

**Darlington County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
August 2005**

During the week of August 22-26, 2005 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Darlington County. A sample of open and closed foster care and treatment cases was reviewed. Also reviewed were screened-out intakes, foster home licensing records, and unfounded investigations. Stakeholders interviewed for this review included foster parents, Darlington DSS supervisor, representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem, law enforcement, legal representatives, foster children, and biological parents.

Period included in Case Record Review: February 1 – July 31, 2005

Period included in Outcome Measures: August 1, 2004 – July 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

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment				
Data Time Period: 08/01/05 to 07/31/05				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective $\geq 99.99\%*$	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,403	15,790	16,401.36	(611.36)
Darlington	464	461	463.95	(2.95)

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

<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	2	100	0	0	8	0
Treatment	1	100	0	0	9	0
Total Cases	3	100	0	0	17	0

Explanation of Item 1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Darlington 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 Darlington initiated 99.35 (461/464) of the investigations of alleged abuse and neglect within 24-hours. The objective for this item is 99.99%. Based on CAPSS the county missed the established objective. All of the investigations reported in CAPSS need to be initiated timely in order to achieve this objective.

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A stakeholder commented that Darlington DSS has an on-call worker who goes out on all intakes for the week. A different person takes the intake if more calls are received than the on-call worker is able to respond to. A barrier to responding timely is training time (up to six months), mandatory meetings, and staff shortages due to leave and terminations.

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 February 1, 2004 and January 31, 2005				
	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	9,713	60	9,120.51	532.49
Darlington	172	1	161.51	9.49

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	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	19	95	1	5	0	0

Explanation of Item 2

Repeat Maltreatment is a “Strength” for Darlington DSS. According to CAPSS data only one of the cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review involved repeat maltreatment. Reviewers determined one of the applicable cases reviewed on-site involved repeat maltreatment. Darlington DSS met the federally established objective for this item.

Stakeholders interviewed stated drugs are a major problem. Most of the cases involve drug or alcohol abuse. DSS does a good job in preventing the recurrence of maltreatment. The vast majority of cases, with the exception of those involving families with multiple problems, do not re-enter the system.

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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	6	86	1	14	3	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	16	94	1	6	3	0

Item 3

Item 3 is a “Strength”. This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency’s interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. Reviewers rated all of the applicable treatment cases “Strength” for this item. It was determined that services to one treatment family were not sufficient to prevent removal from the home. Placement with the maternal grandmother, who previously had custody, was not explored.

One stakeholder stated Emergency Protective Custody (EPC) does not occur as often as it should. DSS does a good job of providing preventive services. Some children who should be removed from their homes are not. Another stakeholder commented the agency contacts them to arrange for the client to be evaluated to determine what services need to be provided. DSS appears to be providing services when 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	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	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 02/01/04 to 01/31/05	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	14,105	1,132	12,906.08	66.92
Darlington	511	45	467.57	(1.56)

*This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure

Item 4 is a “Strength”. The standard for the outcome report in CAPSS is that no more than 8.5% of alleged child victims have another report within six months of the initial report. According to CAPSS, Darlington DSS did not meet the objective for this item. It must be understood that “subsequent reports of abuse” is a proxy measure for “risk of harm” since additional unsubstantiated reports of abuse do not always mean that a child remains at risk.

On-site reviewers are able to assess what CAPSS cannot. On-site reviewers determine how effective the county DSS office is at managing the risks of harm that necessitate continued involvement by DSS. By these criteria, risk of harm was reduced in 95% of the cases reviewed. One foster care case was rated “Area Needing Improvement” due to custody of one child being returned to the mother who admittedly continued to abuse drugs.

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One stakeholder stated DSS appears to utilize all resources available, background checks, etc, to reduce the risk of harm. This individual also stated the agency needs to recruit younger and “more adequate foster parents (not dependent on board check). This individual also expressed an issue with the Out- of- Home Abuse and Neglect (OHAN) cases. Another stakeholder stated he has been in four different foster homes over the past seven years. He has moved due to issues not relating to his safety and has never felt threatened in the foster care setting. A stakeholder also reported that DSS has worked with his/her agency to determine if a child could be kept safely with the mother in the treatment facility.

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Section Three

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding

Partially Achieved

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

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 5 Findings

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 5: Foster care re-entries.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	57	3	43	3	0

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 08/01/04 to 07/31/05	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	3,153	248	2,881.84	23.16
Darlington	72	8	65.81	(1.81)

* This is a federally established objective.

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Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is an “Area Needing Improvement”. According to CAPSS, the objective was not met. Eight of the seventy-two children who were returned home re-entered foster care.

