



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

Final Report

Pennsylvania Child and Family Services Review

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report
Pennsylvania Child and Family Services Review

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 Pennsylvania CFSR was conducted the week of August 26, 2002. The Final Report is based on information from the following sources:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Pennsylvania Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF);
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 50 cases from three counties in the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three counties and the State capital) with a wide range of stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, various levels of State and local OCYF personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, service providers, court personnel, judges, and attorneys.

A key CFSR finding was that the State is effective in its efforts to prevent maltreatment recurrence. The State data for 2000 met the national standards with respect to the incidence of maltreatment recurrence and the incidence of maltreatment of children in foster care. In addition, the CFSR case reviews revealed a low incidence of maltreatment recurrence. However, the State was not as consistently effective in initiating responses to child maltreatment reports in a timely manner, particularly with regard to establishing face-to-face contact with the child victim.

The CFSR case reviews also identified two other strengths for the State -- ensuring that siblings in foster care are placed together and that the physical and dental health needs of children are adequately addressed.

Despite these strengths, Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with six of the seven safety, permanency, or well-being outcomes. A primary concern pertained to the State’s effectiveness in ensuring that children in foster care have permanency and stability in their living situations (Permanency Outcome 1). The case reviews found that OCYF was not consistently effective with regard to the following:

- Establishing appropriate permanency goals for children in a timely manner (item 7);
- Making diligent efforts to achieve timely permanency through adoption, reunification, permanent placement with relatives, guardianship, or other planned permanent living arrangement (items 8, 9, and 10); and
- Preventing re-entry into foster care (item 5).

The CFSR findings also indicated that OCYF was not consistent in making diligent efforts to ensure that the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children in foster care (Permanency Outcome 2). The case reviews found that in 47 percent of the cases reviewed, OCYF did not explore relatives as possible placement resources or did not give consideration to relatives who requested that children be placed with them. In addition, in more than one-third of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings. Finally, in 33 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF did not provide adequate services to support or strengthen the parent-child relationships of children in foster care.

Another area of concern pertained to the State's effectiveness in ensuring that families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs (Well-Being Outcome 1). According to the case review findings, in 32 percent of the cases, OCYF did not adequately address the service needs of children and parents (item 17); in 23 percent of the cases, OCYF did not appropriately involve parents and children in the case planning process (item 18). In addition, the frequency and quality of face-to-face contact between caseworkers and the children and parents in their caseloads often was insufficient to monitor children's safety or promote attainment of case goals (items 19 and 20).

With regard to the seven systemic factors, the CFSR findings were that the State is in substantial conformity with factors related to the statewide information system; quality assurance; training; service array; agency responsiveness to the community; and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. However, the State was not in substantial conformity with factors pertaining to the case review system. The key concerns pertaining to this factor were that OCYF was not consistent in its efforts to involving parents and children in case planning; and that there were too many impediments, both at the agency and court levels, to attaining TPR in a timely manner. The following is a summary of the CFSR findings regarding specific outcomes and systemic factors.

KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

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

Status of Safety Outcome S1 – Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania achieved substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- 92.7 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome, which exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
 - The State met the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period, and the national standard for the percentage of children maltreated in foster care.
- The State data pertaining to maltreatment recurrence is difficult to interpret because it does not include the majority of child neglect incidents. In Pennsylvania, most reports pertaining to child neglect are classified as General Protective Services cases and not Child Protective Services cases, and therefore, they are not reported to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). NCANDS is the data system that collects child maltreatment data for the Federal government and data from this system are used to compute the outcome measure pertaining to child maltreatment recurrence.

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

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Reviewers found that the agency had initiated investigations of reports of child maltreatment in a timely manner in 83 percent of the 12 applicable cases. However, in 17 percent of applicable cases, responses to reports of child maltreatment did not occur in accordance with established timeframes. Although the agency responded quickly and appropriately in the majority of instances, there were two cases in which face-to-face contact with the child did not meet agency timeframes.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following findings:

- In 97 percent of the 39 applicable cases, there was no recurrence of maltreatment. The data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's incidence of repeat maltreatment for 2000 was 3.5 percent, which meets the national standard of 6.1 percent. However, the rate of maltreatment recurrence reported in the State Data Profile includes only those cases classified as Child Protective Services cases. In Pennsylvania, there are two components to protective services, Child Protective Services (CPS) and General Protective Services (GPS). CPS covers cases involving non-accidental injuries or conditions, including serious physical injury, serious physical neglect, sexual abuse, and serious mental injury. GPS covers cases "not rising to the level of child abuse," including less serious injuries or neglect, environmental concerns, lack of supervision, and cases involving the behavior of children. GPS reports are not maintained in the statewide central registry and are not reported to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (which computes the maltreatment recurrence rate). Consequently, the rate of recurrence of substantiated incidents resulting from GPS investigations is not known.

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

Status of Safety Outcome S2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that this outcome was substantially achieved in 82.9 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Although Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity on this outcome, reviewers determined that in 85 percent of the cases, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to children in their own homes and to ensure that the risk of harm to children was adequately addressed. Both case reviews and stakeholder interviews indicated that, for the most part, OCYF uses an array of individualized services, particularly in-home services, to prevent placement and reduce risk of harm. However, the case reviews also indicated that these services are not used as consistently as necessary to ensure safety for all children.

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

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 85 percent of the 27 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes. However, in 15 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to provide services to ensure children's safety while preventing their placement in foster care. A key finding was that although OCYF has access to a wide variety of placement prevention services, the agency is not consistent in its efforts to provide these services to families or to provide services at the level of duration and intensity that is needed by many families.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 85 percent of the 41 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made sufficient efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children. However, in 15 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF was not consistently effective in its efforts to reduce risk of harm to children. The key concerns identified pertained to a lack of monitoring of families to ensure that they were receiving or participating in services intended to address the risk of harm issues. According to the Statewide Assessment, private providers surveyed as part of the State's self-assessment process reported that although the initial risk assessment process is valid, the process of assessing risk on an ongoing basis needs to be improved.

II. PERMANENCY

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

Status of Permanency Outcome 1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 48.0 percent of cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicated that for fiscal year 2000, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the rate of foster care re-entries, (2) the percentage of children achieving reunification within 12 months of entry into foster care, (3) the percentage of children discharged to finalized adoptions within 24 months of entry into foster care, or (4) the percentage of children in foster care for 12 months or less who experienced no more than 2 placements.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that improvements are being made in the State's permanency planning efforts. They noted that efforts such as permanency roundtables, adoption review committees, and intensive reunification programs are designed to enhance the State's capacity to achieve permanency outcomes in a timely manner. However, based on the findings of the case review process, all items assessed for Permanency Outcome 1 received a rating of Area Needing Improvement. The most significant concerns identified pertained to a lack of consistency in the agency's efforts to establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner and achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner.

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 33 percent of the 6 applicable cases, a re-entry into foster care occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode.
- The data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that the rate of re-entry into foster care within 12 months is 20.1 percent, which does not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent.

According to the Statewide Assessment, children between the ages of 10 and 13 are more likely to experience a re-entry into foster care than are younger children and children age 14 to 17.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although in 88 percent of the 25 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency made diligent efforts to ensure children's placement stability while in foster care, this was not consistent with the State data. Data from the State Data Profile indicate that in fiscal year 2000, 85.2 percent of 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. The State Data Profile and the case review process assess placement stability using different measures, and it is necessary for both of them to meet standards or acceptable criteria for this item to be rated as a Strength.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 68 percent of the 25 applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had established appropriate permanency goals for children in a timely manner. However, concerns were identified regarding this issue in 32 percent of foster care cases. Although the case review findings and stakeholder comments indicate that children's permanency goals are reviewed on a regular basis, the reviews do not always result in a reconsideration of permanency goals or in the filing of termination of parental rights petitions in a timely manner.

Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship or Permanent Placement with Relatives

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 67 percent of the 12 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner. However, in 33 percent of applicable cases reviewers determined that OCYF had not made concerted efforts to achieve these permanency goals in a timely manner.
- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (69.7%) does not meet the national standard of 76.2 percent.

Item 9. Adoption

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 43 percent of the 7 applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had made diligent efforts to achieve adoption in a timely manner. However, in 57 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had not made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner.
- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's percentage of finalized adoptions in FY 2000 that occurred within 24 months of removal from home (19.1%) does not meet the national standard of 32.0 percent.

According to stakeholders, delays in achieving adoptions in a timely manner may be attributed to delays in (1) changing goals from reunification to adoption, (2) filing for TPR, (3) searching for absent parents, and (4) conducting home studies. They also identified court-related barriers pertaining to the time to achieve TPR when there are appeals, and the difficulty of scheduling hearings in a timely manner due to crowded court dockets. According to the Statewide Assessment, variation in the financial and health care benefits that are available to adopting families is a barrier to timely adoptions.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 67 percent of the 6 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to assist children in attaining the goal of emancipation. However, in 33 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to ensure permanency for children with regard to alternative living options.

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

Status of Permanency Outcome 2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania 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 60.0 percent of the 25 foster care cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with this outcome, the case reviews found that the agency made concerted efforts to keep siblings together while in foster care. However, the case reviews also found that OCYF was less effective in placing children in close proximity to their families of origin, and particularly in placing children with relatives. Another area of concern identified by both stakeholders and reviewers was a lack of consistency in agency efforts to locate and involve absent fathers in the lives of their children. In addition, in more than one-third of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings.

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 80 percent of the 20 applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had made diligent efforts to ensure that children's foster care placements were in close proximity to their parents or relatives. However, in 20 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not been effective in placing children in proximity to their parents and relatives.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 88 percent of the 16 applicable cases, siblings were placed together, or their separation was deemed necessary to meet the needs of one or more of the children.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although in 63 percent of the 19 applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had made concerted efforts to facilitate visitation, in 37 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had not made concerted efforts to facilitate visitation with parents and siblings.

Item 14. Preserving connections

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 80 percent of the 25 foster care cases, reviewers determined that OCYF made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections. However, in 20 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that children's connections to extended biological family and/or to their heritage and faith had not been preserved in foster care.

Item 15. Relative placement

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 53 percent of the 19 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This was reflected in cases in which relatives were considered as placement resources early in the case and appropriate assessments were conducted. However, in 47 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had not made diligent efforts to seek relatives as possible placement resources.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 67 percent of the 18 applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF made efforts to support the parent-child relationship of children in foster care. However, concerns related to this issue were identified in 33 percent of applicable cases. A key concern pertained to an inconsistency in the agency regarding efforts to locate and involve absent fathers in their children's lives.

III. WELL-BEING

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

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania 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 64.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

A general CFSR finding was that OCYF is not consistent in meeting the service needs of children and families or in involving parents and children in the case planning process. In addition, concerns were identified regarding the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with children and parents in their caseloads. Although caseworkers were more likely to maintain sufficient contact with children than with parents, reviewers noted that the frequency and quality of contacts was not always sufficient to ensure children's safety and well-being or to promote attainment of case goals. A key finding is that all of these problems were more likely to occur in the in-home services cases than in the foster care cases.

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

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 68 percent of the 50 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the needs and services of children, parents, and/or foster parents had been, or were being, adequately addressed by OCYF. However, in 32 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that OCYF was not adequately addressing the needs and services of children and parents, although the agency was effective in meeting the needs of foster parents. According to the Statewide Assessment, frontline caseworkers participating in focus groups (conducted as part of the State's self-assessment) indicated that the coordination with private providers of service delivery to families at the local level is an area needing improvement. These focus group participants suggested that more extensive coordination and communication between caseworkers and private providers is needed to ensure effective service delivery.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77 percent of the 48 applicable case records, reviewers determined that OCYF appropriately involved parents or children in the case planning process. However, in 23 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that parents and/or children had not been appropriately involved in the case planning process. A key finding is that this problem pertained primarily to in-home services cases. Only one foster care case was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item.

Item 19. Worker visits with child

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 84 percent of the 50 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency of caseworker visits with children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of children's safety or to otherwise meet their needs. However, in 16 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with

children was not sufficient to monitor children's safety or to promote attainment of case goals. Reviewers observed that contracted service providers generally met or exceeded the required number of visits, but the frequency of caseworker visits was not always consistent with agency policy, particularly for the in-home services cases.

Item 20. Worker visits with parents

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 68 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that visits with parents were sufficiently frequent or of adequate quality to promote the safety and well-being of the child and enhance attainment of case goals. However, in 33 percent of cases, reviewers determined that visits were not of sufficient frequency or adequate quality. A primary concern identified was an inconsistency with regard to agency efforts to contact fathers, even in cases in which fathers had been caretakers and/or maintained connections with the children. For the most part, reviewers found that the frequency of caseworker contacts with parents in foster care cases was more appropriate than the frequency of contacts with parents in the in-home services cases. However, when in-home services cases were managed by contracted providers, reviewers noted that staff from the contractor agency established contacts with parents on a frequent basis.

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

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 86.4 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome. This is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with this outcome, the general CFSR finding was that in a large percentage of cases, the agency was consistent in assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs. However, in some cases, although educational needs were assessed, services were not provided to meet identified needs.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child.

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 86 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that OCYF was effective in meeting children's educational needs. However, in 14 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the educational needs of children were not effectively or appropriately addressed.

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

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3 - Not in Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 78.3 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

In general, the CFSR process found that OCYF was effective in meeting children’s physical health needs, but was less consistent in its efforts to address children’s mental health needs. A key concern identified was that mental health services were not always of sufficient intensity and duration to meet the children’s needs. In addition, in some in-home services cases, children did not receive adequate monitoring to ensure that recommended mental health services were actually received.

Item 22. Physical health of the child

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 92 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF was adequately addressing the health needs of children in foster care and in-home services cases. Overall, medical and dental services were accessible, services were provided, and documentation was thorough. A key problem identified concerned the availability of dental providers and the ability of children to access dental services.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 83 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF adequately addressed children’s mental health needs. However, in 17 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that mental health needs were not being addressed, either because mental health service needs were not assessed or needed services were not provided. Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that there are insufficient mental health services available to families.

KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Status of Statewide Information System – Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with this 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.

