

**Newberry County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
November 2005**

During the week of November 14-18, 2005 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Newberry 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, 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: May 1, 2005 – October 31, 2005

Period included in Outcome Measures: November 1, 2004 – October 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: 11/01/04 to 10/31/05				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective $\geq 99.99\%*$	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,328	15,784	16,326.37	(542.37)
Newberry	137	135	136.99	(1.99)

* 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	0	0	0	0	10	0
Treatment	4	100	0	0	6	0
Total Cases	4	100	0	0	16	0

Explanation of Item 1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Newberry 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 Newberry initiated 98.54% (135/137) 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. The results of the on-site review indicate that 100% of the cases met the objective. However since the outcome report represents 100% of the cases during the period under review, this item is rated based on that data source.

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One stakeholder reported Newberry initiates investigations timely. Problems occur on nights and weekends if law enforcement takes a child into emergency protective custody (EPC). If the child has to be placed into a foster home, law enforcement has to wait for an hour or longer while the on-call staff person comes to take the child. This occurs when staff lives outside the county. DSS staff responds right away, but the travel time is a problem.

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 May 1, 2004 and April 30 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	9,787	92	9,189.99	505.01
Newberry	51	0	47.89	3.11

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	100	0	0	1	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	18	95	1	5	1	0

Explanation of Item 2

This is a “Strength” for Newberry DSS. According to CAPSS data none of the cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review involved repeat maltreatment. Only one of the applicable cases reviewed on-site involved a previously founded report. One of the treatment cases had two additional substantiated reports during the 12-month period under review. Newberry DSS met the federally established objective for this item.

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Stakeholders reported DSS does quite a bit of preventive work with only a few cases returning due to repeat maltreatment. When children re-enter the system it is usually due to alcohol or drug abuse or generational issues. One stakeholder would like to have more communication between his/her agency and DSS. This individual felt that his/her agency may have more first hand knowledge about the relatives DSS is assessing for a placement.

Section Two

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding

Not Achieved

-Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal.

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

-Safety Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren).

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

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	1	100	0	0	9	0
Treatment	6	67	3	33	1	0
Total Cases	7	70	3	30	10	0

Item 3

Item 3 is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Newberry DSS. This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency’s interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. Reviewers rated seven of the applicable cases “Strength” for this item. In these cases, services to protect children in the home were appropriately rendered. However in three of the treatment cases the services offered were not sufficient to reduce the risk of harm to the children in the home. In one case services were not offered to both parents. In another case there was no follow-up to determine if the parent (s) participated in recommended treatment.

Stakeholders rated Newberry as being very effective in providing services, when appropriate, to prevent removing children from their homes. One stakeholder commented the county does a good job based on the available resources. There is a lack of local resources and families have to go to Columbia for counseling. This can cause a family to fail. Other stakeholders stated DSS does a lot of work on the front end to prevent removing children from their homes. Another stakeholder commended DSS on the manner in which the two agencies collaborated on a sexual abuse case.

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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	100	0	0	1	0
Treatment	5	56	4	44	1	0
Total Cases	14	78	4	22	2	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 05/01/04 to 04/30/05	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective >= 91.50%*	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	13,612	1,177	12,454.98	(19.98)
Newberry	104	2	45.16	6.84

*This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure

This item is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The standard for the outcome report in CAPSS is that no more than 8.5% of alleged child victims have another report within six months of the initial report. According to CAPSS, Newberry DSS met 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 100% of the foster care cases. However the risk was reduced in only 56% of the treatment cases. In two treatment cases the parents did not participate in the recommended services for drug and alcohol abuse. In another case the family remained unstable in spite of the agency’s intervention efforts.

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

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 5 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 5: Foster care re-entries.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	100	0	0	7	0

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
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 11/01/04 to 10/31/05	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	2,941	215	2,688.07	37.93
Newberry	25	6	22.85	(3.85)

* This is a federally established objective.

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Explanation

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

According to CAPSS, 24% (6/25) of the children who entered care in Newberry County during the period under review had been returned home in the prior 12 months.

Although on-site reviewers determined none of the three applicable foster care cases was a re-entry, the sample size is smaller than what is reported in CAPSS. The CAPSS data captures the total foster care population for a 12-month period of time. Therefore this item was rated based on the outcome data from CAPSS. The cases rated not applicable were opened prior to the period under review.

Stakeholders reported re-entries do not occur very often. The few that occur are often due to drug involvement and generational problems in the family. Another stakeholder commented there is a lack of monitoring when a child returns home. In addition, some children remain in foster care too long before returning home.

