

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) assesses State performance during a specified time period with respect to seven child welfare outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being and with respect to seven systemic factors. The assessment is based on information from the following sources:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS), Child and Family Services Division;
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 50 case records at three sites throughout the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites) with local- and State-level stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, mental health providers, court personnel, legislators, and attorneys.

The Oklahoma DHS did not achieve substantial conformity with the seven safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The State also did not meet national standards for measures relating to the recurrence of maltreatment, maltreatment in foster care, re-entries into foster care, length of time to achieve adoption, and stability of foster care placements. The most significant concern with regard to the outcomes is the timely achievement of permanency for children in foster care, with the exception of achieving reunification, as measured in the first permanency outcome. The State achieved substantial conformity on five of the seven systemic factors (statewide information system, quality assurance system, training, agency responsiveness to the community, and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention), but was not in substantial conformity on the remaining two factors (case review system and service array). The primary concerns in these two systemic areas were inconsistencies in meeting requirements that case plans be developed jointly with parents, holding permanency hearings for children in foster care, notifying foster and pre-adoptive parents of hearings and reviews, and assuring that services are accessible to the children and families who need them.

The CFSR process identified several areas needing improvement. One of the areas of particular concern focused on the barriers related to establishing the goal of adoption and achieving termination of parental rights (TPR). The most frequently identified barrier to timely adoptions was that parents have the right to a jury trial in both adjudication and TPR hearings. Consequently, jury trials at adjudication often overwhelm court dockets and result in delayed adjudication, slowing down the process for reunification and adoptions. The State is proposing legislation to change the jury trial option. Another area of concern, reported in the statewide assessment, was the inconsistency across the State with regard to courts holding permanency hearings every 12 months. Data from KIDS indicated that less than one percent of the children in out-of-home placement have had a permanency hearing as per statute; and 73 percent of the children have no information entered into KIDS regarding a permanency hearing. The agency has been unable to determine whether the cause is poor data entry, to the fact that no permanency hearing has been held, or a lack of court documentation of a permanency hearing having

been held. In addition, the State's notification process is inadequate when a review or hearing is being held with respect to the child. The statewide assessment indicated that notification of foster care, preadoptive parents and relative caregivers of reviews or hearings was found to not be occurring on a consistent basis, and that there was no consistency with regard to the opportunity for these caregivers to be heard in court. Tribal stakeholders indicated a similar concern regarding notification of reviews and hearings from both DHS and the courts.

Another area needing improvement was the consistency of service availability on a statewide basis. Although the array of child protective, permanency planning, and adoption services are provided in all county child welfare agency field offices, Oklahoma is largely a rural State, and, as a result, families residing in rural areas are dependent upon transportation to larger metropolitan areas for many of these services. In addition, many rural areas cannot recruit professional mental health and medical staff willing to relocate to their areas. Stakeholders identified several service gaps in rural areas, i.e., transportation issues, and long waiting lists to obtain limited services for mental health and residential treatment services. We also found that the State did not always provide individualized services to families, particularly in-home services cases as required by DHS policy. Results of the case records reviewed found that families were not involved in the development of their case plans or treatment plans, and in many cases the service availability appeared to drive the treatment plan rather than the reverse.

The State did meet the national standard for reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care. In addition, several items assessed under the seven outcomes were rated as a strength. This included the following:

- Providing services to families to protect children in their homes and prevent removal (item 3).
- Implementing diligent efforts to achieve reunification, guardianship, permanent placement with relatives (item 8) or to assist children in achieving self-sufficient independent living if they are emancipated from the system (item 10).
- Placing children in close proximity to their biological families (item 11) and with their siblings (item 12) when possible and in the children's best interest.
- Facilitating visitation of children in foster care with parents and siblings (item 13) and supporting the maintenance of the bond between children and their parents (item 16).

The CFSR assessment process identified several strengths for the Oklahoma DHS. One clear strength observed was the extensive commitment of DHS to assessing and improving the outcomes experienced by children and families served by the child welfare system throughout the State. Evidence pertaining to the high level of commitment of DHS to an ongoing assessment of outcomes was apparent from the following observations:

- The implementation of Statewide comprehensive and intensive quality assurance effort focusing on children's outcomes as well as compliance with State policies.