Item 24 was rated as a Strength because, although Pennsylvania does not have a Statewide Information System, the existing system does permit the State to identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care. However, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the available systems are cumbersome, slow, and fragmented. They noted that there is a need for more general access to the data and staff training on entering the data.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Status of Case Review System – Not in Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System.

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. The on-site review found that although policy requires workers to involve parents and children in case planning, this is not occurring consistently in all cases. Reviewers found that parents and children were involved in case planning in only 77 percent of the cases reviewed. The case review process revealed that parent and child involvement in case planning occurred far more often in the foster care cases than it did in the in-home services cases.

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.

Item 26 was rated as a Strength because stakeholders in all three counties reported that judicial reviews occur every 6 months and sometimes more often. These reviews fulfill both the requirements of the periodic review and the permanency hearing.

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.

Item 27 was rated as a Strength because stakeholder interviews involving judges, masters, Philadelphia child welfare agency attorneys, and caseworkers reported that permanency hearings occur within 12 months of children entering foster care and during judicial reviews every 6 months.

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

Item 28 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because there are a variety of delays in achieving TPR, including routine continuances and lengthy appeals to TPR. The lack of Guardians Ad Litem and attorneys also impedes the TPR process.

Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive 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.

Item 29 is rated as a Strength because there is a process in place for foster parents, relatives, and pre-adoptive parents to be notified of hearings and reviews and to be heard in these hearings and reviews.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Status of Quality Assurance System-Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the factor of Quality Assurance System. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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.

Item 30 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services to address their needs. According to the Statewide Assessment, in January 2000, OCYF issued *Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice*. These standards address all aspects of casework process: assessment, service planning, service delivery, case monitoring and evaluation, and agency administration. Each standard identifies applicable knowledge and values, measurable benchmarks, and implementation strategies.

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.

Item 31 was assigned a rating of Strength because the results of the Statewide Assessment and the on-site review show that the State has a number of mechanisms to monitor the quality of services and to identify system strengths and needs. These include the annual licensing of counties, the Needs Based Budgeting process, the Child Welfare Practice Standards, and the individual county quality assurance systems.

VII. TRAINING

Status of Training-Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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 the State has in place a comprehensive staff development and training program that requires that new workers complete 120 hours of competency-based training.

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 Pennsylvania provides a comprehensive and mandatory ongoing staff training program. According to the Statewide Assessment, the State requires that county caseworkers complete 20 hours of training annually to maintain their certification. Some counties require more than 20 hours of additional training. To assess staff needs for ongoing training, the training program utilizes the Individual Training Needs Assessments (ITNA) tool.

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 is rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania provides appropriate training for current and prospective foster and adoptive parents. According to the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania requires foster parents to participate in a minimum of 6 hours of pre-service training. During the on-site review, it was learned that the 6-hour requirement for foster and adoptive parent pre-service training is a minimum and most counties provide much more training to prospective foster and adoptive parents.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

Status of Service Array-Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of service array. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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 is rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania has a wide array of services that assess the needs of families and provide the appropriate services to meet those needs. The on-site review in all counties identified a “rich and strong array” of services available to meet the needs of families. It also was noted that many of these services are community-based and focus on prevention. There is a strong collaboration with private providers and a strong collaboration at the State level helping the agency move toward a seamless system of services for families.

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

Item 36 is rated as a Strength because, although there are some differences in the services available in each county, the State’s required array of services are generally accessible to all families in all locations of the State. All three sites reviewed confirmed through stakeholder interviews and case reviews that there is good access to services and that services are readily available.

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

Item 37 was assigned a rating of Strength because services available to families in Pennsylvania are individualized to meet the needs of the particular family. Most stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency tailors services to meet the individual needs of families in foster care and in-home cases.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Status of Agency Responsiveness To The Community- Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this outcome are presented below.

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.

Item 38 was assigned a rating of Strength because Pennsylvania has a strong working relationship with consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other stakeholders. According to the Statewide Assessment, OCYF engages external stakeholders through invitations to meetings, public hearings, and inclusion in program and practice-setting work groups. Individual counties have procedures in place to engage their immediate communities through a variety of avenues, such as child welfare advisory boards, community meetings, liaisons with foster parent associations, and town meetings.

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

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania utilizes community stakeholders in evaluating services and developing annual reports of the State's progress in child welfare.

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.

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because the Department of Public Welfare, as well as the county offices, have worked diligently to build partnerships with other agencies and stakeholders to coordinate services that serve children and families throughout the State. Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency has been assertive about reaching out to other Federally-funded programs to coordinate services.

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

Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention- Substantial Conformity

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this outcome are presented below.

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

Item 41 was assigned a rating of Strength because Pennsylvania has in place a set of comprehensive standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are routinely monitored for compliance.

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

Item 42 was assigned a rating of Strength because Pennsylvania applies the standards for foster family homes and child care institutions uniformly. Stakeholders reported that standards and training are the same for both relative and non-relative foster families. All foster homes and institutions are licensed and approved, and foster homes are reviewed annually.

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 all foster and adoptive parent applicants must submit criminal background checks through the State Police. FBI checks must be submitted by families that have resided out of the State. In addition, all applicants must go through a child abuse history clearance.

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.

Item 44 was assigned a rating of Strength because the State employs various methods to recruit a diverse pool of foster and adoptive families. Some of the methods used by the public and private agencies to recruit foster and adoptive parents include the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN); One Church One Child programs; special local events; the Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association Initiative; and specific campaigns to recruit African-American and Hispanic families.

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.

Item 45 was assigned a rating of Strength because Pennsylvania uses its Statewide Adoption Network to facilitate cross-jurisdictional adoption. Stakeholders reported that the State is effective in the use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive and permanent placements for children. Children are listed on county, State, and national adoption exchanges. Booklets are also distributed featuring children needing adoptive homes.

Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Pennsylvania. The CFSR was conducted the week of August 26, 2002. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Pennsylvania Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF);
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services providing child welfare data for the year 2000;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites throughout the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, service providers, court personnel, judges, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 50 cases reviewed are the following:

- 24 cases were reviewed in Philadelphia County, 14 in Montgomery County, and 12 in Lancaster County.
- 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).
- In 30 of the cases, all children in the family were African American; in 12 cases, all children in the family were white; in 6 cases, all children in the family were Hispanic; and in 2 cases, children were of two or more races.
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the **primary** reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case was the following:
 - Physical abuse – 8 cases (16%)
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 8 cases (16%)
 - Child’s behavior – 7 cases (14%)
 - Substance abuse by parents – 6 cases (12%)
 - Sexual abuse – 4 cases (8%)
 - Abandonment – 4 cases (8%)
 - Mental/physical health of parent – 3 cases (6%)
 - Domestic violence in child’s home – 2 cases (4%)
 - Child in juvenile justice system – 2 cases (4%)
 - Mental/physical health of child – 1 case (2%)

- Other – 5 cases (10%)
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, **all** reasons cited for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency were the following:
 - Substance abuse by parents – 21 cases (42%)
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 18 cases (36%)
 - Child’s behavior – 15 cases (30%)
 - Mental/physical health of parent – 13 cases (26%)
 - Domestic violence in child’s home – 11 cases (22%)
 - Physical abuse – 9 cases (18%)
 - Abandonment – 7 cases (14%)
 - Sexual abuse – 5 cases (10%)
 - Medical neglect – 5 cases (10%)
 - Child in juvenile justice system – 4 cases (8%)
 - Mental/physical health of child – 4 cases (8%)
 - Substance abuse by child – 2 cases (4%)
- In 17 (68%) 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 presenting key findings, a discussion of the State’s status with regard to the outcome, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed. 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.

SECTION 1: OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Lancaster	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	11	10	17	38	92.7
Partially Achieved:	0	1	2	3	7.3
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	0	0	0.0
Not Applicable:	1	3	5	9	
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:					
	National Standard	State's Percentage	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	
Repeat maltreatment	6.1%	3.5%	X		
Maltreatment of children in foster care	0.57%	.25%	X		

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1

Pennsylvania achieved substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- 92.7 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome, which exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State met the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period, and the national standard for the percentage of children maltreated in foster care.

The CFSR findings with respect to Safety Outcome 1 suggest that OCYF is successful in its efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect. Repeat maltreatment was observed in only one of the 39 applicable cases, and the rate of maltreatment recurrence for calendar year 2000 reported in the State Data Profile was less than the national standard. However, the rate of maltreatment

recurrence reported in the State Data Profile includes only those cases classified as Child Protective Services cases. In Pennsylvania, there are two components to protective services, Child Protective Services (CPS) and General Protective Services (GPS). CPS covers cases involving non-accidental injuries or conditions, including serious physical injury, serious physical neglect, sexual abuse, and serious mental injury. GPS covers cases "not rising to the level of child abuse," including less serious injuries or neglect, environmental concerns, lack of supervision, and cases involving the behavior of children. GPS reports are not maintained in the statewide central registry and are not reported to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (which computes the maltreatment recurrence rate). Consequently, the rate of recurrence of substantiated incidents resulting from GPS investigations is not known.

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 1 are presented below.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 12 of the 50 cases. Thirty-eight cases were not applicable because they did not involve reports of child maltreatment during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with child welfare agency policy. State policy requires that upon receipt of either a CPS or GPS report, the agency begin an investigation immediately and see the child immediately if the following conditions apply: (1) emergency protective custody has been taken or is needed, or (2) it cannot be determined from the report whether or not emergency protective custody is needed. If neither of these "high risk" conditions is met, an investigation of CPS reports must begin within 24 hours and the child must be seen within 24 hours. Investigations for GPS reports that do not meet "high risk" conditions are prioritized to ensure that children who are most at risk receive an assessment first. There is no requirement to see the child within 24 hours if the report is classified as a GPS report. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 10 (83%) of the 12 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (17%) of the 12 applicable cases (neither of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength in all cases in which the initiation of responses to child maltreatment reports occurring during the period under review was in accordance with agency policy for the type of report received. For the two cases rated as Area Needing

Improvement, reviewers noted that OCYF did not establish face-to-face contact with the child within agency guidelines. Both cases were moderate risk CPS cases requiring face-to-face contact within 24 hours.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in general agreement that the agency responds in a timely manner to maltreatment reports. Stakeholders in one of the sites included in the on-site review noted that, even when there are staff shortages, the agency is able to respond to abuse cases within 24 hours, because they allow caseworkers overtime pay or "comp" time. In another site, stakeholders reported that the agency is able to respond quickly to reports of maltreatment because caseworkers in the investigations units are more "seasoned" than in other units due to lower rates of staff turnover in those units. Finally, in the third site, stakeholders noted that investigations are initiated in a timely manner because investigating caseworkers have cell phones, beepers, and cars, and are in constant contact with supervisors. Stakeholders also reported that timeliness of investigations is enhanced by the agency's 24-hour-a-day access to judges and strong collaboration with the police department.

Although most stakeholders agreed that investigations were initiated in a timely manner, several expressed concern that many reports are not accepted for investigation, particularly those that are low- and moderate-risk cases involving children who are older than age 6. In one county, stakeholders noted that if the child is age 13 or older, only cases that are determined to be high risk are accepted for investigation.

Determination and Discussion: Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 17 percent of the applicable cases, the agency did not respond to a maltreatment report in a timely manner. Although the agency responded quickly and appropriately in the majority of instances, there were two cases in which face-to-face contact with the child did not meet agency timeframes.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 39 of the 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had been at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report occurred within 6 months of that report. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 38 (97%) of the 39 applicable cases (19 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (3%) of the 39 applicable cases (which was not a foster care case).

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in cases in which there was no repeat maltreatment. In the one case rated Area Needing Improvement, a substantiated report was received during the period under review that was within 6 months of a substantiated report received prior to the period under review. In 17 of the 38 cases rated as a Strength, the child was in foster care during the entire period under review. In addition, there were only six cases in which there was at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review.

Additional findings with respect to maltreatment reports for the 39 applicable cases were the following:

- In 10 cases, there was only 1 maltreatment report over the life of the case.
- In 22 cases, there were between 2 and 4 maltreatment reports over the life of the case.
- In 7 cases, there were between 5 and 8 maltreatment reports over the life of the case.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the low incidence of maltreatment recurrence may be attributed to the frequency with which caseworkers conduct risk assessments. For in-home cases, risk assessments are conducted at least every 6 months, and for foster care cases in which reunification is the goal, a risk assessment is conducted before the child returns home and then 30 days after return home. Both reviewers and stakeholders indicated that the provision of intensive services in response to a substantiated maltreatment report contributes to the low incidence of repeat maltreatment. However, stakeholders expressed concern that multiple reports on GPS cases are not captured by any tracking system. Consequently, there is no way to know if children are experiencing recurrence of problems such as "less serious injuries or neglect," or lack of supervision.

Determination and Discussion: Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following findings:

- In 97 percent of the applicable cases, there was no recurrence of maltreatment.
- The data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's incidence of repeat maltreatment for 2000 was 3.5 percent, which meets the national standard of 6.1 percent. It should be noted that although the State met the national standard for recurrence of maltreatment, the State does not submit information on GPS reports to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (which computes the maltreatment recurrence rate.) Therefore, the rate of repeat maltreatment among GPS cases is unknown.

Safety Outcome 2

Safety Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Lancaster	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	9	8	17	34	82.9
Partially Achieved:	2	0	2	4	9.8
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	2	1	3	7.3
Not Applicable:	1	4	4	9	

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2

Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that this outcome was substantially achieved in 82.9 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Although Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity on this outcome, reviewers determined that in 85 percent of the cases, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to children in their own homes and to ensure that the risk of harm to children was adequately addressed. Both case reviews and stakeholder interviews indicated that, for the most part, OCYF uses an array of individualized services, particularly in-home services, to prevent placement and reduce risk of harm. However, the case reviews also indicated that these services are not used as consistently as necessary to ensure safety for all children.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: There were 27 cases for which an assessment of item 3 was applicable. Twenty-three cases were excluded from this assessment because the children were in foster care for the entire review period or because there were no substantiated or indicated

maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 23 (85%) of the 27 applicable cases (6 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (15%) of the 27 applicable cases (none of which were foster care cases).

