

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

Final Report
District of Columbia Child and Family Services Review
January 2008

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the District of Columbia. The CFSR is the Federal government's program for assessing the performance of State child welfare agencies with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. It is authorized by the Social Security Amendments of 1994 requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to promulgate regulations for reviews of State child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The period under review for the District of Columbia's CFSR was April 1, 2006 to June 25, 2007. The onsite review was conducted the week of June 25, 2007. The findings presented in the final report were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Administration (CFSA).
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the District's child welfare data for fiscal year (FY) 2003, FY 2004, and FY 2005 (the District's CFSR 12-month target period).
- Reviews of 65 cases; 39 foster care cases and 26 in-home services cases.¹
- Interviews or focus groups with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

All 65 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review. The key characteristics of the 65 cases reviewed are presented in the table on the following page.

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to the District's performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of the District's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of its first CFSR review, the District's status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) are identified when appropriate. The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

¹ Initially, 40 cases were drawn for the sample of foster care cases. However, during the onsite review, it was determined that one case in the foster care sample would be more appropriately rated as an in-home services case because the child was in the home under protective supervision during the period under review until the case was closed.

TABLE OF CASE CHARACTERISTICS

Case Characteristics	Foster Care Cases 39	In-Home Cases 26
When case was opened/child entered foster care		
Open prior to the period under review	34 (87%)	12 (46%)
Open during the period under review	5 (13%)	14 (54%)
Child entered foster care during the period under review	9	NA
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than age 10	18 (46%)	NA
At least 10 but younger than 13	6 (15%)	NA
At least 13 but younger than 16	7 (18%)	NA
16 and older	8 (21%)	NA
Race/Ethnicity		
African American (Non-Hispanic)	35 (90%)	*
Hispanic (of all races)	2 (5%)	*
Two or more races	2 (5%)	*
Primary Reason for opening case		
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	19 (48%)	11 (42%)
Physical abuse	5 (13%)	4 (15%)
Sexual abuse	4 (10%)	0
Medical neglect	0	3 (12%)
Mental/physical health of parent	4 (10%)	1(4%)
Mental/physical health of child	1 (3%)	0
Substance abuse by parent	5 (13%)	5 (19%)
Domestic violence in child's home	0	1 (4%)
Abandonment	1 (3%)	0
Child's behavior	0	1 (4%)

*Information on these characteristics for in-home services cases is not provided because all children in the family are considered in these cases

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

In the Outcomes Section of the CSFR Final Report, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement is assigned to each of the 23 indicators (items) reviewed. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. In addition to the item ratings, States (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) are evaluated with regard to performance on seven outcomes, each of which incorporates one or more of the individual items. The rating options for these outcomes are Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, and Not Achieved. For a State to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. Two outcomes—Safety Outcome 1 and Permanency Outcome 1—also are evaluated based on a State’s performance with regard to seven national data indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, the national standards for each data indicator must be met as well as the case review requirements. A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of concern identified for that outcome.

ACF has established a very high standard of performance for the CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our nation’s most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable. The standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being. This is consistent with the goal of the CFSR to promote continuous improvement in performance on these outcomes.

It should be noted, however, that States are not required to attain the 95 percent standard established for the CFSR onsite review at the end of their PIP implementation. ACF recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often are time consuming to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with ACF to establish a specified amount of improvement or to determine specified activities for their PIP. That is, for each outcome or item that is an area needing improvement, each State (working in conjunction with the Children’s Bureau) specifies the following: (1) how much improvement the State will demonstrate and/or the activities that it will implement to address the areas needing improvement, and (2) the procedures for demonstrating the achievement of these goals. Both the improvements specified and the procedures for demonstrating improvement vary across States. Therefore, a State can meet the requirements of their PIP and still not perform at the 95 percent (for outcomes) or the 90 percent (for items) levels established for the CFSR.

The second round of the CFSR is intended to assess a State’s current level of performance by once more applying the high standards and a consistent, comprehensive, case-review methodology. The results of this effort are intended to serve as the bases for continued

PIPs addressing areas where a State still needs to improve, even though prior PIP requirements may have been achieved. The goal is to ensure that program improvement is an ongoing process and does not end with the closing of a PIP.

In the following sections, information is provided for each outcome pertaining to how the District performed on that outcome in its first CFSR conducted in FY 2001. If the outcome was not substantially achieved during the first round of the CFSR, the key concerns that emerged from the first round review are identified as well as the strategies implemented in the PIP to address those concerns. There also is a discussion focusing on whether the key concerns that emerged in the first CFSR continued to be present in the second review, or whether those concerns appear to have been resolved, but other concerns emerged.

Because many changes have been made in the onsite CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State's performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to their performance in the first round, particularly with regard to comparisons of data indicators or percentages regarding Strength and Area Needing Improvement ratings. Key changes in the CFSR process that make it difficult to compare performance across reviews are the following:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases.
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items.
- Changes in criteria for specific items to enhance consistency and ensure an assessment of critical areas, such as child welfare agency efforts to involve non-custodial parents in planning for their children.

I. SAFETY

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

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.			
Number of cases reviewed according to degree of outcome achievement			
	Total Number	Percent	
Substantially Achieved	21	80.8	
Partially Achieved	4	15.4	
Not Achieved or Addressed	1	3.8	
Total Applicable Cases	26		
Not Applicable Cases	39		
Total Cases	65		
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:			
	National Standard (%)	District's Percentage	Meets Standard
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6	94.7	YES
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68	99.66	NO

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1

This District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 80.8 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. However, the District met the national standard for the data indicator assessing the absence of maltreatment recurrence. Although the District did not meet the national standard for the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care, its performance (99.66 percent) was very close to the standard (99.68 percent). The District was in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2001 CFSR and was not required to address the outcome in its PIP.

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

The case reviews indicated that CFSA was not consistent in initiating a response to maltreatment allegations within the timeframes established by District policy. In the five cases where initiation was delayed, the report was assigned a priority level two, requiring a response within 24 hours of receipt of the report. The case reviews found that the agency was timely in responding to priority level

one reports, which are considered emergencies and require a response within 30 minutes of receipt of the report. In addition, maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period was found in only one case.

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

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 26 (40 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable when there were no child maltreatment reports 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 the District’s child welfare agency policy requirements.

District of Columbia policy states that an investigation is initiated when the children in the family are seen face-to-face outside of the presence of the caretaker or when good-faith efforts have been made to see the children, but the children could not be located. Good-faith efforts include visiting the child’s home, school, or day care as well as contacting the reporter, if known, to elicit additional information about the child’s location. The timeframes established in policy for responding to reports are the following:

- Priority Level One reports are considered emergencies and the response must be initiated within 30 minutes.
- Priority Level Two reports are those in which the child does not have immediate protection needs and the response must be initiated within 24 hours of receipt of the report.

The results of the assessment of this item are presented in the table below.

Item 1	Total N	Percent
Strength	21	81
Area Needing Improvement	5	19
Total Applicable Cases	26	
Not applicable	39	
Total Cases	65	

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact established with the child within the timeframes required by the District's policy or law. It was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when face-to-face contact was not established within the required timeframes. In all five cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement, the maltreatment report had been assigned a priority level two (requiring a response within 24 hours). In one of these cases, the caseworker reported that a priority level one report was assigned to him shortly after receiving a priority two report, which resulted in him postponing the investigation of the priority two report.

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 81 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percent is less than the 90 percent required for an overall item rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the District's 2001 CFSR. However, in the 2001 CFSR, only 10 cases were applicable for an assessment of this item (i.e., there was a maltreatment report during the period under review).

Stakeholder Interview Information

All stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review expressed the opinion that CFSA responds to most maltreatment reports in a timely manner and within the guidelines mandated by policy. They noted that initiation is particularly timely when the report is assigned a priority level one. A few stakeholders, however, noted that timeliness of response can be a challenge when there is a need for a joint investigation with the District's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), which may occur when a maltreatment allegation involves sexual or physical abuse. Stakeholders reported that the MPD decides which reports require a joint response and, although CFSA has mandated timeframes, the MPD does not. These stakeholders noted that there is a multidisciplinary team in place to improve the partnership between the MPD and CFSA, and that one focus of this team effort is on improving the response process.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA maintains a 24-hour hotline for reporting allegations of child abuse and neglect. Each referral to the hotline is screened, reviewed, and assigned on a continuous basis. Investigations are conducted by the Child Protective Services Administration (CPS).

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA continuously monitors the status of investigations through FACES, the District's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). Daily reports measure the number of investigations initiated within 24 and 48-hour time periods. (The 48-hour time frame was established by the court monitor as the requirement for response to a maltreatment allegation, although District policy continues to require a response within 24 hours). The Statewide Assessment reports that in 70.5 percent of the 471 new investigations opened in March 2007, the children were seen within 48 hours. The

Statewide Assessment also notes that “although CFSA continues to struggle with seeing the child within 24 hours (30.4 percent as of March 2007), the agency anticipates a successful approach to the standard due to significant practice improvements that have resulted in a noticeable decrease in open investigation backlogs and corresponding caseloads.” At the end of January 2007, the backlog was down to 45 cases (compared to nearly 800 in January 2001 and 369 in January 2004). As of March 2007, the backlog was 60 cases.

Similar to stakeholder interviews, the Statewide Assessment also identified joint investigations with law enforcement as a barrier to timeliness. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, District of Columbia law requires CFSA to coordinate investigations of physical abuse and sexual abuse with the MPD. It was noted that the Youth Division of MPD makes the final determination regarding cases in which they will become involved. The Statewide Assessment reports that at times, MPD’s priorities are not consistent with CFSA’s response timeframes and that CFSA and MPD are working together to improve this process.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 23 (35 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review. For all applicable cases, reviewers were to determine whether there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report involving any child in the family during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report involving similar circumstances had occurred within a 6-month period before or after that identified report. Information regarding the ratings is provided below.

Item 2	Total N	Percent
Strength	22	96
Area Needing Improvement	1	4
Total Applicable Cases	23	
Not applicable	42	
Total Cases	65	

Item 2 was rated as a Strength when there was only one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family within a 6-month period. Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case in which there were two substantiated maltreatment reports within a 6-month period.

Although there was little evidence in the cases reviewed of the recurrence of substantiated maltreatment, there were many cases in which there were multiple reports on the family during the life of the case. In 12 cases, there were 6 or more child maltreatment reports during the life of the case, and in 4 of these cases, there were 10 or more maltreatment reports. Information is not available regarding the number of these reports that were substantiated.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 96 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that there was no recurrence of maltreatment. The District also met the national standard for the measure pertaining to the absence of maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed concern about the recurrence of maltreatment in the District. They noted that although the practice model is helping caseworkers focus more on identifying and addressing the underlying issues in a family to prevent recurrence, the model is inconsistently implemented across caseworkers. Agency stakeholders reported that the agency is focusing on identifying the problems that recur most frequently in order to develop strategies and practices to prevent recurrence.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, to reduce rates of maltreatment recurrence, caseworkers complete an initial safety plan with the family's input, identifying concrete issues to be addressed within the next 90 days. Caseworkers then use a series of Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools to facilitate implementation of the plans. The Statewide Assessment notes that in-home services caseworkers also use the Parents and Children's Strengths and Needs Assessment, which is repeated every 90 days and is designed to identify areas of strength in the parent-child relationship and to pinpoint areas where services are needed to further strengthen stability in the home.

The Statewide Assessment attributes the District's 2005 data regarding the national measure of absence of maltreatment recurrence to the following practice improvements:

- Implementation of the SDM tools.
- Redesign of the in-home services unit in March 2006 to ensure that the appropriate amount of attention and services are given to children who remain in their own homes.
- Dedicated use of child-centered family team meetings.
- Consistent bi-annual use of administrative reviews that assess a child's case in its totality.

- Active collaboration with the neighborhood-based, support network provided by the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives (the Collaboratives).

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA contracts with the Collaboratives, located in seven neighborhoods in the District with high concentrations of families who enter the child welfare system. The Collaboratives provide a range of services and access to resources for the families in their communities, including prevention services, community case management, information and referral, intervention services, supportive case management, foster parent and caregiver support, aftercare services for children and families whose cases have been closed with CFSA, community sites for visitation for children with their parents and siblings, and family group decision-making services.

The Statewide Assessment notes that despite the District's success with regard to achieving the national standard for the measure of maltreatment recurrence, many of the environmental factors that contribute to child maltreatment remain a challenge for the District. These include high poverty rates, unemployment, under-employment, and the lack of affordable housing within the city limits.

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

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate		
Number of cases reviewed according to degree of outcome achievement		
	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	52	81.5
Partially Achieved	9	12.3
Not Achieved or Addressed	4	6.2
Total Applicable Cases	65	
Not Applicable Cases	0	
Total Cases	65	

STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 81.5 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Key Concerns of the 2001 CFSR

The District of Columbia was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2001 CFSR, and was required to address the outcome in its PIP. Both items incorporated in the outcome were rated as Areas Needing Improvement in 2001. The key concerns noted in the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- The agency provided services to address identified problems, but did not address potential underlying causes of the problems such as domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, continued educational neglect, or sexual abuse.
- The agency did not consistently monitor the progress of the parents or children who were receiving services to determine whether the services were effective in bringing about the necessary changes.
- In some instances, the agency removed children from the home when placement prevention services might have been appropriate without exploring the possibility of providing these services.
- The agency was not consistent with regard to conducting comprehensive initial safety and risk assessments or conducting these assessments on an ongoing basis to reevaluate safety and risk issues.

To address these concerns, the District implemented the following strategies in its PIP.

- Created a multidisciplinary team centralized in the Office of Clinical Practice with specialists in domestic violence, housing, substance abuse, health services, and education.
- Provided competency-based, clinical training to caseworkers to assist them with identifying issues such as substance abuse and sexual abuse.
- Modified the safety assessment tool and provided training to all caseworkers on the use of the risk and safety assessment tools.
- Increased the use of the Collaboratives to provide support services for in-home services cases.
- Required supervisors to ensure the completion of risk and safety assessments.
- Strengthened supervisory oversight by increasing supervisory case conferences for in-home services cases.
- Increased the number of cases in which risk assessments are updated throughout the life of the case.

The District met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

Item 3 was rated as a Strength in the 2007 CFSR. The 2007 CFSR findings suggest that many of the issues identified in the 2001 CFSR had been addressed prior to the 2007 review. In the majority of cases reviewed in 2007, for example, reviewers determined that CFSA made concerted efforts to identify the underlying factors that brought the family to the attention of the agency and to provide services to meet those concerns. There were multiple cases with referrals and follow up for domestic violence services and substance abuse assessment and treatment services.

In addition, for all cases in the 2007 CFSR in which the child was removed from the home without provision of services, reviewers determined that the removal was necessary for the safety of the child and that in-home services would not have been appropriate. This addresses the concern identified in the 2001 CFSR regarding removals of children from their homes in situations in which provision of placement prevention services would have been a more appropriate response.

Specific findings pertaining to the items assessed under Safety Outcome 2 are presented below.

Item 3. Services to family to protect children in the home and prevent removal

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 35 (54 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded from this assessment if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and there were no other children in the home, or if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or identified risk of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent placement of children in foster care while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 3	Total N	Percent
Strength	32	91
Area Needing Improvement	3	9
Total Applicable Cases	35	
Not applicable	30	
Total Cases	65	

Item 3 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- Services were provided to the parents and child to prevent removal (22 cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home because the removal was necessary to ensure the child's safety (7 cases).
- Services were provided after the reunification of the child to prevent re-entry into foster care (3 cases).

Case review information indicates that a range of services was offered or provided to families. These included general casework services provided by CFSA staff as well as the following: substance abuse assessments and treatment, family and parent-child therapy, mentoring, domestic violence assessments and services, individual therapy, housing assistance, assistance meeting basic needs such as furniture and heat, parenting classes, medication monitoring, bus tokens, financial counseling and budgeting classes, assistance in basic skills to maintain a household such as cooking and shopping, tutoring, transitional housing, legal assistance, family violence interventions services, and grief counseling.

Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases when reviewers determined the following:

- No services were provided and the children remained at risk in the home (two cases).
- Services were eventually provided, but they were delayed for an extensive period of time due to a delay in transferring the case from intake to in-home services (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 91 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CFSA had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percent exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review expressed different opinions regarding the effectiveness of the agency in providing services to families to maintain children safely in their own homes. Several stakeholders suggested that CFSA and the Collaboratives have been working together effectively to ensure that children and families receive services to protect children while they remain in their own homes. Several stakeholders also reported that the agency provides services to the child and family immediately after reunification to support the stability of the reunification.

Other stakeholders, however, questioned the effectiveness of the agency in preventing removals. They noted that the District does not have a family preservation program and although the agency can refer families to the Collaboratives, the Collaboratives vary in their ability to provide the necessary services. They noted that the service provided by the Collaboratives focus primarily on meeting basic needs, and that many families need more intensive services to address deeper problems.

A few stakeholders expressed concern about older youth coming into foster care due to "neglect," when the problem may be that the youth are acting out and parents are not able to handle them. These stakeholders suggested that more attention is needed to identify services to these families that might prevent the youth's entry into foster care.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, as of March 2007, 1,976 children in 782 families were receiving in-home services from CFSA. The Statewide Assessment notes that the following recently implemented strategies have helped to prevent removal of these children:

- Holding family team meetings when there is the potential for a removal, rather than after a removal.
- Referring families to the Collaboratives to ensure that supports and services are in place to prevent removal or reentry.
- Using risk and safety assessment tools that allow hotline staff and CPS investigators to properly identify safety issues and make appropriate responses.
- Providing children and families with a variety of family supports and services such as counseling, day care, and housing services.
- Implementing the In-Home Redesign (in March 2006), including a caseload reduction, to permit more frequent caseworker visits with children and their families and an overall improvement in the level of services to those in need.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that, for foster care cases, it is CFSA’s policy to review the parent-child visitation pattern and the quality of the visits prior to a child’s return home. Caseworkers are required to complete the SDM tool to assess the safety of the home prior to reunification.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the key barriers to effective placement prevention efforts are the lack of affordable housing in the District and the limited capacity of the service community to address mental health needs. The Statewide Assessment also identified other barriers to placement prevention, including the District’s lack of an effective truancy program and the fact that there is no service center designed to support parents or caretakers who are caring for ungovernable youth. The Statewide Assessment notes that the lack of these latter services may be a contributing factor to the increase in the past 3 years in the percentage of youth age 15 and older who are entering foster care for the first time.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 65 cases. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 4	Total N	Percent
Strength	54	83
Area Needing Improvement	11	17
Total Applicable Cases	65	
Not applicable	0	
Total Cases	65	

Item 4 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by the agency through (1) conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children’s home or in the children’s foster home and, (2) addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment. Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- There was risk of harm to the children when they were in their homes and the services necessary to reduce that risk were not provided or the safety plan that was established was not sufficient to address the risk (five cases).

