

**Fairfield County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
July 2005**

During the week of July 18-22, 2005 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Fairfield 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, Fairfield DSS supervisors, and representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem.

Period included in Case Record Review: January 1, 2005 to June 30, 2005

Period included in Outcome Measures: July 1, 2004 to June 30, 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

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment				
Data Time Period: 07/1/04 to 6/30/05				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective >= 99.99%*	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,465	15,632	16,463	(831.35)
Fairfield	72	47	71.99	(24.99)

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

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 1 : Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	100	0	0	9	0
Treatment	1	100	0	0	9	0
Total Cases	2	100	0	0	18	0

Explanation of Item 1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Fairfield DSS. State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. Only two of the cases reviewed were opened during the period under review. Consequently, 18 cases were rated “Not Applicable”. However, reviewers documented that investigations were initiated on time in all of the cases reviewed. In fact, investigations were usually initiated within two hours of the intake, regardless of the risk level assigned to the intake.

The outcome report seems to indicate that Fairfield has the highest percentage of late investigations in the state. Discussions with the intake worker and supervisor revealed that Fairfield DSS’s problem is not practice. The problem is data entry.

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Analysis of Safety Item 2 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
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 Nov 1, 2003 and Oct 31, 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	9,531	72	8,949.61	509.39
Fairfield	58	1	54.46	2.54

Note: This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 2 : Repeat Maltreatment.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	9	90	1	0	0	0
Total Cases	19	95	1	5	0	0

Explanation of Item 2

This is a “Strength” for Fairfield DSS. According to CAPSS data 1 of the 58 cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review was a victim in a previously founded report. One of the 19 applicable cases reviewed onsite was a case of repeat maltreatment. The data indicates that less than 2 percent of the children served by the Fairfield DSS child welfare program are repeat victims of maltreatment.

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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: Substantially Achieved**
 -Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal. **Finding: Strength**
 -Safety Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren). **Finding: Strength**

Analysis of Safety Item 3 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	100	0	0	8	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	11	92	1	8	8	0

Item 3

This is a “Strength” for Fairfield DSS. This item assesses the appropriateness of the services selected to prevent the removal of children from their family. Reviewers rated 11 of the applicable 12 cases “strength” for this item. In the cases reviewed, when DSS decided to removed children from their home, that decision was supported by the facts of the case. When DSS decided to leave children in their home after finding that abuse or neglect had occurred, the services selected to protect those children were appropriate.

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Analysis of Safety Item 4 Findings

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 4: Risk of harm.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	19	95	1	5	0	0

Strategic Outcome Report Findings				
Measure S2.2: Risk of harm to child – 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 01/01/04 to 12/31/04	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective $\geq 91.50\%$ *	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	13,866	1,118	12,687.39	60.61
Fairfield	67	7	61.31	(1.31)

* This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure

This is a “Strength” for Fairfield DSS. 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 7 of the 67 (10%) child victims were reported again to DSS within 6 months of an unfounded determination. 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 conclusively mean that risk has or has not been reduced. Only one of the 7 subsequent reports was a substantiated case of abuse or neglect.

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 criterion, 1 of the 20 cases reviewed was rated “Area Needing Improvement”. Stakeholders also judged Fairfield DSS as being very effective at reducing risk of harm to the children in their care. They explained that

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Fairfield DSS has very little turnover among its staff, the staff are experienced, and have manageable caseloads.

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 placement.
- Item 7: Permanency goal for child
- Item 8: Reunification, plmt w/ relatives
- Item 9: Adoption
- Item 10: Perm goal of other planned arrangement

Substantially Achieved

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

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 5 Findings

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 07/01/04 to 06/30/05	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Foster Care Episode	Number of Children Objective $\geq 91.40\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,217	253	2,940.34	23.66
Fairfield	8	1	7.31	(0.31)

* This is a federally established objective.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 5: Foster care re-entries.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	100	0	0	8	0

Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Fairfield DSS.