Twenty-one cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that OCYF assessed the family's service needs appropriately and provided or referred the family for services to meet those needs. These services were provided either to prevent an initial removal (19 cases) or to prevent a re-removal after reunification (2 cases). The services provided included, but were not limited to, drug and alcohol evaluation and treatment, parenting classes, Head Start, day care, financial assistance, mental health assessments and counseling, housing referrals, transportation assistance, sexual offender treatment, sexual abuse prevention, in-home services, post-reunification services, domestic violence counseling, employment assistance, family preservation services, legal assistance, wraparound services, anger management, and support groups. In addition, two cases were rated as a Strength because reviewers determined that OCYF had appropriately removed the children from the home to ensure their safety.

Cases received a rating of 'Area Needing Improvement' for this item when reviewers determined that services were not provided (2 cases), or that the services provided were not sufficient to address the families' needs and protect the children (2 cases). Reviewers noted that services were least likely to be intensive and meet the families' needs when the allegation involved "non-serious" neglect.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue indicated that there is a wide range of services available to families to protect children in their homes and prevent removal, including intensive family preservation and other types of flexible and individualized services. However, some stakeholders expressed concern that there is insufficient coordination among service providers when primary services are provided by private agencies under contract with the State.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 15 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to provide services to ensure children's safety while preventing their placement in foster care. According to the Statewide Assessment, OCYF regulations require that each county provide services designed to keep children in their own homes; prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation; and help families overcome problems that result in dependency and delinquency. The Statewide Assessment also notes that Family Centers are available in 78 communities as resources for family support in reunification and prevention. Individual counties include family preservation services in the continuum of services available in their agency. It appears that while the counties have a wide variety of placement prevention

services available, they are not consistently offered in every case, or, if provided, are not always at the level required to meet the families' needs.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 4 was applicable for 41 of the 50 cases reviewed. Nine cases were not applicable for assessment because the case was opened for a reason other than a substantiated or indicated report of abuse or neglect and there was no risk of harm to the child. In assessing item 4, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 35 (85%) of the 41 applicable cases (20 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (15%) of the 41 applicable cases (none of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from home and providing services to the parents to reduce risk of harm (10 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by removing the children from the home and seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) either prior to or during the period under review (9 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remain in the home (16 cases).

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in six in-home services cases when reviewers determined the following:

- No services were provided to address risk of harm (2 cases).
- The agency did not follow-up with the family to ensure that parents were participating in and receiving services to reduce risk of harm (2 cases).
- The agency did not conduct a safety assessment on the target child's siblings, who also were in the home (1 case).
- Underlying risk factors were not addressed (i.e., lack of supervision and domestic violence) (1 case). In this case, there also was evidence of physical abuse while the case was open that was not reported by the private agency service provider.

Some stakeholders commenting on these issues expressed the opinion that the agency implements effective risk assessment practices. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that the risk assessment tool used by the agency is too subjective. Some stakeholders also expressed concern that the courts accept caseworkers' safety assessments without any additional checks.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 15 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF did not make diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children. The key concerns identified pertained to a lack of service provision and monitoring.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania uses a risk assessment instrument to help identify high risk factors in the family that affect child safety. The Statewide Assessment also notes that, during the State's self-assessment process, participants in focus groups reported that the agency is effective in protecting children. However, private providers surveyed as part of the self-assessment process reported that although the initial risk assessment process is valid, the ongoing assessment process needs improvement. They suggested that caseworkers tend to consider the family's compliance with the Family Service Plan as evidence of effective change, when this may not be the case. Private providers also conveyed a desire to be more involved in the ongoing decision-making process regarding risk, and suggested that improved coordination between caseworkers and providers would result in improved risk assessments.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Lancaster	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	1	4	7	12	48.0
Partially Achieved:	5	2	5	12	48.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	1	0	1	4.0
Not Applicable:	6	7	12	25	
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:					
	National Standard (percentage)	State's Data (percentage)	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	
Foster care re-entries	8.6	20.1		X	
Length of time to achieve reunification	76.2	69.7		X	
Length of time to achieve adoption	32	19.1		X	
Stability of foster care placements	86.7	85.2		X	

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME P1

Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 48.0 percent of cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicated that for fiscal year 2000, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the rate of foster care re-entries, (2) the percentage of children achieving reunification within 12 months of entry into foster care, (3) the percentage of children discharged to finalized adoptions within 24 months of entry into foster care, or (4) the percentage of children in foster care for 12 months or less who experienced no more than 2 placements.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that improvements are being made in the State's permanency planning efforts. They noted that the State implemented efforts such as permanency roundtables, adoption review committees, and intensive reunification programs are helping to achieve permanency outcomes. However, based on the cases reviewed, all of the items assessed for Permanency Outcome 1 received a rating of Area Needing Improvement. The most significant concerns identified pertained to a lack of consistency in the agency's efforts to establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner and achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 are presented below.

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Six of the 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of foster care re-entries because they involved children who entered foster care at some time during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 4 (67%) of the 6 applicable cases.
- Item 5 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (33%) of the 6 applicable cases.

One of the two cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item involved an adolescent in the juvenile justice system who re-entered foster care because he committed another delinquent act. The other case involved a child who was discharged to the custody of relatives, ran away from the relative's home, and re-entered foster care when he was found.

Several stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that re-entry into foster care is a problem, particularly for juvenile delinquents who have been in residential treatment centers. However, for many other children, stakeholders suggested that re-entry is less of a problem because the court does not transfer custody until 6 months after a child has returned home. This allows the agency sufficient time to provide post-reunification services to support family reintegration.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 33 percent of applicable cases, a re-entry into foster care occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode.
- The data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that the rate of re-entry into foster care within 12 months is 20.1 percent, which does not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State's data analyses indicate that the percentage of children with two removals from the home has steadily increased over the past years from 13 percent in 1998 to 19 percent in 2001. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that children between the ages of 10 and 13 were more likely than children in any other age group to experience a re-entry into foster care. The Statewide Assessment suggests that a more specific focus on the developmental needs of children in this age group may be helpful in understanding why they are re-entering foster care and how to prevent their re-entries.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of Item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 22 (88%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (12%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 14 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in 7 cases experienced 2 placements.
- Children in 4 cases experienced 3 or more placements during the period under review.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item if reviewers determined that a child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (14 cases), or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest (i.e., movement from a residential treatment center to a therapeutic foster home) (8 cases).

A rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item was assigned when reviewers determined the following:

- Placement changes resulted from issues in the foster home and there was no evidence that the agency attempted to address the problems to prevent the disruptions (2 cases).
- A child had 5 placement changes in 6 months and his most recent placement was not appropriate for his needs (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that children in foster care generally experience stability in their placements. They noted that, although in some areas of the State there may be an initial placement in an emergency foster home, most children remain in the foster home in which they are placed until permanency is achieved. Stakeholders in one site attributed this level of stability to the fact that the agency is supportive of foster parents and individualizes services to foster parents to prevent placement disruptions. However, several stakeholders reported that relative caregivers are less likely to receive supportive services from the agency and are not adequately informed about their eligibility to become licensed foster parents. In another site, placement stability was attributed to the large pool of foster homes administered by the child welfare agency.

Although stakeholders were generally positive about children's placement stability while in foster care, several noted that children with mental health problems, older children, and juvenile delinquents tend to experience less placement stability than other children.

Determination and Discussion: Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although in 88 percent of the applicable cases reviewers determined that the agency made diligent efforts to ensure children's placement stability while in foster care, this was not consistent with the State data. Data from the State Data Profile indicate that in fiscal year 2000, 85.2 percent of children in foster care for 12 months or less had no more than two placement settings, which does not meet the national standard of 86.9 percent. The State Data Profile measure of placement stability and the case review measure of placement stability are different, and it is necessary for both of them to meet standards or acceptable criteria in order for this item to be rated as a Strength.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State Data Profile finding on placement stability is due to the large percentage of older children in foster care and children entering care due to their own behavior problems. The Statewide Assessment notes that over one-half of the children and youth entering the system are 10 years of age or older at the time of entry and over 40 percent of children who enter care are entering due to their behavior problems.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 17 (68%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (32%) of the 25 applicable cases.

The case review found that the children in the 25 foster care cases had the following permanency goals:

- 11 children had a goal of reunification with parents or permanent placement with relatives.
- 7 children had a goal of adoption.
- 6 children had a goal of permanent placement (long-term foster care) leading to eventual emancipation.
- 1 child had a goal of guardianship.

At the time of the on-site review, 18 children had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. In seven of the 18 cases, the agency had not yet filed for TPR. In four of these seven cases, compelling reasons not to file for TPR were provided in the case files. In three cases, compelling reasons were not noted in the files.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the most recent goal was not appropriate given the needs of the child (5 cases), or that the goal was appropriate, but had not been established in a timely manner (3 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency's permanency planning efforts are improving. The activities identified as contributing to improved permanency planning included (1) permanency roundtables that review cases prior to Family Service Plan (FSP) development, (2) use of legal guardianship as a permanency option, (3) increased judicial resources, (4) increased efforts to locate absent parents, and (5) use of specialized reunification units. Stakeholders also noted that many counties use concurrent planning, although the process has not been implemented statewide. However, there was little evidence of concurrent planning in the cases reviewed. Reviewers noted that information from the case files suggested that agency caseworkers view

concurrent planning as a process of establishing a "back-up" goal if the initial goal does not work out. For example, in a few cases in which adoption was the goal, the concurrent plan was to change the goal to long-term foster care if adoption was not achieved.

Stakeholders also identified ongoing barriers to timely permanency for children. One barrier is that some caseworkers are unwilling to move children toward TPR and adoption because of their own attitudes about adoption. Another barrier is that some judges are opposed to establishing a goal of adoption or will not pursue TPR until an adoptive family has been found. Several stakeholders noted that the agency is attempting to address these problems through training of caseworkers and court personnel regarding permanency and adoption. Other stakeholders, however, suggested that the push for adoption is not always appropriate, and that the 15-month timeframe for filing for TPR may not be sufficient for some parents to resolve their issues, particularly when substance abuse is involved.

Determination and Discussion: Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 32 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner. According to the Statewide Assessment, the child's permanency plan must be completed prior to the child entering care or within 30 days of the child's placement when the child is placed on an emergency basis. Permanency goals for children must be ordered by the court during dispositional and permanency hearings. Although the case review and stakeholder comments indicate that children's permanency goals are reviewed on a regular basis, there was evidence in the case files of unnecessary delays in changing children's goals and failure to pursue TPR in a timely manner.

Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship, or Permanent Placement with Relatives

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Item 8 was applicable for 12 cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives for the children in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved in a timely manner, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 8 (67%) of the 12 applicable cases.
- Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (33%) of the 12 applicable cases.

The cases assessed for item 8 included 10 with a goal of reunification, 1 with a goal of guardianship, and 1 with a goal of permanent placement with relatives. Review findings with respect to these goals were the following:

- For the 10 cases with a goal of reunification, the goal was achieved in 4 cases, and in 2 of those cases, the goal was achieved within 12 months.
- For the 1 case with a goal of guardianship, the goal had not been achieved, and the child had been in care for longer than 12 months.
- For the 1 case in which the goal was permanent placement with relatives, the goal was achieved within 12 months.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency was making, or had made, concerted efforts to achieve the goals in a timely manner.

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 cases because reviewers determined that the agency had not made adequate efforts to achieve the goal of reunification. The fourth case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the goal stated in the case file was guardianship, but no efforts had been made to work toward that goal.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that OCYF has implemented or supported initiatives designed to expedite reunification. These include recruiting foster parents to serve as mentors for biological parents (the Family-to-Family program) and establishing specialized reunification units in which caseworkers have reduced case loads and are trained to support reunification efforts. Stakeholders also anticipate that the recent State permanency option of subsidized legal guardianship will enhance and expedite permanency for children. Stakeholders suggested that one area where this option may be put to good use is in achieving permanency for children who are in kinship care.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following findings:

- In 33 percent of cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship.
- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (69.7%) does not meet the national standard of 76.2 percent.

According to the Statewide Assessment, many counties have dedicated staff assigned to Reunification Units to work directly with parents in preparing for the child's return home. Other county agencies incorporate the principles of reunification services into the ongoing work with the child and family. OCYF support for the Family-to-Family approach to foster care promotes the incorporation

of foster parents as mentors and role models for parents. Additionally, Family-to-Family emphasizes flexible family visitation that is tied to specific service objectives established to enhance parental capacity to provide safe and nurturing environments for their children.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the State has recently initiated the option of Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship. This is particularly geared toward permanency for children residing with relatives or foster parents who are willing to provide long-term care and assume legal responsibility for children who cannot return home and for whom adoption is not an option. Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship provides a financial payment similar to adoption subsidy to families who are named as permanent legal custodians by the Juvenile Court. Medical assistance benefits also continue for the child under the custodianship subsidy program in most cases.

Item 9. Adoption

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Seven of the foster care cases were assessed for item 9. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether appropriate and timely efforts had been, or were being, undertaken to achieve finalized adoptions. The results were the following:

- Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 3 (43%) of the 7 applicable cases.
- Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (57%) of the 7 applicable cases.

Of the seven cases with a goal of adoption, adoption had been finalized in one case, but it took 7 years to achieve the finalized adoption, although the child was adopted by the foster parents. TPR was finalized for five of the six children who had not yet achieved a finalized adoption. Three children were in adoptive placements with foster parents, one child was not in an adoptive placement.

This item was assigned a rating of Strength when reviewers determined that diligent efforts were being made or had been made to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. Cases were rated as Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Delays in seeking TPR (2 cases).
- There were delays in changing the goal to adoption (2 cases).

