

**Sumter County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
January 2006**

During the week of January 9-13, 2006 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Sumter 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, Sumter 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: July 1, 2005 – December 31, 2005

Period included in Outcome Measures: November 1, 2004 – December 31, 2005

Purpose

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

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

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

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

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Section One

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding

Partially Achieved

-Safety Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations.

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

-Safety Item 2: Repeat maltreatment.

Finding: Strength

Analysis of Safety Item 1 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment

Data Time Period: 01/01/05 to 12/31/05

	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective $\geq 99.99\%$ *	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,302	15,708	16,300.37	(592.37)
Sumter	406	396	405.96	(9.96)

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

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

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

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	100	0	0	9	0
Treatment	9	100	0	0	1	0
Total Cases	10	100	0	0	10	0

Explanation of Item 1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Sumter 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 Sumter initiated 97.54 (396/406) 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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Stakeholders stated a team approach is used in Sumter County. It is very rare that DSS does not accompany law enforcement in the investigation of a complaint on nights or weekends. The protocol and commitment do not need to be improved. They also work with the family Advocacy Center at Shaw AFB. In addition stakeholders commented that DSS workers are timely. DSS and the schools need more social workers.

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 January 1, 2005 and December 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	10,008	103	9,397.51	507.49
Sumter	200	0	187.80	12.20

Note: This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 2: Repeat Maltreatment.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	20	100	0	0	0	0

Explanation of Item 2

Repeat Maltreatment is a “Strength” for Sumter DSS. According to CAPSS data none of the cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review involved repeat maltreatment. Reviewers determined repeat maltreatment did not occur in any of the cases reviewed on-site. Sumter DSS met the federally established objective for this item.

Stakeholders interviewed stated the agency does a good job in preventing the recurrence of maltreatment. However, most parents don’t rehabilitate. Usually drugs, lack of education and a lack of jobs are the causes. Another stakeholder felt the agency could improve in this area. More follow-up is needed after reunification. Child care, transportation and employment are barriers.

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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

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	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	9	82	2	18	9	0

Item 3

Item 3 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency’s interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. The case managers were diligent in assessing and making appropriate referral for services to reduce the risk in the majority of the cases reviewed. However in one treatment case the parents were not seen during the investigation. There were no services documented for this family. In a separate treatment case the parent refused to submit to AOD screening. The treatment plan objectives listed treatment for substance abuse. There was no documentation to indicate efforts were taken to follow through with these objectives.

Stakeholders rated the agency as being effective in this area. One stakeholder stated DSS has policies in place to prevent abuse and the recurrence of abuse, but there are not enough case workers. More follow-up is needed. Parents need closer monitoring and more contact. The agency has improved. Caseworkers need to spend more time in the home, especially with parents who are functionally limited and need help setting limits. More staff is needed for in-home support and training in addition to parenting classes.

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Analysis of Safety Item 4 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 4: Risk of harm.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	7	78	2	22	1	0
Total Cases	17	89	2	11	1	0

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
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 07/01/04 to 06/30/05	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective >= 91.50%*	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	13,148	1,124	12,030.42	(6.42)
Sumter	356	19	325.74	11.26

*This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure

Item 4 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, Sumter DSS met the objective for this item with only 5% (19/356) of the cases having another report within six months. 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. Although risk of harm was reduced in 100% of the foster care cases the reduction was only 78% in the treatment cases; with an overall risk reduction of 89% in the cases reviewed. Domestic violence was identified as the risk factor in one of these cases. The case manager did not document services to reduce the risk during the investigative period. The parents were not seen until the case was indicated. In the other case the children were taken out of state by their father before the case manager saw them. Therefore risk could not be assessed.

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The case manager was in contact with both parents. It appeared as though minimal effort was made to see the children.

One stakeholder stated the DSS attorney is well prepared in court and coordination between the caseworkers and Guardians-Ad Litem (GALs) is very good. The system works well in Sumter County. This stakeholder voiced a dislike for the criticisms about DSS. He/she felt DSS adequately promotes reunification. Another stakeholder stated supervisors and caseworkers are good; but they don't have enough time. The Foster Care Review Board is not invited to attend court hearings; there is not enough room in court.

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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: Strength |
| -Item 6: Stability of foster care placemt. | Finding: Strength |
| -Item 7: Permanency goal for child | Finding: Strength |
| -Item 8: Reunification, plmt w/ relatives | Finding: Area Needing Improvement |
| -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	1	100	0	0	9	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 01/01/05 to 12/31/05	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Fos Care Episode	Number of Children Objective $\geq 91.40\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,230	247	2,952.22	30.78
Sumter	24	0	21.94	2.06

* This is a federally established objective.

