6	0	1.92	(1.92)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

<b><u>Site Visit Findings</u></b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 9: Adoption.</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	0	0	1	100	9	0

**Explanation**

**This is a “Area Needing Improvement”.** According to the outcome report none of the six adoptions completed during the period under review was completed within 24 months. The average months in care for children with a plan of adoption in Florence County is 39.03 months. This means that the DSS office must reduce the average length of time to achieve adoption by 15 months to meet the federally established objective.

Stakeholders shed some light on factors affecting this issue. One stakeholder stated that if a 7 to 12 year old foster child tells an adoptions assessment worker that he/she does not want to be adopted, the Adoptions unit closes the file. Another stakeholder said that the DSS attorney was reluctant to ask for TPR at the merit hearing even when the parents’ history with the agency could be used as evidence.

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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 02/01/04 – 01/31/05	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective >= 85.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,011	1,141	6,809.35	60.65
Florence	62	14	52.70	(4.70)

\* 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	0	0	0	0	10	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Florence DSS.** The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan. Approximately 23% of the children in Florence DSS custody have this plan. The percentage of children with this plan could be unusually high if the plan of Adoption was prematurely ruled out.

Stakeholders expressed concerns that may impact this issue. Some stakeholders felt that children once served by Mental Health and the Dept of Juvenile Justice are now being referred to DSS for placement because those agencies are either not providing placements for children or rarely placing them. This has resulted in an increase in older children with emotional and/or behavioral disorders entering foster care in Florence County.

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

Analysis of Permanency Item 11 Findings

**Strategic Outcome Report Findings**

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

	Number of Children In Care 02/01/04 – 01/31/05	Number of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Percent of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Number of Children Objective >= 70.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	5,930	3,925	66.19	4,151.00	(226.00)
Florence	62	50	80.65	43.40	6.60

\* This is a DSS established objective.

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<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 11:</b> Proximity of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0

**Explanation**

**This is a “Strength” for Florence DSS.** To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in Florence County. The outcome report indicates that 81% (50/62) of the children in care are placed in the county. Consequently, the county met the standard for this item.

Onsite reviewers rated this item by different criteria. If a child was placed out-of-county to receive medical or behavioral treatment this item was rated “strength”. Onsite reviewers rated all applicable cases “strength”.

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 12:</b> Placement with siblings						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	100	0	0	7	0

**Explanation**

**This is a “Strength”.** It was apparent that the agency attempted to place siblings together when resources and circumstances made that possible. When siblings were not placed together, it was not in their best interest to be placed together.

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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	67	3	33	1	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** The visiting rights of fathers was sometimes ignored by the agency, even when it was known that the father maintained a relationship with the child prior to the child entering foster care. The other situation that was not properly handled involved incarcerated parents. Two cases reviewed involved mothers who spent some time in jail during the period under review. In each case the plan for the child remained “Return Home” yet visiting was not arranged.

<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0

**Explanation**

**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. It should be noted that most (80%) of the cases reviewed were rated “Strength” for this item. In most, but not every instance the important relationships in the lives of the children in foster care were maintained.

The area that needs attention is in supporting the child’s relationship with significant grandparents. Because most of the children in foster care have drug-abusing parents, the most reliable caregiver in that child’s life was often a grandparent. In fact, grandparents are often the ones who report the abuse and neglect to DSS, in an effort to protect their grand children. The cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” for this item involved foster children for the relationship with a significant grandparent was severed, even when the agency knew that the relationship was important to the child.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 15:</b> Relative placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	78	2	22	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 7 of the 9 applicable cases, both maternal and paternal relatives were assessed as placement options. In the two cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” the paternal relatives were not assessed. In one instance, the father had an extensive criminal history, but no assessment was to determine the appropriateness of his relatives.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Permanency Item 16:</b> Relationship of child in care with parents						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	78	2	22	1	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. In the seven cases rated “Strength” the caseworker documented the efforts of foster parents to maintain and strengthen the relationship between the children in their care and those children’s parents.

This item requires that more than the minimum required by the agency’s visitation policy occur, especially with small children in foster care. Reviewers found instances where the agency did not go beyond the minimum even when there were indicators that more than the minimum was needed. In one case it may not have been in the child’s best interest to maintain a relationship with a parent who was in and out of jail. Instead of ending such visits, the visits continued but were sporadic.



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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	8	80	2	20	0	0
Treatment	3	30	7	70	0	0
Total Cases	11	55	9	45	0	0

**Explanation**

This item asks two questions: 1) Were the needs of the child, parents, and foster parents assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? This is an **“Area Needing Improvement”** for Florence DSS.

With 30% of treatment cases rated “Strength” and 80% of foster care cases rated “Strength” it was evident that ongoing assessment and service delivery in treatment cases needs attention. Caseworkers often focused on the mother and the child that was reported to the agency. Assessment of and service delivery to fathers and other children in the home often did not occur.