- Delay in transfer of case to adoption caseworker (1 case).
- Lack of efforts to find adoptive home (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue described several initiatives that OCYF has implemented to promote adoption. These include the establishment of adoption review committees, which review all foster care cases after the child has been in care for nine months, and the development of an array of post-adoption services. Stakeholders also identified ongoing barriers to expedited adoptions that were both agency-related and court-related. According to some stakeholders, the agency-related barriers pertained to unnecessary delays in (1) changing goals from reunification to adoption, (2) filing for TPR, (3) searching for absent parents, and (4) conducting home studies (particularly when foster parents have to have a new home study to become adoptive parents). Court-related barriers pertained to TPR appeals and crowded court dockets. A few stakeholders expressed concern that caseworkers and courts tend to view older children as “unadoptable,” and that some caseworkers will not pursue adoption even for younger children if the children express reluctance to being adopted. Other stakeholders noted that some families are hesitant to adopt because they are not sure how much support they will receive after adoption. Some of these stakeholders noted that a disincentive to foster parent adoption is that adoption subsidies end at age 18, while foster care support in Pennsylvania can continue up to age 21.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 57 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had not made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner.
- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's percentage of finalized adoptions in FY 2000 that occurred within 24 months of removal from home (19.1%) does not meet the national standard of 32 percent.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State has established the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN), which is a collaborative effort that serves children and prospective adoptive families. Available services include preparation of children for the adoption process and a continuum of post-adoption services ranging from counseling to respite care. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that there are inconsistencies in the availability of adoption-related services and supports due to the disparity in resources and the diverse geography of the State. The urban areas of the State such as Philadelphia have a larger variety of post-adoption services than many of the rural areas. In addition, OCYF has identified difficulties in the recruitment and matching of prospective foster families, as well as inconsistencies in application of the adoption subsidy process at the county level. Variation in the financial and health care benefits that are available to adopting families was also identified in the Statewide Assessment as a barrier to more timely adoption.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Six of the foster care cases were assessed for item 10. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements. The results were the following:

- Item 10 was rated as a Strength in 4 (67%) of the 6 applicable cases.
- Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (33%) of the 6 applicable cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the goal and the living arrangement met the child's needs and assessments and services to support eventual independent living were provided when appropriate. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case when reviewers determined that the child's goal had changed several times from adoption to long-term foster care. The foster parents reported that they were interested in adoption, but changed their minds when they were told that their services (to the foster parents and the child) would be cut. The other case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the goal of long-term foster care was appropriate, but the child was not yet in a permanent placement, although the child had been in foster care for 5 years before the goal was established.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed concern about the adequacy of independent living services provided to children who are expected to be emancipated from foster care after the age of 18. Some stakeholders reported that many foster care youth are unaware of their independent living plans and of their eligibility to remain in foster care and receive services until they are 21.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because, in 33 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to ensure permanency for children with regard to alternative living options.

Permanency Outcome 2

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Lancaster	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Total	Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	1	6	8	15	60.0
Partially Achieved:	5	1	4	10	40.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	0	0	0.0
Not Applicable:	6	7	12	25	

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2

Pennsylvania 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 60.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with this outcome, the case reviews found that the agency made concerted efforts to keep siblings together while in foster care. The case reviews also found that OCYF was less effective in placing children in close proximity to their families of origin, and particularly in placing children with relatives. Case reviewers determined that in 47 percent of the cases reviewed, OCYF did not explore relatives as possible placement resources or did not give consideration to relatives who requested that children be placed with them. In addition, stakeholders expressed concern that the agency is not consistently informing relative caregivers (or potential relative caregivers) about their eligibility to become licensed foster parents. Another area of concern identified by stakeholders and reviewers was a lack of consistency in agency efforts to locate and involve absent fathers in the lives of their children. In addition, in more than one-third of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings.

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Of the 25 foster care cases, 20 were applicable for an assessment of item 11. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which (1) TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, (2) contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest, or (3) parents were deceased or whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 11 was rated a Strength in 16 (80%) of the 20 applicable cases.
- Item 11 was rated an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (20%) of the 20 applicable cases.

In the 16 cases rated as a Strength, the child either was placed in the same community or county as parents or relatives (9 cases), or placement in a different county was necessary to meet the child's treatment needs (7 cases). Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that the child was not placed in close proximity to parents or close relatives because no appropriate placements were available in that area (3 cases). One case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the reviewer determined that the reason for the child's placement out of county was not related to helping the child achieve his case plan goals.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed differing views. In one site, stakeholders reported that the availability of a large pool of foster homes contributes to placements within the county. In another site, however, stakeholders said that children frequently are placed far away from family because of lack of placement resources in the community. Several stakeholders reported that children needing inpatient mental health treatment services or "step-down" therapeutic placements often must be sent out of the State.

Determination and Discussion: Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 20 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had not made diligent efforts to ensure that children's foster care placements were in close proximity to their parents or relatives.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Sixteen of the 25 foster care cases involved a child with siblings who were also in foster care. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 14 (88%) of the 16 applicable cases.
- Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (13%) of the 16 applicable cases.

In 6 of the 16 applicable cases, the child was in a placement with at least one other sibling, and in 3 of these cases, the child was in a placement with all siblings. Reviewers determined that in 11 cases, the children’s separation from some or all siblings was necessary to meet the treatment needs of one of the siblings. In the 2 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, reviewers determined that siblings were placed apart due to the lack of placement resources available to accept sibling groups.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that OCYF experiences some difficulties keeping siblings together in foster care because of a lack of placement resources that can accommodate sibling groups. Some stakeholders suggested that keeping siblings together is particularly problematic when siblings come into care at different times.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 88 percent of the cases, siblings were placed together, or their separation was deemed necessary to meet the needs of one or more of the children.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 13 was applicable for 19 of the 25 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine (1) whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care, and (2) whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 12 (63%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (37%) of the 19 applicable cases.

The case review process revealed the following visitation patterns between children and their mothers in the 16 applicable cases:

- Weekly visits - 2 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 8 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 6 cases.

In five of the six cases in which visits between the mother and child occurred on a less than monthly basis, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Fathers were far more likely than mothers to be identified as not applicable for this assessment because they could not be located or because visits between children and fathers were deemed to be not in the child's best interest (14 cases). Typical visitation patterns between children and their fathers for the 11 applicable cases were the following:

- Twice a month visits - 3 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 8 cases.

In six of the eight cases in which visits between the father and child occurred on a less than monthly basis, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Typical visitation patterns between siblings for the 10 applicable cases were the following:

- Twice a month visits - 5 cases.
- Monthly visits - 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits - 4 cases.

In one of four cases in which sibling visits occurred less than monthly, reviewers determined that the agency had made efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that visitation had occurred at least once a month, or that, when visitation was less frequent, the agency had made diligent efforts to promote more frequent visitation. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that visitation was less frequent than once a month and the agency had not made diligent efforts to promote more frequent visitation. In two cases, for example, the agency did not assist parents in resolving scheduling and transportation problems. In five cases, the agency did not arrange visitation either with siblings in foster care (4 cases) or with a parent in prison (1 case).

Some stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that sibling visitation generally is encouraged by the agency. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that visitation usually is left up to foster parents to handle, particularly visitation between siblings in foster care, and that caseworkers are not always proactive in this area. Also, in one site included in the on-site review, stakeholders noted that regular visitation with parents is promoted by ensuring that visits occur in home-like settings.

Determination and Discussion: Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 37 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had not made concerted efforts to facilitate visitation, particularly among siblings in foster care. According to the Statewide Assessment, the agency must provide opportunities for visits between the child in placement and his/her parents as frequently as possible. At a minimum, an opportunity for visits must be provided once every two weeks, at a time and place convenient to the parties and in a location that will permit natural interaction. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that there is no specific State policy requiring visitation between children in foster care and their siblings who are also in foster care at different locations, although sibling visitation is encouraged.

Item 14. Preserving connections

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Item 14 was applicable for assessment in all 25 foster care cases. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child's connections to neighborhood, community, heritage, family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 20 (80%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (20%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Reviewers indicated that in 18 of the 25 cases, children's primary connections had been “significantly” preserved while they were in foster care; in 5 of the 25 cases, children’s primary connections had been “partially” preserved; and in 2 of the 25 cases, children’s primary connections had been “not at all” preserved.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that critical primary connections were being at least partially preserved while the child is or was in foster care. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The children’s connections to their culture and heritage had not been preserved (2 cases). (In one case, the child, who is Hispanic was placed in a facility that had no Spanish speaking staff and was prohibited from speaking Spanish. In the other case, the child, who also is Hispanic was in a foster family that did not make efforts to connect the child to his Hispanic heritage or language.)
- The children's connections to their friends, communities, and schools were not preserved because of the location of their foster care placements (2 cases).
- The child was placed in a home in which foster parents were of a different religion and did not attempt to preserve the child's connections to his religion (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue identified several agency efforts designed to help preserve children’s connections. One of these is the alliance established with the Amish and Mennonite communities so that when children from that community need to be placed, they are placed back in the community. Another effort is the Family-to-Family initiative, which promotes close relationships between the birth parents and the foster parents. However, stakeholders noted that many caseworkers are not aware of the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and do not routinely ask if children entering foster care are Native American.

Determination and Discussion: Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 20 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections to community, heritage, faith, and friends. Although there are no nationally recognized Tribes in Pennsylvania, stakeholder interviews indicate that there is a need for caseworker training on ICWA requirements.

Item 15. Relative placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: Nineteen of the 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 15. Six foster care cases were determined to be not applicable for assessment because the child’s needs required placement at a higher level of care. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 10 (53%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (47%) of the 19 applicable cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children were placed with relatives (1 case), had been previously placed with relatives (2 cases), or were not placed with relatives but the agency had made diligent efforts to seek relatives and assess them as placement resources (7 cases).

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency had not conducted a thorough search of relatives as potential placement resources (7 cases).
- The child was placed with a relative, but this was done after the child had been in foster care for 3 years (1 case).
- A relative had requested consideration as a placement resource for a child, and the agency did not follow up on this request (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that a large number of children are in relative care. However, several stakeholders noted that relative caregivers receive very little in the way of support from the agency and are not adequately informed about their eligibility to become licensed as foster parents and receive foster care payments for the children in their care. In one site, stakeholders suggested that agency policy regarding placement with relatives is still under development, and that these placements are just becoming formalized.

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 47 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires that, when a child is not returning home, the agency must determine if a fit and willing relative is available for the child. If such a relative can be found for the child, then the agency must discuss with the relative and the child, if age appropriate, legally sanctioning the arrangement. It appears from the case review findings that this policy is not applied consistently in all cases.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 16 was applicable for 18 of the 25 foster care cases. A case was considered not applicable for an assessment of this item if parental rights had been terminated and parents were no longer involved with the child or if a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child's best interests. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine

whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between the child and both of his/her parents through visitation and provision of services that promote bonding. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 12 (67%) of the 18 applicable cases.
- Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (33%) of the 18 applicable cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that (1) there was a strong bond between the parent and the child that the agency supported through facilitating frequent visitation or, (2) there was not a strong bond between the parent and the child, but the agency made concerted efforts to promote bonding through frequent visitation or services designed to strengthen the parent-child relationship.

Cases were rated Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency did not promote visitation or provide services to strengthen the parent-child relationship (2 cases), or did not make efforts to contact absent fathers to encourage their involvement with their children (3 cases). One case was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because, although the child had a strong bond with the parents, the parents were very angry about the placement although they did not indicate that they would take care of the children. The result was that visitation resulted in increased disturbance and confusion for the child and the agency did not provide services to the children and parents to assist in promoting a healthier relationship.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that the agency encourages foster parents to help nurture the parent/child relationship. They noted that the Family-to-Family initiative supports this process.

Determination and Discussion: Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that, in 33 percent of applicable cases, the agency did not provide adequate services to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. A particular concern pertained to a lack of consistent efforts to locate and involve absent fathers.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well Being Outcome 1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Lancaster	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	5	11	16	32	64.0
Partially Achieved:	5	2	7	14	28.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	1	1	4	8.0
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	0	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1

Pennsylvania 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 64.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

A general finding of the CFSR process was that OCYF is not consistent in meeting the service needs of children and families. In addition, there were many cases in which family members, particularly fathers, were not involved in the case planning process, and many cases in which caseworker visits with children and parents was not of sufficient frequency or quality to ensure children's safety and/or promote attainment of case goals.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Well-Being Outcome 1 are presented and discussed below.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had (1) adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents; and (2) provided the services necessary to meet those needs. The results were the following:

- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 34 (68%) of the 50 applicable cases (19 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 16 (32%) of the 50 applicable cases (6 of which were foster care cases).

Reviewers made the following determinations from the case reviews:

- Children's needs were assessed in 39 of the 50 cases and services were provided in 40 cases. There was 1 case in which reviewers determined that the services received were not appropriate for the child's needs.
- Mothers' needs were assessed in 36 of the 43 cases for which an assessment of mothers' needs was applicable and services were provided in 29 cases.
- Fathers' needs were assessed in 17 of the 32 cases for which an assessment of fathers' needs was applicable and services were provided in 15 cases.
- Foster parents' needs were assessed in 16 of the 18 foster family cases, and services were provided in 18 cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met. Reviewers noted that the Family Assessment tool used by the agency was effective in assessing needs and matching families and children with services.

A rating of Area Needing Improvement was assigned when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Children's needs were not assessed and/or services to address identified needs were not provided (9 cases).
- The services provided were not adequate to meet the needs of parents and/or children (3 cases).
- Parent's needs were not assessed and/or services to address needs were not provided (7 cases).
- Foster parent's needs were not assessed and/or services to address needs were not provided (1 case).
- Fathers were not contacted by the agency to determine needs (4 cases).

Many stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the agency is effective in early identification of the needs of families and children and in linking families to a wide array of available services. Several stakeholders suggested that the agency is

highly supportive of foster parents and that their service needs are addressed. Despite these positive perceptions, some stakeholders noted that families often experience delays in accessing mental health services and substance abuse assessments and treatment. In addition, a few stakeholders suggested that many foster care placements are decided based on what is available rather than on what best meets the needs of the child.

Determination and Discussion: Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 32 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had not been effective in addressing the service needs of children, parents, and/or foster parents. According to the Statewide Assessment, frontline caseworkers participating in focus groups (conducted as part of the State's self-assessment) indicated that the coordination of service delivery to families at the local level is an area needing improvement. These focus group participants suggested that more extensive coordination and communication between caseworkers and private providers is needed to ensure effective service delivery. The Statewide Assessment also noted that county agencies and private providers identified high staff turnover rates as a barrier to effective service delivery.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 18 was applicable for 48 of the 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents (including pre-adoptive parents or permanent caregivers) and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interest. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent (or child) had actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. This assessment produced the following findings:

- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 37 (77%) of the 48 cases (22 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 11 (23%) of the 48 cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

In assessing this item, reviewers made the following determinations:

- Mothers were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 37 cases. In 6 cases, the mother was not involved but should have been. There were 7 cases that were not applicable for assessment of involvement of mother in case planning because the mother's participation in the case plan was contrary to the child's interests (4 cases) or the mother was not available to participate (3 cases).