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	10	100	0	0	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	3,429	2,755	2,972.94	(217.94)
Newberry	31	26	26.88	(0.88)

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 shows 26 of the 31 children (84%) in care less than 12 months had no more than two foster care placements. This is below the standard of 86.70%.

On-site reviewers not only counted the number of moves children in foster care experienced, but also looked at the reasons for those moves. All of the placements of the children included in the review were stable. Again the data from the outcome report is being used to rate this item since 100% of the foster care population is included.

One stakeholder commented some children have to move too often. There are not enough foster homes in the county

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 7 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

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 09/04 –10/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective >= 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,566	1,625	1,889.98	(264.98)
Newberry	30	12	15.90	(3.90)

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

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 7: Permanency goal for children.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0

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 Newberry DSS, 40% (12/30) of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. Consequently, the objective for this item was not met in CAPSS.

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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 except one were rated “Strength” for this item. Therefore, an overall rating of “strength” is being assigned based on the results of the on-site review. One case was rated “area needing improvement” due to the length of time the child has been in care with the permanency goal of reunification. After twenty-three months in care, there has been little cooperation from the parent with minimal efforts to complete the treatment plan.

Stakeholders attributed some of the problems in attaining permanency for children to past legal issues. Several stakeholders commented some major improvements have been made within the past year due to a change in attorneys. Many merits hearings were being delayed. One stakeholder stated some children with a plan of reunification are staying in care too long. Parents seem to be given an excessive amount of time to meet treatment goals. An identified barrier is turnover and the lack of experienced staff. Additional staff may be needed.

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 8 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings				
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 11/01/04–10/31/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	1,905	1,588	1,451.61	136.39
Newberry	24	24	18.29	5.71

* This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	67	1	33	7	0

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Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Newberry DSS. To meet this federally established 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. According to CAPSS data 100% 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 two of the three applicable cases were rated as “strength”. In reference to the case rated “Area Needing Improvement”, the child had been in care for over twenty-three months with no definite plans of reunification with the parent. The parent’s progress toward meeting treatment objectives has been minimal

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	363	53	116.16	(63.16)
Newberry	5	2	1.60	.40

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	1	17	5	83	0	0

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Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement for Newberry DSS”. According to the outcome report Newberry had five finalized adoptions within the past 12 months. Only six of the cases reviewed on-site had a plan of adoption. The plan was appropriate and the necessary procedures were in place to accomplish the goal of adoption within the allowable time frame in only one of these cases. The adoptions will not be finalized within twenty-four months in any of the cases rated “area needing improvement”. In one case the merits hearing was held June 1999 and TPR occurred in 2000. The Adoptions Unit has had case management responsibility since August 2001; however the adoption has not been finalized. The county did not pursue timely TPR in two other cases. The TPR hearing was not held until the child had been in care in excess of twenty-three months in one case. Although the plan changed to TPR in August 2004 in the other case, the petition for TPR was not filed until August 2005.

Stakeholders agreed that filing for TPR had been a problem in the past. There was a major problem for the past two years in that a contract attorney did not file any TPRs. There was a backlog which created a delay when foster parents were waiting to adopt and the TPR had not occurred. Improvements have been made in this area and the county is making an effort to reduce the backlog. Another stakeholder stated the time to complete the home study, extra training for foster parents to become adoptive parents, and the paperwork are very time consuming.

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 11/01/04 – 10/31/05	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective >= 85.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	7,817	1,045	6,644.45	127.55
Newberry	51	1	43.35	6.65

* This is a DSS established objective.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	100	0	0	8	0

Explanation

Item 10 is a “Strength” for Newberry DSS. The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan. Based on the outcome report, less than 2% of the foster children in Newberry County have this permanency goal. Reviewers determined this was the appropriate goal for the two children with a plan of other planned permanent living arrangement. They were receiving Independent Living services in preparation for emancipation.

One stakeholder rated the agency as being effective in this area. Another stakeholder questioned the need to do TPR on older children who do not want to be adopted.

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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

Not Achieved

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- 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 11/01/04 – 10/31/05	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	5,768	3,729	64.65	4,037.60	(308.60)
Newberry	52	13	25.00	36.40	(23.40)

* This is a DSS established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	83	1	17	4	0

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Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Newberry DSS. To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in Newberry County. The outcome report indicates 25% (13/52) of the children in care are placed within the county.

The results of the on-site review shows Newberry did not meet the standard of 90%. Only 83% of the children were placed within the county. 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 of the children in the sample was placed out of the county. There was no documentation to justify the reason for not placing the child within the county.