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Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is a “Strength”. According to CAPSS, the objective was met. Sumter DSS did not have any foster care re-entries during the period under review. Only one of the cases pulled for the on-site review was applicable. This item was rated “Strength” for that case

One stakeholder commented foster care re-entries are not common. This generally happens when custody has been given to a relative. Another stakeholder felt that treatment plans look the same and there is not enough of an array of services. A lack of coordination at the state level with the counties was also cited. This stakeholder felt the PIP training was not consistent and support from the state office is not consistent. Another stakeholder felt some improvement has been made and there is a decrease in re-entries. Assessments are better and families’ needs are being met.

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
Sumter	82	70	71.09	(1.09)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

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Explanation

Stability of foster care placement is a “Strength”. The outcome report indicates 21 of the 31 children (68%) in care less than 12 months had no more than two foster care placements. This is below the standard of 86.70%. This item is rated based on the outcome data which accounts for all placements during the period under review.

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 during the period under review.

Stakeholders’ opinions varied. Some believed DSS is effective in providing stable placements and case managers make good decision and find appropriate homes. Sometimes children are moved due to a “lack of fit”. One stakeholder commented case managers don’t have input into foster home selection. The decision is made by the licensing staff. This individual felt that DSS is not responsive to foster parents and do not support foster homes well. Another stakeholder reported all placements in his/her home have been stable. However the board payments and clothing allowance are not sufficient. DSS should also work with the educational system more and provide training for teachers.

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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 01/05-12/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,603	1,642	1,909.59	(267.59)
Sumter	129	66	68.37	(2.37)

* 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	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 Sumter DSS, 51% (66/129) of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. The objective for this item was not 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 with the exception of 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.

Stakeholders’ views on the “new law” were mixed. One felt the system is too rigid in that TPR occurs even though it is not in the child’ best interests if an adoptive family has not been identified. This individual feels that a “piece of family” is better than no family. Another stakeholder felt the “new law” has been helpful. Children are not allowed to linger and concurrent planning is being done. Foster care is not a good permanency plan.

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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 01/01/05–12/31/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	1,986	1,676	1,513.33	162.67
Sumter	31	14	23.62	(9.62)

* 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	100	0	0	8	0

Explanation

Item 8 is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Sumter 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 Sumter County 45% (14/31) 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 the two applicable cases were rated “strength

A stakeholder commented the greatest barrier is drug usage. Perhaps more programs like Chrysallis are needed. Another stakeholder felt the biggest issue is with Managed Treatment Services (MTS). Once a child is out of therapeutic foster care there are no services. Children won’t integrate back into a family without support and services. The agency needs to find a better way to transition children from therapeutic foster care.

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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	359	52	114.88	(62.88)
Sumter	11	0	3.52	(3.52)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 9: Adoption.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	75	1	25	6	0

Explanation

Item 9 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. According to the outcome report Sumter had eleven finalized adoptions within the past 12 months. The county did not have any finalized adoptions that met the 24-month standard.

Three of the four applicable 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 three of those cases. In the case rated “area needing improvement” the adoption will not be finalized within 24 months of the child’s placement in foster care.

A stakeholder commented that TPRs in Sumter County had been backed up. They are now current. This was not the agency’s fault. More adoptions are occurring now. Another stakeholder felt that the time from TPR to adoption is too lengthy. This process is not timely especially for teenagers. There is a psychological impact of not really belonging. This individual would like to see more TPRs and adoptions done concurrently.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 10 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

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 01/01/05 – 12/31/05	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	3,603	1,642	1,909.59	(267.59)
Sumter	129	66	68.37	(2.37)

* This is a DSS established objective.

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	4	100	0	0	6	0

Explanation

Item 10 is a “Strength” for Sumter 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 51% (66/129) of the children in Sumter DSS custody have this plan. On-site reviewers read the cases of four children who had this permanency plan. Adoption was not a viable option for any of these children. One youth was almost eighteen years of age and did not want to be adopted. Another child had emotional problems which were a barrier to adoption. All were receiving Independent Living services and the plans appeared to be appropriate.

One stakeholder responded that there is no “plan” other than to hold foster children until age 18. In regard to Independent Living, the plan exists on paper but children are not receiving true Independent Living services. If they happen to get into a good home and fight for services, they might receive some. This individual feels children need an advocate after age 18. Other stakeholders felt the agency does a good job in providing Independent Living services to youth. Older youth are usually on target; however permanent foster care is not appropriate for the younger children. The agency needs to

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get the children into therapeutic foster care earlier. Case managers are following policy; however there is a concern for what is happening to the children.

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: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 13: Visiting w/ parents & siblings	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 14: Preserving connections	Finding: Strength
-Item 15: Relative placement	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 16: Relationship of child w/ parents	Finding: Strength

Analysis of Permanency Item 11 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

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

	Number of Children In Care 01/01/05– 12/31/05	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	6,001	3,888	64.79	4,200.70	(312.70)
Sumter	130	92	70.77	91.00	1.00

* This is a DSS established objective.