- There was insufficient ongoing risk assessment in the foster home or non-foster care (relative or fictive kin) placement setting (four cases).
- The case was closed or the child was reunified without a final home assessment and safety check on the child prior to closing or reunification (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 83 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had appropriately addressed the risk of harm to the children. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for an overall rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review focused primarily on the issue of risk of harm in foster homes. Several stakeholders said that agency caseworkers are effective in assessing safety and risk issues in foster homes and often interview the children separately from the foster parents in order to identify concerns or risk-related issues. However, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that agency staff do not consistently follow up on the recommendations that are generated from the risk assessment tool. These stakeholders suggested that decisions regarding whether to leave a child in a foster home or remove the child are not based on consistent criteria; for example, in a similar foster care situation, some children may be removed from the foster home and some may remain in the home.

Statewide Assessment Information

Although the District did not meet the national standard for the measure pertaining to the absence of child abuse and/or neglect of children in foster care by a foster parent or facility staff member (99.68 percent), its performance in the CFSR 12-month target period (99.66 percent) was very close to the standard. According to the Statewide Assessment, the factors that CFSA believes have contributed to improved performance in this area are the following:

- Requiring 30 hours of pre-service foster parent training (with an additional 15 hours required annually).
- Improving social worker visitation rates and monitoring of potential risk factors.
- Having comprehensive support services available, including mental health services and emergency assistance for children who do not require hospitalization but display extreme behavior.
- Having a fully staffed team of specialists for licensing District foster homes, including a sanitarian to inspect physical plant safety for congregate care facilities.
- Implementing the Mockingbird Family Model, which provides respite and support services to foster parents.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Permanency Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.			
Number of cases reviewed according to degree of outcome achievement			
	Total Number	Percent	
Substantially Achieved	16	41.0	
Partially Achieved	22	56.4	
Not Achieved or Addressed	1	2.6	
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	39		
Not Applicable Cases	0		
Total Foster Care Cases	39		
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:			
	National Standard (Scaled Score)	District's Composite Score	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	122.6 +	97.8	NO
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	106.4 +	90.7	NO
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods	121.7 +	115.3	NO
Composite 4: Placement stability	101.5 +	98.5	NO

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 41.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for the CFSR 12-month target period, the District did not meet the national standards for any of the four Permanency Composites.

Performance on the individual measures included in the composites is presented in the discussion of the relevant items.

Key Concerns from the 2001 CFSR

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with this outcome during the 2001 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its PIP. In the 2001 CFSR, all items incorporated in this outcome were rated as an Area Needing Improvement.

Key concerns identified during the 2001 CFSR with regard to Permanency Outcome 1 were the following:

- CFSR did not routinely assess the appropriateness of a placement on an ongoing basis to ensure that the placement continued to meet the needs of the child.
- The District's data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) indicated a high percentage of re-entries into foster care.
- Children were in foster care for long periods of time before achieving their permanency goals.
- There was a general lack of focus on permanency in case practice. For example, permanency goals were not consistently documented in the case plans or court orders, adoption often was not established as a goal until the child had been in care for an extended period of time, when adoption goals were identified the agency was not filing for termination of parental rights, there was a lack of concurrent planning, there were cases in which the private providers and the agency had different permanency goals, and there were cases that had no permanency goal identified in the case file.
- Judges were reluctant to terminate parental rights unless there was an identified adoptive family for a child.
- The appeals process for termination of parental rights resulted in extensive delays in finalizing an adoption.
- There was a tendency to establish a goal of other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA) without consideration of permanency options for the child such as adoption or guardianship.²
- There was a lack of independent living services for older youth and youth with a goal of other planned permanent living arrangements.

The District of Columbia implemented the following strategies in its PIP to address these concerns:

- Improved the program logic, data accuracy, and reporting of foster care re-entries and placements.
- Increased the use of risk and safety assessment tools prior to reunification to decrease foster care re-entries.
- Developed and implemented a model of family group decision-making to be used on all new cases and foster care cases in which placements are at risk of disruption.
- Used the Collaboratives to provide aftercare services to families that had been reunified or to adoptive families.
- Increased the array of placement options and use of these placements.
- Conducted placement disruption staffings to prevent the disruption.

² In the CFSR, this goal is referred to as Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA) . However, the District refers to this goal as Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangements (APPLA). Through most of the report, this goal is referred to as OPPLA. However, APPLA is used in this report in the sections that provide information directly from the Statewide Assessment.

- Expanded foster parent support services to enhance the ability of foster parents to meet the needs of the children placed with them.
- Conducted permanency planning staffings through the administrative review process for cases in which reunification is no longer a viable option for children.
- Increased the number of TPR petitions filed for children with the goal of adoption.
- Established procedures for documenting compelling reasons for not filing for TPR in court orders.
- Modified policy, procedures, and the case-plan format to incorporate and document concurrent permanency plans and efforts.
- Promulgated and implemented protocols for licensing of independent living programs.
- Expanded independent living services for youth in foster care by targeting younger children, providing additional services, and training foster parents on teaching independent living skills.
- Implemented dual and concurrent certification of foster and adoptive homes to reduce the delay in the adoption process of going through another home study when a foster parent decides to adopt.
- Reviewed cases with the goal of other planned permanent living arrangement to determine the appropriateness of the goal.
- Established a guardianship subsidy program.

The District met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

The 2007 CFSR resulted in a finding of Area Needing Improvement for items pertaining to placement stability (item 6), establishing appropriate permanency goals a timely manner (item 7), achieving reunifications in a timely manner (item 8), and achieving adoptions in a timely manner (item 9). Some of the concerns identified in the 2001 CFSR were not found in the 2007 CFSR. For example:

- In the 2007 CFSR, all of the cases reviewed had a case plan and permanency goal identified in the case file.
- In the 2007 CFSR, both the case review findings and the stakeholder interviews indicated that CFSA has strong independent living services and that youth are being appropriately prepared to make the transition from foster care to independent living.
- In the 2007 CFSR, there was only one case in which reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA had been established without consideration of permanency options for the child such as guardianship or adoption.

Despite these improvements, the following concerns were found in both the 2001 and the 2007 CFSR:

- Stakeholders reported that judges are reluctant to terminate parental rights unless there is an identified adoptive family for a child.
- Case review findings indicated that many children were in foster care for long periods of time before their permanency goals were achieved.
- The District's AFCARS data continued to indicate a high percentage of re-entry into foster care.

Additional key findings of the 2007 CFSR case reviews were the following:

- Although many of the children in the cases reviewed experienced placement stability, the agency was not consistently effective in placing children in stable homes. The data for Permanency Composite 4 – Placement stability—indicate that placement stability continues to be a challenge for the District.
- Permanency goals were not being established in a timely manner on a consistent basis, particularly in situations in which it was appropriate to change a goal from reunification to adoption.
- Only two cases in the District’s sample had concurrent goals and evidence that concurrent planning was occurring.

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

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 9 (23 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for assessment if the child did not enter foster care 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 are presented in the table below.

Item 5	Total N	Percent
Strength	9	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0
Total Applicable Cases	9	
Not applicable	30	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

The District’s performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was as follows: 24.5 percent of the children exiting foster care to reunification in the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period re-entered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. The national median for

this measure is 15.0 percent, with lower percentages associated with higher performance. The District's percentage of re-entries within 12 months is among the highest in the nation.

Despite the relatively high percentage of foster care re-entries demonstrated in the data, there were no re-entries within a 12-month period for the nine cases applicable for this assessment.

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the case review finding that the item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the cases reviewed. However, as noted above, only nine cases were applicable for assessment of this item.

It is important to note that the District's performance on Composite 1 – Timeliness and Permanency of Reunifications – does not meet the national standard. The high percentage of re-entries into foster care in less than 12 months from the time of reunification suggests that many reunifications that occur in the District are not “permanent.”

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review reported that the agency works with the Collaboratives to ensure that families have access to services after reunification, should they want to use them. They noted that most of the services provided by the Collaboratives focus on stabilization of the family such as housing and employment services, linking families to school and health services, and providing a general array of support services.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, it is the practice of the agency to refer a family to the Collaboratives for support services 6 months prior to the date identified for reunification. The Statewide Assessment notes that these services are initiated through a joint conference involving the referred family, CFSA, and Collaborative staff. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, after reunification occurs, CFSA monitors the child in the home for up to 6 additional months to ensure that the community services and other supports that were put into place while the child was in foster care are helping to sustain the child. However, the agency does not retain care and supervision responsibilities during this time period. If the family needs additional services after CFSA closes the case, the Collaborative will convert the family to a community case. Services are then provided to support and strengthen the family to prevent re-entry into the child welfare system. The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA has created an internal post-permanency unit to address the service needs of children and families post-adoption and post-guardianship finalization.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the District is proposing a change in local law to allow for trial home visits. The Statewide Assessment reports that the District believes that this is commensurate with best practice standards and anticipates that it will reduce the District’s re-entry rate.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 39 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. Reviewers also assessed the stability of the child’s current placement setting. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 6	Total N	Percent
Strength	30	77
Area Needing Improvement	9	23
Total Applicable Cases	39	
Not applicable	0	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

The District’s performance on the individual measures included in Composite 4: Placement stability for the 12-month CFSR target period is presented below.

- 82.3 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percent is slightly less than the national median for this measure (83.3 percent) for the data set used to establish the national standards.
- 63.7 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percent exceeds the national median for this measure (59.9 percent) for the data set used to establish the national standards, but is less than the 75th percentile of 65.4 percent.
- 42.9 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percent exceeds the 75th percentile for this measure (41.8 percent) for the data set used to establish the national standards.

The data reported above indicate that, when compared to other States, the District's performance during the target 12-month period with regard to placement stability improved the longer that children were in foster care. For example, although the District performed at about the national median for placement stability of children in foster care for less than 12 months, and at less than the 75th percentile for placement stability for child in foster care for 12 to 24 months, the District exceeded the 75th percentile for placement stability of children in foster care for 24 months or longer.

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child did not experience a placement change during the period under review, and either the current placement was stable or the child was discharged from foster care during the period under review (24 cases).
- The placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest and were intended either to further achievement of the child's permanency goal or to provide specialized services to the child (5 cases). For example, placement changes were made to move the child from a group home to a foster family home, or from a foster home to a relative home that was interested in guardianship or adoption.
- The placement change was necessary because of an unexpected change in life circumstances of the foster parents (1 case).

Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The child was in multiple placement settings during the period under review, and at least one placement change was not planned by the agency to further attain the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs (seven cases).
- The child's current placement setting (at the time of the onsite CFSR) was not stable (four cases).

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- 24 children experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- 10 children experienced two placements during the period under review.
- 5 children experienced three or more placements during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability or that changes in placements were in the best interests of the child. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that placement stability is a challenge for CFSA and that there are many children who experience multiple placements while in foster care.

Many stakeholders attributed placement instability to a lack of effective supports for both the children and foster parents, particularly when the children are adolescents. These stakeholders noted that many adolescents can exhibit “acting out” behaviors and often express displeasure with their parents, but for those in foster care, these behaviors are not addressed in the context of the family as they might be in other families. Stakeholders made the following observations with regard to this issue:

- When older children tell caseworkers that they have a problem in their foster homes, the caseworker’s tendency is to move the child rather than trying to work with the family on the problems that are arising.
- Foster families experience instability when children are adolescents similar to most families, but the agency is not making efforts to help the families stabilize.
- Older children (adolescents) will be removed from a home because the child and foster parents do not get along. Instead of removal, this situation could be mediated. Stakeholders said that the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC) is willing to provide mediation services in these situations.

Stakeholders noted that although there are foster parent support caseworkers within the agency to ensure that the needs of foster parents are identified and addressed, many foster parents are not aware that these caseworkers exist.

Some stakeholders also attributed lack of placement stability to a scarcity of placement resources. They expressed the opinion that the scarcity of resources results in placements based on the availability of a “bed” rather than on the needs of the children. Some stakeholders reported that it can take a long time to place a child with a relative if the relative lives in Maryland or Virginia, and this long period of time often results in the child being in unstable placements before finally being placed with the relative.

Agency stakeholders noted that CFSA makes concerted efforts to convene family team meetings whenever there is a placement change. However, they also noted that private agencies providing foster care services do not hold these meetings. Several stakeholders said that they believe that sometimes there are changes in foster placements within the private provider network that are not being reported as placement changes.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA’s policy states that children shall be matched with an appropriate placement based on the individual needs of the child and family and that “the first placement should be the best placement.” The Statewide Assessment also reports that policy requires that a family team meeting be held if there is a threat of placement disruption to identify problems and put services in place to support placement stability. However, the Statewide Assessment notes that placement-related family team meetings are not being implemented on a consistent basis and that there is some concern among stakeholders that the placement-related family team meetings tend to focus on deciding what the next placement will be rather than on preserving the existing

placement. According to the Statewide Assessment, these stakeholders suggested that caseworkers should be trained to better recognize the early signs of a potential disruption so that a family team meeting can be scheduled in advance of a placement crisis. The Statewide Assessment also notes that during the process of developing the Statewide Assessment, CFSA learned that some foster parents did not realize that they could request a family team meeting if they had concerns about the stability of the placement.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, in addition to family team meetings, CFSA conducts multi-placement staffings whenever a child has had three placements within a 12-month period. The staffings include an assessment and the development of a placement intervention plan with recommended services. The caseworker has 45 days to initiate the plan and is expected to follow up on the plan on an ongoing basis until the child is stabilized.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following factors as contributing to a lack of placement stability for some children in foster care:

- The current pool of placement providers does not include enough providers who have the skills to meet the needs of many of the children and youth in foster care.
- There is an inadequate capacity to recruit and retain foster parents both at CFSA and at the private agencies.
- The private agency network does not operate under the same policy requirements concerning placement stability as does CFSA. For example, private agencies are not required to convene family team meetings when there is a threat of placement disruption.
- Matching children with appropriate caregivers is very difficult in the current crisis-based placement environment, limiting optimal placements.
- The State of Maryland does not allow the District to temporarily license kin within its boundaries. Children who have identified kin in Maryland must first be placed in non-relative care until those kin can complete the licensing process.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 39 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established a permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and whether the most current permanency goal was appropriate. The results of this assessment are shown below.

Item 7	Total N	Percent
Strength	22	56
Area Needing Improvement	17	44
Total Applicable Cases	39	
Not applicable	0	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

The District did not meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. Performance on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:

- 32.1 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the CFSR 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (i.e., adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percent exceeds the national 75th percentile for this measure of 29.1 percent.
- 99.7 percent of the children exiting foster care in 2005 who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home. This percent exceeds the national 75th percentile for this measure of 98.0 percent.
- 61.2 percent of the children who either (1) were discharged from foster care prior to age 18 with a discharge reason of emancipation, or (2) reached their 18th birthday while in foster care, were in foster care for 3 years or longer. This percent exceeds the national median of 47.8 percent for the data set used to establish the national standards. For this measure, a lower score indicates a more positive performance. Consequently, the District's high percentage for this measure indicates that it is an area of concern.

These data suggest that, when compared to other States, the District is effective in achieving permanency for children in foster care for 24 months or longer and for ensuring that children who are legally free for adoption exit foster care to a permanent home. However, the District's performance on this second measure may be due to the fact that in many cases, children become legally free for adoption (i.e., there is a termination of parental rights for both parents) at the same time as an adoption is finalized. The primary concern with regard to the measures for Permanency Composite 3 is that a large percentage of children who are emancipated from foster care or reach the age of 18 while still in foster care have been in foster care for 3 years or longer and therefore entered foster care when they were younger than age 15.

Item 7 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. The case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The child's current permanency goal was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (5 cases).
- The child's permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (11 cases).

- The agency did not explore all possible permanency options before establishing a goal of OPPLA (1 case).

Case review findings pertaining to case goals were as follows:

- 11 children had a goal of adoption only.
- 11 children had a goal of OPPLA only (OPPLA is a living arrangement other than adoption, reunification, living with other relatives, or guardianship that involves the child remaining in State custody until reaching the age of majority).
- 10 children had a goal of reunification only (including living with other relatives).
- 5 children had a goal of guardianship only.
- 2 children had concurrent goals of guardianship and reunification.

Case review findings pertaining to termination of parental rights (TPR) were as follows:

- At the time of the on-site review, 26 of the 39 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.
- TPR had been filed in a timely manner in 7 of the 26 cases.
- A reason for not filing for TPR was noted in 12 of the 19 cases in which TPR had not been filed despite the “15 out of 22-month” criterion being met.

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 56 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR identified the following as contributing to appropriate permanency goals being established in a timely manner:

- The Court Improvement Project, which has enhanced the timeliness of permanency plans by making the court aware of the importance of establishing permanency as soon as possible.
- The Family Treatment Court, which has contributed to both establishing and achieving permanency goals in a timely manner.

Various stakeholders also expressed the following opinions regarding barriers to establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.

- Concurrent planning is not implemented consistently.

- Some judges are reluctant to terminate parental rights unless an adoptive home is identified. However, many potential adoptive families are unwilling to commit to a child unless there has been a termination of parental rights.
- Some judges are establishing a goal of OPPLA for a child because they are afraid that the child will not be able to get services if he or she is discharged from foster care either to adoption, reunification, or guardianship. This often results in the court's goal of ensuring that children have services in conflict with the agency's goal of ensuring that the children have permanency.
- Many older children say they do not want to be adopted because they believe that this means they will be cut off from their birth families. Consistent efforts are not being made to work with children and explain to them that in many situations they can have an adoptive family and still maintain connections to their birth family.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, in September of 2005, CFSA updated its policy to emphasize that permanency planning begins the moment the agency becomes involved with a child and family. The Statewide Assessment reports that CFSA now establishes a priority ranking for consideration of permanency goals, incorporating a participatory process with families to create individualized case plans. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA policy states that only when the four prioritized permanency goals (reunification, adoption by kin, permanent guardianship by kin, and non-kin adoption) have been ruled out, can a case plan involve goals pertaining to alternative planned permanent living arrangements (APPLA) or legal custody (and then only if both parents consent). The Statewide Assessment notes that this policy is in compliance with recent court guidelines and that judges, CFSA caseworkers, and the Assistant Attorneys General have been trained regarding these new guidelines for changing a youth's goal to APPLA.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the primary practices designed to ensure that appropriate permanency goals are established in a timely manner are family team meetings, administrative reviews, and court hearings. The Statewide Assessment notes that family team meetings produce an identified permanency goal and an initial plan for achieving the identified goal. This initial plan is reviewed and updated in administrative reviews on an ongoing basis and is submitted to the court as the basis for developing the case plan for the child and family.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 17 (44 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the permanency goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals.

The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 8	Total N	Percent
Strength	12	71
Area Needing Improvement	5	29
Total Applicable Cases	17	
Not applicable	22	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

The District of Columbia did not meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification. Performance on the individuals measures included in this composite was as follows:

- 71.2 percent of the reunifications of children in foster care for at least eight days occurred in less than 12 months of the child's entry into foster care. This percent exceeds the national median of 69.9 percent, but is less than the national 75th percentile of 75.2 percent.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children in foster care for at least eight days who were discharged to reunification was 5.3 months. This length of stay is less than the national median of 6.5 months and less than the 25th percentile of 5.4 months. (Note that lower number of months means higher performance.)
- 29.4 percent of children entering foster care in the 6 months prior to the 12-month target period who were in foster care for at least 8 days were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percent is less than the national median of 39.4 percent.