- The expenditure of resources on methodologically appropriate evaluations of the effectiveness of child welfare agency services conducted by third-party evaluators, and the willingness to respond appropriately if evaluation findings do not support service efficacy.
- The recently implemented programs and initiatives designed to enhance attainment of positive outcomes for children including, but not limited to, the Swift Adoption Program, the Transitions Unit initiative, and the Family Group Conferencing pilot program.
- The high quality of the DHS Child Welfare Information System (called KIDS), which in addition to supporting a variety of agency functions, includes elements that relate to children's outcomes to promote the production of outcome-focused management reports.

Another strength observed concerns DHS' efforts to work closely with the many Indian Nations and Tribal child welfare agencies throughout the State. Native Americans represent nearly eight percent of Oklahoma's population and are the largest non-white population group. Tribes may elect to exercise jurisdiction over the child of an enrolled member at any point in a case but frequently choose to allow DHS to serve as a primary provider of protective and treatment services. Therefore, Indian children can be either served exclusively by the Tribe or by DHS with various levels of tribal oversight and support. Currently, there are 2,013 Indian Children in DHS custody. For example, during the case review, it was observed that for the Native American children in foster care, DHS involved the Tribe in the cases immediately and children were placed with either a relative or a tribal family. Although stakeholders in both DHS and Tribal agencies indicated that problems have occurred, and continue to occur, particularly at local levels, most stakeholders agreed that DHS listens to the issues raised by the Tribes and attempts to address those issues as quickly as possible.

The assessment also identified other systemic strengths for DHS, particularly its high quality training programs for staff, both basic and ongoing training; its reaching out to the community for input into planning and program development; and its standards and recruitment efforts with respect to foster and adoptive homes.

The following is a summary of the CFSR findings with respect to outcomes and systemic factors.

KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

SAFETY

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Status of Safety Outcome S1

Oklahoma did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- 80 percent of the case records reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity;
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentages of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6 month period; and
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentages of children experiencing maltreatment from caretakers while in foster care.

A summary of the findings for specific items assessed under this outcome is presented below.

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

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 30 percent of the applicable cases, the agency did not respond to a maltreatment report in a timely manner. Information the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews suggests that the agency is consistent in responding to Priority I (highest risk) reports in a timely manner, but that there are inconsistencies in the timeliness of responses to reports assigned to lower priority areas. This problem was attributed by stakeholders to the high level of staff turnover among the child welfare agency's front-line workers, which results in both inexperienced staff and excessive staff caseloads.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

In 18 of the cases in which children experienced a maltreatment report during the period under review, 28 percent had experienced another substantiated or indicated maltreatment report within a 6-month period.

The State Data Profile indicated that in 2000, the incidence of repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period was 11.7 percent, which does not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Status of Safety Outcome S2

Oklahoma did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 81.7 percent of the case records reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity. A summary of findings of the specific items assessed relevant to this outcome is presented below.

Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 88 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to provide services to ensure children's safety while preventing their placement in foster care.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 17 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that DHS was not effective in its efforts to reduce risk of harm to children. A key finding was that although the agency is extremely effective in managing risk by removing children from their homes when it is appropriate, it is less effective in managing risk when children remain at home. DHS acknowledged this problem in the Statewide Assessment and indicated that it is in the process of redesigning its preventive services programs throughout the State based on models that have been proven effective through methodologically sound evaluations.

II. PERMANENCY

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Status of Permanency Outcome P1

Oklahoma did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 based on the following findings:

- 64 percent of the case records were rated as having substantially achieved Permanency Outcome 1, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicated that in 2000, the percentage of children entering foster care who were re-entering care within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode was 15.3, which is greater than the national standard of 8.6 percent.
- The State Data Profile indicated that in 2000, the percentage of children experiencing no more than two placements during their first 12 months in foster care was 75.9, which is less than the national standard of 86.7.
- The State Data Profile indicated that in 2000, the percentage of children who experienced a finalized adoption within 24 months of removal from home was 31.3, although very close, was less than the national standard of 32.

A summary of findings of the specific items assessed relevant to this outcome is presented below.

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because (1) 17 percent of the children who entered foster care during the period under review were re-entering care within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode, and (2) the data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that the rate of re-entry into foster care within 12 months is 15.3 percent, which does not

meet the national standard of 8.6 percent. DHS administrators indicated that there may be some inaccuracies in the data provided in the State Data Profile due to the way the State interprets particular data elements in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS). The administrators noted that DHS is currently in the process of examining and resolving potential data reporting discrepancies.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because: (1) data from the State Data Profile indicate that 75.9 percent of all children in foster care for 12 months or less had no more than two placement settings, which does not meet the national standard of 86.7 percent; and (2) the item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 40 percent of the 25 foster care cases reviewed. A key problem observed with respect to this item was the use of shelter care as the first placement for the majority of children coming into foster care. DHS maintains that this placement is necessary to allow the agency to assess the child's needs so that an appropriate match can be made with a foster family.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 20 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner. However, this problem occurred primarily with respect to children with a goal of adoption who had been in foster care for a long time before the goal of adoption was established. For most of the cases in which children had a goal of reunification, the goal was deemed to be appropriate and to have been established in a timely manner.

Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship or Permanent Placement with Relatives

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because: (1) data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's percentage for reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (80.2%) meets the national standard of 76.2 percent, and (2) in 85 percent of the case records reviewed, reviewers determined that the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to attain permanency for children with goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship.

Item 9. Adoption

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because: (1) in 55 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that DHS had not made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner, and (2) data from the State Data Profile indicate that the percentage of finalized adoptions in FY 2000 occurring within 24 months of removal from home (31.3%) did not meet the national standard of 32 percent. Some of the barriers to timely adoptions were the following: (1) the high level of turnover in caseworkers, (2) the practice of some agency workers of maintaining a goal of reunification even when there is no evidence that

parents are working on their treatment plans, and (3) the fact that Oklahoma statute allows parents to have a jury trial at both the adjudication and TPR hearings.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in both applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal was appropriate for the child and that DHS workers were in the process of helping the child attain that goal. The small number of cases for which long term foster care was actually a goal is consistent with DHS policy that reunification and adoption are the primary permanency goals.

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Status of Permanency Outcome P2

Oklahoma did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 84 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. A summary of findings for specific items assessed relevant to this outcome is presented below.

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in all applicable cases, children were placed in close proximity to parents or close relatives.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 95 percent of the cases, siblings were either placed together, or reviewers determined that their separation was necessary to meet the needs of one or more of the siblings.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 90 percent of the applicable case records, reviewers determined that DHS had made, and was making, concerted efforts to facilitate visitation. In most cases, visitation occurred on at least a monthly basis with mothers, fathers, and siblings.

Item 14. Preserving connections

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 17 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that children's connections to family, community, culture, faith, and friends had not been preserved while the child was in foster care.

However, reviewers noted that for Native American children in foster care, the agency had been effective in preserving children's connections. In these cases, the Tribe had been involved in the case immediately and placements were made with either a relative or a tribal family. As of October 2001, there were 449 tribal homes identified by the State's SACWIS (KIDS system) to serve Indian custody children who represent approximately 22 percent of the average daily population of children in foster care. There is not an accurate measurement available as to how many of those homes are relative or same Tribe placement.

Item 15. Relative placement

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that in 28 percent of the cases, the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. The key finding was that the agency was consistent and effective in exploring maternal relatives, but that paternal relatives were not sought as consistently.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because reviewers determined that in all applicable cases, the agency was supporting the relationships of children in foster care with their parents.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB1

Oklahoma did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved for 70 percent of the case records reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. A summary of findings for specific items relevant to this outcome is presented below.

Item 17. Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 22 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the needs and services of children, parents, and/or foster parents had not been, or were not being, adequately addressed by DHS. This finding reflects an inconsistency in practice rather than typifying the agency's casework practice. A primary concern identified was the lack of consistency among workers in providing fathers with adequate attention with respect to their service needs.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 40 percent of the applicable case records, reviewers determined that DHS had not appropriately involved parents or children in the case planning process. Although DHS policy requires that parents be involved in the assessment and treatment planning process, the case review process indicated that this policy is not implemented on a consistent basis.

Item 19. Worker visits with child

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 18 percent of the case records, reviewers determined that the quantity and quality of caseworker visits with children were not sufficient to adequately monitor the child's safety and well-being. Although in the majority of cases workers were diligent with regard to visiting children and monitoring their safety and well-being, this was not a consistent practice across cases.

Item 20. Worker visits with parents

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 22 percent of the applicable case records, reviewers determined that visits with parents were not sufficiently frequent or of sufficient quality to promote the safety and well-being of the child or increase movement toward permanency for the child. Despite this rating, there were many cases in which workers visited parents more frequently than required by DHS policy and were diligent in addressing case-related issues during all visits.

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2

Oklahoma did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 because 81 percent of the case records reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. A summary of findings of the specific items assessed relevant to this outcome is presented below.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child.

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because for 19 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the educational needs of children were not effectively and appropriately addressed. This finding reflects inconsistencies in practice rather than representing typical cases. In most of the cases, children educational needs were appropriately addressed through service provision and advocacy.