Reviewers rated three of the foster care cases “area needing improvement” for this item. In two of the cases the children re-entered foster care within thirty days of being returned home.

Stakeholders rated DSS effective in preventing foster care re-entries. The vast majority of children do not come back into the system. Although there is some recidivism, re-entries do not occur a third time. Some of the re-entries are due to the judge’s decision to send children home if parent meets conditions of the treatment plan (parenting classes, drug treatment).

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 6 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> 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

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
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	3,660	2,956	3,173.22	217.22
Darlington	82	70	71.09	(1.09)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

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Explanation

Stability of foster care placement is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The outcome report indicates 70 of the 82 children (85%) in care less than 12 months had no more than two foster care placements. This is below the standard of 86.70%. Based on the results of the on-site review, the standard was met.

On-site reviewers not only counted the number of moves children in foster care experienced, but also looked at the reasons for those moves. Reviewers determined one child had four placement changes since February 2005. Two of these placement changes were due to disruptive behaviors.

Stakeholders agreed that older children tend to move more often. One stakeholder reported that he has been in foster care over seven years. He and his siblings are being adopted by the foster parent. He stated the case manager is the only consistent person involved in his care. Another stakeholder responded placement changes usually occur when the child and foster parent are not compatible or when the child “acts” out.

Analysis of Safety 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 08/04-07/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,550	1,633	1,881.50	(248.50)
Darlington	46	26	24.38	1.62

* 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

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Explanation

Item 7 is a “Strength”. 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 Darlington DSS, 56% (26/46) of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. The objective for this item was met in CAPSS.

On-site 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? All of the cases were rated “Strength” for this item. Therefore, an overall rating of “strength” is being assigned based on the results of the on-site review.

Stakeholders felt that the local DSS office is effective in establishing permanency goals for children. The case managers do a good job at reunification. Pleadings are filed 4-5 weeks in advance of the hearing. Approximately 16-18 cases are heard in half a day. The judges work well with the agency.

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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 08/01/04–07/31/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,033	1,689	1,549.15	139.85
Darlington	58	54	44.20	9.80

* 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	5	100	0	0	5	0

Explanation

Item 8 is a “Strength” for Darlington 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 Darlington County 93% (54/58) 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. During the on-site review all of the applicable cases were rated “strength

Stakeholders rated the agency as being effective in achieving timely reunification. A barrier is the policy and trying to work to keep children in relative placements and out of foster care. Sometimes a judge will return a child home as long as a parent completed the treatment plan; even if DSS still has concerns. Most children leave foster care to return to parents or relatives. A few have re-entered care. Parents have to be involved (visits, etc.).

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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 $\geq 32.00\%*$	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	348	65	111.36	(46.36)
Darlington	4	1	1.28	(0.28)

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	2	50	2	50	6	0

Explanation

Item 9 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. According to the outcome report Darlington had one finalized adoption within the past 12 months.

Four of the cases reviewed on-site had a plan of adoption. Reviewers determined the plans were appropriate and the necessary procedures were in place to accomplish the goal of adoption within the allowable time frame for two of those cases. In one of the cases rated “area needing improvement” the child has already been in foster care in excess of 24 months. In the other case, the child had been in care 16 months at the time of the review. The adoption will probably not be completed timely.

Stakeholders stated the agency is not achieving timely adoptions. It appears that the agency waits for the twelve-month review before seeking TPR. One stakeholder has been in foster care seven years. The TPR occurred during the past year.

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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 08/01/04 – 07/31/05	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective $\geq 85.00\%*$	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,041	1,045	6,834.85	161.15
Darlington	112	5	95.20	11.80

* 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	1	100	0	0	9	0

Explanation

Item 10 is a “Strength” for Darlington DSS. The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan. The outcome data shows only 4% (5/112) of the children in Darlington DSS custody have this plan. Only one of the youth in the cases reviewed has this permanency plan. Services are in place to help the youth achieve this goal.

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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:	Partially Achieved
-Item 11: Proximity of placement	Finding: Strength
-Item 12: Placement with siblings.	Finding: Strength
-Item 13: Visiting w/ parents & siblings	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 14: Preserving connections	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 15: Relative placement	Finding: Strength
-Item 16: Relationship of child w/ parents	Finding: 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 08/01/04– 07/31/05	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	5,873	3,801	64.72	4,111.10	(310.10)
Darlington	112	86	76.79	78.40	7.60

* This is a DSS established objective.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0

Explanation

Proximity of foster care placement is a “Strength”. To meet this objective 70% or more of the children in care must be placed in Darlington County. The outcome report indicates 77% (86/112) of the children in care are placed within the county.