Performance on these measures indicates that the District of Columbia performs better than half of the States when timeliness of reunification is assessed at the time of discharge from foster care (i.e., an exit cohort analysis). However, when timeliness of reunification is assessed from the time of entry into foster care (the third measure noted above), the District of Columbia's performance is well below the national median.

Performance on the fourth measure included in permanency composite 1 pertains to foster care re-entry and is provided in the discussion of item 5. As noted under that item, the District's rate of foster care re-entry is among the highest in the nation.

Item 8 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency was making concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in five cases when reviewers determined that there were unnecessary delays in achieving the child's permanency goal.

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 71 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. In the District's 2001 CFSR, there was no comparable item. At the time of the 2001 CFSR, item 8 pertained to independent living services. The change for item 8 from an assessment of independent living services to an assessment of timeliness of achieving goals of reunification, guardianship and permanent placement of relatives was not made until Federal FY 2002.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR identified the following practices as expediting reunification:

- Regular administrative reviews and permanency hearings.
- Family team meetings.
- The ability to provide substance abuse treatment services quickly.
- Access to the family treatment court.
- The ability to provide parenting classes and individual therapy quickly.

A few stakeholders noted, however, that in some cases a lack of service availability or accessibility, particularly with regard to substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence services, is a barrier to efforts to reunify children quickly.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA facilitates reunification through its partnership with the Collaboratives. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the Collaboratives provide services to facilitate reunification, such as housing assistance, budgeting (and utility payments), parenting education, intensive case management, support groups, family team meetings, and linkages to concrete services. The Statewide Assessment notes that CFSA also facilitates reunification through referrals to services to address substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health concerns. However, the Statewide Assessment reports that these services are not always

available and that the lack of available housing in the District and the high rates of poverty continue to be barriers to timely reunifications and guardianships.

The Statewide Assessment includes the following data pertaining to the timeliness of reunification and guardianship.

- In FY 2006, 85.2 percent of children exited to reunification in 24 months or less compared to 76.5 percent in FY 2001.
- In FY 2006, 52.2 percent of all children that exited CFSA custody to guardianship did so in 36 months or less.

Item 9: Adoption

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 9 was applicable for 11 (28 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. The results are shown in the table below.

Item 9	Total N	Percent
Strength	6	55
Area Needing Improvement	5	45
Total Applicable Cases	11	
Not applicable	28	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

The District of Columbia did not meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions. For the CFSR 12-month target period, performance on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:

- 7.5 percent of the children exiting to adoption were discharged in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care. This percent is less than the national median of 26.8 percent.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 50.8 months. This length of stay is considerably higher than the national median of 32.4 months. (A lower number of months equates to a higher level of performance.)
- 20.5 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the target period. The District’s performance exceeds the national median of 20.2 percent.

- 7.2 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within six-months. This percent is less than the national median of 8.8 percent.
- 87.4 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percent exceeds the national 75th percentile of 53.7 percent and is one of the highest percentages in the nation.

These data suggest that, when compared to the States, the District performed better than the national median on two of the five measures incorporated in Permanency Composite 2. For the measure on children adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free, the District out-performed almost all of the States. The District's high performance on this measure is possibly due to the frequent practice in the District of petitioning for adoption when there is an adoptive family rather than seeking a termination of parental rights (TPR) prior to adoption proceedings. If the adoption petition is granted through a show cause hearing, then parental rights are automatically terminated as part of that process. Consequently, the child becomes legally free for adoption and has a finalized adoption at the same time. The District's comparatively high performance on this measure also may be attributed in part to the hesitancy of some judges to approve a TPR petition unless there is an identified adoptive family for the child.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the District had made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in five cases due to one or more of the following concerns:

- There were delays in a court hearing for TPR (one case).
- ICPC paperwork to finalize an adoption was misplaced and the adoptive parent no longer wanted to adopt (one case).
- The goal of adoption was in place for multiple years before it was achieved (three cases)

In six cases, the adoption was finalized during the period under review. In one of those cases, the finalization occurred within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Reviewers determined that this item was a Strength in 55 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review were in general agreement that adoptions take too long to finalize. Various stakeholders expressed the following opinions and information regarding key barriers to more timely adoptions.

- There are some judges who will not terminate parental rights unless there is an already identified adoption resource for the child.

- In the District of Columbia, you cannot finalize an adoption until the child has resided in the adoptive home for at least 6 months.
- There often are delays due to difficulty locating the birth father.
- Sometimes there are subsidy issues and the foster parent does not want to adopt because of both a loss of services and payments.
- Adoptive home studies can take 6 months or longer to complete.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA policy requires the placement of a child in an approved pre-adoptive home within 9 months of adoption becoming the permanency goal. For those children without an adoptive resource, CFSA is required to convene a permanency planning team within 95 days to develop a child-specific recruitment plan. The plan may include contracting with a private adoption agency. The Statewide Assessment notes that CFSA policy further requires finalization of the adoption within 12 months of placement in a pre-adoptive home, barring any opposition of the court.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has two units containing 10 staff fully dedicated to adoption recruitment. In addition, the agency produces a bi-annual adoption and foster home recruitment plan. Policy requirements are reflected in practice by ensuring that pre-adoptive homes are licensed and re-licensed in a timely manner. The Statewide Assessment notes that caseworkers strongly encourage attorneys to file adoption petitions shortly after the placement of the child.

Also indicated in the Statewide Assessment are several factors that affect the District's performance on timeliness of adoptions. One factor is that, unlike other jurisdictions, CFSA is not a party to adoption cases and cannot initiate them. While counsel can be appointed and CFSA can cover some attorney fees, there often is a delay in counsel initiating the adoptions, which handicaps the CFSA's ability to push the adoptions through the court calendar in a timely manner.

The Statewide Assessment reports that for children who have severe special needs, there are costs associated with renovating pre-adoptive homes. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, families are guarded in signing a subsidy agreement until they are assured that the agency will commit to requests for renovations. Although the agency does use its resources to do so, this delay in agreeing to and signing the subsidy agreement commonly impacts compliance with the requirement in the District's Amended Implementation Plan that children placed in approved adoptive homes will have finalized adoptions within 12 months of placement in the home.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has implemented the following activities to expedite the adoption process.

- CFSA was awarded a 1-year grant through the Dave Thomas Foundation (Wendy's Wonderful Kids) that funds the salary of a recruiter to implement the child-focused, adoptive parent recruitment strategy based on the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Model.
- The agency is working diligently to strengthen the partnership with both the court and the attorneys to ensure that TPR trials are held expeditiously and efficiently.

- A team approach established by CFSA’s Permanency Redesign has been implemented so that caseworkers will team as a “Unit of One” to bolster the focus on permanency and increase the potential for successful outcomes in safety and well-being for all children served. The anticipated outcome is greater efficiency in achieving permanence for children through elimination of the case-transfer process when goals change from reunification to adoption.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that one of the primary barriers or challenges to achieving timely adoptions is the reluctance by many judges to terminate parental rights without an identified adoptive home.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 11 (28 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. 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 are presented in the table below.

Item 10	Total N	Percent
Strength	10	91
Area Needing Improvement	1	9
Total Applicable Cases	11	
Not applicable	28	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

Item 10 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a permanent, long-term placement for the child and was providing the necessary service to prepare the child for independent living, when appropriate. In cases in which the child was in a foster home, there were formal agreements on the part of foster parents to continue caring for the child until the child aged out of foster care.

Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case because, during the period under review, the child was not in a stable permanent placement.

An additional finding with regard to this item was that although CFSA policy and practice specify that no child younger than 16 is to have a goal of OPPLA, in 4 of the 11 cases with a goal of OPPLA, the child was younger than age 16 when that goal was established; one child was 12 years old when the goal of OPPLA was established.

Rating Determination

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 91 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percent exceeds the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFSA makes concerted efforts to provide services to assist children in making the transition from foster care to independent living and attempts to assist children with a goal of OPPLA in establishing and maintaining connections with family and community. Several stakeholders praised the District's independent living program, called Keys for Life. However, some stakeholders suggested that the program should be provided to children ages 14 and older instead of 16 and older. Stakeholders also noted that the Collaboratives are available to provide a multitude of support services to youth who are transitioning out of foster care, including housing services.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, in July 2005, CFSA issued a report entitled "*Revamping Youth Services: Preparing Young People in Foster Care for Independence.*" The Statewide Assessment notes that CFSA has established benchmarks and created a comprehensive system to promote improved outcomes for older youth. The Statewide Assessment also notes that since the first CFSR, there has been a shift in focus for the Office of Youth Development (OYD), which serves youth in foster care age 16 and older who have the goal of APPLA. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, all OYD staff are trained in the new positive youth development model and receive training in the area of permanency for older youth. The Statewide Assessment reports that the new positive youth development model is strength-based, involves youth in critical decision-making processes, has flexible programs to meet all interests and needs, and involves youth recruiting peers to participate in programs that the youth design and operate.

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.		
Number of cases reviewed according to degree of outcome achievement		
	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	28	71.8
Partially Achieved	11	28.2
Not Achieved or Addressed	0	0
Total Applicable Cases	39	
Not Applicable Cases	0	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 71.8 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity.

Key concerns from the 2001 CFSR

The District of Columbia was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2001 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its PIP. During the 2001 review, item 13 (Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care) and item 16 (Relationship of child in foster care with parents) were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. Key concerns identified in the 2001 review relevant to Permanency Outcome 2 were the following:

- There was a lack of documentation in the case files regarding visitation between children and parents and between children and their siblings in foster care.
- There were some cases in which the parent’s whereabouts were reported as “unknown,” but the agency had not made diligent efforts to attempt to locate the parents in order to encourage their visitation with children. In these cases parental rights had not been terminated.
- Parent-child visitation tended to occur in the local agency office rather than in a family-like setting, making it difficult for parents and children to interact in a somewhat “normal” fashion.
- The agency did very little to connect children in foster care with their fathers. There was very little mention of the fathers in the case records in terms of visitation or contact.

To address these concerns, the District implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan.

- Improved case record documentation of visits between parents and siblings in foster care when the permanency goal is reunification.
- Developed policy and procedures on diligent search for absent parents.
- Improved the frequency of visits between parents and children in foster care.
- Issued contracts with the Collaboratives to facilitate visits in family-like settings.
- Developed training for staff and providers to increase awareness of the role of fathers in the lives of their children.

The District met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key findings from the 2007 CFSR

In the 2007 review, items pertaining to visits with parents (item 13), searches for relatives as placement resources (item 15), and supporting the parent-child relationship (item 16) were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. The concern identified in the 2001 CFSR pertaining to a lack of documentation of visitation in the case files was not an issue in the 2007 review. However, the 2007 review continued to identify concerns pertaining to the lack of diligent efforts to locate parents (particularly fathers), the lack of effort to connect children in foster care with their fathers, and the lack of family-friendly settings for visits. With regard to family-friendly settings, however, the Statewide Assessment indicates that the agency is in the process of implementing a program to ensure more appropriate settings for family visits.

Additional findings of the 2007 review were the following:

- Children in the cases reviewed were placed in close proximity to their biological parents, whenever possible and appropriate.
- Children in the cases reviewed were placed with siblings when appropriate.
- The agency was effective in ensuring that children in the foster care cases maintained their connections to their extended family, culture, neighborhood, and schools.
- The agency was effective in ensuring frequent visitation between siblings in foster care who were placed apart. However, the agency was less effective in ensuring adequate visitation between parents and their children, particularly between fathers and their children. Both stakeholders and the Statewide Assessment note that the agency makes concerted efforts to promote visitation with the parent with whom the child is expected to be reunified. Stakeholders expressed the opinion, however, that if there is no expectation that a child will be reunified with a particular parent, little effort is made to promote visitation with that parent.
- For the most part, the agency made concerted efforts to place children with relatives, although in a few cases, the agency did not search for either maternal or paternal relatives when considering placement resources.
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to strengthen or maintain the parent-child bond in many of the foster care cases reviewed. Although there was an agency focus on visitation between parents and children, there were few efforts to involve parents in school-related activities, medical appointments, and other aspects of the child's day-to-day life.

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

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 11 was applicable for 30 (77 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. 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, and/or (3) parents were deceased or whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child’s most current foster care setting was in close proximity to the child’s parents or close relatives. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below:

Item 11	Total N	Percent
Strength	30	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0
Total Applicable Cases	30	
Not applicable	9	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

Item 11 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child was placed in the same community or county as the parents or that the child’s placement was not in the same community or county, but was still in close proximity to the parents. The item also was rated as a Strength if the child was placed out of his or her community or county, but the placement was necessary to meet the needs of the child and/or support attainment of the permanency goal.

Rating Determination

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 100 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CFSA had made diligent efforts to ensure that children were in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives, or that were necessary to meet special needs. This item also was rated as a Strength in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that most of the children in CFSA foster care are placed in Maryland, although the placements usually are close to the District. A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed concern that there are no residential treatment facilities in the general community and that children who need to be placed in this type of facility are at least 50 miles and often further from their families.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA policy requires that children are not placed more than 25 miles outside the District of Columbia. When there is no kin placement available, efforts are made to place the children within a licensed District home before looking to neighboring jurisdictions. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, efforts are made to place children in proximity to the homes, schools, and communities in which they resided before entering CFSA's care.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that in accordance with the Amended Implementation Plan, CFSA will not place more than 82 children more than 100 miles from the District of Columbia, although children placed in kinship or pre-adoptive family-based settings under the ICPC are not considered as part of this requirement. However, as reported in the Statewide Assessment, as of March 2007, 111 children were placed 100 miles from the District. Eight of these children were in traditional or pre-adoptive foster homes and 88 were in residential treatment centers (RTC). Forty-three of the youth placed in RTCs over 100 miles from the District required specialized treatment services that are not available locally. These services are specific to high-risk juvenile offenders, sexual trauma, youth with profound developmental delays, and youth with medical fragility. The Statewide Assessment indicates that CFSA's management team closely monitors the number of children and youth placed more than 100 miles outside the District and that reviews are conducted on a monthly basis and are discussed at meetings with agency leadership.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 12 was applicable for 23 (59 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not have a sibling in foster care at any time during the period under review. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether the separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below:

Item 12	Total N	Percent
Strength	21	91
Area Needing Improvement	2	9
Total Applicable Cases	23	
Not applicable	16	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

Item 12 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child was placed with all siblings, or if siblings were separated, the separation was due to the special needs of one of the siblings or to the fact that placement with siblings was not in the child’s best interest.

Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case when reviewers determined that the agency had not placed siblings together and there was no documented reason as to why the siblings were separated. It was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in another case when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to find a single placement for a sibling group with three children.

Rating Determination

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 91 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever possible and appropriate. This exceeds the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review noted that CFSA makes concerted efforts to place siblings together. However, one stakeholder expressed the opinion that although this is clearly a preference, it is not always achieved.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, efforts are made to place children with all of their siblings, except in cases where such placement would not be considered to be in the best interest of at least one of the siblings. The Statewide Assessment notes that CFSA’s policy and regulations also allow the Placement Unit to expand foster homes’ licensed capacity to accommodate larger sibling groups as long as there is adequate space in the home. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, this expansion policy allows the home to accommodate up to six children, if necessary. Furthermore, the temporary licensing policy for District kin allows many sibling groups to be placed with relatives immediately.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 13 was applicable for 31 (79 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item if the child had no siblings in foster care and if one of the following conditions were met with regard to the parents: (1) TPR was established prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the child's life (or parents were deceased), or (2) visitation with a parent was considered to not be in the best interests of the child. 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 are presented in the table below:

Item 13	Total N	Percent
Strength	20	65
Area Needing Improvement	11	35
Total Applicable Cases	31	
Not applicable	8	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

Item 13 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visitation with parents and siblings met the needs of the children or the agency made concerted efforts to promote visitation.

Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the mother (four cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the father (six cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with either the father or mother (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 65 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the family. This

percent is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Lack of efforts to promote visitation with fathers was a key concern identified in seven cases. In all cases, reviewers determined that visitation with siblings was sufficient. In 8 of the 17 cases in which sibling visits were applicable for assessment, the frequency of visitation between siblings was at least once a week.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed a number of opinions regarding agency efforts to ensure sufficient visitation between children and their parents and between siblings in foster care. Some stakeholders reported that custodial parents have extensive visitation services, but non-custodial parents rarely receive visitation services. Stakeholders said that if the goal is reunification, visitation services are provided only to the parent with whom the child is expected to reunify. Some stakeholders also said that children placed with relatives tend to have the most frequent visitation with parents.

A few stakeholders suggested that foster parents are very involved in ensuring that children have frequent opportunities to see their siblings in foster care. However, other stakeholders said that children do not get to visit with their siblings once they have been adopted.

Stakeholders reported that lack of transportation is a major barrier to visitation.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA policy, in accordance with the Amended Implementation Plan, indicates that CFSA and contracted agency caseworkers shall ensure that all children with a reunification permanency goal are permitted to visit with their parents at least once a week, unless clinically inappropriate and disapproved by the family court, which must be documented in the case plan. For children whose goal is not reunification, the caseworker shall make an individualized assessment of the child and his or her circumstances to determine whether visitation is in the best interests of the child. Children placed apart from their siblings shall have at least twice monthly visitation with some or all of their siblings. The Statewide Assessment reports that caseworkers are required to facilitate visits between children and their parents. If the court requires visits to be supervised, the caseworker may arrange for the parents and children to visit at the agency offices. In the case of kinship placements, the kinship provider may be permitted to provide the supervision.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the seven Collaboratives are contracted to facilitate, supervise, and provide family-friendly community visitation centers for parent and child visits, although use of the Collaboratives to facilitate visits is not yet occurring universally. The Statewide Assessment also notes that, since December of 2004, the number of children with monthly parental visits has doubled from 29.9 percent to 60.2 percent for those children with a goal of reunification. As of December 2006, 44 percent of the children with a goal of reunification had bi-weekly visits and 26 percent had weekly visits with their parents.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the number of children experiencing monthly sibling visitation has more than doubled from 26.8 percent in December 2003 to 62.8 percent in March 2007. While the number of twice-monthly sibling visits remains relatively low, the numbers increased by 24.3 percent between March 2006 (25 percent) and 2007 (49.3 percent). The Statewide Assessment also states that, beginning in early 2007, CFSA will schedule agency-wide sibling visitation days twice each month on alternating Saturdays. Regularly scheduled, sibling-visitation days will allow families to plan to visit at a regularly established time and place at least once a month. Visitation sites will be located inside the city limits and selected for Metro accessibility, as well as parking convenience.

The Statewide Assessment notes that CFSA believes that visitation is under-reported and that some visitation occurs without caseworker facilitation, which means it would not be documented in the system. To address this issue, administrators within Program Operations have assigned staff to make contact with foster parents to find out if visitation has occurred that did not involve the agency. In addition, the agency is conducting educational outreach to ensure that social workers accurately record visitation data in the SACWIS screens.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that beginning in 2005, the agency increased the size and upgraded its fleet of vehicles which has greatly improved the ability of caseworkers to facilitate visits. Additionally in 2006, CFSA contracted with companies providing *Zip Cars* and *Flex Cars* to make additional vehicles available for staff throughout the District and throughout the day.