- Fathers were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 17 cases. In 9 cases the father was not involved but should have been. There were 24 cases that were not applicable for assessment of involvement of father in case planning because the father was not available to participate (18 cases) or the father's participation was considered to be contrary to the child's best interest (6 cases).
- Children were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 27 cases. In 6 cases, children were not involved, although reviewers determined that they were old enough to have been involved. There were 17 cases that were not applicable for assessment of involvement of child in case planning because reviewers determined that the children were not old enough to participate in the case planning process.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that all relevant parties had actively participated in the case planning process. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that one or more of the key parties had not been involved in the case planning process. In these cases, the general finding was that case plans were prepared by the caseworkers and presented to parents for signature without requesting their feedback or input.

While only one of the 23 applicable foster care cases was rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, 9 of the 25 applicable in-home services cases were assigned this rating. This suggests that the agency is more effective in involving parents and children in case planning when the children are in foster care than when they are being maintained in their homes.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency was generally effective in involving parents and children (when age appropriate) in the case planning process, which is consistent with the case review findings for the foster care cases. In addition, stakeholders in one of the sites included in the on-site review expressed the opinion that the agency does conduct diligent searches for fathers to involve them in the case planning process.

Determination and Discussion: Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that, in 23 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that OCYF had not made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. A key finding is that this problem pertained primarily to in-home services cases. Only one foster care case was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item.

These findings are not consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment regarding agency standards pertaining to family involvement in case planning. According to the Statewide Assessment, family involvement, as discussed in the Practice Standards and regulations, means that families are encouraged and provided the opportunity to identify their needs and the specific services to meet those needs; identify family strengths; include family members and significant others in the planning process; identify

individual and family goals for the safety and well-being of the children; and participate in the evaluation of progress toward goal achievement. Planning Standards suggest that the caseworker engage parents, extended family, and substitute caregivers in a mutual ongoing process that builds upon strengths and addresses identified needs. These standards also address the issue of family involvement as it relates to participation in the evaluation of service effectiveness and the impact on service planning.

The Statewide Assessment also notes, however, that focus group participants, convened as part of the State's self-assessment process, reported that many case plans are "boiler plate" plans generated to expedite the process. Focus group participants described caseworkers' use of these generic case plans as the greatest hindrance to family involvement in case planning.

Item 19. Worker visits with child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: All 50 cases were applicable for an assessment of item 19. In conducting this assessment, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the caseworkers and the children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 42 (84%) of the 50 applicable cases (22 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (16%) of the 50 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 25 foster care cases:

- In 4 cases visits typically occurred once a week.
- In 10 cases visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 8 cases visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 3 cases visits typically occurred less than monthly.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 25 in-home cases:

- In 12 cases visits occurred once a week.
- In 2 cases visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 7 cases visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 4 cases visits typically occurred less frequently than once a month.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals.

Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits with children was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child (6 cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (1 case).
- The caseworker visited the child, but never visited at the location of the child's placement (1 case).

Reviewers noted that visits tend to focus more on substantive issues in the foster care cases than in the in-home services cases.

Determination and Discussion: Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 16 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality. Reviewers noted that contracted service providers generally met or exceeded the required number of visits, but the frequency of caseworker visits was not always consistent with agency policy.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Protective Services Regulations establish the framework for caseworker contact with children, parents, and service providers. These regulations link the frequency of visits with the child's identified level of risk. Contacts may be accomplished either directly by the county agency or through a purchase of service agency and they may be made by phone or in person. However, face-to-face contacts with the parent and the child are required to occur as often as necessary for the protection of the child, but no less than once per week until the case is no longer designated as high-risk, if the child remains in or returns to the home in which the abuse occurred and the county agency has determined a high level of risk, or once a month for six months or case closure when the child is either placed out of the home or remains in the setting in which the abuse occurred and the case is not designated as high risk. For children placed in foster care outside the State, the agency shall visit the child in the home or facility where the child is residing no less frequently than once every 12 months. In addition, the county agency caseworker is required to visit the child as often as necessary to carry out the service plan regardless of whether services are being purchased from another agency. At a minimum, one visit must be made every 180 days.

Item 20. Worker visits with parents

___ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 20 was applicable for 40 of the 50 cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker had sufficient face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers to promote attainment of case goals or to ensure the children's safety and well being. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 27 (67.5%) of the 40 cases (12 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 (32.5%) of the 40 cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

Typical patterns of caseworker visits with mothers were the following (40 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits - 12 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 6 cases.
- Monthly visits - 12 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 10 cases.

Typical patterns of caseworker visits with fathers were the following (28 applicable cases).

- Weekly visits - 3 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 3 cases.
- Monthly visits - 5 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 14 cases.
- No visits - 3 cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that visits were not sufficiently frequent to meet the needs of parents and children (5 cases); visits did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (3 cases); the father was not included in caseworker visits or contacted for visits (4 cases); or visits were made by the contracted service provider only, with no visits by the agency caseworker (1 case).

Determination and Discussion: This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 33 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with parents were not sufficient to

promote the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals. A primary concern identified was lack of caseworker contacts with fathers, even in cases in which fathers had been caretakers and/or maintained connections with the children. For the most part, reviewers found that the frequency of caseworker contacts with parents in foster care cases was more appropriate than the frequency of contacts with parents in the in-home services cases. However, when in-home services cases were managed by contracted providers, reviewers noted that staff from the contractor agency established contacts with parents on a frequent basis.

Well Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Lancaster	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	8	10	20	38	86.4
Partially Achieved:	0	2	2	4	9.1
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	0	0	2	4.5
Not Applicable:	2	2	2	6	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2

Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 86.4 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome. This is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with this outcome, the general finding of the CFSR process was that in a large percentage of cases, the agency was consistent in assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs. However, in some cases, although educational needs were assessed, services were not provided to meet identified needs. The findings for the item assessed for Well Being Outcome 2 are presented below.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 21 was applicable for 44 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for assessment were foster care cases in which the children were too young to be enrolled in school or preschool, or in-home services cases in which the children did not have needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 38 (86%) of the 44 applicable cases (21 of which were foster care cases).

- Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (14%) of the 44 applicable cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

Reviewers reported the following additional findings with respect to this item:

- Services were provided to meet educational needs in 36 cases, services were not provided in 4 cases, and service provision was not applicable in 10 cases.
- Of the children receiving educational services, 4 were in special education, 4 had Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings, 2 received educational advocacy, 2 received tutoring, 8 received early intervention, and 16 received other services (e.g., alternative school, therapeutic support services, speech therapy, gifted program and school-based placements).
- School records were included in all 22 applicable foster care cases; school records were not present in 4 of the 22 applicable in-home cases.
- In one foster care case, foster parents or relative caretakers did not receive the children's school records at the time of placement;
- In 8 cases, the children experienced multiple school changes as a result of placement changes in foster care.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item if there was evidence that the agency had assessed the children's educational needs and had provided services to meet those needs (if necessary). Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when educational needs were identified, but services were not provided to address those needs.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that the agency is involved in efforts to ensure that children's educational needs are met. Some stakeholders reported that the agency's independent living committee has a subcommittee that discusses issues related to education for teens and advises the State on ways to deal with identified concerns. Stakeholders also noted that there are efforts in some areas to train teachers to help them understand the educational needs of foster children.

Determination and Discussion: Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because, although reviewers determined that in 86 percent of the cases the educational needs of children were effectively and appropriately addressed, this did not meet the 90 percent level required for substantial conformity for this outcome.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice specify that caseworkers will set goals and objectives that meet the child's educational needs and draw upon their capabilities. The caseworker engages the family to develop an appropriate plan of services and helps the family assess the educational needs of their children and develop strategies to meet those needs. The Protective Services Regulations require that the child's educational information be maintained in the case record. The caseworker identifies essential and relevant collateral contacts that support the educational decision-making process. As part of the case service provision process, the caseworker assists the family in developing skills related to educational needs. The Standards

recommend that the caseworker use information obtained during monitoring and that evaluation activities be used to reassess the child's educational needs on a periodic basis. The caseworker proposes modifications to the family service plan based on reviews of child safety and family functioning, including the educational needs of the child. This occurs as frequently as needed but no less than every 6 months. In addition, the caseworker maintains monthly contact and reviews service plan goals, including educational goals, with service providers.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Lancaster	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	9	10	17	36	78.3
Partially Achieved:	1	2	4	7	15.2
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	0	1	3	6.5
Not Applicable:	0	2	2	4	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUCOME 3

Pennsylvania did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 78.3 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

In general, the CFSR process found that OCYF was effective in meeting children’s physical health needs, but was less consistent in its efforts to address children's mental health needs. A key concern identified was that mental health services were not always of sufficient intensity and duration to meet the children's needs. In addition, in some in-home services cases, children did not receive adequate monitoring to ensure that recommended mental health services were actually received.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Well-Being Outcome 3 are presented and discussed below.

Item 22. Physical health of the child

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 22 was applicable for 39 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for this assessment were in-home services cases for which no physical health issues were identified. In assessing this item, reviewers were to

determine whether (1) children's physical health needs had been appropriately assessed, and (2) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 36 (92%) of the 39 applicable cases (23 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (8%) of the 39 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the children's health needs were routinely assessed and services provided as needed. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Physical exams were not provided on a routine basis (1 case).
- No health screening was provided at entry into foster care for a child who entered care because of 'failure to thrive' (1 case).
- Adoptive parents did not receive the child's health records, even after the adoption was finalized (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue indicated that access to medical care is not generally a problem, with the exception of finding medical specialists in some parts of the State. However, stakeholders did report problems finding dentists who will accept Medicaid.

Determination and Discussion: Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that, in 92 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF was adequately addressing the health needs of children in foster care and in-home services cases. Overall, medical and dental services were accessible, services were provided, and documentation was thorough. There were some problems accessing dental care.

These findings are consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment indicating that the agency provides routine preventive physical and dental care to all children in out of home care. A child must receive a medical appraisal by a licensed physician within 60 days of the child's admission to foster family care, unless the child has had an appraisal within the last 90 days and the results of the appraisal are available. The appraisal includes a review of the child's health history, a physical examination of the child, and laboratory or diagnostic tests as indicated by the examining physician, including those required to detect communicable disease. After the initial health appraisal, each child is expected to have contact with a licensed physician once every 6 weeks for children birth through 6 months, once every 3 months for children age 7 months through 23 months, and once a year for children 23 months and older. The Code also requires that a child 3 years of age or older receive a dental appraisal by a licensed dentist within 60 days of admission, unless the child has had an appraisal within the previous 6 months and the results of the appraisal are available. The appraisal includes taking or reviewing the child's dental history, examination of the hard and soft tissue of the oral cavity and x-rays for diagnostic purposes, if deemed necessary by the dentist. After the initial appraisals, children should have a dental examination at least once every 9 months while in placement.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Review Findings: An assessment of item 23 was applicable for 37 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were foster care cases in which the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs, and in-home services cases in which the children's mental health needs were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and, (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 29 (83%) of the 37 applicable cases (16 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (17%) of the 37 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

For the 37 applicable cases, reviewers noted that children's mental health needs were “significantly assessed” in 27 cases, “partially assessed” in 2 cases, “not at all assessed” in 5 cases and “not applicable” in 3 cases. Reviewers also reported that mental health needs were “significantly met” in 21 cases, “partially met” in 7 cases, “not at all” met in 2 cases and “not applicable” in 7 cases.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength if mental health needs were “significantly” assessed and the children's mental health needs were “significantly” met. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that assessments and services were provided only partially or not at all. The following problems were found in cases rated as Area Needing Improvement:

- Child’s mental health needs or behavioral issues were not assessed (5 cases).
- Child had an identified service need that was not met (2 cases).
- The agency did not monitor the family to ensure that recommended mental health services for the child were being provided (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that there are insufficient mental health services available to families, particularly HMO clients.

Determination and Discussion: Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because, in 17 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that OCYF did not adequately address children's mental health needs. While the Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice supports conducting health assessments and determining the health needs of children who are in foster care or receiving in-home services by guiding the child welfare caseworker to identify, assess and document the impact and

interrelationships of critical issues, this did not occur in 5 of the cases reviewed. Critical issues include cognitive abilities, drug and alcohol abuse, emotional capacities, physical and mental health issues, and parent/child development levels. The caseworker is directed to incorporate the results of these assessments into the case planning process to ensure that service delivery reflects changes identified in considering the child's health needs.

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3X	4

STATUS OF STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the factor of Statewide Information System. Findings with respect to the item assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 24. 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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item has been rated as a Strength because although Pennsylvania does not have a Statewide Information System, the existing county-level systems permit the State to readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of all children in foster care.

According to information contained in the Statewide Assessment, some counties are fully automated while others maintain fiscal spreadsheets or ledger sheets on which the fiscal officer tracks the location of children in foster care. This was also confirmed during the on-site review through stakeholder interviews. Pennsylvania uses AFCARS data submitted by counties as the mechanism to track children. In addition, it was evident that when children moved from one county to another county within Pennsylvania, the information gathered by the originating county cannot be electronically transferred to the placement county, but has to be printed out, copied, and either mailed or faxed to the other county. This issue has caused delays in the system for these children. Also, on the

State level, stakeholder interviews revealed that because of the lack of a statewide information system, the Statewide Adoption Network is not able to identify the number of children in Pennsylvania that are legally free for adoption without contacting each county individually and asking for a count.

State-level stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR reported that counties collect and report the necessary data that at a minimum can identify the goals, location, status, and demographic characteristics of children in foster care. Stakeholders also noted that county administrators are proficient in using the data for planning and decision-making purposes.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2 X	3	4

STATUS OF CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Pennsylvania is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Although the State has laws, policies, and processes in place pertaining to all of the items examined in this area, the results of the on site review indicate that these are not fully implemented or consistently applied in the areas of termination of parental rights and involving parents in case planning. Findings with regard to specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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.

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 has been assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because the on-site review found that although policy requires workers to involve parents and children in case planning, this is not occurring consistently in all cases. Reviewers found that parents and children were involved in case planning in only 77 percent of the cases reviewed. These results are similar to the State’s findings in their mock case review. In addition, the case review process revealed that parent and child involvement in case planning occurred far more often in the foster care cases (22 of the 23 applicable cases) than it did in the in-home services cases (15 of the 25 applicable cases).

