

**South Carolina Department of Social Services**  
**Child Welfare Quality Assurance Review: Abbeville County**

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This report describes the results of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) Abbeville County Quality Assurance Review, conducted June 4-8, 2012.

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

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

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

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Substantially Achieved</b>	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	<b>Not Achieved</b>
<b>Safety 1</b> <i>Children Are, First and Foremost, Protected from Abuse and Neglect</i>	62.5% (5)	37.5% (3)	0% (0)
<b>Safety 2</b> <i>Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate</i>	60% (12)	10% (2)	30% (6)
<b>Permanency 1</b> <i>Children have permanency and stability in their living situations</i>	30% (3)	60% (6)	10% (1)
<b>Permanency 2</b> <i>The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children</i>	30% (3)	30% (3)	40% (4)
<b>Well-Being 1</b> <i>Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs</i>	20% (4)	50% (10)	30% (6)
<b>Well-Being 2</b> <i>Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs</i>	75% (6)	0% (0)	25% (2)
<b>Well-Being 3</b> <i>Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs</i>	26.7% (4)	13.3% (2)	60% (9)

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

Twenty cases were reviewed including ten foster care and ten in-home treatment cases.

**SECTION I: REVIEW FINDINGS**

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

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

**Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations**

Purpose of Assessment: To determine whether responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports received during the period under review were initiated and face-to-face contact with the child made, within the timeframes established by agency policies or State statute.

**Table 2.**

Rating	Item 1	Item 2
<i>Strength</i>	25%(5)	35%(7)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	15%(3)	0%(0)
Not Applicable	60%(12)	65%(13)
Total	100%(20)	100%(20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>62.5%(5)</b>	<b>100%(7)</b>

**Item 2: Repeat maltreatment**

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

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

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

**Item 3: Services to family**

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

**Table 3.**

Rating	Item 3	Item 4
<i>Strength</i>	30%(6)	65%(13)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	30%(6)	35%(7)
Not Applicable	40%(8)	0%(0)
Total	100%(20)	100%(20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>50%(6)</b>	<b>65%(13)</b>

**Item 4: Risk assessment and safety management**

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

**Permanency Outcome 1: Children have Permanency and Stability in their Living Situations**

Six items are included under Permanency Outcome 1. Ratings for the items are shown in Table 4.

**Item 5: Foster Care reentries**

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

**Item 6: Stability of foster care placement**

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

**Item 7: Permanency goal for child**

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

**Item 8: Reunification, guardianship or permanent placement with relatives**

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

**Item 9: Adoption**

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

**Item 10: Other planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA)**

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

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

Table 4.

Rating	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10
<i>Strength</i>	10%(2)	35%(7)	25%(5)	5%(1)	5%(1)	15%(3)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	0%(0)	5%(3)	25%(5)	10%(2)	20%(4)	0%(0)
Not Applicable	90%(18)	50%(10)	50%(10)	85%(17)	75%(15)	85%(17)
Total	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>100%(2)</b>	<b>70%(7)</b>	<b>50%(5)</b>	<b>33.3%(1)</b>	<b>20%(1)</b>	<b>100% (3)</b>

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

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

**Item 11: Proximity of Foster Care Placement**

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

**Item 12: Placement with siblings**

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

**Item 13: Visiting with parents & siblings in foster care**

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

**Item 14: Preserving connections**

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

**Item 15: Relative placement**

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

**Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents**

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

Table 5.

Rating	Item 11	Item 12	Item 13	Item 14	Item 15	Item 16
<i>Strength</i>	15%(3)	20%(4)	0%(0)	20%(4)	10%(2)	0%(0)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	5%(1)	0%(0)	35%(7)	25%(5)	20%(4)	25%(5)
Not Applicable	80%(16)	80%(16)	65%(13)	55%(11)	70%(14)	75%(15)
Total	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>75%(3)</b>	<b>100%(4)</b>	<b>0%(0)</b>	<b>44.4%(4)</b>	<b>33.3%(2)</b>	<b>0%(0)</b>

**Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have Enhanced Capacity to Provide for their Children’s Needs**

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

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

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

**Item 18: Child & family involvement in case planning**

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

**Item 19: Caseworker visits with the child**

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

**Item 20: Caseworker visits with parents**

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

**Table 6.**

Rating	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20
<i>Strength</i>	25%(5)	10%(2)	70%(14)	5%(1)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	75%(15)	75%(15)	30%(6)	70%(14)
Not Applicable	0%(0)	15%(3)	0%(0)	25%(5)
Total	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)	100%(20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>25%(5)</b>	<b>11.8%(2)</b>	<b>70%(14)</b>	<b>6.7%(1)</b>

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

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

**Item 21: Educational needs of child**

Purpose of Assessment: To assess whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children’s educational needs at the initial contact with the child (if the case was opened during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis (if the case was opened before the period under review), and whether identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities.