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

Explanation

Proximity of foster care placement is a “Strength”. To meet this objective 70% or more of the children in care must be placed in Sumter County. The outcome report indicates 71% (92/130) of the children in care are placed within the county.

The results of the on-site review show Sumter exceeded 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”.

Site Visit Findings 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 three applicable cases were placed together. In the case rated “area needing improvement” there was no documentation to indicate why the siblings were placed in separate foster homes.

The consensus among stakeholders was that the agency does a good job of placing siblings together. Stakeholders stated it is difficult to keep large sibling groups together. Brothers and sisters are important to each other and it is difficult to arrange visits when they are separated. One stakeholder commented that siblings are sometimes disruptive when placed together and may need to be separated. Special needs children sometimes need to have alternate placements. Another stakeholder commented the agency could do a better job with placing siblings together.

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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	80	1	20	5	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 four of the five applicable cases. In one case visits with the child’s mother were occurring twice monthly; however there were no visits documented with siblings during the period under review.

Stakeholders commented DSS is effective in planning and facilitating visits. One stakeholder stated the case manager arranges visits for the children at DSS. A minimum of two visits a month is required. This is difficult when the child is out of the county.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	100	0	0	3	0

Explanation

This item is a “Strength”. This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. All of the applicable cases reviewed were rated “Strength” for this item. Documentation indicated that efforts were taken to preserve connections with grandparents and siblings. One foster youth was placed in the same Independent Living facility as her infant son

Stakeholders reported DSS strives to preserve the connections for foster children. The agency arranges visits with the foster child’s immediate family as well as with significant others.

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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	7	88	1	12	2	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 seven of the eight applicable cases the agency explored placements with other relatives to include a biological father, paternal grandparents and other family members. Many of these relatives were ruled out as suitable placements. In the one case rated “area needing improvement” efforts to explore relatives as a placement resource was missing from the case record.

According to stakeholders, the agency does really well pursuing relative placement; locally that is the goal. The 72-hour EPC hearing sometimes occurs before a suitable relative can be located. Another stakeholder felt relative placement is not a permanent solution unless the relative adopts. Parents can have access when a child is placed with relatives. One stakeholder commented that the agency does not identify relatives. If the relative is not licensed resources may be a barrier. Relatives cannot realistically keep the parents from the children.

<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	100	0	0	7	0

Explanation

Item 16 is a “Strength”. Several of the cases were rated “not applicable” due to TPR or voluntary relinquishment. The applicable cases contained excellent documentation of the agency’s efforts to foster the parent/child relationship. The case manager took one child to her mother’s marriage ceremony. This child also visits with her stepfather. Case managers observed positive interactions between parents and children during visitations. Parents were also involved in decisions regarding their children.

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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 Sumter DSS. Reviewers determined needs were adequately assessed in 80% of the foster care and treatment cases. In these cases the case manager assessed all parties to determine what services were necessary and made referrals to services. The children in one treatment case were not visited by the case manager prior to their relocating to another state. Fathers’ needs were not assessed in several of the cases. Although domestic violence issues were apparent and the children’s mother appeared to have a learning disability appropriate services were not offered to a treatment family.

One stakeholder commented treatment plans for parents need improvement. When parental rights are not terminated, parents have visiting rights. DSS is not continuing treatment and should be continuously involved with the parent. Another stakeholder felt services are improving. The quality of services depends on the resources and skills. The agency needs more support services.

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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	6	75	2	25	2	0
Treatment	1	11	8	89	1	0
Total Cases	7	41	10	59	3	0

Explanation

Child and family involvement in case planning is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for **Sumter County**. Documentation in the case files shows the agency did not regularly involve the child and both parents in case planning. Fathers were not included in the development of the plan in several of the cases reviewed.

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	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	18	90	2	10	0	0

Explanation

Item 19 is a “**Strength**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) is Sumter DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) do the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? Overall the county met the requirement; however not all treatment cases were rated “strength”. Children in foster care were visited at least monthly with a focus on treatment plan objectives, well being and safety. Children in one of the treatment cases were not visited prior to their relocation out of state. Visits with children for each month during the period under review were not documented in the other treatment case.

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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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	75	1	25	6	0
Treatment	6	67	3	33	1	0
Total Cases	9	69	4	31	7	0

Explanation

Worker visits with parents is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Sumter DSS. In the treatment and foster care cases rated “area needing improvement” the case manager did not have visits with parents each month during the period under review. The parents in one treatment case were not visited at all 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

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	100	0	0	4	0
Treatment	6	67	3	33	1	0
Total Cases	12	80	3	20	5	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Sumter 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 managers’ dictation indicated contact with school officials and updates on school progress. In three of the treatment cases the documentation did not indicate contact with school officials or contain information on the children’s school progress.