According to CAPSS, 1 of the 8 children (12.5%) who entered foster care in Fairfield County during the period under review had been returned home in the prior 12 months. Fairfield failed to meet the standard that allows no more than an 8.6% re-entry rate. Because of the small number of children entering care in Fairfield County, the one child who was a re-entry caused Fairfield DSS to not meet this standard.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 6 Findings

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

Strategic Outcome Report Findings				
Measure P3.2: Stability of Foster Care Placement – 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	3,704	3,017	3,211.37	(194.37)
Fairfield	13	12	11.27	0.73

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Stability of foster care placement is a “Strength”. The outcome report shows that 12 of the 13 children (92%) in care less than 12 months had no more than 2 foster care placements. Consequently, Fairfield DSS met the standard of 86.7%. The sample of foster care cases reviewed also showed that placements for children were generally stable. This level of stability is because most of Fairfield DSS’s teenagers are placed at Carolina Children’s Home, rather than in foster homes within the county. The one child who had more than two placements during the period under review was a teenager who had disrupted several therapeutic placements.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 7 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.5: Permanency Goal for Child – 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 07/04 –06/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,557	1,652	1,885.21	(233.21)
Fairfield	22	14	11.66	2.34

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

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 7: Permanency goal for children.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0

Explanation of Item 7

This is a “Strength” for Fairfield DSS. To meet the criteria established in the CAPSS report 53.00% or more of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months must have a TPR petition filed. For Fairfield DSS the percentage is 63.6 (14/22).

Onsite reviewers noted that Fairfield DSS excelled in this area. With the support of the Family Court Judges and the agency attorney, Fairfield DSS routinely submits plans of TPR/Adoption at either the Probable Cause or the Merit Hearing for cases involving parents with a long history of non-compliance with treatment for their addictions or other disorders. Reviewers found that the permanency goal for every case reviewed was appropriately matched to the child’s need and was determined in a timely manner.

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Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 8 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.3: Length of Time to Achieve Reunification – 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 07/01/04–06/30/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,051	1,696	1,562.86	133.14
Fairfield	11	8	8.38	(0.38)

* This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	100	0	0	9	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Fairfield 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 Fairfield County 73% of the children returned home within a year of removal. Fairfield DSS missed this standard by 3 percentage points which, because of the county’s small numbers, is less than one child. The value of this measure is as an indicator of practice issues that might cause children to remain in foster care longer than necessary. Onsite reviewers did not find that to be the situation in any of the cases reviewed.

It is significant that 9 of the 10 cases reviewed had plans other than “Return Home”. This was largely due to the agency’s efforts to work with children in their own families as long as possible. When children entered foster care their parents had generally demonstrated an unwillingness or inability to make the changes needed to provide a safe home for their children.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 9 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.4: Length of Time to Achieve Adoption – Of all children who exited from foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children With Finalized Adoption W/in Past 12 Months	Number of Children Where Adoption Was Finalized Within 24 Months of Entering Care	Number of Children Objective >= 32.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	346	63	110.72	(47.72)
Fairfield	2	1	0.64	0.36

Note: This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 9: Adoption.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	100	0	0	7	0

Explanation

This is a “Area Needing Improvement”. To meet this federally established objective 32% of the adoptions in a county must be completed within 24 months of the children entering care. Fairfield DSS met that standard. It is significant that 20 to 30 percent of the children in foster care in Fairfield County have the plan of TPR/Adoption. The agency quickly and aggressively pursues adoption when circumstances of a case warrant it.

Stakeholders also said that DSS was very effective in pursuing and accomplishing adoptions for children in foster care.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 10 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.6: Permanency Goal of “Other Planned Living Arrangement” – 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 07/01/04 – 06/30/05	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	8,103	1,054	6,887.55	161.45
Fairfield	27	6	22.95	(1.95)

* This is a DSS established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	100	0	0	4	0

Explanation-*

This is a “Strength” for Fairfield DSS. The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan. Approximately 22% of the children in Fairfield DSS custody have this plan. The value of this measure is an indicator of children whose permanency plan may have them aging out of foster care when some of those children should either be returned home or adopted. Onsite reviewers read the cases of all 6 children in Fairfield County with the plan of APPLA (Alternate Planned Permanent Living Arrangement). Two of the children were in college. One was a senior in high school who had been accepted in college. The other three children were in high level therapeutic placements with significant behavioral issues. They had been assessed by Adoptions and deemed not appropriate. Foster Care Review Board concurred with those assessments. Consequently, Fairfield DSS’s management of their children with this plan was appropriate in every case.