Item 14. Preserving connections

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 14 was applicable for all 39 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, extended family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care. The results of the assessment are provided in the table below.

Item 14	Total N	Percent
Strength	36	92
Area Needing Improvement	3	8
Total Applicable Cases	39	
Not applicable	0	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

Item 14 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with extended family members (e.g., through phone contact and visits) (29 cases). In two cases, it was noted that special efforts were made to ensure that the child maintained connections with siblings who were adopted.
- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with the child’s religious or cultural heritage (7 cases).
- The agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with the school and community (e.g. selecting placements that do not require a change of school and/or neighborhood) (15 cases). In two of these cases, the foster parents provided transportation so that the child could be maintained in the same school.

Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases because reviewers determined that the agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connection to siblings who were not in foster care.

Rating Determination

Item 14 was rated as a Strength. In 92 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections with extended family, culture, religion, community and school. This exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to maintain children’s ties to their family and communities of origin. A few stakeholders noted that the agency needs to make greater efforts to maintain or develop community connections for children who have a case plan goal of OPPLA so that when they transition from foster care to independent living, they have supports in the community. In addition, some stakeholders noted that there are difficulties maintaining connections between siblings when one of the siblings has been adopted. They reported that this occurs either when the adoptive parents do not wish their adopted child to maintain connections with siblings, or the agency does not make concerted efforts to help the children maintain connections.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA policy states that efforts should be made to place children in proximity to the homes, schools and communities in which they resided before entering CFSA’s care. It was noted that continuity of school placement is a priority. The Statewide Assessment also notes that policy requires that “efforts be made to place children with respect to the spiritual and religious beliefs and practices of the parent and child.”

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA focuses its foster parent recruitment on individuals who live within neighborhoods from which most District children come into foster care. The Statewide Assessment reports that CFSA has been assisted in this effort by the Washington Council of Governments, which hired a consulting firm in 2004 to conduct market research for recruiting prospective resource families who best match the demographics of the District’s foster children. CFSA also focuses on maintaining spiritual and religious connections between children and their parents by engaging in extensive foster parent recruitment with the District’s faith-based communities.

The Statewide Assessment reports that for older youth in care, CFSA has implemented Youth Connections, the agency process that is designed to prepare youth ages 14 - 20 for independent living. According to the Statewide Assessment, Youth Connections is a proven approach to identifying people who will remain permanent connections for youth when they leave foster care.

Item 15. Relative placement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 15 was applicable for 36 (92 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because: (1) the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period, or (2) the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement. 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 are presented in the table below.

Item 15	Total N	Percent
Strength	31	86
Area Needing Improvement	5	14
Total Applicable Cases	36	
Not applicable	3	
Total Foster Care Cases	39	

Item 15 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed with relatives (11 cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives (20 cases).

Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency had not made diligent efforts to search for either maternal or paternal relatives during the period under review (four cases).
- The agency had made efforts to search for maternal relatives, but not paternal relatives (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 86 percent of cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFSA makes concerted efforts to place children with relatives whenever possible.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, in all cases requiring removal of children from their homes, CFSA policy requires that the caseworker must first investigate kin as the priority placement resource. If reunification is not possible, kin and other family supports may then become permanency resources.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that in April 2004, CFSA promulgated the Temporary Licensing of Foster Homes for Kin regulation. This policy allows kin relatives residing in the District of Columbia to receive a temporary foster home license to expedite the placement of a child in their home. The temporary license is active for 120 days. During that period of time, the prospective caregiver is required to complete foster parent training in preparation for permanent licensing.

However, the Statewide Assessment also reports that, currently, several children under the care of CFSA have family members from Maryland or Virginia who are appropriate caregivers but are not able to obtain immediate temporary licensure due to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) regulations. For example, 40 family team meetings held between July 2006 and September 2006 identified kinship placement resources but the resources were unable to apply for a temporary kinship license because they resided outside of the District of Columbia.

Also indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA's Diligent Search Unit locates and engages biological parents and extended family members throughout the life of a case using a myriad of databases and court records, in addition to conducting interviews. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the family team meetings assist the agency in identifying relatives who are potential placement resources, as well as potential permanency resources.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 16 was applicable for 28 (72 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if (1) parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, or (2) a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child's best interests throughout the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers through efforts other than arranging visitation. The results of this assessment are provided in the table below:

Item 16	Total N	Percent
Strength	15	54
Area Needing Improvement	13	46
Total Applicable Cases	28	
Not applicable	11	
Total Foster Care Cases	29	

Item 16 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children through one or more of the following activities:

- Encouraging the parents' participation in school or after school activities and attendance at medical appointments and special events (15 cases).
- Providing transportation so that parents can participate in these events (9 cases).
- Providing opportunities for family therapeutic situations (15 cases).
- Encouraging foster parents to mentor biological parents and serve as parenting role models for them (6 cases).
- Encouraging and facilitating contact with incarcerated parents (when appropriate) or with parents not living in close proximity to the child (2 cases).

Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the father (three cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the mother (three cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with either the mother or father (seven cases).

The key concern identified in the case rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item was that although visitation occurred frequently and regularly, the agency was not consistent in providing parents with the opportunity to be more involved in their children's lives through participation in school-related activities or attendance at medical appointments and other aspects of the child's day-to-day life.

Rating Determination

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 54 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Only a few stakeholders commented on this item during the onsite CFSR. They noted that while some older youth in foster care are able to maintain relationships with their parents, other older youth in foster care have expressed concerns that their caseworkers do not help them maintain relationships with their parents.

Statewide Assessment Information

There is no information in the Statewide Assessment relevant to agency efforts to support the parent-child relationship in ways other than visitation. The Statewide Assessment section relevant to item 16 discusses agency policy and practice pertaining to visits between children and their parents.

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 according to degree of outcome achievement		
	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	32	49.2
Partially Achieved	26	40.0
Not Achieved or Addressed	7	10.8
Total Applicable Cases	65	
Not Applicable Cases	0	
Total Cases	65	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 49.2 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied based on the type of case. The outcome was found to be substantially achieved in 62 percent (24 cases) of the 39 foster care cases compared to 31 percent (8 cases) of the 26 in-home services cases.

Key concerns from the 2001 CFSR

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with this outcome during its 2001 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its PIP. In the 2001 CFSR, all four items incorporated in the outcome were rated as Areas Needing Improvement.

Key concerns identified in the 2001 review were the following:

- The agency was not consistent with regard to conducting comprehensive assessments or meeting the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents.
- Case plans, particularly updated case plans, frequently were not in the case records.
- There was little effort on the part of agency caseworkers to involve parents in the case planning process beyond having the parents sign the case plans.
- Agency staff did not have sufficient face-to-face contact with the children in their caseloads.

- Agency staff did not have sufficient face-to-face contact with the parents of the children in their caseloads.
- Some cases reviewed had no worker assigned to the case for various periods of time due to caseworker turnover and high caseloads.
- The agency did not make diligent efforts to search for absent or non-custodial parents to establish contact with them so that they could be involved in case planning and other aspects of their children's lives.

To address these concerns, the District implemented the following strategies in its PIP.

- Implemented a child well-being status report to summarize the need for and provision of services.
- Provided updated resource information to caregivers and service providers through the development of a Foster Parent Handbook and Resource Directory.
- Modified the case plan and policies to address family involvement.
- Provided training to staff on family involvement in case planning.
- Ensured that children in foster care have current case plans that include documentation of efforts to involve family members in the planning process.
- Enhanced FACES to capture caseworker visitation data and revised the FACES manual on documenting visitations.
- Implemented supervisory control to monitor documentation of caseworker visits and contacts with the child and with parents.
- Trained staff on gathering information on birth parents, establishing paternity, family assessment and treatment planning.
- Implemented the referral of cases to the Diligent Search Unit at intake when parental whereabouts were unknown.

The District met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

In the 2007 CFSR, all of the items included under Well-Being Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. However, some of the concerns identified in the 2001 CFSR were no longer identified as concerns in the 2007 CFSR. For example, the 2007 CFSR resulted in the following findings:

- The agency was highly effective in assessing and meeting the needs of children and foster parents, and somewhat less effective in assessing and meeting the needs of the biological mothers. However, the agency was not at all effective in assessing and meeting the needs of the biological fathers.
- There were no cases that did not have a case plan in the case file.
- Reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to involve mothers in case planning, although the agency continued to lack efforts to involve fathers in case planning.
- In most cases, there was frequent contact between caseworkers and their children in their caseloads.

- Concerns were not identified with regard to cases not being staffed for long periods of time.

Despite these improvements, the 2007 CFSR case review findings indicate that the agency did not consistently conduct diligent searches for absent parents or make concerted efforts to reach out to non-custodial parents even when they were accessible.

An additional finding of the 2007 CFSR with regard to this outcome was that foster care cases were more likely than in-home services cases to be rated as a Strength with regard to assessing and meeting the service needs of children and parents and involving parents and children in case planning.

The 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

Case Review Findings

Item 17 was applicable for all 65 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. This item excludes the assessment of children’s (but not parents’) needs pertaining to educational, physical health, and mental health needs. These are addressed in later items. The case review results were the following:

Item 17	Total N	Percent
Strength	33	51
Area Needing Improvement	32	49
Total Applicable Cases	65	
Not applicable	0	
Total Cases	65	

Performance on this item varied based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 62 percent (24 cases) of the 39 foster care cases, compared to 35 percent (9 cases) of the 26 in-home services cases.

Item 17 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. Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that there was either inadequate assessment of needs or inadequate services to meet identified needs.

Specific findings for this item are shown in the table below. The data in the table suggest that the agency was highly effective in assessing and meeting the service needs of children and foster parents. However, it was less effective in assessing and meeting service needs of the mothers of the children in foster care and not at all effective in assessing and meeting the service needs of the fathers.

Item 17: Table of Needs Assessment and Services	Evaluation Results		No. of Applicable Cases
	Yes	No	
Mother's needs assessed and met?	40 (77%)	12	52
Father's needs assessed and met?	9 (24%)	28	37
Foster parent's needs assessed and met?	30 (91%)	3	33
Child's needs assessed and met?	61 (94%)	4	65

Rating Determination

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 51percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the District had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children and parents. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency generally is effective in assessing the service needs of children and families, but that this practice tends to vary across caseworkers. Stakeholders noted that CFSA uses its quarterly quality assurance process to evaluate the impact of services and the needs assessment process. Stakeholders also reported that if the agency cannot provide a service through an existing contract with a provider, there is a protocol for reviewing the service request, and the agency will pay for the service if it is deemed appropriate.

A few stakeholders reported that more day care and respite care services for foster parents are needed. Although several stakeholders mentioned that the agency employs foster care support workers to meet the needs of foster parents on an ongoing basis, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that many foster parents are unaware of this resource.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA policy requires that investigators assess the needs of children and parents during the course of the investigation. The Statewide Assessment also notes that in accordance with CFSA’s policy, the administrative review assesses the appropriateness of the services being provided to the child and, in those cases in which the child’s planning goal is return home, the services being provided to the child’s family. The administrative review also is required to examine and assess whether supports and services are available that will ensure the well being of children exiting the child welfare system.

The Statewide Assessment reports that assessment of needs is part of on going case planning and service delivery. Individualized case planning supports the provision of services based on the assessment of needs. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, child-specific case plans are expected to outline the child’s placement requirements and resources as well as the steps taken to ensure the child’s safety and the services needed to address the child’s needs. Family case plans outline the services and tasks required for the family to achieve stability (for in-home cases) or to achieve reunification with children who have been removed and placed in foster care.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 18 was applicable for 60 (92 percent) of the 65 cases. A case was not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were not involved with the child in any way **and** the child was too young or had cognitive delays or other conditions that were barriers to participation in case planning. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in case planning, 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	Total N	Percent
Strength	29	48
Area Needing Improvement	31	52
Total Applicable Cases	60	
Not applicable	5	
Total Cases	65	

Performance on this item varied substantially based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 65 percent (22 cases) of the 34 applicable foster care cases compared to 27 percent (7 cases) of the 26 in-home services cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in case planning or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in case planning. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in case planning. Key findings with regard to this item were the following:

- There were 48 cases in which involvement of the mothers in case planning was applicable for assessment. Reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to involve mothers in case planning in 37 (77 percent) of these cases.
- There were 38 cases in which involvement of the fathers in case planning was applicable for assessment. Reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to involve fathers in 11 (29 percent) of these cases.
- There were 42 cases in which involvement of the children in case planning was applicable for assessment. Reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to involve children in case planning in 32 (76 percent) of these cases.

These findings indicate that the agency is somewhat effective in involving mothers and children in case planning, although there is room for improvement. However, the data indicate that the agency is not at all effective in involving fathers in case planning. For the most part, this was due to the agency's lack of effort to diligently search for absent fathers. In some cases, however, the father's whereabouts were known, but the agency still did not involve them in case planning.

Rating Determination

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 48 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in case planning. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that parents and children (when age appropriate) are participating in case-planning and they attributed this primarily to the implementation of the family team meetings both at the onset of the case and at crisis points in the case. However, a few stakeholders reported that currently the agency is not making sufficient efforts to engage fathers in the process, but that the agency already has targeted this as an area needing improvement.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires caseworkers to develop case plans in a team environment including all age-appropriate children, parents, kin, the family’s informal support network, out-of home caregivers, and other formal resources working with or needed by the family. The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA policy requires that the case plan be signed by the child (when age appropriate), the child’s parents, the family social worker, the supervisor for the family social worker, and the child’s social worker and supervisor.

The Statewide Assessment reports that CFSA’s Practice Model promotes parental and family engagement in the case planning process and that mandatory training is provided in the areas of “Engaging Families in the Process of Change” and “Engaging Fathers.” The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA has added a level of quality assurance that documents family participation in the development of case plans. This is the *Case Planning Acknowledgement Form*. This process provides an opportunity for any participating parent or family member to formally disagree with the tenets and requirements of the case plan. Parental involvement in case plan development also is tracked through regular supervisory sessions between caseworkers and their supervisors.

In addition, as indicated in the Statewide Assessment, to maximize family participation in administrative reviews, the agency has expanded the review schedule to include hours that are more convenient for working parents. CFSA also has integrated the family team meeting and structured decision making models into the child and family case planning process. According to the Statewide Assessment, family team meetings enable staff to initiate case planning and engage families and key stakeholders in the case-planning process at the onset of a case.

Item 19. Worker visits with child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 19 was applicable for all 65 foster care cases. In conducting the assessment of this item, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the caseworkers and children was 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 are presented in the table below:

Item 19	Total N	Percent
Strength	56	86
Area Needing Improvement	9	14
Total Applicable Cases	65	
Not applicable	0	
Total Cases	65	

Performance on this item did not vary substantively based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of the foster care cases and 81 percent of the in-home services cases.

Item 19 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that both the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child’s safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals. Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that either the frequency of contacts (four cases) or the quality of contacts (five cases) between caseworkers and children was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child. One case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item because the child was placed in a foster home in Virginia and was visited only once every 3 months.

Specific information from the case reviews is presented in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits with Child	Foster Care Cases (Number and Percent)	In-Home Services Cases (Number and Percent)
Visits occurred on at least a weekly basis	8 (20.5%)	4 (15%)
Visits occurred less than weekly, but at least twice a month	20 (51%)	8 (31%)
Visits occurred less than twice a month, but at least once a month	8 (20.5%)	12 (46%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month or never	3 (8%)	2 (8%)
Total cases	39	26

Rating Determination

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 86 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and/or quality. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength, although it is very close. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

All stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that caseworkers are establishing face-to-face contact with the children in their caseloads on a frequent basis. They suggested that every child is seen at least once a month and most are seen more frequently, particularly in the first 4 weeks that a case is open.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has detailed policies for caseworker visitation with the children that CFSA serves. The Statewide Assessment notes that the agency has improved extensively in the area of caseworker visits with children and youth in its care. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, between 2004 and 2006, monthly social worker visits to children and youth in foster care increased from 64.8 percent to 88.9 percent, while visits to children in the in-home cases increased from 35.7 percent to 74.2 percent. The most recent data (December 2006 to March 2007) indicate that monthly visitation with children in foster care increased from 88.9 percent to 93.3 percent and monthly visits with children in the in-home services cases increased from 74.2 percent to 77.9 percent. According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders noted that while the quantity of visits occurring is a Strength for CFSA, the agency should now focus on enhancing the quality of those visits.

Item 20. Worker visits with parents

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 20 was applicable for 51 (78 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this assessment if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of their children. All cases that were not applicable were foster care cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker's face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and/or ensure the children's safety and well being. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below:

Item 20	Total N	Percent
Strength	20	39
Area Needing Improvement	31	61
Total Applicable Cases	51	
Not applicable	14	
Total Cases	65	

Performance on this item did not differ substantially based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 44 percent (11 cases) of the 25 applicable foster care cases, and 35 percent (9 cases) of the 26 in-home services cases.

Item 20 was 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. Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that visits were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality to meet the needs of the parents and children.

Specific information from the case reviews relevant to caseworker contacts with parents is presented in the table below. The data in the table indicate that, for the cases reviewed, the agency was somewhat effective in visiting with the mothers of the children in their caseloads (78 percent were contacted by the caseworker at least once a month). However, the data also indicate that the agency was not effective in visiting with the fathers of the children (only 22 percent were contacted by the caseworker at least once a month).

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits with Parents	Mother		Father	
	N	%	N	%
Visits occurred at least weekly	7	14 %	1	3%
Visits occurred less than weekly, but at least twice a month	15	30%	3	8%
Visits occurred less than twice a month, but at least once a month	17	34%	4	11%
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	8	16%	10	29%
There were no visits during the period under review	3	6%	17	49%
Total Applicable Cases	50		35	

Rating Determination

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 39 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with parents were sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or

promote attainment of case goals. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were no comments from stakeholders on this item.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has detailed policies for caseworker visitation with the birth parents. These policies are in effect for CFSA caseworkers as well as caseworkers in the contracted private agencies who have full case-management responsibility.

- For children and families who receive services in their own homes, the caseworker shall make efforts to visit with parents twice monthly, but at a minimum will visit once a month.
- During the first 3 months after a child is placed in out-of-home care, the caseworker shall visit the parents no less frequently than twice per month, unless a parent is unavailable or refuses to cooperate with CFSA or the contracted agency.
- After the first 3 months, the caseworker shall continue to work with the parents as often as is necessary to facilitate reunification, but with a minimum of once a month for as long as the goal is reunification, unless there is documentation that a parent is unavailable or refuses to cooperate with CFSA or the contracted agency.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, since the implementation of the In-Home Redesign, CFSA's performance with parent visitation has improved. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that, in general, CFSA makes efforts to visit and engage parents and caretakers for whom reunification is the goal. These are the visits that are tracked. The Statewide Assessment notes that, although the agency also attempts to engage non-custodial parents (when appropriate) who are not involved in the reunification plan, regular visitation with these non-custodial parents is neither tracked nor required.

The Statewide Assessment reports that as of January 2007, caseworkers completed twice monthly visits to 50 percent of parents whose children were placed in foster care within the last 3 months.³ In March 2007, CFSA performance with twice monthly visits was 47 percent while private agency workers visited parents monthly and twice monthly at 75 percent.