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<b>Site Visit Findings</b> Performance Item Ratings						
<b>Well Being Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning</b>						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	44	5	56	1	0
Treatment	5	50	5	50	0	0
Total Cases	9	47	10	53	1	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. The agency consistently uses family group conferences and family meetings during its early involvement in foster care and treatment cases. However, the involvement of parents and children in case planning diminishes from the six-month reassessment, onward. Reviewers found that involvement of non-custodial fathers in the planning process was inconsistent, even when those fathers had ongoing contact with the children. When a sibling group had more than one father the agency would sometimes work with one of the fathers and not the other, or with neither father.

<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	4	40	6	60	0	0
Total Cases	14	70	6	30	0	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) are Florence DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) do the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? In regard to foster care cases the answer to both questions is “Yes”. The treatment cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” all involved sibling groups in which some, but not all of the children in the family were seen and assessed according to agency policy.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	67	2	33	6	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	14	86	2	14	7	0

**Explanation**

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Florence DSS. All treatment cases were rated “Strength”. However, a third of the applicable foster care cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement”. In one case visits between the child and mother stopped because of the therapist’s recommendation, but the therapist’s recommendations did not relieve the caseworker of her responsibility to see the parent. Although this does not appear to be a major problem, caseworkers may need guidance when dealing with unfamiliar circumstances regarding visits with parents.

**Section Six**

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

**Summary of Findings**

**Overall Finding:**

**Partially Achieved**

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	86	1	14	3	0
Treatment	4	57	3	43	2	0
Total Cases	10	71	4	29	5	0

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**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. 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” in 71% of the cases reviewed. Workers in treatment cases were more likely to assess the educational needs of one, but not all of the children in the home.

**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	9	90	1	10	0
Treatment	6	60	4	40	0	0
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. The physical health needs of children in foster care were more likely to be assessed and met than children in treatment cases. As was described in several other items, the physical health needs of some but not all children in sibling group were addressed.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 23: Mental health of the child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	100	0	0	3	0
Treatment	2	33	4	67	4	0
Total Cases	9	69	4	31	7	0

**Explanation**

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. Documentation in the case records indicated that children in foster care were assessed for Mental Health services and received counseling as needed. Children in treatment cases were less likely to have their mental health needs met.

Stakeholders revealed that drug and alcohol services provided by Circle Park were very good. However, mental health services were available but not of good quality. Mental health services for sex abuse victims and perpetrators was not available. Stakeholders also stated that the Dept of Mental Health would not provide residential services for their clients when needed.

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**Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses**

Ten of the 29 open foster home records were reviewed. Of the 10 records reviewed, there were no problems noted in 5 records.

1. Quarterly visits were conducted on all foster homes. Dictation of those quarterly visits addressed specific issues and adequately assessed the appropriateness of the foster homes.
2. No licenses expired prior to renewal.
3. Minor case-specific compliance issues were seen in 5 foster home records. There were no patterns of non-compliance.

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**Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Investigation Initiated Timely?	3	2
Assessment Adequate?	5	0
Case Decision Appropriate?	5	0

**Analysis:** The use of Family Group Conferences and Family Meetings helped staff prepare thorough assessments of risks and safety factors. CPS screening tools (for domestic violence, protective capacity of caregiver, etc.) were completed appropriately. The investigation of one high risk case was initiated in 2.5 hours instead of 2 hours. The investigation of a medium risk intake that came in at 3:23pm was initiated the next morning, so it was not done within the 0 to 12 hour timeframe required by agency policy. These types of timeliness issues are not captured by the agency's outcome reports.

**Section Ten – Screened Out Intakes**

**Explanation**

Not all calls made to DSS meet the legal definition of child abuse or neglect. Each DSS office must have an intake process that accurately determines which calls should be accepted for investigation and which should be screened out. Ten screened out intakes were reviewed. Screened out intakes are evaluated solely on the information contained in the agency database CAPSS.

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Cannot Determine</b>
Screen-Out Decision Appropriate?	7	2	1
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Necessary Collaterals Contacted?	3	1	6
Appropriate Referrals Made?	1	1	8

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**This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.** Seven of the 10 screened-out intakes reviewed were deemed appropriate. Three of the intakes that were screened out should have been accepted and investigated by the agency. In one case the victim child stated that she was choked by the aunt with whom she was living. In another case a clear threat of harm existed. In the third case the degree of risk to the children could not be determined because the police were not contacted for their report or insight into the domestic violence incident that prompted the call to DSS intake.

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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.				20 (100%)	0	0	0
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	4 (100%)	0	16				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	20 (100%)	0	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				17 (85%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	14 (88%)	2 (12%)	4				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	16 (84%)	3 (16%)	1				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				7 (70%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	8 (100%)	0	2				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	1				
Item 9: Adoption		1 (100%)	9				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	0	0	10				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	10 (100%)	0	0				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	3 (100%)	0	7				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	6 (67%)	3 (33%)	1				
Item 14: Preserving connections	8 (80%)	2 (20%)					
Item 15: Relative placement	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	1				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	1				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				8 (40%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	10 (50%)	10 (50%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	9 (47%)	10 (53%)	1				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	14 (70%)	6 (30%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	5 (26%)	14 (74%)	1				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				10 (67%)	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	5
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	10 (67%)	5 (33%)	5				
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	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	7				