**Table 7.**

Rating	Item 21
<i>Strength</i>	30%(6)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	10%(2)
Not Applicable	60%(12)
Total	100%(20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>75%(6)</b>

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

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

**Item 22: Physical health of child**

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

**Item 23: Mental/behavioral health of child**

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

**Table 8.**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Item 22</b>	<b>Item 23</b>
<i>Strength</i>	20%(4)	20%(4)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	45%(9)	30%(6)
Not Applicable	35%(7)	50%(10)
Total	100%(20)	100%(20)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>30.8%(4)</b>	<b>40%(4)</b>

**Summary**

Many positives were found with the cases. *Items 2, 5, 10, and 12* were identified as *strengths* of the agency because all of the cases reviewed were rated as *strengths* with no *areas needing improvement*. This means that for the cases reviewed, repeat maltreatment did not occur within the past six months, no children returned to foster care during the PUR, the agency made efforts to ensure that youth with a permanency goal of APPLA were adequately prepared to transition, and concerted efforts were made to ensure siblings were placed together where possible. Foster care workers made regular high quality visits with children in the cases reviewed. Reviewers noted that there was good documentation on some cases.

Reviewers identified several concerns. Three of the treatment cases had no *strengths*: all of the applicable *items* were rated as *areas needing improvement*. Another treatment case had only one *item* rated as a *strength*. Caseworkers in the treatment area appear to be struggling with several *items*. All of the cases received an *area needing improvement* rating for *items 17 and 18* and only one case was rated as a *strength* for *item 20*. In the foster care area, two cases also had more *items* rated as *area needing improvement* than *strengths*. Foster care workers appear to be struggling with *item 13*. All of the cases had an *area needing improvement* rating on this *item*.

## SECTION II: FOSTER CARE LICENSE REVIEW

As part of the Quality Assurance Review Process in Abbeville County, all five Foster Home Licenses issued by the county during the period under review were selected for review. Two licenses could not be reviewed because these cases were closed and the foster homes no longer wanted to be licensed. Three of these licenses were reviewed using the *SC Department of Social Services Foster License Review Instrument*. This instrument consists of three sections. Section One focuses on the issuance of the Initial/Standard License. Section Two focuses on the standard license renewal process. Section Three focuses on agency oversight, data entry, and qualitative issues. Each section of the instrument includes the appropriate agency, state, and federal requirements.

Section One review criteria include the following *items*:

- applications
- autobiography information
- financial information
- child factor's checklists
- initial home assessment studies
- references
- information related to firearms and ammunition in the house
- pet vaccination information
- background checks
- convictions
- required trainings
- medical reports
- fire inspections/re-inspections
- discipline agreements
- disaster preparedness plans
- alternative caregiver forms
- a review of any conflicts noted between file documents and CAPPS

Section Two review criteria include the following *items*:

- a review of the initial background checks
- convictions
- training hours
- medical reports
- updated home studies
- discipline agreements
- fire inspections and drills
- quarterly home visits
- disaster preparedness plans
- annual firearms location update
- information concerning the alternative caregivers
- safety checks of alternative caregivers,
- a review of child protective service allegations
- pet vaccination information
- a review of any regulatory infractions
- a review of any conflicts noted between file documents and CAPPS

All of the requirements evaluated in Sections One and Two of this instrument must be met for the foster home license to be valid. If any *items* are rated as not met, the foster home license is considered invalid. Federal funds cannot be used for board payments for any foster children in the home during the time the license was invalid. Areas noted as having occurred as required on the assessment are rated as *strengths*. Those *items* that were not met are rated as an *area needing improvement* (ANI). If the issue is not applicable, it is rated N/A.

Additionally, the percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for each *item*. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of ANIs. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Results of the review in Abbeville County are noted in Table 10.

Section One is rated as *not applicable* because no initial licenses were issued during the period under review.

In Section Two, all three of the cases reviewed were rated *strengths* because all of the licensing requirements were met prior to authorization of the license renewal.

**Table 10. Summary of Ratings for Sections One and Two**

Rating	Section One	Section Two
<i>Strength</i>	0(0%)	3(100%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	0(0%)	0(0%)
Not Applicable	0(0%)	0(0%)
Total	0(0%)	3(100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>		<b>100%</b>

Section Three results are displayed in Table 11. Deficiencies were noted in all three of the files reviewed. Deficiencies noted in Section Three may not invalidate the license, but still require attention and correction by county management. Several issues were identified by the reviewers, including:

- Background safety checks were not completed on all alternative caregivers.
- Quarterly home visits not completed in a timely manner; not all family members were visited; and documentation not entered into CAPSS.
- Quarterly Home Visit Guides were not always completed.
- Supervisory reviews of quarterly home visits were not conducted on a regular basis.
- Fire drills were either not done or not recorded properly.