³ Although CFSA's policy requires that caseworkers visit a child at least once a month, the Amended Implementation Plan requires that caseworkers visit the child twice a month.

Well-Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.		
Number of cases reviewed according to degree of outcome achievement		
	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	44	88.0
Partially Achieved	2	4.0
Not Achieved or Addressed	4	8.0
Total Applicable Cases	50	
Not Applicable Cases	15	
Total Cases	65	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. Reviewers determined that 88.0 percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved this outcome. This is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 100 percent of the 32 applicable foster care cases compared to 67 percent of the 18 applicable in-home services cases.

Key Concerns of the 2001 CFSR

The District was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2001 CFSR. Key concerns identified during the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- The agency was not consistent in addressing the educational needs of children who were not in foster care, particularly those children who were often tardy or absent from school on a frequent basis.
- The agency was not consistent in following up or monitoring services to children who had identified educational needs.
- Educational issues frequently were not incorporated into the case plan.
- The agency was not consistent with regard to advocating with the educational system to get children's needs met.

To address these concerns, the District implemented the following strategies in its PIP.

- Created a multidisciplinary team centralized in the Office of Clinical Practice with specialists in education.
- Conducted case reviews to monitor cases to ensure that children received educational assessments.

The District did not meet its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

As indicated in the discussion for item 21 below, the findings of the 2007 CFSR suggest that the concerns found in the 2001 review also were found in the 2007 CFSR, although there were fewer cases exhibiting the problems. The key concern for the 2007 review was that for some in-home services cases, education-related needs were identified in the case file, but the agency did not make diligent efforts to address those needs, either by attempting to obtain services or by advocating for the child with the school system. In general, however, in the majority of cases, the agency was effective in assessing and meeting children’s educational needs.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 21 was applicable for 50 (77 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if any of the following applied: (1) children were not of school age; or (2) children in in-home cases did not have service 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 are provided below.

Item 21	Total N	Percent
Strength	44	88
Area Needing Improvement	6	12
Total Applicable Cases	50	
Not applicable	15	
Total Cases	65	

Item 21 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child’s educational needs were appropriately assessed and services were provided, if necessary. Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in six in-home services cases when case reviewers determined the following:

- There was no formal assessment of education-related needs, although there was clear evidence of education-related problems in the case file, such as poor attendance, non attendance, and failing grades (four cases).
- There was no effort to ensure that children received services to address the educational needs that were identified, such as advocating with the school system or attempting to arrange for tutoring services (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 88 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children. This percent is less than the 95 percent required for this item to be rated as a Strength. A 95 percent standard instead of a 90 percent standard is set for this item because it is the only item assessed for Well-being Outcome 2.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Although most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that it is difficult to ensure that children's educational needs are being addressed by the District's public school system, they also expressed the opinion that CFSA has made major efforts to meet the educational needs of the children served by the agency. Stakeholders reported that CFSA has worked to improve the communication between the agency and the Department of Education, has included educational needs as part of the focus of the family team meetings, and has stressed a focus on education with caseworkers, particularly for children in foster care. Stakeholders also reported that the court is working on an educational "checklist" to help judges determine whether needs are being appropriately assessed and met. A few stakeholders also praised the agency for setting high education-related expectations for youth in foster care. They noted that it is a general practice to set the expectation that youth not only will graduate from high school but also will pursue higher education.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, it is the policy of CFSA to ensure that every school-aged child is appropriately enrolled in school and that every child's educational goals are met in a timely and appropriate fashion. The Statewide Assessment also notes that agency policy requires that accurate information on the number of children under the care of CFSA who receive educational services, including the location where these services are provided, is maintained and recorded in FACES.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, greater attention was given to the educational success of children in foster care during the summer of 2006, which coincided with CFSA's implementation of the necessary strategies to formalize its practice and improve its relationship with the school systems. Since that time, CFSA has dramatically improved the processes for exchanging data with the public school system, for ensuring the integrity of its own data, and for evaluating the educational outcomes of children in foster care. The Statewide Assessment reports that the procedures to execute these improvements are outlined in CFSA's education policy, which provides the agency with a formal structure and a tool to enforce accountability.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that CFSA was selected to participate in the Breakthrough Series Collaborative: *Improving Educational Continuity and School Stability for Children in Out-of-Home Care*, which is sponsored by Casey Family Programs. This

program provides technical assistance for implementing small-scale tests of change designed to improve the educational outcomes for children in care. Currently, CFSA has partnered with Shaw Middle School to develop appropriate strategies for improving services provided to foster children in attendance there.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.		
Number of cases reviewed according to degree of outcome achievement		
	Total Number	Percent
Substantially Achieved	48	87.3
Partially Achieved	4	7.3
Not Achieved or Addressed	3	5.4
Total Applicable Cases	55	
Not Applicable Cases	10	
Total Cases	65	

STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 87.3 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied base on the type of case. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 97 percent (38 cases) of the 39 applicable foster care cases compared to 62.5 percent (10 cases) of the 16 applicable in-home services cases.

Key Concerns from the 2001 CFSR

The District of Columbia did not achieve substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2001 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its PIP. In the 2001 CFSR, item 22, pertaining to the physical health of the child, and item 23 pertaining to the mental health of the child, were both rated as an Area Needing Improvement. The key concerns identified in the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- The agency was not following up with services when children had clearly identified health needs.
- There was a lack of dental services for children.
- Foster parents were not routinely given a child’s medical history when the child was placed with them.
- There was a lack of comprehensive, ongoing, mental health assessments to assess the needs of children and a failure to monitor progress.
- There was a lack of assessment of children’s mental health needs in the in-home services cases.
- There was a lack of provision of mental health services when children had clearly identified needs for services.

To address these concerns, the District implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- Developed a comprehensive assessment tool to be completed during investigation that incorporates health and dental information.
- Maintained a comprehensive group of health care providers to ensure a full array of health care services for children by developing relationships with medical service providers in the District.
- Ensured that medical information is provided to foster parents when children are initially placed, and to birth parents upon reunification.
- Developed and utilized a core group of mental health providers that are certified through the Department of Mental Health to ensure quality care for children.
- Completed a Needs Assessment that examined current mental health resources and identified gaps in services.
- Provided training for caseworkers to enhance their ability to assess and provide appropriate services to meet the mental health needs of children.

The District met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

In the 2007 CFSR, item 22 (physical health of child) was rated as a Strength. Concerns pertaining to dental health services and lack of provision of medical records to foster parents were not found to be relevant in the 2007 CFSR. Although item 23 pertaining to children’s mental health needs continued to be rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the 2007 CFSR, the percentage of cases rated as a Strength was very close to the 90 percent needed for an overall rating of Strength. A key finding for both items was that the items were rated as a Strength in almost all of the foster care cases. Only one foster care case received a rating of Area Needing Improvement for item 23.

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

Case Review Findings

Item 22 was applicable for 53 (82 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were in-home services cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) children’s physical health needs (including dental 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 are presented in the table below:

Item 22	Total N	Percent
Strength	50	94
Area Needing Improvement	3	6
Total Applicable Cases	53	
Not applicable	12	
Total Cases	65	

The three cases that were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were all in-home services cases. For the foster care cases, 100 percent were rated as a Strength.

Item 22 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children’s health needs (medical and dental) were routinely assessed and services provided as needed. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases when reviewers determined that the children had identified health concerns that were noted in the case file, but there was no action on the part of the agency to address those concerns.

Rating Determination

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 94 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was adequately addressing the health needs of children in foster care and in-home services cases. This percent meets the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that CFSA is effective in meeting the physical health needs of children in foster care. They noted that, although dental care has historically been problematic, the agency recently has connected with dental service clinics and specific dentists in the community who are willing to work with children in foster care and accept Medicaid.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, each child entering foster care shall receive a health screening within 24 hours of placement. The purpose of this screening is to gather information to identify health problems and needs for immediate care. The Statewide Assessment reports that, in an effort to provide support for the completion and follow up for these assessments, the CFSA Office of Clinical Practice (OCP) – Health Services Division is required to either schedule examinations for the child or help the foster parent schedule them within the required timeframe. An initial dental assessment must be conducted within 14 days of placement.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that once a child has been removed from the home, the child’s case plan shall include a health care plan. To help achieve optimum, preventive, health care, each child must have periodic, comprehensive, medical assessments. In addition, comprehensive dental care for children in foster care is required to include routine restorative care and ongoing dental examinations, preventive services and treatment as recommended by the dentist. Follow-up care for all conditions identified in the initial dental assessment is required.

In addition, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA’s Amended Implementation Plan requires children to have a health screening prior to placement in foster care. The Statewide Assessment reports that during the second quarter of FY 2006, 74 percent of children entering foster care had pre-placement screenings.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 23 was applicable for 42 (65 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs, or if there were no mental health concerns. 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 are presented in the table below:

Item 23	Total N	Percent
Strength	36	86
Area Needing Improvement	6	14
Total Applicable Cases	42	
Not applicable	23	
Total Cases	65	

There was variation in performance on this outcome based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 97 percent (30 cases) of the 31 applicable foster care cases compared to 55 percent (6 cases) of the 11 applicable in-home services cases.

Item 23 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were appropriately assessed and the identified mental health needs were addressed.

Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in six in-home services cases when reviewers determined the following:

- Mental health needs were not assessed nor addressed (four cases).
- Mental health needs were assessed but not met (two cases).

Ratings Determination

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 86 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed concern about the availability and quality of mental health services for children who come into contact with the District’s child welfare system. Several stakeholders said that mental health services are available, but often they are not the services that the children need.

Stakeholders reported that the District’s Department of Mental Health (DMH) was created about 5 years ago and prior to that, CFSA provided mental health services to its own children. Since the creation of the Department of Mental Health, CFSA must access mental health services through DMH. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that this transition has been problematic and has resulted in children in foster care having inconsistent access to high quality mental health services.

Several stakeholders also expressed the opinion that the DMH clinicians are not skilled in working with children who have special needs related to the trauma of sexual and severe physical abuse. In addition, they voiced concern about the insufficient availability of intensive mental health services from DMH, which results in children who need residential care being placed far away from their families. A third concern raised by stakeholders is that children are receiving mental health assessments and needs are being identified, but services are not being provided to meet those needs.

Some stakeholders suggested that there is a difference in accessibility of services for children in the in-home services cases and children in the foster care cases. They noted that, in general, services are much easier to access if the child is in foster care. If the child is not in foster care, the family usually must have insurance to access quality services.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA policy requires that once a child has been removed from the home, the child's case plan must include a description of any mental health services to be provided to address the child's mental health needs, the goals of those services, how progress will be assessed, and the anticipated achievement date. The Statewide Assessment reports that the Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) requires an assessment of mental health development for all Medicaid-eligible children and that psychiatric and psychological services must be made available to meet the needs of children in foster care. The CFSA Behavioral Services Unit is responsible for the processing and linkage of referrals and for evaluations for mental health treatment for children with identified mental health needs.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has a contract with the Children's National Medical Center (CNMC) to perform mental health assessments and to provide routine and specialty care for committed youth. Caseworkers are required to accompany the child to the screening and to ensure that all pertinent information is provided to the medical staff. The Statewide Assessment reports that, in the event of a psychiatric emergency, children are triaged to the emergency room for a more intensive psychiatric consultation.

SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

This section of the CFSR Final Report provides information regarding the District’s substantial conformity with the seven Systemic Factors examined during the CFSR. Information on the items included in each systemic factor comes from the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders conducted during the onsite CFSR. A score for substantial conformity is established for each systemic factor. Scores of 3 and 4 represent substantial conformity. A score of either 1 or 2 means that the District is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor. In addition, information is provided regarding the District’s performance on each systemic factor for the District’s first CFSR. If the systemic factor was part of the District’s Program Improvement Plan (PIP), the key concerns addressed in the PIP and the strategies for assessing those concerns are noted, as well as any changes in ratings that occurred as a result of the District’s second CFSR.

I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

STATUS OF STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

The District of Columbia is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The District was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2001 CFSR and the factor was addressed in the District’s PIP. The key concerns identified in the 2001 CFSR were the following:

- The District’s automated information system (FACES) did not capture historical information on cases.
- Agency staff was not consistent with regard to entering data concerning the status of children in foster care in a timely manner.

The District addressed these concerns in its PIP through multiple strategies. To address the concern pertaining to missing historical information, CFSA designed a procedure for uploading the necessary missing historical data on children and families into the FACES application. These data were then uploaded after CFSA generated several data clean-up reports identifying the missing information.

The following PIP strategies were designed to address concerns about the timeliness and accuracy of data entry:

- CFSA developed diverse training methods and tools to ensure both initial and ongoing staff training with regard to entering information into FACES accurately and in a timely manner.
- CFSA implemented monthly management reports to monitor the timeliness and accuracy of data entry.
- CFSA ensured that all users, including off-site contract agency users, had access to technical support 24-hours a day. CFSA also provided on-site functional and technical support to private agencies at least once a month, if needed, and set aside one day a week as a FACES workday during which agency caseworkers could access individual support.
- CFSA improved access to the system by reducing the number of hours that the system was “down” from 13.3 hours per month to two hours per month.

The District met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Specific findings of the 2007 CFSR for the item included in this systemic 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

Item 24 is rated as a Strength because the District has an information system that can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District’s 2001 CFSR and was addressed in its PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the District of Columbia’s SACWIS achieved Federal approval in January 2005. In receiving approval, the District met all requirements of a State system, including the ability to readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster care.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that on February 27, 2006 the District implemented a web-based version of the SACWIS called FACES.NET. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the new FACES system has retained all the existing functionality approved in January 2005, but has enhanced functionality, including permitting uniform 24-hour access for CFSA staff and private-

sector vendors providing case management services. Furthermore, CFSA case-carrying caseworkers are equipped with laptops through which they can access FACES.NET from any location with an internet connection. According to the Statewide Assessment, this unlimited access allows caseworkers to enter data shortly after visits in the field.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, all CFSA and private agency case-carrying caseworkers received classroom training prior to the implementation of the system. Training manuals and tip sheets are available on CFSA's intranet and internet sites, providing ongoing assistance for entering critical data elements, such as status, demographic characteristics, location, and permanency goals for children and youth in foster care. The Child Information Systems Administration (CISA), which is responsible for FACES.NET, also operates a Help Desk during normal business hours to assist CFSA staff with functional questions about the system.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that the District's information system can identify the legal status, location, and demographic characteristics of children in foster care as well as children in the in-home services cases. They also noted that the system generates multiple reports that are useful for agency staff at all levels and that data from the system support the agency's quality assurance efforts. In addition, stakeholders reported that agency caseworkers receive extensive training on FACES.

Although stakeholders also agreed that 24-hour access to the system promotes more timely data entry, some stakeholders raised concerns about the timeliness of data entry. They noted that the agency is working hard to "push" timely data entry to ensure that the information in the system is current and reliable. A key issue identified by stakeholders concerned the timeliness of data entry for children in placements under contract with private agencies. They expressed the opinion, for example, that a private agency may move children from one foster home to another within the provider's placement network without recording this information with FACES. One stakeholder mentioned that to resolve this issue, the agency developed the provider web for validating and reconciling placement data.

In the opinion of several stakeholders, data entry pertaining to children in private agency placements also was a concern because not all provider agencies have access to FACES. As they noted, if a provider agency participates in the FACES training, they are permitted to access key parts of the system, but not all provider agencies take the training. In these latter situations, the provider agency is expected to notify the CFSA caseworker about any changes applicable to a given child, and the caseworker must enter the information. This could result in inaccurate information in FACES if the provider does not contact the agency in a timely manner and the data are not entered immediately into FACES by the caseworker.

II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

STATUS OF CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

The District of Columbia is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The District was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2001 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its PIP. At that time, the following key concerns were identified:

- The agency was not consistently establishing case plans for children, and when case plans were developed, parents and age-appropriate children were not actively involved in the process.
- Cases were not consistently reviewed every six months and when administrative reviews were held, they often involved only the administrative review staff and the caseworker.
- Permanency hearings were not always held in a timely manner.
- The courts were not willing to terminate parental rights unless an adoptive family had been found for the child.
- Foster parents, relative caretakers, and pre-adoptive parents were not consistently notified of reviews or hearings pertaining to the children in their care.

The following PIP strategies were implemented to address these concerns:

- To address the concern regarding involvement of children and families in case planning, CFSA (1) conducted training to enhance caseworker skills pertaining to involving children and families in the case planning process; and (2) modified the case plan and the FACES screens and reports pertaining to the case plan to ensure that the tools for involving families in case planning were available in the system.
- To address concerns regarding the frequency of case reviews, CFSA began tracking administrative review data to ensure that reviews were occurring as required. CFSA also implemented a process whereby supervisors or program managers would attend the administrative review if the caseworker could not attend, to ensure that the review could take place as scheduled
- To address concerns regarding the timeliness of permanency hearings, CFSA and the courts integrated their computer systems to facilitate the tracking and monitoring of permanency hearings. This included sharing information such as the hearing type, the

date and time, the judge’s name, and the courtroom. A daily interface between the court and FACES automatically populates the court calendar information in FACES, allowing caseworkers to view the court orders and hearing schedule for their cases. In addition, CFSA hired more than 40 attorneys to provide the agency with consultation pertaining to judicial hearings and termination of parental rights cases.

- To address concerns regarding petitions for TPR, CFSA revised its policies to be consistent with the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and developed a case-tracking form to monitor compliance of each case with ASFA, particularly compliance with the provisions pertaining to TPR.
- To address concerns pertaining to inconsistent notification of foster parents and relative caretakers regarding court hearings and administrative reviews, CFSA automated the notification process for administrative reviews so that FACES generates notification letters two weeks prior to the review for all individuals who are to receive notification.

The District met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Specific findings for each item included in this systemic factor and the reasons for item ratings 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 X Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 was rated as a Area Needing Improvement because, although case plans are being developed in a timely manner, interviews with stakeholders and information from the Statewide Assessment indicate that the agency is not involving parents in case planning in a consistent manner. In addition, case review results of the 2007 CFSR show that 52 percent of the cases were rated Area Needing Improvement for involving parents and children in case planning. The CFSR found that CFSA involved mothers in case planning in 77 percent of the cases, involved fathers in 29 percent of the cases, and involved children in 76 percent of the cases. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District’s 2001 CFSR and was addressed in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA’s policy requires that the case plan be completed within 30 days of a child’s placement and updated, at a minimum, every 90 days thereafter or when changed circumstances of the child or family require modifications to the case plan. The Statewide Assessment reports that FACES management reports are generated on a monthly basis and track completion of case plans. CFSA publishes monthly scorecards that identify the extent to which both the agency and private provider

caseworkers complete case plans in a timely manner. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, production of case plans has increased considerably. The Statewide Assessment notes that the administrative review unit contributed to this effort by notifying caseworkers if case plans were needed for an upcoming review. The Statewide Assessment also notes that this practice resulted in moving CFSA from a position where reviews were canceled due to a lack of case plans, to a position where close to 100 percent of reviews included a case plan that was current and available prior to the review.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA policy requires that case plans be developed in a team environment that includes age-appropriate children, parents, kin, the family's informal support network, out-of-home caregivers, and other formal resources working with or needed by the family (e.g., the child's guardian ad litem, the parent's attorney, or a representative from the Office of Clinical Practice). As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, "every reasonable effort shall be made to locate family members in order to develop case plans in partnership with youth and families..."