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania’s Administration of County Children and Youth Social Service Programs regulations requires county agencies to develop written case plans, which are referred to as Family Service Plans. Family Service

Plans must be completed within 60 days of the date that the agency accepted the family for in-home or placement service. However, stakeholders reported that the plans are somewhat generic or contain “boiler plate” language without taking into consideration individual situations. Service providers reported in Philadelphia that some problems exist with the Family Service Plan due to unclear role responsibilities and expectations between Department of Human Services Workers and contract workers.

Private provider agencies are required to develop Individual Service Plans for each child placed in their care within 30 days of acceptance for service. The case record review found that individual provider case plans were timely and adequate.

State regulations require county and private agency staff to provide to all family members, including the child, their representatives and service providers the opportunity to participate in the development of the Family Service Plan. The plan must have the signatures of the county or private agency staff persons responsible for case management. The parent or legal guardian of the child, and the child, if fourteen years of age or older, must be given the opportunity to sign the plans. The on-site review found that parents are invited to participate in the development of the plan. Multidisciplinary teams stated that parent involvement was evident in the plans. Regular meetings are held to develop the plans and parent advocates are invited to attend case plan meetings as well.

Both the Administration of County Children and Youth Social Service Programs and the Protective Services regulations provide for supervisory oversight of the development of the service plan. The supervisor is required to review the service plan within ten calendar days of the plan’s completion to ensure that the level of activity, in-person contacts with the children, oversight, supervision, and services provided to the child and family are consistent with the child’s identified level of risk. During the review process, a notification tracking system in Philadelphia was identified that alerts supervisors when case plans are due.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a mock case record review analysis indicated that parental participation in service planning was evident in the majority of cases. A combined sample of 33 in-home and placement cases from six counties were reviewed. In 20 cases, the Family Service Plan contained evidence that the parent was involved in some level of in-service planning. Age-appropriate children were involved with case planning in 14 cases. Case documentation showed that the children either signed the plan or were present at the service plan meeting. However, families who participated in OCYF focus groups as part of the State's self assessment did not indicate as high a level of involvement. In addition, caseworkers participating in the State's focus groups indicated that caseload demands, lack of sufficient referral services, and paperwork requirements are barriers to adequately involving parents.

Findings of the CFSR case reviews indicated that the agency is more effective in involving parents and children in case planning when children are in foster care than when they are being maintained in their own homes. Of the 11 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, only one was a foster care case.

Stakeholders interviewed during the on-site CFSR generated different opinions regarding the involvement of parents in case planning. Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that parents are involved in case plan development and that case plans are completed in a timely manner. Other stakeholders expressed the opinion that many family service plans are not developed with the input of parents and are not completed in a timely manner. Several stakeholders suggested that case plans are generic and do not take individual needs of the family into consideration.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because stakeholders in all three counties reported that judicial reviews occur every six months and sometimes more often. These reviews fulfill both the requirements of the periodic review and the permanency hearing.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Act and the OCYF Bulletin 3130-01-01 requires that a review be conducted at least every 6 months by a court or through an administrative review for each child that has been determined to be a dependent child and subsequently placed in foster care. In an effort to ensure that an appropriate permanency plan for each child is established, OCYF has mandated through legislation that permanency hearings be conducted every 6 months. The purpose of the permanency hearing is to determine, or to review, the permanency plan for the child, the date that the goal of permanency for the child might be achieved, and whether the placement continues to be suited to the safety, protection, and physical and mental welfare of the child.

In one county, for example, permanency round tables are convened before the second review to discuss progress on goals and services needed and provided. There are also behavioral health units available in the court in Philadelphia to provide immediate assessments and evaluations for parents as well as children. Case reviews also supported that periodic reviews are held every six months.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in general agreement that 6-month permanency review hearings are held in a timely manner. Stakeholders noted that agency efforts to facilitate reviews include scheduling hearings in advance, convening permanency roundtables, conducting pre-conference hearings, and providing video conferencing for juveniles placed out of State. Key concerns expressed by stakeholders were the following: (1) parents, foster parents, and youth are not invited to permanency roundtables, (2)

there is little tracking and follow-up on court-ordered services, (3) there are delays in holding hearings because of continuances, and (4) the master hearing cases in one county does not always approve case goal changes, which creates a barrier to moving children forward through the system.

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.

X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

This item was assigned a rating of Strength because stakeholder interviews involving judges, masters, Philadelphia child welfare agency attorneys, and caseworkers reported that permanency hearings occur within 12 months of children entering foster care and are reviewed during judicial reviews every six months.

As noted under item 27, according to the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania law and regulations require that a permanency hearing be held at least every 6 months by a court or through an administrative review for each child determined to be dependent and placed in foster care. A majority of the county agencies have developed either a Management Information System (MIS) or manual tracking system that includes a tickler to ensure that court hearings and court reviews are scheduled within the required timeframes. The Statewide Assessment notes that, in Philadelphia, the agency collaborated with the court to plan a centralized mechanism for scheduling hearings, rather than the judges in each of several courtrooms doing so on an individual basis. Dependent Court operations handle the scheduling of all review dates. This has increased the probability that reviews will be heard in court within required timeframes. Data from Philadelphia's Court Improvement Project verify 100 percent compliance with the State's 6-month review requirement.

In Philadelphia, OCYF has instituted specialized units with smaller caseloads which enables them to pay closer attention to cases and permanency issues. As a general rule, cases are scheduled for the fifth month to allow for court continuances in order to still meet the six-month requirement.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that permanency hearings are held in a timely manner and that the courts are committed to moving cases through the system. In one site, stakeholders expressed concern, however, about the limited number of public defenders available to represent families and the high caseloads of the Guardians Ad Litem. In another site, stakeholders

reported that court reviews are cursory and that court-appointed advocates are underpaid, causing them to put little effort into cases. In the third site, stakeholders expressed concerns about judges not being willing to approve changes to permanency goals, particularly changes from reunification to adoption.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because of a variety of delays including routine continuances and lengthy appeals to TPR. The lack of Guardians Ad Litem and attorneys also impedes the TPR process.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania amended its State law to incorporate the requirements of ASFA for termination of parental rights (TPR). The Juvenile Justice Act at Section 6351 f.9, and policy contained in OCYF Bulletin 3130-99-01 were changed to terminate parental rights for children who have been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months. The policy also provides for exceptions when TPR is not required. The law and policy also were amended to require TPR for children whose parents have been convicted of certain felonies.

Despite the law and policy changes, the Statewide Assessment reported that findings from the focus groups, interviews and consultations held as part of the State's self-assessment process indicated that judges and attorneys are not meeting the ASFA requirements for timely decisions regarding permanency. The involvement of multiple judges and attorneys has been identified as a barrier related to compliance with these timeframes. The result is a lack of consistency in maintaining a historical perspective of the case that may contribute to delays in court hearings or in decisions that are contrary to the safety and well-being of the child.

There is a process in place and some improvement has been made in moving cases forward as evidenced by the increased number of adoptions being finalized. In some of the cases reviewed, there was documentation of compelling reasons for not filing TPR.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the TPR process takes place in accordance with ASFA. Stakeholders noted that the agency uses compelling reasons for not filing for TPR when appropriate. However, stakeholders noted that some judges are reluctant to grant TPR due to their preference for reunification or concerns about creating “legal orphans.” Stakeholders also reported judges’ reluctance to terminate parental rights due to a “pro-reunification” mentality without regard to the

length of time the child has been involved in the system. It was also reported that there is a conflict between Pennsylvania’s adoption law and the Adoption and Safe Families Act on the timeliness that the Pennsylvania law may have less stringent time lines. Stakeholder concerns were verified through the case review process. Of the cases reviewed in which the child’s goal was adoption, 57 percent were rated as “area needing improvement” as a result of delays in achieving adoption, including delays in seeking TPR.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was assigned a rating of Strength because there is a process in place for foster parents, relatives, and pre-adoptive parents to be notified of and have an opportunity to be heard in hearings.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Juvenile Act was amended to require the court to direct the county agency or Juvenile Probation department to provide timely notification of hearings to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, or relative caregivers. State policy issued under the ASFA Bulletin requires the county agencies, when a petition is filed with the court and when administrative reviews are conducted, to provide to the substitute caregiver written notice of the date, time, place and purpose of the hearing. This notice must be sent 15 calendar days prior to the proceeding.

The Statewide Assessment reports that each county agency uses the Juvenile Act and related bulletins as the framework for a system of notification that compliments the characteristics of their organizational structure, population, and court system. In addition, each agency is inspected for compliance with the appropriate policy and regulations. During the review, OCYF regional staff determined the agency’s level of compliance to assure that families have been provided with notice of hearings and opportunity to be heard. Foster parents, who participated in focus groups as part of the State's self-assessment process, generally indicated that they were included in the case review hearings, and that they were notified on a consistent basis of court dates by letter or phone. Some of the cases reviewed contained documentation such as letters and notices that were sent to foster parents or the record contained statements that verbal notification was provided and this was later confirmed with the parents through interviews.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue generally agreed that foster parents are provided with advance notice of all hearings. However, stakeholders differed in their opinions regarding whether foster parents have the opportunity to be heard in these hearings. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that foster parents usually have the opportunity to be heard, although this may not always be

during court testimony. Other stakeholders noted that there is wide variation among judges in soliciting or allowing foster parent input. Although invited, some youth expressed concern that they were not able to be heard during court proceedings, not able to speak, and sometimes not even allowed in the courtroom.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4 X

STATUS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the factor of Quality Assurance System. Findings with respect to the specific items assess for this factor are presented below.

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.

X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

This item is rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services to address their needs.

According to the Statewide Assessment, in January 2000 OCYF issued *Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice*. These standards address all aspects of casework process: assessment, service planning, service delivery, case monitoring and evaluation, and agency administration. Each standard identifies applicable knowledge and values, measurable benchmarks, and implementation strategies. The Pennsylvania standards are intended to be a working tool for agency county casework staff and managers. Counties are expected to use the standards in assessing their service results, in planning program changes and enhancements, and in the development of their Needs-Based Plan and Budget.

The State's licensing process is used to ensure that State standards are met by county and private provider agencies. State policies and regulations reflect the Title IV-B State plan requirements that define the goal and minimum standard of services to be provided to reduce risk to children. Regional Offices monitor the county-level compliance through the use of licensing visits conducted on an annual basis. Every agency also is assessed with respect to its ability to meet the treatment needs of the population being served. Counties and private agencies must submit a corrective action plan when an agency does not comply or needs improvement. All juvenile justice cases that are Title IV-E eligible and designated as "joint case management" are subjected to the same quality assurance system.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that counties use the Federal outcomes data to prepare their Needs-Based Plan and Budget and undergo a self-assessment. Once counties review their data, including interpretations such as client demographic breakdowns of the outcomes, they determine which areas need greater focus on improvement. Counties then use the *Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice* to determine which standards are most applicable to improving outcomes, where they need improvement. When counties do not comply, regional staffs conduct case reviews and interviews with all stakeholders (public and private agencies, parents, foster parents, and interested parties) to identify needs for improvement. This process occurs through the annual licensing process as well as through the follow-up on complaints and child death investigation processes. The investigation processes in such circumstances are prescribed in the OCYF Bulletins and include the use of Multi-Disciplinary Teams to assure objective evaluations.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that Pennsylvania's child welfare Practice Standards provide sufficient standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services. In addition, many counties also have their own Quality Assurance Systems and some are moving towards the use of the Child and Family Services Review model.

In Philadelphia, it was reported through interviews that visitation tracking occurs when supervisors update the system following visits by workers and also alert workers and supervisors when the next visit is due. Supervisors also maintain a court calendar, which is reviewed with workers during weekly meetings and discussions. Multidisciplinary Teams which are made up of representatives from hospitals, schools, law enforcement, behavioral health, advocates, the District Attorney's office and providers, are used for cases with more than one indicated report of maltreatment. It is a requirement that these cases be referred to the MDT for assessment. Philadelphia currently has two teams that meet every other week.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because the results of the Statewide Assessment and the on-site review show that the State has a number of mechanisms to monitor the quality of services and to identify system strengths and needs. These mechanisms include the annual licensing of counties, the Needs Based Budgeting process, the Child Welfare Practice Standards and the individual county quality assurance systems.

Eleven counties have a quality assurance system. Philadelphia has established its own quality assurance method, known as the Contract Administration and Performance Evaluation (CAPE), to oversee and link contracting and performance activities. Montgomery and Lancaster Counties have established their own processes using the case review system to evaluate whether safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes are addressed in each phase of casework activities. All county agencies monitor private service providers to assure uniformity as well as quality of services and compliance with State policies and practice standards. Supervisory case reviews and licensing reviews provide case-specific and agency-specific data to determine the degree and consistency of service coordination.

A three-year review of the licensing of the 67 county Children and Youth agencies was conducted in preparation for the Statewide Assessment. The most common problems identified were related to Family Service Plans, Family Case Records, and placement planning. Most counties do not meet the national standards for timely permanency, two or fewer placement settings, and foster care re-entries.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that the State conducts an annual licensing of counties that is similar to the Federal CFSR process and involves one week of on-site case reviews and interviews. Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that the State requirement of needs-based budgeting helps guide the counties in developing good practice. Some stakeholders reported that many counties have their own quality assurance systems, and stakeholders in two sites indicated that their county-level quality assurance programs have been in place for many years. In the third site, stakeholders noted that although there is no formal quality assurance system, supervisors hold weekly conferences with caseworkers and the county participates in a regional audit once a year.

VII. TRAINING

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4 X

STATUS WITH RESPECT TO TRAINING

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Findings with respect to items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 was rated as a Strength because the State has in place a comprehensive staff development and training program that requires that workers complete 120 hours of competency-based training for new workers.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania’s training system includes three programs: the Competency-Based Training and Certification Program (CBT), the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Program (CWEB), and the Child Welfare Education for Leadership Program (CWEL). The training program is a collaborative effort of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work (the University), and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (PCYA). The University has established the Central Management unit to manage statewide short- and long-term training programs. The University monitors all curriculum development and training plans to train the OCYF staff, county Children and Youth agency caseworkers, supervisors, managers, and other child welfare program staff that work with the agency. Each county has the opportunity to identify the training needs of their staff and work with the regional training centers to develop the training curriculum.