**Table 11. Section 3: Other Standard Licensing and Practice Issues**

	Yes	No	NA	Total
A. Home visits documented in CAPSS?	0	3	0	3
A.1. Adult household members visited?	0	1	1	2
B. CAPSS consistent with 1513?	3	0	0	3
C. Licensing issues addressed during each quarterly visit documented in CAPSS?	1	2	0	3
D. Supervisory Review conducted	3	0	0	3
E. Discussion of safety guidelines regarding access to in-ground swimming pools documented in CAPSS?	0	0	3	3
F. Background checks completed on alternative caregivers?	0	0	3	3

### SECTION III: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE SCREEN-OUT REVIEW

A review of seven screened-out allegations was completed to determine whether the reports were appropriately screened out. The reports were randomly selected from the list of reports screened out by the county during the period under review. The *Screened-Out CPS Referral Review Instrument* was used to conduct the review. This instrument includes a description of the allegation and three questions:

- In the first question, the reviewer rates the appropriateness of the screen-out using a rating of *yes*, *no*, or *cannot determine*.
- In the second question, the reviewer considers whether the necessary collaterals were contacted using a rating of *yes*, *no*, or *not applicable*.



- In the third question, the reviewer considers whether appropriate referrals were made using a rating of *yes*, *no*, or *not applicable*.

Yes answers are considered *strengths*, no answers are considered *area needing improvement* (ANI), and N/A answers are considered Not Applicable.

The percentage of *strengths* is also calculated for each question. This percentage is calculated by adding the number of *strengths* and the number of ANIs. The number of *strengths* is divided into this total to determine the percentage of *strengths*. Findings of these reviews are noted in Table 12.

**Table 12. Summary of Ratings for Screen-Outs Review**

Rating	Was this case appropriately screened out?	Were necessary collaterals contacted?	Were appropriate referrals made?
<i>Strength</i>	9(90%)	6(60%)	2(20%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	0(0%)	1(10%)	0(0%)
Cannot Determine	1(10%)		
Not Applicable	0(0%)	3(30%)	8(80%)
Total	10(100%)	10(100%)	7(100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>90%</b>	<b>85.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Nine of the cases reviewed were determined to be screened out appropriately. In one case, the reviewer was unable to determine if the intake was appropriately screened out. This family has prior CPS history to include several accepted and screened out reports. The dictation from the decision to screen out indicated that the GAL program has investigated this family and the school guidance counselor interviews the victim child and sibling daily; however, there is no dictation and/or other documentation in record stating the findings and/or observations from the GAL or guidance counselor.

Necessary collateral contacts were not made or were not documented in one of the applicable cases reviewed. It was indicated in the intake that the victim child had a medical condition; however, it does not appear that this information was confirmed by the victim child’s pediatrician and/or school nurse. Additionally, it is documented that the GAL program has investigated the family, but it does not appear that the GAL office was contacted regarding the allegations in this intake or asked if they had any concerns regarding physical abuse with the family. Additionally, the intake worker requested the records check from law enforcement, but the records were not in the case file.

**SECTION IV: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES UNFOUNDED REPORTS REVIEW**

Five unfounded reports were reviewed to determine whether the reports were appropriately unfounded. The five unfounded reports were randomly selected from the list of all reports unfounded by the county during the period under review. The review was conducted using the *Child Welfare Services Review Instrument for Unfounded Reports*. This instrument includes a description of the allegation, the risk level assigned to the case at Intake, and three questions:

- In the first question, the reviewer assesses whether the investigation was initiated in a timely manner using a rating of *yes* or *no*.
- In the second question, the reviewer assesses whether an adequate assessment was conducted using a rating of *yes* or *no*.
- In the third question, the reviewer assesses whether the decision to unfound was appropriate using a rating of *yes* or *no*.

Questions rated as Yes on the assessment are considered *strengths* and those rated as No are considered ANI.

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

**Table 13. Summary of Ratings for Unfounded Reports Review**

Rating	Was the investigation initiated in a timely manner?	Was an adequate assessment conducted?	Was the decision to unfound the case appropriate?
<i>Strength</i>	5(100%)	5(100%)	5(100%)
<i>Area needing improvement</i>	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Total	5(100%)	5(100%)	5(100%)
<i>% Strengths</i>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based upon this review process, all cases were initiated in a timely manner. The rating for three cases was high indicating the face-to-face meeting must occur within two hours. The other two cases were rated low which means the face-to-face meeting must be within the first 24 hours after the report was received. Adequate assessments were found to have been conducted in all cases. All cases were found to have been unfounded appropriately.