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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

Substantially Achieved

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

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 07/01/04 – 06/30/05	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	5,978	3,902	65.27	4,184.60	(282.60)
Fairfield	27	19	70.37	18.90	0.10

* This is a DSS established objective.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	100	0	0	1	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Fairfield DSS. To meet this objective 70% or more, of the children in care must be placed in Fairfield County. The outcome report indicates that 70.37% (19/27) of the children in care were placed in the county. Most of the children placed outside of Fairfield County are teenagers and are placed in adjacent Richland County at Carolina Children’s Home.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 12: Placement with siblings						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	100	0	0	6	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. It was apparent that the agency attempted to place siblings together when resources and circumstances made that possible. Siblings who were not placed together were teenagers who were separated because one or more of them needed a therapeutic placement.

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

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. Case documentation showed that children in foster care had visitation plans that addressed visits with their parents and siblings both in foster care and not in foster care. Documentation also showed that those visits occurred. This task was made easier because almost all of Fairfield DSS’s children are either in Fairfield County or are in adjacent Richland County.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	100	0	0	1	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. All of the applicable cases were rated “Strength”. Foster Care Review Board, Guardian Ad Litem, and foster parents all said that Fairfield DSS excels in this area. The agency facilitates contact between foster children and their adult siblings, even when those siblings live in other states. Relationships with grandparents are supported. Consideration is given to keeping children in their same school, when appropriate.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 15: Relative placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	67	3	33	1	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness at identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. In 6 of the 9 applicable cases, both maternal and paternal relatives were assessed as placement options. In the 3 cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” there was no evidence that all known relatives were assessed as placement options. One phenomenon that affects Fairfield DSS is that the workers often know the child’s family members very well. Based on that knowledge, the workers may determine that certain relatives would not be appropriate placement options. However, no formal assessment is done or documented, nor is consideration of relatives documented in staffings between the supervisor and worker. Consequently, no evidence exists that relatives were assessed.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	100	0	0	3	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in promoting or maintaining a strong emotionally supportive relationship between children in care and their parents. All seven of the applicable cases were rated “Strength” because in those cases provisions were made for parents to be involved in their children’s lives beyond the minimum visitation required by policy. Fairfield DSS’s performance on this item was affected by the willingness of their foster parents to establish relationships with the parents of the children in their care.

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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)

Substantially Achieved

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

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	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	18	90	2	10	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 a **“Strength”** for Fairfield DSS.

Communication between economic and human service staff in Fairfield DSS is very good. As part of their initial assessment human service staff consistently check economic service information systems to determine if a client is receiving services. Consequently, foster care and treatment staff know when clients are receiving economic services. Assessment documents consistently identified needs of parents and all children. The few (2) exceptions were treatment cases.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	17	85	3	15	0	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area needing Improvement**”. Even though this item is an area needing improvement it should be noted that 85% of the cases reviewed were rated “Strength”. Those cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” received that rating because fathers who either lived in the home or were involved in the lives of their children were not invited or encouraged to participate in case planning.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 19: Worker visits with child						
	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

This is a “**Strength**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) Were Fairfield DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) Did the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? Both criteria were met in every case reviewed. In most cases Fairfield DSS staff visited clients more frequently than policy required. The frequency of visits appeared to be based on the needs of the clients.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	80	1	20	5	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	13	87	2	13	5	0

Explanation

This is a “**Strength**” for Fairfield DSS. In 87% of the cases reviewed worker visits with parents met or exceeded policy requirements. In addition to face-to-face visits, workers made frequent telephone contacts with parents to assess their needs and monitor their progress on treatment plan objectives. One area that Fairfield DSS may need to attend to is situations in which the primary caregiver is not the parent, yet the parents are still the legal guardians of the child. The one foster care case rated Area Needing Improvement involved that situation. Fairfield DSS worked closely with the child’s caregiver, a great aunt, but was not working with the child’s parents.

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Section Six

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

Partially Achieved

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	89	1	11	1	0
Treatment	6	86	1	14	3	0
Total Cases	14	88	2	12	4	0

Explanation

This is a “**Strength**” for Fairfield DSS. This item asks two questions: 1) Did DSS assess the educational needs of the children under their supervision, and 2) Were identified educational needs addressed? The answer to both questions was “Yes” for 88% of the cases reviewed. The agency’s assessment form was used to assess the educational needs of all children in the family in treatment cases, not just the child initially reported to the agency. In the two cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” the agency relied on information either from the parent or from a foster parent about the child’s educational performance. The agency did not verify that information by contacting the child’s school.