The results of the on-site review shows Darlington met the standard of 90%. On-site reviewers considered those factors that were not captured in CAPSS. If a child was placed out of county because of a need for therapeutic services the item was rated “Strength”. If maintaining a relationship with parents/relatives was not an issue the item received a rating of “Not Applicable. One child is placed in Florence County due to the lack of a Darlington County foster home. This case was rated “area needing improvement”.

Stakeholders felt the agency does a good job of placing children within the county. Children who are placed out of the county tend to have behavior issues. The case manager arranges visits for parents and siblings which are usually held at the county DSS office.

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

Explanation

Placement with siblings is a “Strength”. Siblings in the four applicable cases were placed together.

Stakeholders responded some case managers do a better job than others in placing siblings together. There are some homes where siblings are placed together. One factor is the availability of the foster parent. Some foster parents cannot accept large sibling groups. Some limitations are also placed on the number of children a home can accept. One stakeholder has three siblings in foster care. There have been instances when they were placed together while being placed separately at other times.

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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	3	43	4	57	3	0

Explanation

Item 13 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Reviewers determined visits with parents and siblings in foster care occurred on a regular basis in only three of the seven applicable cases. Documentation of visitation with parents and siblings for each month during the period under review was missing in all of the cases rated “area needing improvement”. In some instances documentation of visits with the non-custodial fathers was not filed. Agency efforts to contact the absent parents were not documented.

Stakeholders commented that visitation often depends on the case manager’s ability to provide transportation. Visits typically occur every two weeks at the DSS office. A stakeholder reported the case manager periodically takes him to visit with his father in prison. He is able to call siblings\freely. He does visit with siblings; however he would like to see them more often.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	71	2	29	3	0

Explanation

This item 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. All but two of the applicable cases reviewed were rated “Strength” for this item. Documentation of visits during the period under review was not recorded for one foster child who had older siblings in relative care. In another case the agency failed to preserve the connections between a foster child and his grandmother with whom he had a relationship prior to foster care placement.

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Stakeholders reported DSS strives to preserve the connections for foster children. One stakeholder is able to visit a parent who is in prison, attend church and participate in other activities with siblings. Case managers attempt to keep children in the same school whenever possible. Case managers have provided transportation to maintain a child in the same school. Interagency collaboration has made it possible to keep parents and children together during the parent's inpatient drug treatment.

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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	9	90	1	10	0	0

Explanation

Relative placement is a “Strength”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. In nine of the cases the agency explored placements with other relatives. Relatives were involved early in the process. In the one case rated “needing Improvement” there was no supporting documentation to indicate that maternal or paternal relatives had been assessed for placement.

According to stakeholders, children are often placed with relatives. Parents are taken to court and ordered into treatment. The agency utilizes available resources and completes background investigations on relatives prior to placement.

<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	3	50	3	50	4	0

Explanation

Item 16 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Only three of the six applicable cases had sufficient documentation to indicate the relationship of children with their parents. In the cases rated “area needing improvement” there was no documentation of the agency’s efforts to promote parental involvement with the child (ren) in foster 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)

Partially Achieved

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Strength**
- Finding: 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	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	7	70	3	30	0	0
Total Cases	16	80	4	20	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 Darlington DSS. Reviewers determined needs were adequately assessed in 80% of the foster care and treatment cases. In 90 percent of the foster care cases the case manager assessed all parties to determine what services were necessary and made referrals to services. Fathers were not assessed in the treatment cases rated “needing improvement”. In one treatment case the child’s biological father was involved in the child’s life and was present on at least two of the case manager’s visits. However he was not assessed or involved in the treatment process. In another treatment case the father was not referred for alcohol and drug assessment although he admitted to past drug use

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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	5	63	3	37	2	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	13	72	5	28	2	0

Explanation

Child and family involvement in case planning is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for **Darlington County**. Documentation in the case files shows the agency did not regularly involve the child and family in case planning. Fathers were not included in the development of the plan, even when they were involved with the family. In some instances children, even though age appropriate, were not included in the development of the treatment plans.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 19: Worker visits with child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	19	95	1	5	0	0

Explanation

Item 19 is a “**Strength**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) is Darlington DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) do the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? The county met the requirement in both foster care and treatment. The case managers were visiting the children and focusing on overall well-being issues.

A stakeholder reported the case manager sees the children monthly. Visits occur more often if needed. This individual communicates by phone on a frequent basis with the case manager.