OCYF administers the CBT program. In 1999, at the request of OCYF, the American Humane Association conducted an evaluation of the program and found it to be “among the best in the country”.

State policies on training requirements for child welfare agency staff are contained in the Title IV-B Plan, ACT 151, Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), the Juvenile Act, as well as various State regulations. Most counties maintain the State standard that requires caseworkers to have a Bachelor’s Degree in Human Services, preferably in social work. Some counties require supervisors to have Master’s degrees. Supervisors and caseworkers are not required to be licensed social workers. Public child welfare staff must be certified in order to perform case management services. Newly appointed caseworkers and supervisors must meet the certification requirements within the first 18 months of employment. New caseworkers are assigned a caseload while attending the initial certification training. However, these new caseworkers are only permitted to manage GPS cases under direct supervision until certification is completed.

The curriculum provides the knowledge and skills needed for the pre- and post-service tasks. It is reviewed every three years so that the training reflects current policy and practice. Training is delivered through eight Regional Training Centers and there is a strong partnership with the counties in identifying training needs, updating the training curriculum, and evaluating training.

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed positive views of Pennsylvania’s 120-hour, competency-based training for new caseworkers (60 hours for supervisors). Stakeholders reported that the State has developed “behavioral indicators” to measure skills at different levels. However, some stakeholders expressed concern that supervisors who were hired many years ago have not received training equivalent to the training new caseworkers are receiving, which sometimes results in conflicts between new caseworkers and supervisors. Stakeholders also expressed concern that contracted service providers do not always have access to the training. Finally, stakeholders in one site noted that new caseworkers receive caseloads immediately after being hired, although they may not be able to participate in the training for six to nine months. Some stakeholders suggested that a mentoring program in which new caseworkers are matched with more experienced caseworkers would resolve some of the problems arising when new caseworkers receive caseloads prior to training.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania provides a comprehensive, mandatory ongoing training program for staff. In addition, there are a variety of staff development opportunities for staff to take advantage of.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State requires that county caseworkers complete 20 hours of training annually to maintain their certification. Some counties require more than 20 hours of additional training. To assess staff needs for ongoing training, the training program utilizes the Individual Training Needs Assessments (ITNA) tool. In consultation with their supervisors, each staff member (caseworker and supervisor) must complete an ITNA annually, which is used to develop an Individual Training Plan. Pennsylvania has collected ITNA data for 9 years. A review of the data indicates that the highest training needs for casework staff are in the areas of sexual abuse, working with adolescents, drug and alcohol abuse, childhood emotional disorders, adult mental health issues, domestic violence, and legal issues.

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCYF reviews its Title IV-B training plan each year in order to identify training strategies necessary to build staff capacity to achieve ASFA goals. The Child Welfare Training Steering Committee oversees the development of the training plan. The Committee membership includes OCYF staff, county agency administrators, supervisors, caseworkers, and the University Regional Training Staff. Data collected from the ITNAS, focus groups with agency staff, and meetings with agency staff guide the development of the annual training plan. In 2000, the American Humane Association (AHA) conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the training program. AHA reported that high quality standards were utilized in the curriculum development and trainer development process. AHA indicated that the training program has successfully attained the National Staff Development and Training Association standards for training the trainers and curriculum development.

Initiated in January 1995, Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) provides an opportunity for child welfare caseworkers to advance their skills through graduate professional education. County Children and Youth agency employees with 1 year of tenure are eligible to participate in the program. The CWEL program provides full funding of all educational costs for part-time students and full payment of all educational costs plus the employee's salary for the duration of their program for full-time students. In return, the student has a 2-year employment commitment to their county Children and Youth agency. Over 300 students have completed the program since its inception and 100 percent have met their commitment. It was reported that there is an 84 percent retention rate after two years of graduation from CWEL.

The State also has the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureate (CWEB) program, in which qualified individuals who are enrolled as social work majors in any of the approved schools, on either a full-time or part-time basis, can receive financial support in return for a contractual obligation to accept employment in a Pennsylvania public child welfare agency. Both the CWEL and the CWEB programs are excellent for attracting and retaining workers in child welfare.

The State/University of Pittsburgh training collaborative recognizes that social work programs are not the only source of potential caseworkers, and values students who obtain degrees in psychology, sociology, human services, child development, and other fields. They are working with universities and colleges in Pennsylvania that offer these programs to include more child welfare related coursework in their curricula, and to provide student internships in child welfare. As a result, the State actively recruits caseworkers from these programs.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the State's ongoing training requirements are adequate and that OCYF provides a broad range of training opportunities for staff. Stakeholders also noted that the State provides cross-training with other departments and service providers and maintains a staff development center that coordinates training needs. Stakeholders reported that agency staff complete individual training needs assessments on an annual basis.

Despite the general praise for the ongoing training efforts, some stakeholders expressed concern that caseworkers and supervisors are not participating sufficiently in training and, as a result, there is inconsistency among agency staff with regard to knowledge and skills. In addition, several stakeholders indicated that because contract providers and agency caseworkers are not trained together using the same curriculum, caseworkers and contractors may have a divergent understanding of risk issues and effective case practice. Separate training sometimes results in miscommunications between the agency staff and private providers. These stakeholders suggested that agency staff and private providers should receive training on how to more effectively collaborate and coordinate efforts.

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.

X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania provides appropriate training for current and prospective foster and adoptive parents as well as training opportunities for private agency staff.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania requires foster parents to participate in a minimum of 6 hours of pre-service training. State-funded training is offered to foster/adoptive parents through regional training centers. Initial training of foster parents is the responsibility of private and public agencies. The OCYF Training Program has developed a pre-service foster parent training curriculum, in collaboration with private and public agency staff, foster parents and the Department of Public Welfare. The curriculum addresses legal issues, separation, placement of children, child development, child sexual abuse, cultural diversity and parenting skills. It also covers foster care and adoption policies and regulations. Over 100 different workshops are available to meet the ongoing training needs of foster parents.

Private provider membership organizations, such as the Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth, and Family Services (PCCYFS) and the Pennsylvania Community Providers Association (PCPA) sponsor and provide training to foster and adoptive parents on a regular basis. The Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association (PSFPA) regularly collaborates with the eight Regional Training Centers as well as public and private providers to develop its Regional Training Program. The association conducts three statewide foster parent training sessions a year.

Private and public agencies offer ongoing support groups and training to adoptive families through the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN). Agencies also collaborate regularly to provide orientation to families interested in adoption. These adoptive families return to their county agencies to complete their preparation and homestudy.

During the on-site review, it was learned that the 6-hour requirement for foster and adoptive parent pre-service training is a minimum and most counties provide much more training to prospective foster and adoptive parents. For example, Lancaster County reported that foster parents receive 12 hours of training, while foster parents in Philadelphia receive 20 to 24 hours per year. Foster parents

reported the training is accessible and delivered in a variety of settings such as one-on-one, in conferences, and in hospitals. In addition, the State allows foster parents to attend the core caseworker training provided to staff.

Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the training is generally effective and addresses a number of topics. One concern expressed by stakeholders is that there is no training that results in dual licensure of families as foster/adoptive families. Also, there is no separate training curriculum for adoptive parents. Although some stakeholders indicated that training is accessible to most families and that alternatives to classroom training are available, other stakeholders noted that transportation is often a barrier to foster parent attendance, as is the lack of availability of training in Spanish.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4 X

STATUS WITH RESPECT TO SERVICE ARRAY

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of service array. Findings pertaining to the specific items relevant to this factor are presented and discussed below.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania has a wide array of services that assess the needs of families and provide the appropriate services to meet those needs.

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCYF regulations require that all counties provide the following services: Intake, Investigation, and Assessment, placement prevention services (including counseling, parent education, homemaker/caretaker, day-care and day treatment), and emergency and planned temporary placement services (including emergency placement, foster family care, and residential child care). OCYF regulations permit counties to fund services that will prevent the entry of families and children into the formal children and youth or juvenile probation systems. Services supporting permanency when reunification is not an option include the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN), the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE), the One Church One Child Program, and independent living services. Pennsylvania has initiated the option of Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship.

Many counties have dedicated staff assigned to reunification units to work directly with parents in preparing for the child's return home. The Title IV-B plan outlines services specifically geared toward reunification of children with their families. Many counties have developed Family Centers in targeted neighborhoods as a preservation and prevention strategy. There are 78 Family Centers in counties throughout the State. Ten of the Family Centers offer programs specifically designed for fathers through the use of the fatherhood initiative.

The on-site review in all counties identified a "rich and strong array" of services available to meet the needs of families, many of which are community-based and preventive services. This was confirmed through stakeholder interviews and in the case reviews, which support the finding that high quality services are available. There is a strong collaboration with private providers and a strong collaboration at the State level, helping the agency move toward a seamless system of services for families.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in general agreement that there is an impressive array of services available in Pennsylvania to meet most of the service needs of children and families. They noted that the State has been effective in blending its funding resources to build a comprehensive service array. The basic service components that stakeholders indicated are available to all families included parenting programs (including programs in Spanish), substance abuse services, medical services, support groups, services for juveniles, and independent living services. Stakeholders also noted that there are specialized programs that strengthen local service delivery options, such as programs for addicted mothers with newborns, family support services, fatherhood initiatives, and intensive reunification services.

Stakeholders also identified service gaps in the following areas:

- Mental health services for youth and low-income parents (particularly HMO clients),
- Dental providers who accept Medicaid,
- Drug and alcohol treatment inpatient facilities,
- Domestic violence shelters,

- Respite care for parents of children with special needs,
- Reunification services for families with children who are dually diagnosed mental health/mental retardation,
- The number of foster homes, particularly those that can accommodate sibling groups,
- Therapeutic foster care and "step-down" placements after residential treatment,
- Residential and special needs placements for females, dually diagnosed children, and children aged 16 and over,
- Independent living services, (since currently the State serves only half of the eligible population)
- Post Adoption services are not consistently available in all counties and there is a need for all counties to increase the use of Adoption Assistance,
- Services targeting Hispanic and Asian families (with providers who speak the language), and
- Affordable housing.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 was rated as a Strength because while there are some differences in the services available in each county, the State's required array of services is generally accessible to all families in all locations of the State.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the licensing process for counties and private agencies provides a mechanism for ensuring that required services are provided statewide. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that there are differences among counties and that delivery and accessibility of services varies. Some counties, based on assessed needs of the community, may offer additional specialized services. The actual availability of services is reviewed each year during the annual inspection through the case record review. Additionally, each county must sign an assurance of compliance with this requirement as part of the annual plan submission. The county must identify in the plan how it will arrange for any needed service that is not provided in the county. Barriers to service accessibility, including transportation, lack of community health providers, knowledge of how to access services, and inadequate reimbursement for fees, were cited as relevant in the more rural areas. Other barriers identified were: inability to meet service eligibility requirements, lack of knowledge of existing services and how to access them, and complicated and unclear procedures for accessing health and behavioral health care.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, identified gaps and service needs differ by county. Accessibility to services also varies by county. The service gaps include physical and behavioral health services, community health and accessible transportation, and coordination among service providers. There are inconsistencies in the availability of adoption-related services and supports due to the diversity in resources and geography within the State. Focus groups addressing the question of the adequacy and quality of the service array indicated that available services were generally of high quality, but in most parts of the State there is not a sufficient quantity of services to meet all the needs. Data from mail surveys indicate that housing services, health services, and respite services have become scarcer.

All three sites included in the CFSR onsite review confirmed through stakeholder interviews and case reviews that there is adequate access to services and that services are readily available. The Family Centers, which provide family support services, are located in the communities where the families live. Family Centers strengthen families by focusing on adult education, training and employment, language skills, access to health care services for children, child development, parenting, and family support to preserve the family unit. Another strong program area is the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN) which has resulted in significant increases in adoption over the past few years. Other programs and services include the Fatherhood Initiative, the Children’s Trust Fund, Big Sisters, Tough Love, and residential treatment for substance abuse. In addition, there are Services to Children in their Own Home (SCOH); Educating Physicians in Their Communities – Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (EPIC SCAN) training for doctors by doctors to identify child abuse and neglect; and Preventing Abuse and Neglect through Dental Awareness (PANDA), which educates dentists in identifying abuse and neglect; as well as a new program to help doctors, hospitals, and nursing staff identify Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the accessibility of services varies in different communities.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 was rated as a Strength because services available to families in Pennsylvania are individualized to meet the needs of the particular family.

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCYF regulations permit counties to fund services that will prevent the entry of families and children into the formal youth or juvenile probation systems. Within this regulatory and funding structure each county develops an

array of services that meets the needs of the children and families in that county. Through the Needs-Based Plan and Budget process individual counties have the opportunity to assess and identify service needs specific to the families and children in their community, to outline strategies to institute services, and to develop a supporting budget.

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency tailors services to meet the individual needs of families in foster care and in-home cases. In fact, some stakeholders described the agency as particularly innovative in providing individualized services and in developing collaborations with other community agencies and providers to enhance the capacity to meet families' individualized service needs. The State blends its funding resources to build a comprehensive array of services with a great deal of creativity. Stakeholders in one site noted that emergency funds are available to provide specialized services in order to prevent placement or support reunification. In addition, Services to Children in their Own Homes (SCOH), Family Preservation Services, and Early Childhood Intervention were all found to be individualized to meet the needs of the family.