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data regarding case plans:

- In March 2007, 95.2 percent of children in foster care had current case plans, including 95 percent of children in foster care whose case management was being provided by CFSA, and 95.6 percent of children in foster care whose case management was being provided by private agencies. Regarding in-home services cases, 87.9 percent had current case plans, including 89 percent of in-home cases managed by CFSA caseworkers and 86 percent of in-home cases managed by private agency caseworkers.
- Quality Service Reviews (QSRs) conducted in May 2006 found that parents may have signed the case plan, but they could not articulate the goals that needed to be achieved to attain case closure.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There was general consensus among the stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR that all children have case plans and that the case plans are developed in a timely manner and revised on an ongoing basis. They noted that the case plans often are developed from the family team meetings (FTMs). These meetings are held early on in a case and the written report that results from the meetings usually serves as a basis for the case plan.

There was less consensus among stakeholders regarding the involvement of parents and age-appropriate children in case planning. Several stakeholders said that caseworkers are engaging families in case plan development and encouraging families to participate in the administrative reviews of the plans. They noted that the use of FTMs supports this process because parents and age-appropriate children are brought together to talk about the plan. They also noted that youth who are about to age-out of the foster care system are involved in their own transition planning. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that even when caseworkers may not necessarily talk to parents and children about the specific case plan document, they regularly engage the family in ongoing conversations about

what will go in the plan. Several stakeholders mentioned that often caseworkers arrange to meet families in the evenings or on weekends to ensure that they have input into the plans.

Other stakeholders, however, expressed the opinion that although some caseworkers make concerted efforts to engage parents, there are other caseworkers who prepare the case plan themselves and then ask the parents and/or child to sign it rather than actively involving them in the development of the case plan. This perception is supported by data from the onsite CFSR case reviews indicating that only 48 percent of the cases reviewed for item 18 (involvement of children and parents in case planning) were rated as a Strength. A key finding of the case reviews was that mothers were determined to be involved in case planning in 77 percent of the applicable cases, and children were determined to be involved in case planning in 76 percent of the applicable cases, but fathers were determined to be involved in case planning in only 29 percent of the applicable cases. For the most part, this was due to the agency's lack of effort to diligently search for absent fathers, but in some cases, the father's whereabouts were known, but the agency still did not involve them in the case planning process.

Several stakeholders suggested that some of the difficulty in engaging parents in case planning may be attributed to the fact that the case plan itself is not "family friendly." They noted that the form is confusing and difficult to read and that the printed case plan report from FACES does not include all of the information about the strengths, barriers, and needs of the family which is key information needed to individualize case plans. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers often are more likely to involve families in case planning in the in-home services cases than in the foster care cases. This is because in the in-home services cases, there are no court-ordered services or plans, therefore, it is important to have the family fully engaged in the process in order to ensure that they will implement the plan. However, this perception was not supported by the case review data. Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 65 percent of the applicable foster care cases compared to 27 percent of 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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as a Strength because the Statewide Assessment and information from the on-site review indicate that cases are reviewed every six months through an administrative and/or court review. Some children's cases are reviewed every six months by both methods. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the State's 2001 CFSR and was addressed in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has two processes in place for the periodic review of the status of each child no less frequently than once every six months—a court and an administrative review process. The Statewide Assessment notes that the CFSA policy requires that the status of each child in out-of-home placement, including children placed out of State, must be reviewed at an administrative review within 180 days of a child’s entry into the physical or legal custody of CFSA and every 180 days thereafter. CFSA policy requirements for case reviews are the same for all children committed to CFSA, including those who also receive services from the District’s juvenile and mental health systems.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the timely conduct of administrative reviews has improved. In FY 2004, 85 percent of the children in foster care had administrative reviews at six-month intervals, compared to 98 percent in FY 2005 and 99 percent in FY 2006. In addition to improvements in the timing and frequency of reviews, there has been substantial improvement in methods and the quality of reviews. The Statewide Assessment reports that although in the past, administrative reviews frequently included only the administrative reviewer and the caseworker assigned to the case, CFSA has been making concerted efforts to ensure that participation in administrative reviews includes parents, foster parents, attorneys, and other interested parties. Notification letters are sent to all of the above-mentioned stakeholders, particularly parents, well in advance of the review. Some reviews are scheduled in the evening to accommodate working parents and there is conference-call capacity to expand participation. The Statewide Assessment notes that parents and others are given introductory letters at the FTM concerning the content and purpose of each review.

Stakeholder Interview Information

All stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there is a case review for every child in foster care at least every six months, if not more frequently. They noted that the review process either involves an administrative review or a court review or both. Stakeholders reported that, generally, the administrative review occurs before the court review and information from the administrative review is used by the court during the court review.

Stakeholders also noted that a wide range of stakeholders are invited to the administrative reviews including the caseworker, the child’s Guardian ad litem, parents, therapists, foster parents, parent’s attorneys, and children if they are age 14 or older. Stakeholders noted that many youth appreciate the opportunity to talk to the judges during these hearings and many believe that the judges listen to what they have to say and are concerned about their well being.

A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that despite agency efforts, family participation in the administrative reviews is minimal. In addition, some stakeholders also voiced concerns that while the administrative reviews make recommendations regarding a case, it is not clear that the agency implements the recommendations on a routine basis.

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

Item 27 is rated as a Strength because permanency hearings are held in a timely manner for every child within 12 months after the child’s entry into foster care, and often are held every six months thereafter. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the State’s 2001 CFSR and was addressed in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, District of Columbia law requires that the Family Court of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia (“Family Court”) hold initial permanency hearings “for every child within 12 months after the child’s entry into foster care and at least every six months thereafter, for as long as the child remains in an out-of-home placement.” The Statewide Assessment notes that the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) tracks the permanency of children once they are removed and Assistant Attorneys General coordinate with the court and caseworkers to ensure that the permanency hearing are held in a timely manner. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the senior level Attorneys General for the Family Services Division regularly meet with Family Court judges and administrators to ensure timely appearances of Assistant Attorneys General. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, this is designed to ensure expedited resolution of barriers to timely case reviews, avoid unnecessary continuances, and exchange training opportunities. The Deputy meets monthly with the Family Court Implementation Committee to review issues, including meeting the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

The Statewide Assessment reports that compliance with the deadline for holding permanency hearings has improved over the past several years, particularly since the formation of a separate Family Court Division of DC Superior Court (DCSC) in 2004. For example, 79 percent of cases filed in 2001 had permanency hearings within the deadline or had been dismissed before the deadline. In comparison, for the 513 cases filed in 2005 that had reached the permanency hearing deadline by the end of March 2006, 99 percent were in compliance.

Stakeholder Interview Information

All stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that permanency hearings are held in a timely manner and that they occur at least every 12 months and usually every six months after the initial 12-month hearing. In addition, several stakeholders reported that some cases have more frequent permanency hearings.

Many stakeholders noted that permanency hearings usually are scheduled for at least a one-hour time period and that they cover details that extend beyond statutory requirements. Several stakeholders reported that age-appropriate children (age 14 and older) can participate and often do unless they cannot miss school. They noted that the youth are permitted to speak in the hearing and that they believe that the judge listens to them and is interested in their well being.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 was rated as a Strength because the Statewide Assessment and information gathered during stakeholder interviews indicate that the District of Columbia has a process in place that requires filing for TPR when a child has been in foster care for 15 out of the most recent 22 months. Stakeholders noted that there is a specialized TPR unit within the OAG that is responsible for filing for TPR 45 days after a child’s goal is changed to adoption. It should be noted that while the Office of the Attorney General files the TPR, the court often places it in abeyance once an adoption petition is filed and proceeds with the adoption matter instead of the TRP. If the adoption is then approved, the parents’ rights are terminated at the same time as the adoption is finalized. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the State’s 2001 CFSR and was addressed in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, District of Columbia Code (Section 16-2354) requires that a TPR petition be filed when a child has been in foster care 15 out of the most recent 22 months and in court-ordered custody under the responsibility of the District. The Statewide Assessment notes that the OAG is charged with ensuring that TPRs are filed in cases that meet this qualification, even if an adoptive placement has not been identified. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA and the OAG file for TPR for children within 45 days after the permanency goal becomes adoption. District law also permits termination of parental rights through a show cause hearing in adoption proceedings.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the AAGs attend the second and third administrative reviews of each case to have input on the recommendations for permanency and to determine if a TPR is appropriate (i.e., child has been in care 15 of 22 most recent months or the child’s permanency goal is to be changed to adoption). According to the Statewide Assessment, by making it mandatory that AAGs attend these reviews, CFSA and OAG are able to monitor the progress towards the permanency goal and identify any barriers to achieving the goal in a timely manner.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that in some cases, there are compelling reasons not to initiate a TPR. CFSA, OAG and the District of Columbia Superior Court collaboratively created the following list of reasons in which it is acceptable NOT to file a TPR:

- The goal of reunification is expected to occur legally within 12 months.
- The child is 14 and is opposed to adoption (District of Columbia law requires a child 14 or older to consent to their adoption).
- The child is placed in a residential or medical facility and has significant emotional or medical problems.
- The child's goal is not adoption (i.e., the goal is guardianship, custody, reunification, APPLA).

These exceptions are evaluated at an administrative review. If a compelling reason is applicable, the caseworker shall include that information in their report to the court. The court also is aware of the list of compelling reasons and often, on its own initiative, determines that one of the compelling reasons is applicable to one of their cases.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, major improvements have been made in the area of TPR filings since the Statewide Assessment prepared for the 2001 CFSR. In 2004, OAG and CFSA identified a backlog of approximately 448 cases which warranted a TPR. By convening TPR staffing administrative reviews on all those cases, CFSA and OAG were able to determine that 230 cases had compelling reasons to support not filing a TPR. A special unit in the OAG's office, Child Protective Services IV, filed 193 TPR motions between January and June 2005, 171 of which were cases from the backlog.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that one of the primary barriers or challenges to achieving permanency through TPR is the reluctance by many judges to terminate parental rights without an identified adoptive home.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in agreement that CFSA and the courts have had a major initiative in the past few years to address the backlog of cases that are eligible for a termination of parental rights filing. They noted that there is a specialized TPR unit within the OAG that is responsible for filing for TPR 45 days after a child's goal is changed to adoption.

Stakeholders also reported that the agency is diligent about identifying compelling reasons if TPR is not pursued. They noted that the most frequent compelling reasons are the age of the child (usually children 14 and older, who can specify that they do not want to be adopted), reunification is imminent, child is in secure placement, or child has multiple handicaps. Some stakeholders expressed concern that not enough is being done to explain adoption and permanency to children who say that they do not wish to be adopted. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that this may be too major a decision to be placed on children without providing counseling to assist them in understanding what adoption means and the importance of having a permanent family. A few

stakeholders mentioned that judges are talking to families about the timeframes required by ASFA to ensure that parents are aware of the TPR process.

- District of Columbia law requires that when a child has been placed in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, a petition for TPR must be filed or an exception be documented. However, in light of decisions from the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, a general practice in the District has been to file the TPR motion then hold it in abeyance while the adoption petition moves forward, or to not file the TPR motion at all and sever the parent-child relationship within the adoption process.
- According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA and the Office of the Attorney General file for TPR for children within 45 days after the permanency goal becomes adoption. However, it is not clear that the goal change that would trigger the TPR filing is always made timely so that TPR is filed at the 15 out of 22 mark. In addition, if the agency has not filed a TPR and decides to sever the parent-child relationship at a show cause hearing, it is not clear that this always occurs prior to the 15 out of 22 time period.

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.

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 was rated as a Strength because foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers are notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, reviews and hearings either through speaking in hearings or providing written communications to the court. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR and was addressed in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the District of Columbia Superior Court Rule 10(c) mandates that the current foster parent, pre-adoptive parent, legal guardian or kinship caregiver of a child or youth in foster care and their attorneys shall be provided notice of, and an opportunity to be heard in, neglect or termination proceedings. The Statewide Assessment also notes that although the responsibility of notification falls to the court, CFSA has provided notice to foster, pre-adoptive, and kinship caregivers of hearings and reviews since March 2004. The Office of Planning, Policy and Program Support (OPPPS) has assumed responsibility for mailing the notices.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, hearing dates are captured in FACES through an interface system with the courts. A list of cases with upcoming hearings is printed weekly and letters are sent to the caregiver associated with each case to ensure that caregiver

rights regarding notice of hearings and reviews are protected. Each letter includes the name of the child or youth, and the type, date, and time of hearing scheduled. In addition, the letters encourage recipients to direct questions and confirm information with the caseworker or that caseworker's supervisor. The names and phone numbers of both individuals are included in the letter. The Statewide Assessment notes that when letters are returned to OPPPS as undeliverable, the OPPPS point of contact immediately notifies the Office of the Deputy Director for Program Operations, or the agency's liaison to the private agencies, to ensure that the addresses are corrected. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the Deputy Director instructs recipients of the letter to contact her office directly if notice of a hearing or review is not received in a timely manner. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, judges encourage foster parents to attend and participate in court hearings because of their firsthand knowledge of the child.

The Statewide Assessment reports that although foster, pre-adoptive and relative caregivers are not necessarily parties to the case, District of Columbia law states that upon request, they can become a party at any time. If the child has been placed with the caregiver for less than one year at the time the request is made, the judge has the discretion to determine whether granting "party" status is in the best interest of the child. However, under DC law, if the child has been placed with a caregiver for one year or longer, the caregiver's request to be a party to the case shall be granted.

Stakeholder Interview Information

All stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that foster parents, relative caregivers, and pre-adoptive parents receive notice of court hearings and administrative reviews, that these notices are received in a timely manner, and that they are invited to attend. Stakeholders reported that foster parents cannot actually speak in court unless they are granted status as a party to the case, which they can request. In addition, stakeholders said that advocates disseminate information to foster parents on how to submit this request and the Foster Parent Association holds trainings on how to present in court. Stakeholders also noted, however, that even if a foster parent is not a party to the case and cannot speak in court, they may submit written documents to the court.

III. 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

The District of Columbia is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The District also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor during the first round of the CFSR.

Findings of the 2007 CFSR with regard 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.

X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as a Strength because CFSA has implemented several procedures for ensuring standards for delivery of quality services that protect the health and safety of children. This item also was rated as a Strength during the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, in February 2006, CFSA launched its new Practice Model, which articulates the values by which CFSA expects its staff and contracted providers to abide while delivering services to children and families. Performance standards are delineated through the Amended Implementation Plan (AIP).

Stakeholder Interview Information

Knowledgeable stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that CFSA implements several procedures to ensure standards for delivering quality services that protect the safety and health of children. These included the following:

- Performance-based contracting that requires service providers to meet specified standards.

- A Modified Final Order (MFO) and an AIP with the court monitor that requires processes to be in place to ensure quality services.
- A comprehensive practice model focusing on children’s safety, permanency, and well-being.
- Administrative reviews and family team meetings that review the services provided to children and the ongoing safety of the child.
- Administrative review reports that incorporate issues related to a child’s health (including dental and vision health).

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

Item 31 is rated as a Strength because CFSA has implemented several mechanisms to ensure the quality of practice and services, including semi-annual case reviews through the Quality Services Reviews (QSRs). CFSA has instituted a philosophy of accountability and transparency in monitoring for practice and outcomes. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the MFO and the AIP (under the court monitor) required CFSA to develop and implement a comprehensive quality assurance system to assess the quality of services provided by CFSA and its contracted agencies. The Statewide Assessment notes that as a result of this requirement, CFSA developed a Quality Assurance (QA) system with sufficient staff and resources to assess case practices, analyze outcomes, and provide feedback to managers and stakeholders. The Statewide Assessment reports that the QA system conducts annual reviews of a sufficient number of cases to assess best practice compliance with the provisions of the MFO, to identify systemic issues, and to produce results that permit identification of additional skills or training necessary for caseworkers and supervisors.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, in March 2006, CFSA began publishing on the internet monthly scorecards to measure the performance of CFSA and provider agencies on key benchmarks as identified in the AIP. The Statewide Assessment notes that key benchmarks include caseworker visits with children in foster care and timely completion of case plans for children. The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA supervisors and managers are held accountable for progress in meeting the benchmarks and must identify challenges and strategies for overcoming barriers. Similarly, CFSA works with its contracted provider agencies to identify strategies to improve their progress as well.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in January 2006, CFSA established the Office of Organizational Development and Practice Improvement (ODPI) to push the planning and development of practice innovations and to centralize quality improvement functions in one office. Both the Quality Improvement Administration (QIA) and the Office of Training Services (OTS) fall under the jurisdiction of ODPI. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, ODPI is spearheading the institutionalization of CFSA's Practice Model. ODPI strategies for improving practice and ensuring continuous quality improvement throughout CFSA include training, qualitative case reviews, monthly scorecards, data review and outcome monitoring, and program analysis and practice support. ODPI also uses these strategies to measure CFSA's progress in meeting performance standards and the goals identified by the practice model.

According to the Statewide Assessment, since 2003, CFSA has implemented semi-annual QSRs to examine differences in the quality of care for specific cases, to provide feedback on the system as a whole, and to review outcomes for children and identify strengths and areas in need of improvement with regard to those outcomes. The Statewide Assessment notes that since March 2005, CFSA has conducted four rounds of the QSR, reviewing approximately 15–40 cases during each round. Teams of two reviewers have each conducted interviews involving (collectively) almost 300 parents, children and adolescents, caseworkers, supervisors, attorneys, teachers, therapists and other service providers in each round. The Statewide Assessment also notes that although the QSRs have proven to be an effective tool for understanding what is and is not working, CFSA still needs to develop a more robust, comprehensive and inclusive process for implementing the recommendations that have resulted from these processes.

In addition, as indicated in the Statewide Assessment, FACES generates multiple reports that can be used to measure CFSA's performance in many of the following areas: closing an investigation, completion of case plans, timeliness of administrative reviews and court hearings, stability of placements, and visits related to children and youth in care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR expressed positive views of the District's QA system. They noted that the agency's QA system incorporates intensive reviews of case practice (the QSR) and is consistent with the agency's focus on accountability and transparency. Stakeholders also said that the QA system receives support from the large amount of data available from FACES. Stakeholders indicated that CFSA staff members at all levels of agency operations receive feedback from the QA process, and that individual cases that are reviewed are debriefed with caseworkers and supervisors. Several stakeholders reported that there also is an extensive amount of quality assurance conducted at the unit level involving the case supervision provided by unit supervisors.

A few stakeholders reported that a key feature of the QA system is that QA reports are broken down by type of case, by how CFSA is doing compared to the private agencies, and by how administrators are doing compared to one another. Stakeholders said that private agencies have access to the reports so that they can be in charge of their own quality improvement and the court monitor sees the QA

reports to evaluate the agency's progress. Stakeholders also suggested that the agency is in the process of determining how best to share QA reports with stakeholders other than the courts and private providers.