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Status Of Well-Being Outcome 3

Oklahoma did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 because the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 71 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. A summary of findings for specific items assessed as relevant to this outcome is presented below.

Item 22. Physical health of the child

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 23 percent of the applicable case records, reviewers determined that DHS was not adequately addressing the health needs of children in both foster care and in-home services cases.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 26 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that DHS was not addressing children's mental health needs in an effective manner. For these cases, the agency either did not conduct a mental health assessment when there was an indication that one was needed, or they conducted an assessment, but did not follow up with services based on the findings of the assessment. In most cases, DHS caseworkers were diligent in ensuring that children's mental health needs were met.

KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Status of Statewide Information System

Oklahoma is in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

Item 24. The State is operating a Statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

This item was rated as a Strength because Oklahoma's automated child welfare system (SACWIS) – KIDS – has been implemented Statewide and can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is

currently, or has recently been, in foster care. KIDS was implemented Statewide in 1995 and is one of only four State systems that has passed the SACWIS Statewide Assessment Review (SAR) requirements. KIDS also interfaces with Child Support, Eligibility, Financial Management and Juvenile Justice programs.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Status of Case Review System

Oklahoma is not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

Item 25. Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.

Item 25 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because although case plans are routinely developed for children, the involvement of parents (particularly fathers) in this process is not consistent.

Item 26. Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.

This item was rated as a Strength because the State has established a number of procedures to ensure a review of the status of each child in foster care every 6 months. The most common procedure is the Permanency Planning Review (PPR). DHS policy requires that the PPR must take place every 6 months for as long as a child remains in out of home care.

Item 27. Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because of the inconsistency across the State with regard to courts holding permanency hearings every 12 months. However, some stakeholders suggested that permanency hearings are being held, but because the hearings are not formal, and no court minutes are provided, the court may not be documenting them.

Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

This item was assigned a rating of Strength because Oklahoma State statute and DHS rules comply with the ASFA requirement for filing TPR petitions within 15 of 22 months, unless one of the three exceptions is requested.

Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because notification of hearings to foster parents, preadoptive parents and relative caregivers was not occurring consistently, and there was variation across jurisdictions regarding the willingness of judges to provide an opportunity for these caregivers to be heard in court. Tribal representatives also indicated that provision of notice to Indian families by both DHS and the Courts is inconsistent.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Status of Quality Assurance System

Oklahoma is in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.

This item was rated as a Strength because DHS has developed standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children.

Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

This item was rated a Strength because the State operates a quality assurance system that is comprehensive and meets all of the requirements stated in the item. In January 2001, DHS implemented a statewide quality improvement system incorporating many features of the Federal CFSR process. The State has integrated these CFSR outcomes into goals constituting the State's title IV-B, Child and Family Services Plan. The Annual Program and Services Report includes a critical evaluation of performance in the context of goals as well as strategies for ongoing service improvement.

VII. TRAINING

Status of Training

Oklahoma is in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.

Item 32 was rated as a Strength because DHS operates a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.

Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

Item 33 was rated as a Strength because DHS provides numerous opportunities for ongoing training that addressed the skills and knowledge base needed by staff to carry out their jobs and mandates ongoing training for all caseworkers.

Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

Item 34 was rated as a Strength because DHS policy and/or contractual agreements require foster and kinship applicants to complete 21 hours of the Oklahoma PATH (Parents as Tender Healers) curriculum and 6 hours of Behavior Crisis Management Training (BCMT). For continued certification, 12 hours of in-service training are required per contract year. Both training programs are managed through a contract with the National Resource Center for Youth Services.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

Status of Service Array

Oklahoma is not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

Item 35 was rated as a Strength because the State has available and in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine additional services needs. DHS provides many services directly, such as casework services,

family support, emergency shelter, and placement services. Placement services include emergency foster care, therapeutic foster care, and in-patient and residential treatment. DHS also purchases a number of services for the children in DHS custody and their parents.

Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP.

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because there is a wide variation across the State with respect to the availability of key services to children and families. In many rural communities, families must travel long distances to metropolitan areas to receive services.

Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State did not always provide individualized services to families, particularly in in-home services cases, as required by DHS policy. A large percentage of the case records reviewed revealed that families were not involved in the development of their case plans or treatment plans, and in many cases the service availability appeared to drive the treatment plan rather than the reverse.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Oklahoma is in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.