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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	57	3	43	3	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	12	71	5	29	3	0

Explanation

Worker visits with parents is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Darlington DSS. The agency consistently failed to document visits with parents. In one of the treatment cases rated “area needing improvement” the father was deceased however visits with the children’s mother were not documented for the month of July. Although some of the fathers appeared to be involved with the child/family, visitation centered on the mother. In another case there was no documentation of visits with parents for any of the months during the period under review.

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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	3	100	0	0	7	0
Treatment	6	75	2	25	2	0
Total Cases	9	82	2	18	9	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for **Darlington 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 standard was met in foster care. The case records contained grade reports from the school. The case managers’ dictation indicated contact with school officials and updates on school progress. In one treatment case the case manager never made contact with school officials to inquire about the child’s progress or attendance. This child appeared to have some emotional problems exhibited by his reluctance to go outside. The only documentation from the school on a child in another treatment case was an attendance record from October 2004.

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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

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	8	80	2	20	0	0
Treatment	6	67	3	33	1	0
Total Cases	14	74	5	26	1	0

Explanation

Item 22 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Medical information was not filed in the case records for several children who had problems prior to the agency’s involvement. In one treatment case the case manager did not address medical follow-up for an infant who was born to a mother who tested positive for drug abuse. One case was opened due to educational neglect. According to the child’s mother, school was missed due to illness. The reviewer was unable to locate any medical records to validate or rule out a medical problem

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 23: Mental health of the child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	100	0	0	5	0
Treatment	2	40	3	60	5	0
Total Cases	7	70	3	30	10	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The cases rated “Strength” contained adequate documentation to support the child’s mental health needs were being addressed. The dictation reflected contact with the mental health counselor or therapist. This type of documentation was found in only 70% of the cases reviewed. The behavior of a child in one treatment case indicated the probability of some emotional problems. However the case manager did not make a referral for Mental Health assessment. The psychological evaluation on one child indicated the need for counseling. The case manager advised the youth to follow-up with Mental Health for counseling. There was no documentation of a referral being made by the case manager.

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Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses

Ten of the open foster home records were reviewed. The review of these records revealed dictation is thorough and addresses safety issues. Quarterly visits were documented. The case manager worker has frequent contact with families by telephone or through letters or visits. Families receive reminders of upcoming training opportunities. The case manager is responsive to families. Dictation was entered timely.

FINDINGS:

1. The foster home licensing worker and foster care worker are not discussing the care being provided to foster child. Foster home licensing worker is to document discussion and any concerns expressed by foster care worker.
2. Families should have/use forms found in the Master Forms Index (MFI).
3. Assessment summaries are required on all families. The reviewer was unable to locate these forms in some records.
4. DHEC must conduct a lead test in homes that are being licensed for children age six and below.
5. Home studies were found in records without dates and/or supervisory approval.
6. The foster home license information does not match information in CAPSS when asked about gender and age of child.
7. Updated medicals are required when a foster parent is hospitalized or if there is a significant change in medical status that may impact the care of a child in the foster parent's home.

Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	Yes	No
Investigation Initiated Timely?	5	0
Assessment Adequate?	5	0
Case Decision Appropriate?	5	0

This is a “Strength”

Analysis: The investigations were all initiated timely. The case managers conducted a thorough assessment by interviewing family members, victim child (as appropriate) and collaterals. Parents were required to undergo random drug screens in all instances where drug abuse was alleged. Professional collaterals were contacted to obtain documentation to assist in the case decision. All records contained excellent documentation.

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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. Four screened out intakes were reviewed. Screened out intakes are evaluated solely on the information contained in the agency database CAPSS

	Yes	No	Cannot Determine
Screen-Out Decision Appropriate?	4	0	0
	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Necessary Collaterals Contacted?	0	0	4
Appropriate Referrals Made?	4	0	0

Analysis

Based on the allegations, the decision to screen-out was appropriate in all of the cases reviewed. It did not appear as though the supervisor had reviewed any of the decisions.

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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	3 (100%)	0	17				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				19 (95%)	0	1 (5%)	0
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	16 (94%)	1 (6%)	3				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	3				
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	5 (100%)	0	5				
Item 9: Adoption	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	6				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	1 (100%)	0	9				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				5 (50%)	5 (50%)	0	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	4 (100%)	0	6				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	3 (43%)	2 (57%)	3				
Item 14: Preserving connections	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	3				
Item 15: Relative placement	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	4				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				14 (70%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	16 (80%)	4 (20%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	13 (72%)	5 (28%)	2				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	12 (71%)	5 (29%)	3				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				9 (82%)	0	2 (18%)	9
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	9 (82%)	2 (18%)	9				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				12 (63%)	4 (21%)	3 (16%)	1
Item 22: Physical health of the child	14 (74%)	5 (26%)	1				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	10				