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Section Seven

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

-Item 22: Physical health of the child

-Item 23: Mental health of the child

Partially Achieved

Finding: Strength

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	10	100	0	0	0
Treatment	8	89	1	11	1	0
Total Cases	18	95	1	5	1	0

Explanation

This is a **“Strength” for Fairfield DSS**. This item asks two questions: 1) Were the medical needs of the children assessed?, and 2) Were identified medical needs addressed? In 95% of the cases reviewed, the answer to both questions was “Yes”. Medical records, or letters from medical providers, or documented telephone contacts with medical providers were in the case files. When a child’s condition warranted continuous monitoring, documentation of ongoing assessment was in case files.

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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	4	80	1	20	5	0
Treatment	3	100	0	0	7	0
Total Cases	7	88	1	12	12	0

Explanation

This is a **“Strength” for Fairfield DSS**. This item ask two questions: 1) Were the mental health needs of the children assessed?, and 2) Were identified mental health needs addressed? For 88% of the cases reviewed the answer to both questions was “Yes”. Many of the cases were rated Not Applicable because those cases were opened long before the period under review and the initial assessment of those cases did not indicate the need for mental health services for the children. However, the mental health needs of those children were assessed.

Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses

Ten of Fairfield DSS’s 18 foster homes were reviewed. Licensing is an **Area Needing Improvement** that will have to be addressed in the county’s Program Improvement Plan. The county director and staff were aware of the problems with licensing and had already taken steps to address them.

1. Quarterly visits were not being done according to policy. It appeared that, in early 2005 the visits started to be done consistently and properly documented. This improvement occurred because another caseworker was given this duty. Prior to Jan/Feb 2005 many visits did not occur.
2. Reference checks and background checks were well documented.
3. Training hours were not documented in CAPSS or in licensing files. However, the licensing worker had sign-in sheets to show that foster parents were attending training. Reviewer talked with licensing worker about how to properly document the hours completed by each foster parent.

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Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

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

Analysis: Reviewers found that the assessment tool was completed thoroughly in all cases reviewed. The evidence in each case supported the unfounded decision.

Section Ten – Screened Out Intakes

	Yes	No	Cannot Determine
Was Intake Appropriately Screened Out?	7	1	2
	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Were Necessary Collaterals Contacted?		1	9
Were Appropriate Referrals Made?		2	7

Explanation: Not all calls to the Dept. of Social Services alleging abuse or neglect meet the legal definition of abuse or neglect. Those calls are screened out, and not investigated. The table above contains the findings of a reviewer who examined 10 screened out intakes.

This is an **“Area Needing Improvement”** for Fairfield DSS. For 2 of the 10 cases reviewed the reviewer could not determine if the decision to screen out the intake was appropriate. The reviewers explanation for those ratings was similar to the explanation for the intake deemed inappropriately screened out – documentation did not support the decision to screen out those intakes. One of the intakes deemed inappropriately screened out involved a family that had been the subject of nine (9) prior referrals. Even though 70% of the screened-out intakes reviewed were deemed appropriate, that percentage is not high enough to ensure the safety of the children referred to DSS for protection.

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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.				19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0	0
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	2 (100%)	0	18				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0	0
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	8				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				10 (100%)	0	0	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	2 (100%)	0	8				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	10 (100%)	0	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	1 (100%)	0	1				
Item 9: Adoption	3 (100%)	0	7				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	6 (100%)	0	4				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				10 (100%)	0	0	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	9 (100%)	0	1				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	4 (100%)	0	6				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	3				
Item 14: Preserving connections	9 (100%)	0	1				
Item 15: Relative placement	6 (67%)	3 (33%)	1				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	7 (100%)	0	3				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				16 (80%)	4(20%)	0	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	17 (85%)	3 (15%)	0				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	20 (100%)	0	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	5				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				14 (88%)	2 (12%)	0	4
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	14 (88%)	2 (12%)	4				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				17 (89%)	1 (5.5%)	1 (5.5%)	1
Item 22: Physical health of the child	18 (95%)	1 (5%)	1				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	12				