IV. TRAINING

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

STATUS OF TRAINING

The District of Columbia is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of training. The District was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor during the 2001 CFSR. Key concerns identified at that time were the following:

- There were significant time lags between the date a new caseworker was hired and the time that pre-service training was provided, so that new caseworkers were assigned cases without having completed training.
- Some caseworkers were being pulled out of training by their supervisors because they were needed to handle caseload activities.
- Supervisors were not consistently participating in competency-based training, which was not mandatory.
- There was no mandatory ongoing training for current caseworkers.
- There was a lack of specialized training for staff on the use of risk assessments, case planning, permanency, and engaging families in the child welfare process.
- Supervisors were not consistently supporting caseworkers in their units who wanted to attend in-service training.

The following strategies were implemented in the District’s PIP to address these concerns:

- To address several of the concerns pertaining to training, CFSA revised the content, structure, and delivery of pre-service training, incorporating training on child welfare competencies.
- The time lag between a new worker’s job start date and the initiation of pre-service training was eliminated.
- To address concerns regarding supervisory issues, CFSA required supervisors to attend the “Mastering the Art of Child Welfare Supervision” course within the first six months of assuming a supervisor position and a set of mandatory in-service core trainings covering areas such as risk assessment, case planning, permanency, and family engagement.
- To address concerns pertaining to the lack of mandatory ongoing training, CFSA established mandated ongoing training hours and offered caseworkers continuing education contact hours for participation in training courses.

The District met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Findings with regard 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.

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although CFSA has instituted a strong staff development and training program that mandates both classroom and on-the-job training for new caseworkers and training for new supervisors, private agency caseworkers who have full case management responsibilities are not subject to these same requirements. Stakeholders reported that private agency caseworkers do not routinely access the CFSA new caseworker training and often assume caseloads before training is completed. In addition, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, as of December 2006, only 38 percent of private agency caseworkers had participated in pre-service training. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR and was addressed in the PIP.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA operates a staff development and training program that spans four months. The training includes 196 hours of classroom training and the remaining time is spent in on-the-job training with specialized training supervisors. Initial training is provided for new CFSA caseworkers and new private agency caseworkers. New caseworkers in provider agencies receive three and a half consecutive weeks of initial training. The Statewide Assessment notes that training is comprised of theoretical, skill-building and practical on-the-job training (OJT) experiences that support the CFSA's mission, outcomes, and the newly established 2006 Practice Model. Upon completing the training program, new caseworkers graduate to an ongoing unit, having gradually received 12 active child welfare cases. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, new supervisors in CFSA receive child-welfare related leadership and management training that encompasses five modules over a 5-month period (one module per month).

The Statewide Assessment also notes that since 2003, CFSA's training program has been administered in-house by the Office of Training Services (OTS). Data indicate that the shift from outside to in-house training has improved both the quality of training and staff participation in training. The Statewide Assessment reports that in addition to integrating on-the-job training with classroom

training, the OTS competency-based curriculum introduces skill-based classes that support best practice benchmarks and collaborates with outside agencies and experts to deliver specialized training.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, in 2005, CFSA had a 96 percent attendance rate for pre-service training. In contrast, attendance of private agency caseworkers was at 15 percent. The Statewide Assessment notes that in response to this concern OTS revised the training curriculum into a three-week program for private agency caseworkers, and as of December 2006, 38 percent of private agency caseworker had participated in pre-service training.

The Statewide Assessment reports that CFSA uses the FACES.NET SACWIS system to track attendance, identify CFSA staff in need of training, and ensure compliance with Federal and local training-related requirements. The Statewide Assessment also reports that OTS conducts evaluations and facilitated feedback sessions that (1) assess a training participant's comprehension of subject matter before and after the program; and (2) provide information about the effectiveness of particular aspects of the training program.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the new CFSA training is very strong and does a good job of preparing staff for their jobs. They emphasized that the mixture of classroom style training, on-the-job training, shadowing of experienced caseworkers, and the gradual assumption of cases ensures that by the end of the 4-month training period, new caseworkers have the basic skills they need to do their jobs. They also noted that make-up sessions are scheduled for caseworkers who miss the training (usually due to being in court).

Several stakeholders reported that the training program is evaluated by the new caseworkers once they have completed it and that caseworkers identify the shadowing of experienced caseworkers as the most effective part of the training while noting that classroom training does not really prepare them for the reality of the job. Stakeholders indicated that training attendance is monitored but rarely is a problem with agency staff, although it can be a problem with private agency staff.

Stakeholders said that all caseworkers in private agencies who have case responsibility must have three and a half weeks of training. If they do not complete the training, they cannot access FACES. Several stakeholders suggested that there are problems with ensuring that new caseworkers in the private agencies access the training. Many stakeholders noted that private agency staff do not routinely participate in the CFSA training for new caseworkers and a few stakeholders expressed concern that caseworkers in the private provider agencies often get full caseloads even if they have not completed training.

Although most stakeholders expressed positive opinions regarding the new caseworker training, a few caseworkers noted that the current initial pre-service training does not meet the needs of new caseworkers who are assigned to the intake and investigations units.

These stakeholders said that the current training is not sufficiently detailed on how to interview children on abuse/neglect and how to get the information needed at the front end to do a quality interview with a child. Some stakeholders said that supervisors in the intake and investigations units have to re-train caseworkers after the four-month training. Agency stakeholders noted that the agency is aware of this problem and is searching for an evidence-based curriculum that addresses the issues relevant to intake and investigations.

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 is rated as a Strength because the District has instituted minimum requirements for ongoing training, including ongoing training for supervisors. In addition, CFSA has developed various opportunities to assist staff in meeting the training requirements. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA mandates that previously hired caseworkers receive a minimum of five days annually of structured in-service training geared toward professional development and specific competencies. Previously hired supervisors and administrators must receive a minimum of 24 hours of structured in-service training annually. In addition, each year there are a number of trainings for supervisory (and higher) level staff that focus on leadership and management. The Statewide Assessment notes that recently formed partnerships with the Department of Mental Health, the Foster and Adoptive Parents Advocacy Center, the Center for Workforce Development, and the Office of Attorney General have increased the range and quality of ongoing training opportunities. The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA also conducts periodic training on the FACES.NET management information system for all staff persons who interact in any manner with the SACWIS.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA provides slots for private agency staff to attend all mandatory training and invites them to attend other elective classes. CFSA requires, however, that private agencies with case management responsibilities determine their own training system in compliance with the AIP.

The Statewide Assessment reports that CFSA employs a number of tools to track participation in mandated training. The most common and effective tool is FACES, which produces periodic management reports to identify staff in need of training. The system also tracks attendance and participant completion of training programs.

The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that full compliance with the District’s ongoing training requirements seems particularly arduous for CFSA caseworkers. Many CFSA classroom-based trainings are 6 hours in duration, which often conflicts with balancing hours to fulfill best practice and workload obligations. To make full compliance practical, CFSA is now offering 3-hour training sessions, weekend trainings, and “unit-based training” where caseworkers can receive required training in small groups led by supervisors and program managers.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there are multiple opportunities for ongoing staff training, although a few suggested that there is a need to expand the topic areas. Stakeholders noted that caseworkers are mandated to participate in 40 hours of training each year and that participation is tracked through Excel forms. Stakeholders noted that private agencies have the same requirements for ongoing training hours for caseworkers and that ongoing training available for CFSA staff also is open to all private agency staff. However, stakeholders reported that CFSA only tracks those hours that private agency caseworkers spend in CFSA-sponsored training.

Several stakeholders noted that it often is difficult for caseworkers to fit training into their schedules because of their workloads. They noted that supervisors try to manage their units so that caseworkers can get the time to participate in training. Some stakeholders also noted that there are some trainings that are very good but they fill up very quickly and need to be offered more often.

Stakeholders reported that since the 2001 CFSR, CFSA has implemented several strategies designed to improve the recruitment and retention of staff. These strategies include: (1) improving the supervision provided to staff, (2) instituting a rewards and recognition program, (3) incorporating benchmarks into the performance evaluations of caseworkers, (4) offering re-payment assistance for student loans, (5) completing exit interviews for staff leaving the agency to determine why they decided to leave, (6) encouraging caseworkers to have a voice in system reform, (7) obtaining tools to assist front-line staff, such as laptops and cars, and (8) improving training and education. As a result, CFSA has reduced its vacancy rate to less than five percent.

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 is rated as a Strength because the District requires prospective foster and adoptive parents to attend 30 hours of pre-service training using the Model Approach to Partnership and Parenting (MAPP) or PRIDE curriculum and requires that foster parents participate in 15 hours of in-service training every year. In addition, the District has specified training requirements for staff of licensed congregate care facilities. This item was rated as a Strength in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, as part of the foster home licensing process, prospective foster and adoptive parents attend 30 hours of training using the MAPP curriculum. The Statewide Assessment notes that MAPP assists prospective foster and adoptive parents in discerning whether fostering is the correct choice for them and employs a variety of skill-building activities; provides tools for working with foster children and their families; furnishes information about various laws, regulations, rules, and requirements; and identifies resources to assist families in providing foster services. The private agencies that provide foster and pre-adoptive care services also provide 30 hours of pre-service training, although they use the PRIDE rather than the MAPP curriculum. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, prospective foster and adoptive parents do not receive licenses until they complete all pre-service training requirements.

The Statewide Assessment reports that foster parents who are already licensed must attend 15 hours of in-service training annually. The curriculum and annual calendar for in-service trainings for CFSA foster parents is established based on input from the Training Recommendations Committee (TRC), which meets periodically to discuss current issues and challenges facing foster and adoptive parents and determines training needs based on their own experiences.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, since June 2006, CFSA has demonstrated 100 percent compliance with the pre-service foster and adoptive parent training for both CFSA's foster and pre-adoptive parents and private agencies' foster and pre-adoptive parents. CFSA provides this data each month to its court monitor, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA has begun tracking foster parent attendance at in-service trainings in the FACES system, and produces monthly progress reports on attendance for both contracted foster family homes (through child placing agencies) and non-contracted foster parents (who are licensed and monitored by CFSA directly).

The Statewide Assessment reports that one of the ongoing challenges to CFSA is ensuring that the training schedule is flexible enough to accommodate the varied schedules of prospective and existing foster families. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has made trainings available at various times during the day and on weekends in order to accommodate the scheduling needs of foster and adoptive parents, recently adding an additional six sessions of Saturday training to its already established schedule. Another challenge noted in the Statewide Assessment is that some relative foster parents are reluctant to attend training to care for their own related children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA's contracted congregate care providers (child care facilities) are responsible for training their staff according to the requirements defined in Chapter 62 of Title 29 District of Columbia Municipal Regulations. These regulations require the facilities to maintain training records and documents that indicate the type of training delivered, the number of hours of training provided, and staff attendance. At CFSA's periodic monitoring visits to the facilities, the agency monitor discusses ongoing training issues and needs of the provider.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review noted that foster parents attend 30 hours of pre-service training for licensure and 15 hours of ongoing training for re-certification. They noted that the CFSA uses the MAPP curriculum for the pre-service training (although the training is actually provided by a contractor), while most of the private agencies use the PRIDE curriculum. Most stakeholders expressed positive opinions about both training curricula. Stakeholders reported that CFSA licensing workers are trained in both MAPP and PRIDE.

Several stakeholders said that, with regard to ongoing training, foster parents can take nine hours of training from CFSA and six hours from somewhere else, including the Internet. They noted that the agency disseminates a training planning calendar for the year and sends reminder notices for training and re-certification. Stakeholders also noted, however, that accessing ongoing training can be difficult for foster parents since the agency does not offer child care, notification is not always timely, and training is not always available at convenient times.

Stakeholders reported that some of the training needs for foster parents are not being met with available resources, particularly training on how to parent teenagers and training on how to navigate the system. They noted that foster parents are particularly appreciative of the training offered by the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center, and feel that this training empowers them in their role as foster parents.

V. SERVICE ARRAY

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

STATUS OF SERVICE ARRAY

The District is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. The District was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in the 2001 CFSR and was not required to address it in its PIP. Findings for 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.

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the District has a wide array of services available to meet the needs of children and families, significant gaps exist in the areas of substance abuse treatment (for both parents and youth), housing, and mental health. In addition, CFSA conducts a bi-annual Needs Assessment of services available and addresses identified gaps through the Resource Development Plan. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District's 2001 CFSR, but was not addressed in the PIP because the District was in substantial conformity with the overall systemic factor of service array.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the District of Columbia has an extensive array of services for children and families that represent a continuum of supports necessary to prevent entrance into the child welfare system and to facilitate exiting the system and achieving permanency. The services include child maltreatment prevention services, child protective services, time-limited reunification services, family preservation and family support services, adoption promotion and supportive services, and independent

living services. The Statewide Assessment notes that these services are administered by government and public agencies, as well as community-based and private organizations.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA conducts a bi-annual needs assessment that is used as a basis for the Resource Development Plan. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the needs assessment evaluates the entire child welfare system from multiple perspectives, incorporating the experiences of children, families, providers, caseworkers and stakeholders. The Resource Development Plan translates the findings of the needs assessment into key recommendations and specific action steps designed to develop the services and resources necessary to meet the identified needs.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the 2006 Resource Development Plan continued to identify action steps to address the critical service gaps pertaining to housing, mental health, and substance abuse services that were identified in both the 2003 and 2005 needs assessments. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the 2006 Plan addressed the following target areas identified in the 2005 needs assessment:

- Service needs of children and birth families in general, with special focus on maternal depression and reunification.
- Placement supports.
- Domestic violence.
- Trauma and the impact of violence.
- Services targeting individuals with HIV/AIDS.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, a major barrier to the safety, permanency and well-being for children and adolescents at home, with relatives, or in post-adoption or guardianship families is the lack of a continuum of mental health services for children and youth in the District of Columbia. The Statewide Assessment notes that there are few mental health service providers who are skilled in working with child mental health issues and supporting their families in dealing with the issues associated with child abuse and neglect, trauma, sexual abuse, and physical abuse. The Statewide Assessment also reports that the lack of supports in the community to assist these families makes it difficult to achieve real permanency for these children. According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has recently completed an assessment of mental health needs in conjunction with the Department of Mental Health. As part of the assessment, CFSA reviewed the mental health needs of its service population to identify gaps in service affecting clients served by the child welfare system.

The Statewide Assessment also indicates that a report entitled the *Assessment of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Programs*, which was completed in 2006, found that, despite an extensive array of services in the District, there are several gaps in the District's continuum of prevention services. These gaps relate not only to evidence-based approaches to child abuse and neglect prevention, but also to the basic necessities that support family life, such as job training and employment and safe, affordable housing. The report was

submitted to the Mayor and the City Council. The Statewide Assessment reports that it is anticipated that information in the report will assist officials in developing a child abuse and neglect prevention plan for the city.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the service area with the greatest challenges to accessibility is housing. The January 2004 QSR reported that “the lack of adequate housing was identified in some cases as an obstacle to keeping children safely with their families or returning children from foster care.” Eligibility requirements often exclude individuals from receiving assistance and the shelter beds that are available are extremely limited for the general population, especially for families with children. Parents returning to the community from prison have even greater difficulty finding housing. According to the Statewide Assessment, “increased advocacy at all levels – neighborhood, community and District-wide – is required to address this urgent need.”

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders’ opinions regarding the service array in the District of Columbia were consistent with the information provided in the Statewide Assessment. Stakeholders noted that there is a large array of services in the District, that there are many noteworthy and effective services, and that CFSA, in collaboration with other agencies, is making concerted efforts to ensure a comprehensive service array. At the same time, stakeholders reported that despite these efforts, considerable service gaps exist, particularly in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, and housing. They also reported that these service gaps are particularly critical for families in which children remain in the home, families in which relatives and guardians are attempting to parent children from the child welfare system, and young people transitioning from foster care to independent living. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that children in foster care generally have better access to services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment than do children who are not in foster care.

A particular concern expressed by stakeholders pertained to the lack of appropriate services for children and youth experiencing mental health or substance abuse problems. Stakeholders noted, for example, that mental health providers are using adult modalities, such as “talk therapy” with children and youth instead of the more creative approaches of play therapy, art therapy, music therapy, etc., that have been found to be more effective with children and youth. They also noted that there is a critical lack of services for sexual abuse victims and perpetrators. Another service gap identified pertained to the lack of a residential treatment facility for children in the District, with the closest one being 50 miles away. A few stakeholders indicated that even when services were available in the area of mental health, there were concerns about the quality of the service. They voiced concern that often the people providing therapy are not licensed or credentialed as therapists, but are community-support caseworkers.

Stakeholders also noted that the Collaboratives are a major resource for services to families in the child welfare system, but that the quality and effectiveness of the services varies across Collaboratives and across caseworkers within the Collaboratives. Stakeholders reported that caseworkers in the Collaboratives are not licensed social workers and often do not have social work backgrounds.

Furthermore, stakeholders voiced concern about the general lack of services in the District for parents who are dealing with adolescents who are “acting out” or are considered “out of control.” The lack of these services has resulted in many of these children coming into foster care because the parents cannot handle them or the parents cannot access services for them outside of the foster care system. Stakeholders suggested that this creates an unnecessary burden for the foster care system, particularly with regard to finding placements for these children.

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 is rated as a Strength because the District has implemented strategies to ensure accessibility of services, including locating the HFTC Collaboratives in different neighborhoods, and providing tokens for buses and the Metro to assist families with transportation issues. This item was rated as a Strength in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, services for children and families are available and accessible throughout the District of Columbia, and, in many cases, in neighboring jurisdictions, particularly for children in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that CFSA’s policy is to regularly document, analyze, report, and respond to the quantity, quality, and accessibility of its services to children and families throughout the city through the *Needs Assessment* report and the corresponding Resource Development Plan.

The Statewide Assessment notes that for CFSA children and families at risk of entering the child welfare system, an array of services is available through the seven neighborhood Collaboratives, which are located strategically throughout the District. Through contracts with the HFTC Collaboratives, CFSA children and families can be referred to the Collaborative most convenient to them in order to access services. Even though all services may not be duplicated in each Collaborative, families may be referred to a Collaborative outside of their area when a needed service is available at another Collaborative.

Despite these efforts, the Statewide Assessment reports that some variation in accessibility exists for a number of supportive child welfare services. Typically, eligibility requirements for many of these services, including housing and transportation, prevent access for individuals and families in need. The QSR Report published in January 2004 found the following: “There were a number of cases

in which children received delayed services due to lack of coordination, bureaucratic delays and what appear to be Medicaid issues regarding eligibility and access.”

Other perceived limitations exist in areas where services are not provided in the immediate neighborhood, but are conveniently accessible in neighboring communities via the rail or bus systems. To assist families and youth over these hurdles, CFSA provides train fare cards and bus tokens to assist with transportation.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that services generally are accessible in the District and that public transportation usually is available to access services. A few stakeholders, however, voiced concern that not all services are easy to access.

No stakeholders indicated that there were waiting lists to access services, although a few stakeholders noted that families can spend many hours in the waiting rooms of clinics or medical centers to receive physical and mental health services.