One stakeholder commended staff for their efforts. This individual stated the county has worked to locate absent fathers. At least two children are placed out of state with their fathers. Staff also arrange visitation with parents. Another stakeholder stated there are not enough foster homes to accommodate sibling groups

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 12: Placement with siblings						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	67	1	33	7	0

Explanation

Placement with siblings is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Siblings in two of the applicable cases were placed together. There was no justification in the other case to support the decision to place the children separately.

Stakeholders stated efforts are made to keep siblings together if homes can be found for them. The separation is due to a lack of foster homes and placement resources.

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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	4	50	4	50	2	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 half applicable cases. In some instances visits were documented with only one parent. There was no indication of the agency’s efforts to contact the absent parent. In one case visits were documented with other relatives, but not the child’s parents.

One stakeholder commented the county seems to do a “good job”. Staff attempt to keep children connected through visitation with their parents. A barrier to visitation is placement out of the county. There is a lack of transportation and limited staff to provide transportation.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	80	1	20	5	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. Although the majority of the applicable cases reviewed were rated “Strength” for this item one was not. In the case rated “area needing improvement” there was no documentation of the agency’s efforts to preserve the connections between one foster child and siblings who were not in foster care.

Stakeholders reported DSS staff would try to arrange visits with siblings and other family members only during the time the child was visiting with parents. There have been some improvements during the past few months, particularly since the arrival of the new program supervisor.

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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	4	44	5	56	1	0

Explanation

Relative placement is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. In four of the cases the agency explored placements with other relatives. One relative was ruled out as a placement resource upon advisement of law enforcement. However, in the five cases rated as “Needing Improvement” there was no supporting documentation to indicate that maternal or paternal relatives had been assessed for placement. In one of these cases a parent asked that her relatives be considered for placement. The case manager failed to follow-up on assessing the relatives.

Stakeholders stated DSS staff places a lot of emphasis on placing children with relatives. However, this should be coordinated with other agencies that may have direct knowledge of the relatives’ background.

<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	0	0	4	100	6	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The agency was relieved of offering services to the parents due to TPR or court intervention in the cases rated “not applicable”. The other cases lacked sufficient documentation of the agency’s efforts to promote a relationship between parents and children 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)

Not Achieved

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- 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	7	700	3	30	0	0
Treatment	5	50	4	44	1	0
Total Cases	12	63	7	37	1	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 Newberry DSS. Reviewers determined needs were properly assessed in only 63% of the foster care and treatment cases. The needs assessments were not thorough in several of the cases. Parents were being referred for drug screening even though it appeared some did not have the resources to pay for the services. In addition, some infants were not referred for Baby Net services.

Some stakeholders rated the agency as “doing a good job”. The plans seem to address the individual needs of clients and rarely does the parent or their attorney object to the treatment plan presented by the agency. Other stakeholders commented the treatment plan did not fully address the needs of the child. However, once the oversight was brought to the case manager's attention changes were made. Another stakeholder commented on a case in which the wife was not assessed and referred for services in order to deal with her husband's drug abuse.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	2	20	8	80	0	0
Total Cases	12	60	8	40	0	0

Explanation

Child and family involvement in case planning is an **“Area Needing Improvement”** for **Newberry County**. Documentation in the case files shows the agency did not regularly involve the child and family in case planning. Efforts to involve absent parents or rule them out through diligent search were not filed in the case records. Age appropriate children were not involved in the case planning, even when treatment plan objectives were listed for them.

Stakeholders commented parents may not be involved in their treatment planning based on comments received from parents involved with their agency. The plans appear to be “boiler plate” plans. Another stakeholder stated sometimes parents are not aware of their treatment plans until they arrive at court. Oftentimes the DSS case manager asks the parent to sign the plan without any involvement on the parent’s part. In addition, age appropriate children or other agencies are not involved in the development of the plans. Plans are not updated timely to comply with court orders. DSS staff seemed overworked due to staff turnover and paper work. Barriers are lack of services locally, transportation and no AOD program within the county. Stakeholders reported they have seen improvements with the hiring of the program supervisor.

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Site Visit Findings 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	2	20	8	80	0	0
Total Cases	12	60	8	40	0	0

Explanation

Item 19 is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) is Newberry 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 foster care. The case managers were visiting the children and focusing on overall well-being issues in all of the foster care cases. Only 20% of the children in treatment cases received the mandatory monthly face-to-face visits. In one treatment case all of the documented visits during the period under review occurred in public venues (Subway, Wendy’s, and the laundromat). The case manager could not assess the risk of harm in the home with visits being conducted in alternative settings. One child was in a Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN) facility and had not been seen by the case manager during the entire period under review. In another case, all of the visits occurred in the DSS office.