One stakeholder expressed concerns with the way DSS handles educational neglect cases. This individual felt that DSS sometimes appears unresponsive, especially at the end of the day. Communication of the policies and procedures for referrals is needed. The roles of the agencies need to be more clearly defined. There is no joint training for the school and other agencies (DJJ and DSS). Another stakeholder felt the system could be improved. Schools need to provide more when a child is not performing well. It takes some time for the school psychologist to see the child.

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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

Substantially Achieved

-Item 22: Physical health of the child

Finding: Strength

-Item 23: Mental health of the child

Finding: Strength

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 22: Physical health of the child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	8	89	1	11	1	0
Total Cases	18	95	1	5	1	0

Explanation

Item 22 is a “Strength”. Documentation was filed to indicate children’s physical health needs were being met in all of the foster care cases. In one treatment case the case manager did not seek medical follow-up after observing a child with broken skin during a school visit. Allegedly the grandmother had beaten the child and the case manager took the child’s word that the wound to the skin was not painful without further assessment.

Stakeholders report the agency is effective in meeting children’s physical health needs. There is not enough funding for dental needs. Case managers arrange for children to see the doctor as needed and for them to obtain glasses.

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

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. All of the applicable cases 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. Children were receiving individual and family counseling to address sexual abuse, domestic violence, anger management and other issues which necessitated intervention by the agency.

Stakeholders responded children receive counseling services as needed. They stated there are not enough psychologists (good ones) in the area. Mental Health services are provided to children at school, one-half hour each week. They also offer group counseling sessions. Private providers are used to meet mental health needs.

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Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses

Ten of the open foster home records were reviewed. All of the licenses were up-to-date and the information was filed correctly. The documents were easy to locate. Foster home regulations are being followed. The documentation was excellent and no deficiencies were noted.

FINDINGS:

1. All licenses were renewed prior to expiration. There were no lapses
2. All re-licensing, initial licensing, and amended license information were on file.
3. Foster Home Quarterly visit guides were on file and documented in CAPSS. Quarterly visits were held timely.
4. The licensing worker should refer to the Quarterly Home Visit Guide when documenting in CAPSS.
5. An individual Quarterly Home Visit Guide must be completed for each quarterly home visit.
6. Although the agency's policy on corporal punishment is reviewed at each quarterly home visit and the Foster Parents Responsibilities (which were on file for some cases) address the policy on corporal punishment, all foster parents must sign the Discipline Agreement (DSS 30219).
7. Each licensing file should have a chart indicating the date children enter and exit the foster home.
8. CAPSS was current and up-to-date.
9. Each quarterly foster home visit should indicate the presence of both foster parents (if two parent household) or other adult (s) in the home or the reason why adults were not present for the review.

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Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	Yes	No
Investigation Initiated Timely?	5	0
Assessment Adequate?	1	4
Case Decision Appropriate?	4	1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”.

Analysis: All investigations were initiated timely. Four of the five assessments were found to be inadequate. In one case the collateral contacts were not made with the school and law enforcement per recommendation from the case staffing. In another case the child (victim) could have been seen two days earlier at school. During one investigation the children were not seen for one month although they were allegedly at home during the initial visit. The case manager interviewed the mother from her car due to the presence of a dog on the family’s porch. Reviewers determined the case decision was not appropriate in one case. The children in this case were never seen. Therefore safety was not assessed in order to render a decision.

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. A total of ten 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?	10	0	0
	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Necessary Collaterals Contacted?	0	0	10
Appropriate Referrals Made?	0	0	10

Analysis

This item is rated “**Strength**”. Based on the allegations and the information available in CAPSS, the decision to screen-out was appropriate in all of the cases reviewed.

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Case Rating Summary

The performance and outcome ratings below show the number of cases receiving that rating, followed by the percent of the total that number represents. Not Applicable (N/A) cases do not factor in the percentage.

Performance Item or Outcome	Perf. Item Ratings			Outcome Ratings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	N/A*	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	N/A*
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				20 (100%)	0	0	0
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	10 (100%)	0	10				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	20 (100%)	0	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				17 (85%)	2 (20%)	1 (5%)	0
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	9 (82%)	2 (18%)	9				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	0				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	1 (100%)	0	9				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	2 (100%)	0	8				
Item 9: Adoption	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	6				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	4 (100%)	0	6				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	9 (100%)	0	1				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	7				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5				
Item 14: Preserving connections	7 (100%)	0	3				
Item 15: Relative placement	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	2				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	3 (100%)	0	7				
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	7 (41%)	10 (59%)	3				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	7				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				12 (80%)	0	3 (20%)	5
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	12 (80%)	3(20%)	5				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				18 (95%)	1 (5%)	0	1
Item 22: Physical health of the child	18 (95%)	1 (5%)	1				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	10 (100%)		10				