This item has been rated as a Strength because the State engages in extensive consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court and other relevant public and private agencies in developing and establishing the goals and objectives of the CFSP.

Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.

This item was rated as a Strength because the State-administered CFSR process uses consultation with the community representatives to inform annual reports of progress and services delivered under the CFSP. Similarly, DHS has established a Child and Family

Services Committee that is used to ensure that input from other stakeholders in the community is ongoing and informs the development of reports.

Item 40. The State’s services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.

This item was rated as a Strength because DHS participates with other public and private agencies as an integral part of planning, developing and coordinating services. DHS participates in wide range of councils and organizations in the community and partners with a variety of agencies, including the Casey Family Program, Oklahoma City Division, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), One Church, One Child of Oklahoma, and the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA).

X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Oklahoma is in substantial conformity with this systemic factor.

Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions, which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

Item 41 was rated as a Strength because the State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards. Standards for foster family homes are established through State statutes and the Children and Family Services Division’s rules. Since September 2000, the Department’s policy has required kinship care applicants and providers, paid and non-paid, to meet the same requirements as foster care applicants and providers.

Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or childcare institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.

This item was rated as a Strength because the standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes (both relative foster homes and non-relative foster homes) or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds, with the exception of homes approved by the Tribes, which establish their own standards for tribal foster homes. The State Tribal Coordinator monitors services provided by the various Tribes, but tribal foster homes are approved independent of DHS. Specific information as to the differences between State and Tribal approval standards was not determined as a result of the review or Statewide Assessment.

Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.

Item 43 was rated as a Strength because State statute requires that DHS or a child-placing agency shall not place a child with a foster or adoptive parent who has been convicted of any of these felony offenses: physical assault, battery or a drug-related offense in the 5 year period prior to the application date; child abuse or neglect; domestic abuse; a crime against a child, including, but not limited to, child pornography; or, a crime involving violence, including, but not limited to, rape, sexual assault or homicide, but excluding physical assault or battery.

Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

This item was rated as a Strength because the State has a process for recruiting potential foster and adoptive families and attempts to recruit families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

This item was rated as a Strength because according to the Statewide Assessment, Oklahoma's adoption program has historically placed children in adoptive homes Statewide. Families from out of State with approved home assessments are encouraged to send a copy of their current approved assessment to the State office. The assessment is then forwarded to the child's worker for consideration. DHS contracts out the administration of adoption ICPC services. DHS contracts with licensed child placement agencies in receiving States for supervision of adoptive placements.

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Oklahoma. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS), Child and Family Services Division (CFSD).
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 50 case records at three sites throughout the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites) with local and state level stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, mental health providers, court personnel, legislators, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 50 case records reviewed are the following:

- 26 cases were reviewed in Oklahoma County, 12 in Cherokee County, and 12 in Pottawatomie County (Shawnee).
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review;
- 25 of the cases were “foster care cases” (cases in which children were in the care and custody of the State child welfare agency and in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 25 were “in-home services cases” (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained in their homes).
- Of the 25 in-home services cases, 15 were “aftercare cases” (cases in which children had been reunified with caretakers but, in accordance with State Statute, the State child welfare agency retained supervision for a period of 12 months following the reunification in order to provide follow-up to the families), and 10 were preventive services cases (cases in which services were provided to ensure children’s safety and reduce risk of future harm while children remain in their homes).
- In 24 of the cases, all children in the family were Caucasian; in 13 cases, all children in the family were African American; in 11 cases, all children in the family were Native American; and in 1 case, the children were Native American/Caucasian. In one case, reviewers did not identify the race/ethnicity of the children.
- Of the 50 case records reviewed, the **primary** reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case was the following:
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 19 cases (38%)
 - Substance abuse by parent – 10 cases (20%)
 - Physical abuse – 7 cases (14%)
 - Abandonment – 4 cases (8%)
 - Sexual abuse – 2 cases (4%)

- Domestic violence in child's home – 1 case (2%)
- Mental/physical health of parent – 1 case (2%)
- Child's behavior – 1 case (2%)
- Other – 4 cases (8%)
- Among **all** reasons identified for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency, neglect (not including medical neglect) was cited in 36 (72%) cases, substance abuse by parents was cited in 24 (48%) cases, physical abuse was cited in 19 (38%) cases, and medical neglect was cited in 13 cases.
- For 19 of the 25 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in foster care during the entire period under review.

The first section of the report presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table providing the degree of outcome achievement by site, a presentation of the State's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome, and a discussion of each item assessed as part of the overall outcome assessment. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.