The State's Division of Program Development has developed the Independent Living Program, Family Centers, and the Fatherhood Initiative as well as other grants and preservation programs. It is currently considering developing and implementing a Healthy Marriage Initiative.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4 X

STATUS OF AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania has a strong working relationship with consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other stakeholders.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) engages external stakeholders through invitations to meetings and public hearings, and through inclusion in program and practice-setting work groups. Individual counties have procedures in place to engage their immediate communities. Engagement is accomplished through a variety of avenues, such as child welfare advisory boards, community meetings, liaisons with foster parent associations, and town meetings. Efforts to consult and coordinate with external community stakeholders in the development of the State’s CFSP are indicated through involvement of many stakeholder groups throughout the State - through focus groups, team membership, and surveys. Over 1,069 individuals and groups, such as youth, parents, foster parents, adoptive families, the Pennsylvania Private Providers Association, Drug and Alcohol representatives, Children and Youth administrators, and Juvenile Probation chiefs, participated in focus groups. Additionally, staff

from OCYF (including the Deputy Secretary) meets with State associations of stakeholders on a regular basis. These stakeholders include: legislators, county commissioners, Juvenile Court Judges, Children and Youth Administrators, private provider agencies, adoptive families, youth and categorical agencies. Through these meetings, the goals of OCYF are shared. Continuous input is obtained related to identified goals and stakeholder perspective on service needs and desired outcomes for children and families. The perspectives and concerns of key stakeholders are used to help shape the content of the OCYF Child and Family Service Plan and to establish work groups dedicated to addressing issues that influence child safety, child and family well-being, and permanency.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue praised the agency's level of collaboration with the community, service providers, and other agencies, and noted that the community has input into agency planning. Many stakeholders indicated that the needs-based budgeting process is a particularly effective tool for soliciting community input. Stakeholders identified special collaborations and partnerships with the Amish and Mennonite communities, the Department of Education, the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), and the Court Improvement Project.

The State and counties have developed strong collaborations with private providers. Findings in two of the sites reviewed support the fact that excellent collaboration exists between the child welfare agency, service providers, juvenile courts and citizen advisory groups. In Philadelphia, there was evidence of a strong collaboration between the Department of Human Services, the Departments of Health, Education and Juvenile Justice, District Attorneys, courts and parent advocates. The community feels they have real input into planning. This collaboration has resulted in major program initiatives such as the Children's Hospital sexual abuse team, the Adolescent Initiative for life skills services to youth, and the special youth court to handle older youth and kinship care cases. Philadelphia's Family Court has created a special assessment unit at the court to assess substance abuse and behavioral health issues through the Court Improvement Program.

The Commissioner for the Department of Human Services holds regular town hall meetings to hear issues and concerns of the community. At the State level, the title IV-B plan is developed through a planning committee, which includes representatives from other State agencies, county representatives, and private providers.

An area of concern identified during the review was that the agency needs to involve parents more in planning at the State and local levels. Another concern was that there needs to be a stronger relationship between the Juvenile Probation Office and the child welfare agency in certain counties.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania utilizes community stakeholders in evaluating services and developing annual reports of the State’s progress in child welfare.

Stakeholders noted that the agency develops annual reports of progress in consultation with community representatives as part of the title IV-B planning process. Small committees support the work of the CFSP Management Team and are represented by foster parents, schools of social work, parents, the Juvenile Probation Office and other family service systems. Public forums through the Needs Based Plan and Budgeting process are the primary vehicles used by the State to identify and report on the progress of services delivered from the State’s Child and Family Services Plan. Stakeholders are consulted and advised through focus groups, team membership and surveys. At the local level, counties receive funding through the Family Service System Reform Initiative. Counties are required to develop local collaborative boards. Initiatives are funded through the OCYF to ensure the services are needed and to provide input from all systems on program implementation.

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.

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 was rated as a Strength because the Department of Public Welfare as well as the county offices have worked diligently to build partnerships with other agencies and stakeholders to coordinate services that serve children and families throughout the State.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the management Practice Standards recommend that county agencies establish agreements and protocols with all major service systems, including, but not limited to, mental health, housing, employment assistance, mental retardation, law enforcement, domestic violence, education and substance abuse. County child welfare agencies have interagency agreements with local county assistance offices to assure the coordination of service plans between the two agencies. State departments have memorandums of understanding identifying areas of responsibility and accountability. Shared case management

between county child welfare agencies and county juvenile probation offices is a mechanism that facilitates coordinated services for youth in the juvenile justice system.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the agency uses TANF funds for county Children and Youth agencies and Juvenile Probation offices through the Needs-Based Plan and Budget process. The Office of Income Maintenance, the single State agency responsible for TANF, has allocated 270 million dollars to increase the availability of services to children and families in State fiscal year 2002-2003. The Child and Adolescent Service System (CASSP), spearheaded by the Office of Mental Health, is an additional collaborative effort designed to facilitate coordinated services. The Health Choices Program is designed to benefit children by improving access to health care services and improving the quality of care available. The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency law created a Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee that serves in an advisory capacity in defining and collaborating with all State agencies on planning and programming related to juvenile delinquency prevention and the reduction and prevention of violence by and against children.

The Secretary for the Department of Public Welfare meets regularly with the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission and sets annual goals for the Department based on the concerns raised by judges. The Department of Public Welfare's Secretary has mandated that the Departments of Health, Mental Retardation, and Child Welfare collaborate to achieve common program goals. In DPW, the Departmental programs have worked to resolve turf and jurisdictional problems and work together in collaboration on services to children and families. Relationships have been built at the State level, and agencies are working to build this collaboration at the local level. The Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association's representative meets regularly with the Deputy Secretary to discuss issues and concerns. The collaboration at the State and county level has resulted in a tremendous amount of services for children and families by creatively blending funding sources to meet those needs.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency has been assertive about reaching out to other federally funded programs to coordinate services. Examples include a program for services to mothers with mental retardation, and pre-trial conferences which allow for rapid drug and alcohol referral and assessment of families. Stakeholders also mentioned coordination with early intervention, Head Start, Healthy Beginnings, child support, TANF, and HUD. However, some stakeholders expressed concern that there is insufficient collaboration between the agency and MH/MR/Drug and Alcohol agencies which results in a lack of coordination in service delivery for families with multiple problems.

Stakeholders also noted that the agency has convened two dental summits to work with providers on building capacity and improving the quality of dental care. Other coordinated initiatives cited by stakeholders include a youth violence reduction program for youth in neighborhoods where the numbers of homicides of young people under the age of 24 is the highest; collaboration with the domestic

violence community to develop new programs; specialized grants to counties to look at the post-adoption services model; and a contract with Temple University to track programs for juvenile justice clients and evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

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

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4 X

STATUS WITH REGARD TO FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Pennsylvania is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Findings for the items pertaining to this factor are presented below.

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

X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania has in place a set of comprehensive standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are routinely monitored for compliance.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the licensing process in Pennsylvania is guided by Pennsylvania Code Title 55, Public Welfare Chapter 3700 Foster Family Care Agency regulations. These regulations govern both public and private agency providers of service and are applied through OCYF Regional Offices. These regulations are also applicable to all child care facilities that serve dependent and delinquent youths. OCYF Regional Offices conduct annual reviews of public and private provider agencies to evaluate their compliance with State regulations and policies, including compliance with the regulations specific to foster and adoptive home approvals.

Stakeholders noted that the State has a process in place with standards for licensing or approval of homes, and that the same standards are applied to all homes. Performance standards are enforced through contracts with foster care agencies.

Stakeholder interviews confirmed that the State requires all agencies and licensed families to meet standards. Agencies are reviewed for compliance regularly as part of the annual licensing review. Regional Offices then monitor the progress and provide technical assistance and training. The Regional Office process includes case record reviews and interviews with children and staff. Relative and non-relative foster homes are visited to ensure public/private agency compliance with regulations.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania applies the standards for foster family homes and child care institutions uniformly.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Child Welfare licensing in Pennsylvania regulates all public and private agency providers as well as child care facilities that serve dependent and delinquent youths. Licensed public and private foster care and adoption agencies have the responsibility to approve foster and adoptive homes. Residential child care facilities are licensed by OCYF. Annual inspections of all agencies and facilities are conducted to ensure compliance with applicable regulations. Regional Offices monitor the progress and provide technical assistance and training and evaluate compliance with regulations specific to foster and adoptive home approvals. The process includes: case record reviews and interviews with children and staff. Relative and non-relative foster homes are visited to ensure public/private agency compliance with regulations.

Stakeholders reported that standards and training are the same for both relative and non-relative foster families. All foster homes and institutions are licensed and approved, and foster homes are reviewed annually. Stakeholders noted that counties enforce regulations to ensure safety in foster care. Some stakeholders, however, reported that relatives are not routinely provided with information about becoming licensed foster parents.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania completes criminal background checks for all foster and adoptive parents through the State Police, and through the FBI if families resided out of the State. In addition, all applicants must go through a child abuse history clearance.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Child Protective Services Law and the Protective Services Regulations require persons who apply for positions in child care settings, as well as prospective foster parents and adoptive parents, to obtain a child abuse history clearance from the Department of Public Welfare and a criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police. Additionally, applicants who are not residents of Pennsylvania must obtain a criminal history clearance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Agencies may opt to conduct FBI clearances for applicants who are Pennsylvania residents under Federal legislation called the Volunteers for Children Act. Childline and the State Police Department process requests for background checks within 2 weeks. The criminal background check is also contained in the State policy at OCYF Bulletin 3130-01-01.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that the State requires foster and adoptive parents to complete a criminal background check as part of the licensing process. Stakeholders noted that Pennsylvania State Police checks are done and FBI clearances are mandatory for individuals outside of Pennsylvania. The case reviews and stakeholder interviews all indicated that background checks occurred. Some county systems tie right into the State Police system, which expedites the criminal background checks. There is also an emergency caretaker provision, which provides for expedited background checks for relatives. Relative families must also complete a home study and training within a short period of time, which allows Pennsylvania to move children into homes that are familiar to them relatively quickly. Because of the lack of ability to track the family history in GPS cases, some stakeholders were concerned about checking GPS referrals on families.

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.

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 was rated as a Strength because the State utilizes various methods to recruit a diverse pool of foster and adoptive families.

According to the Statewide Assessment, several methods are used by public and private agencies to recruit foster and adoptive families. These methods include: word-of-mouth; advertising; media such as TV, radio, newspapers, and other publications; web-based initiatives; community brochures; community awareness programs; matching events; Family-to-Family initiative; speaker's bureaus; outreach to ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse populations; faith-based recruitment initiatives; and local regional coalitions/task forces. The Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN) manages the statewide recruitment efforts on behalf of all counties. SWAN has run media campaigns for the recruitment of adoptive families. These campaigns are conducted statewide and target African-American and Hispanic communities. Efforts are made to recruit families for special needs children. SWAN uses the One Church One Child method to recruit adoptive families for African-American children and families. The State also uses a website which features photographs and narratives of Pennsylvania children waiting to be adopted.

The Statewide Assessment notes that recruitment activities and results vary from county to county. No information was provided on the current pool of available foster and adoptive parents or waiting children relative to the ethnic diversity of the foster care population.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed differing opinions regarding foster and adoptive family recruitment. While some stakeholders suggested that the level of foster parent recruitment is adequate, others indicated that there is a need for more culturally diverse homes and more specialized foster homes. Some stakeholders noted that foster parents participate in recruitment efforts, and in some areas, foster parents receive bonuses for bringing in new foster homes. In one site, stakeholders said that the agency had been successful in recruiting homes that reflected the population diversity of the children in care. The on-site review found that in 20 percent of the cases reviewed, children were placed outside of their communities because of a lack of placement options available where their parents live. In two cases, siblings were separated due to a lack of homes that could accommodate sibling placements.

Some of the methods used by the public and private agencies to recruit foster and adoptive parents include the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN); One Church One Child programs; special local events; the Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association Initiative and specific campaigns to recruit African-American and Hispanic families. Montgomery County stakeholders reported that

recruitment is working and no issues were raised about ethnic and racial diversity. Lancaster County stakeholders reported that there are a number of effective recruitment initiatives in place, particularly with the Hispanic Community.

The State has established a contract with a public relations firm to study adoption patterns by foster parents and then to work on part of the recruitment through television and radio ads.

Currently there is not a single licensing procedure for foster/adoptive parents. Foster parents must go through an additional home study process to become adoptive parents. This process causes a delay and lengthens the time to move from foster to adoptive parents.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because Pennsylvania utilizes its Statewide Adoption Network to facilitate cross-jurisdictional adoption.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Pennsylvania’s Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN) was developed to address issues regarding cross-jurisdictional recruitment. SWAN created a method to bring together many licensed adoption agencies across the State and provides a mechanism for handling referrals from all counties. Pennsylvania has eliminated many cross-jurisdictional issues among counties in the delivery of adoption services. This network provides adoption services at no cost to counties. Some SWAN affiliates are licensed to do evaluations in other counties and other States. Also, some counties use resource lists, which provide information regarding foster placement or adoption opportunities available in other counties or States. The Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE), the National Adoption Exchange website, and FACES of adoption are other methods used for cross-jurisdictional permanent placements.

Stakeholders reported that the State is effective in the use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive and permanent placements for children. Children are listed on county, State, and national adoption exchanges. Booklets are also distributed featuring children needing adoptive homes.

Generally, it was found that there is an effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources for adoption. There are SWAN affiliates in several jurisdictions which include recruitment for foster and adoptive resource families. Family packets developed and distributed by SWAN affiliated agencies and Helpline contain information for families interested in special needs adoption.

XI. DETERMINATION OF SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY

For each outcome and systemic factor listed below, mark “Y” where the State is determined to be in substantial conformity and “N” where the State is determined not to be in substantial conformity. For each outcome or systemic factor marked “N,” place a check beside the performance indicator, listed by item number in this form, that has been determined to be an area needing improvement.

Outcomes

I. Safety

Y Outcome S1

 Item 1
 Item 2

N Outcome S2

x Item 3
x Item 4

II. Permanency

N Outcome P1

x Item 5
x Item 6
x Item 7
x Item 8
x Item 9
x Item 10

N Outcome P2

x Item 11
 Item 12
x Item 13
x Item 14
x Item 15
x Item 16

III. Child and Family Well-Being

N Outcome WB1

x Item 17
x Item 18
x Item 19
x Item 20

N Outcome WB2

x Item 21

N Outcome WB3

 Item 22
x Item 23

Systemic Factors

IV. Y Statewide Information System

 Item 24

V. N Case Review System

x Item 25
 Item 26
 Item 27
x Item 28
 Item 29

VI. Y Quality Assurance System

 Item 30
 Item 31

VII. Y Training

 Item 32
 Item 33
 Item 34

VIII. Y Service Array

 Item 35
 Item 36
 Item 37

IX. Y Agency Responsiveness to the Community

 Item 38
 Item 39
 Item 40

X. Y Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

 Item 41
 Item 42
 Item 43
 Item 44
 Item 45