One stakeholder reported in the past visits did not occur monthly. There would be telephone contact or meetings with the case manager at McDonald’s. Many of the former DSS staff did not do well with coordinating visits with the child. This individual has seen much improvement in the last several months.

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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	1	20	4	80	5	0
Treatment	3	30	7	70	0	0
Total Cases	4	27	11	73	5	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Newberry DSS. At least half of the cases were not applicable due to Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) or the agency being relieved of providing services to the families. Visits were not documented monthly for the majority of the cases rated “area needing improvement”. In one case the case manager never saw the children’s father during home visits. The dictation indicated he was always at work.

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Section Six

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding

Not Achieved

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	78	2	22	1	0
Treatment	2	22	7	78	1	0
Total Cases	9	50	9	50	2	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Newberry 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 not met in either program area. Some of the case records contained excellent documentation that children’s educational needs were being met. School reports, conversations with school officials, visits to the schools and assessments of children’s school performance were on file. However in several of the cases the case manager was visiting the child at school but never made direct contact with school officials.

Stakeholders commented case managers seem to know what school and grade the children are in and how they are doing. The current staff does inquire about the child’s school performance during monthly visits. DSS staff is invited to attend IEP meetings.

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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	5	50	5	50	0	0
Treatment	1	10	9	90	0	0
Total Cases	6	30	14	70	0	0

Explanation

Item 22 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Medical information was not filed in the case records. Although the agency’s intervention was due to physical abuse or threat of harm in several of the cases there was no documentation of medical exams. A child in one treatment case was pregnant; however there was no documentation of prenatal care.

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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	8	100	0	0	2	0
Treatment	2	33	4	67	4	0
Total Cases	10	71	4	29	6	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 71% of the cases reviewed. The case managers failed to follow-up with mental health providers as appropriate. One child had problems sexually acting out. There was no documentation of a referral for evaluation or services.

One stakeholder commented that services are provided, however it is difficult to obtain progress reports from providers.

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Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses

All of the open foster home licensing records were reviewed. The records were well organized. The case manager made notes of safety issues and all pertinent forms were filed.

FINDINGS:

1. Foster parents need to submit their training hours.
2. Documentation of correction of DHEC deficiencies need to be filed.
3. Ages of children on license should match information in CAPSS.
4. Supervisory reviews were missing from the licensing records.
5. Documentation of quarterly visits was missing.
6. Summaries (including names, dates of placement, dates of removal, etc.) need to be filed.
7. One case needs another DHEC inspection to correct deficiency related to lead.

Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	Yes	No
Investigation Initiated Timely?	5	0
Assessment Adequate?	3	2
Case Decision Appropriate?	3	2

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”

Analysis: The initial contact in one case occurred within two hours after intake; however the case manager did not make contact with the children’s mother or assess the home environment until approximately 45 days after the intake. Collateral contact with the teacher was not made to substantiate the information received from the children. In another case the typology should have been sexual abuse with the uncle as perpetrator. He lived in the home at the time of the report. The case was taken as a physical neglect case against the mother. Neither the victim nor the other children in the home were interviewed. The physical neglect allegation against the mother was unfounded.

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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. Five 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?	9	1	0
	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Necessary Collaterals Contacted?	0	0	10
Appropriate Referrals Made?	2	0	8

Analysis

This item is a” **Strength**”. Based on the available documentation it appears as though the decision to screen-out was appropriate in 90% of the cases. The decisions should have been documented more thoroughly in several of the cases. In one case the dictation was not on file to support the decision to screen out. Referrals were made to other service providers as needed (DHEC, WIC, Medicaid).

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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.				18 (95%)	0	1 (5%)	1
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	4 (100%)	0	16				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	1				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				14 (78%)	1 (6%)	3 (16%)	2
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	10				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	14 (78%)	4 (22%)	2				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				4 (40%)	6 (60%)	0	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	3 (100%)	0	7				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	10 (100%)	0	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	7				
Item 9: Adoption	1 (17%)	5 (83%)	4				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	2 (100%)	0	8				
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	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	4				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	7				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	2				
Item 14: Preserving connections	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5				
Item 15: Relative placement	4 (44%)	5 (56%)	1				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	0	4 (100%)	6				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				7 (35%)	12 (60%)	1 (5%)	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	12 (63%)	7 (37%)	1				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	12 (63%)	7 (37%)	1				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	12 (60%)	8 (40%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	4 (27%)	11 (73%)	5				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				9 (50%)	9 (50%)		2
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	9 (50%)	9 (50%)	2				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				5 (25%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)	0
Item 22: Physical health of the child	6 (30%)	14 (70%)	0				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	6				