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 is rated as a Strength because CFSA makes every effort to implement strategies to individualize services to meet the needs of children and families. CFSA established the Office of Clinical Practice (OCP) to assist caseworkers in assessing the needs of families and matching appropriate services for education, physical and mental health. OCP specialists have been able to work with other agencies to be creative in meeting individual needs of children and families. In addition, flexible funds are available to assist families in various ways. This item also was rated as a Strength in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, efforts are made to individualize services as much as possible and all areas of the OCP assist in matching the needs of each child with specific services. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the presence of co-located staff at Family Court, including a psychiatrist from the Department of Mental Health (DMH), is an important asset to individualizing services and allows co-located staff to provide service recommendations directly to judges.

Despite these efforts, the Statewide Assessment also notes that, although CFSA and the private providers diligently work to address the individual needs of families, CFSA may experience difficulties addressing issues within the various immigrant populations who come to the agency's attention. However, in those instances the community partners play a large role in assisting in interpretation services and providing culturally competent services that will assist in meeting the safety concerns for the child as well as other problems that the family may be facing.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed differing opinions. Several stakeholders suggested that in general, services are individualized and are sufficiently flexible to meet the unique needs of families. They noted that flexible funds are available to pay for immediate needs through the Collaboratives. The Collaboratives can meet needs for services such as transportation, housing for displaced families, uniforms for school and work, etc. Some of these stakeholders also said that youth have individualized plans and that Chafee funds can be used to meet unique service needs.

Other stakeholders, however, indicated that the availability of emergency funds for utilities and food is limited. They also noted that while there are some culturally responsive services, it is difficult to find therapists who are Spanish-speaking and that services for some of the immigrant ethnic groups in the city are non-existent. Several stakeholders also noted that independent living services are not as individualized as they need to be, particularly for the adolescent boys, who may need different approaches in order to better engage them in services.

VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

STATUS OF AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

The District of Columbia is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The District was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor during the 2001 CFSR and did not address it in the PIP. 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 is rated as a Strength because CFSA seeks input from a variety of external stakeholders in the development of the agency’s Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). This item was rated as a Strength in the District’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA relies on external stakeholders to provide input into the agency’s CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) submissions. The agency ensures that documents and reports, such as the APSR, information requests from the City Council and other stakeholders, and meeting notes and reports involving community partners are available and distributed to the public. These documents are routinely posted on the District’s Internet system for public viewing, as well as on the agency’s intranet. The Statewide Assessment notes that concerns raised by stakeholders are addressed through an ongoing review and evaluation of agency progress in meeting the goals and objectives of the CFSP. These assessments also are posted on the Internet.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the Citizen Review Panel and the Youth Advisory Board are important stakeholders with regard to providing input into the CFSP. The Statewide Assessment notes that CFSA receives consistent and valuable support from its partners, and continues to address major concerns around the delivery of services and policy development through ongoing collaboration. Such partners include the city-wide child fatality committee, the City Council (which receives monthly reports from the agency and conducts bi-annual oversight hearings), and the Council for Court Excellence.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The general consensus of stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR is that CFSA solicits input regarding the CFSP from a number of stakeholders and has developed a number of activities for obtaining this input. Stakeholders identified the following groups as providing input into the CFSP: the Citizen Review Panel, the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center, the State Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, and the Consortium for Child Welfare. Stakeholders knowledgeable about the consultation process reported that various groups are informed that they will be receiving the agency's CFSP 90 days before it is mailed out. They noted that once it is mailed out, respondents are given 30 days to provide feedback. Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that CFSA attends to the feedback that they received and often implements the recommendations.

Several stakeholders noted that, in addition to the general consultation process, the agency conducts a comprehensive assessment every two years that incorporates input from a wide range of stakeholders, including children and families who are clients of the agency. Stakeholders also noted that CFSA involves stakeholders such as judges, foster parents, etc. in the semi-annual QSRs to identify what is working well and where improvements are needed.

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 is rated as a Strength because CFSA engages in consultation with external stakeholders in the development of the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). This item was rated as a Strength in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment

According to the Statewide Assessment, the District of Columbia develops annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP in the form of the APSR. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA prepares the APSR in collaboration with

senior staff and program managers, with input from program staff. As part of the development of the report, CFSA seeks feedback from external stakeholders who receive a draft copy of the annual submission and offer comments and feedback.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders indicated that, as with the CFSP, the agency seeks input from stakeholders regarding the APSR. They noted that over the years, the process of including community stakeholders has become more interactive and meetings occur regularly between the CFSA and stakeholders to obtain input.

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.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because CFSA coordinates its services with those of various Federal or federally assisted programs, particularly in the areas of education and mental health. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the District’s 2001 CFSR. However, it was not addressed in the PIP because the District was in substantial conformity with the overall systemic factor.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA is engaged in ongoing processes to partner with District agencies whose federally funded services and benefits are utilized by the same population in an effort to coordinate service delivery. The Statewide Assessment reported the following activities pertaining to coordination of service delivery.

- CFSA coordinates with the District’s Department of Health and the Department of Human Services in regard to its programming and spending of Medicaid, TANF, and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds.
- The District’s Department of Human Services (DHS) and CFSA have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to share service and financial information about foster children served by DHS’ Early Care and Education Administration (ECEA).
- In FY 2006, CFSA hired a mental retardation and developmental disabilities special needs liaison in collaboration with the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Administration to support caseworkers and facilitate a transition of older CFSA youth to the adult mental retardation system.
- CFSA and the Department of Health’s Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration are co-locating substance abuse counselors in CFSA’s intake and investigations units to provide substance abuse screening, assessment and intake.
- CFSA has a contractual relationship with the Healthy Families/Thriving Community Collaboratives to integrate services at the community level.

The Statewide Assessment reports that key challenges facing the District are related to the coordination of mental health services for child-welfare involved individuals. By partnering with DMH, the overall goal is to create a single system of care that ensures continuity and quality for publicly funded mental health services; establishes a single standard for oversight and delivery of publicly funded mental health services; and, allows the District to maximize its use of Medicaid funding for mental health services. Existing DMH funding criteria utilizes a medical necessity approach to services that does not always capture the type of service needs required by CFSA referrals. The agency is exploring alternatives to the existing mental health system of service delivery, including more flexible access to a wide range of mental health services.

The Statewide Assessment reports that since the last CFSR review, CFSA and DMH have collaborated in an attempt to streamline the evaluation process for children and families involved with CFSA. To that end, CFSA transferred funding to DMH to assist in the creation of an Assessment Center which serves as CFSA's primary source for psychological and psychiatric evaluations and mental health consultations. Referrals for the Assessment Center are completed through the Office of Clinical Practice's (OCP) Behavioral Services Unit (BSU). This unit was put in place to ensure that CFSA referrals are expeditiously linked to DMH services as well as to services from CFSA-contracted vendors. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, some examples of services that the BSU handles are individual, group, and family therapy; expressive therapies; tutoring; mentoring; psychological and psychiatric evaluations. In addition, DMH and CFSA entered into a partnership to implement three evidence-based services: multi-systemic therapy (MST), in-home and community-based services (IHCBS), and crisis mobile response and stabilization services (CMRSS). These services are designed to assist CFSA-involved children who have more intensive mental health and behavioral needs. Currently, CMRSS is not universally available, although full implementation of all of the services should be complete by summer 2007. OCP is responsible for making referrals, tracking usage and trouble-shooting for these services.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that in addition to the Assessment Center, CFSA and DMH's collaborative efforts have included a transfer of responsibilities and funds for out-patient mental health services and residential treatment. In 2004, CFSA began to utilize the Core Service Agency (CSA) system implemented by DMH as its primary resource for out-patient mental health services. CSAs are community-based mental health agencies certified by DMH to provide therapy and evaluation services to its clients. Services are funded through Medicaid. Prior to utilizing the DMH services, CFSA had numerous contracted and non-contracted vendors providing these services using local dollars. In 2005, CFSA and DMH entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding residential treatment center (RTC) services. This MOU was the result of District legislation which designated DMH as the responsible entity for RTC services. The MOU outlines the parameters around a transfer of financial responsibility for these services, as well as a joint effort to monitor treatment and lengths of stay for children placed in an RTC.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders provided various examples of collaboration that are occurring between CFSA and other federally-assisted programs. CFSA is participating in the Casey Family Programs Break-Through Collaborative with the District of Columbia school system and they are working to improve inter-agency communication and raise the awareness of all individuals about the educational needs of children being served by CFSA. For example, they are implementing strategies to keep children stable in the same school when they come into out-of-home care, are working to identify common training for CFSA and education staff, and are discussing how to share information between the different data systems used by the agencies.

Stakeholders also discussed the collaboration between CFSA and DMH to improve child mental health services. The two agencies are working together to establish a common vision for children's mental health and DMH is working to release an RFP to identify "priority providers." Stakeholders also noted that the District has provided DMH with funding for a crisis response system.

Stakeholders reported excellent coordination between the court and CFSA. Quarterly meetings of child welfare and court staff are held to address issues that are identified by either agency. In addition, bi-weekly phone calls are held between the court and the agency to troubleshoot problems.

VII. 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 OF FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

The District of Columbia is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. During the 2001 CFSR, the District was found to be in substantial conformity with this factor. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for 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 is rated as a Strength because CFSA has implemented standards for licensing foster family homes and child care institutions that are in accord with recommended national standards.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the District of Columbia’s Foster Home regulations contain standards that are consistent with national standards. In order to obtain a license, prospective (and current) foster family homes and congregate care providers must meet numerous requirements including: criminal and child protection registry checks; medical evaluations of caregivers; and, an evaluation of the safety of the physical characteristics of the home. The regulations are consistent with Federal requirements in that they allow for exception or waiver of certain non-safety related standards for kinship foster care providers as long as the reasons for such exceptions are individually documented in the child’s case file.

District licensing standards for Group Homes and Independent Living Programs also correspond with national standards. Regulatory requirements include (but are not limited to): criminal and child protection checks for all staff; minimum physical space requirements; environmental and fire safety requirements; and staff development requirements.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that CFSA created a new business process for licensing congregate care in September 2005, which has enhanced providers' compliance by making the licensing process easier for them to navigate. To be licensed, facilities must submit documentation that their staffing levels, financial resources and actual facility meet requirements.

Internally, CFSA split the foster parent support function from its licensing function for its foster family homes. This promising approach has enabled licensing staff to more quickly and efficiently process initial licenses and renewals for District homes. In 2005 licensing staff took over from the support caseworkers all of the responsibilities of licensure renewals, allowing the support caseworkers to engage primarily in the activity indicated in their job titles. Foster parent caseworkers and licensing staff coordinate efforts so that if either staff person has concerns that would impact the other's responsibilities, he/she shares information promptly.

In instances where there is an allegation of abuse/neglect by a provider, regulations require the licensing caseworker to visit the home/facility, to assess risk, to determine if there was actually a violation, and to determine if that violation creates risk to child health or safety. If there is a risk, the licensing caseworker must adhere to strict communication protocols and confer with the chain of command to decide on a course of action, which may be removal of the children and suspension or revocation of the license.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There was general consensus among stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR that the District has appropriate standards for foster homes and child care institutions. They noted that the District currently only places children in licensed foster care homes and institutions, that the appropriate local and Federal clearances are obtained, that the home study is comprehensive and thorough (even the dogs and cats are checked to make sure that vaccines are up to date), and that homes are checked for lead paint and an abatement is done if the home has lead paint.

Stakeholders noted that there is an emergency licensure process that is available for foster parents so that children can be placed with kin without having to wait for the home to be licensed first. Generally, they can place the child immediately and get a quick criminal background check. The temporary license is good for 90 days, but the relative caregivers must go through the licensure process in order for the child to remain in the home.

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 is rated as a Strength because the District applies the same licensing standards to all licensed foster family homes and child care institutions. This item was rated as a Strength in the State’s 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder Interviews

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA has uniform licensing standards for all foster family homes, group homes, or other congregate care facilities that receive title IV-E or IV-B funding. In order to place more children with kin and minimize the trauma of separation from family, CFSA does have a policy for licensing kin placements on an emergency basis. However, CFSA staff and its FACES management information system identify “licenses” with respect to these placements differently than the traditional foster family licenses, and CFSA does not claim title IV-E reimbursements for foster homes issued “Temporary Kinship Licenses.” This policy allows CFSA to safely maintain foster children in the homes of kinship providers while these providers complete the traditional foster family home licensing process. If CFSA determines that the home cannot be licensed, CFSA will either attempt to license another kin resource that meets title IV-E requirements or may choose to pay the unlicensed caregiver with State funds only.

CFSA also issues other types of licenses to facilities that, for any number of reasons, do not meet annual licensing requirements. CFSA does not claim title IV-E reimbursement for any facilities operating under such licenses. “Provisional” licenses address situations where the licensing period has expired, but the licensed agency/facility has not yet met the requirements for an annual license, or when there is a compliance issue with a specific rule. A facility operating with a “restricted” license is not permitted to accept new residents or provide certain services until the facility rectifies an area of concern or non-compliance with respect to District rules (as long as the non-compliance does *not* constitute a serious health or safety issue for current residents). The “restricted” license serves as a formal notice to the agency/facility that it must achieve compliance with the rules within 90 days, or risk losing its licensure status altogether.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders reported that all foster homes must meet the same standards for licensure. As noted in the prior item, temporary licenses are provided for kinship care homes so that the child can be placed with the relative while the relative is undergoing the licensing process.

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 is rated as a Strength because CFSA requires local and Federal FBI criminal background checks and child protection background checks for all foster and adoptive parents for initial licensure and renewal. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA caseworkers (or their counterparts at private child placement agencies and/or foster home licensing agencies) secure authorizations from the foster parent applicant and each adult member of the household to conduct the appropriate child protection checks and to obtain criminal clearances. CFSA enforces this requirement both at the initial licensing stage as well as during license renewal for homes licensed in the District. The agency will not issue a license without the results of the local and Federal FBI criminal background history checks. Prospective foster and adoptive homes in other States also must complete criminal background checks, although the process for renewal may differ somewhat from the District's practice due to a particular State's regulations.

Historically, the criminal background checks required prospective foster parents to report to local law enforcement agencies to record their fingerprints. In 2006, however, CFSA purchased the technology to process fingerprints and send them to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation electronically. The LiveScan technology allows CFSA to collect fingerprints, send them to the MPD, and to receive a ten-print verification from the local law enforcement database within minutes. Thereafter, MPD transmits the fingerprints to the FBI, who respond within seven to ten days with the results. This change in procedures is a major advancement since the last Statewide Assessment.

Prior to purchasing this technology, the fingerprinting/criminal background check process could take 90 to 120 days to complete, thus prolonging the licensing process and depriving CFSA of desperately needed foster care resources. During FY 2006, CFSA performed the on-site fingerprint checks for 321 prospective and current foster parents.

Currently, in the event that a prospective foster or adoptive parent may have a criminal record, local regulations (DCMR § 6008.5) allows CFSA to make a determination on a case-by-case basis as to whether to license the individual as a foster parent after the individual's satisfactory completion of all other requirements set forth in regulations. The regulation allows for a CFSA review of the

conviction and current circumstances so as to discern whether or not that individual is able to provide care for foster children consistent with CFSA policy and in compliance with the mission to secure the health, safety, and welfare of the children. The decision and its rationale are documented in the applicant's file. Presently, criminal background checks have been conducted for all approved/licensed foster and adoptive families and staff of child care facilities.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that the District completes local and Federal clearances and CPS checks in every State all adults in the household have lived and worked in the last five years. They noted that the District is no longer able to waive some criminal records. They also noted that for congregate care staff, they can get criminal background checks done in the District very quickly, but not in Maryland.

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 is rated as a Strength because CFSA has an extensive recruitment plan for both general foster and adoptive homes, and child-specific adoptive homes. This item was rated as a Strength in the District's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFSA's recruitment plan focuses strategies on populations that market research has shown are more likely to foster and/or adopt children/youth that the District is seeking to place. Strategies include: media campaigns including print, radio and television; community outreach at public events; sponsoring "matching parties", etc. The Statewide Assessment notes that, on a monthly basis, recruitment unit staff review data related to the recruitment events held during the quarter for general recruitment. Attendance and response data is evaluated to determine the effectiveness of recruiting among the targeted populations and in the venues chosen. Recruitment staff reviews administrative data from the District's SACWIS (FACES) to identify the children/youth whose goal is adoption. The cases of these children/youth are staffed to develop a child-specific recruitment plan. These plans are reviewed every 90 days until a home is identified for each child/youth.

The Statewide Assessment reports that to ensure that all children with a goal of adoption have a resource identified for them within the time frame required by policy, CFSA management reports track every child from the date that his or her goal is changed to the date of

the adoption. If the child does not have an adoptive home identified, a recruiter is immediately assigned (within five days of the date of the goal change) who convenes a child specific recruitment staffing with all significant parties and a comprehensive recruitment plan is developed. This plan is then implemented and re-visited every 90 days until a resource is identified. The plan outlines strategies such as “Wednesday’s Child”, websites, “Heart” galleries, adoption exchanges, private agencies, and contract agencies among others.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CFSA continues to develop comprehensive recruitment plans which include information on the demographics of the District’s population as well as the characteristics of CFSA’s children. The plan outlines the District’s foster care trends and provides an overview of the existing family based care resources, current CFSA foster home recruitment patterns, recruitment targets and incentives and the strategies and tactics. One of CFSA’s partner agencies, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), hired a consultant firm in 2004 to conduct market research to recruit prospective resource families who best match the demographics of children in care. CFSA has benefited from the knowledge gained from this research, and has incorporated many of the tactics into its strategic recruitment plan. The Statewide Assessment reports that in January 2006, CFSA added another recruitment unit which consists of five caseworkers and one supervisor. Funding from Wendy’s Wonderful Kids will be used to hire another recruiter who will be working to develop homes for “difficult to place” children (from among those children/youth who have been waiting for placement for six months or longer).

Based on the outcomes of market research on the best families to match the demographics of the children needing placement and adoption, CFSA has implemented the following strategies:

- Church Recruitment: CFSA recruiters often address congregations from the pulpit on the need for resource parents and display exhibits in the church lobby.
- Booths: distributing information on the need for foster and adoptive parents at fairs, festivals, expos and many other community events.
- Presentations: addressing a captive audience for 10 - 30 minutes on the need for foster and adoptive parents at clinics, hospitals, universities, government offices, civic and neighborhood associations.
- Lunch and Learns: presenting a condensed version of its foster care and adoption orientation to employees during their lunch hours at their offices.
- Hand-to-Hand Marketing: passing out flyers in high-traffic locations to passersby such as at DC Vehicle Inspections, Barbershop and Beauty Salons on Georgia Ave NW & H St. NE: Holiday rush, Reeves Center and others
- Media Outreach: This strategy includes regular radio interviews and some television outreach through the WB Adoption Documentary (August 23, 2006) and twice weekly “Wednesday’s Child” segments on NBC4.
- Matching Parties.

Over the last several months CFSA's recruitment staff has been able to draw significant numbers of people who indicate interest in fostering or adopting and sign up at recruitment events. Attendance at these events ranges from the 900 to 1000 participants. From those indicating interest, at least 80 - 100 plus prospective foster and adoptive parents are usually in attendance at orientations that are held twice monthly. The recruitment unit recruits at venues that specifically target those families that research has shown will be more likely to respond to parenting children with the demographics of children in CFSA custody. Such venues include: For Sister's Only; The Christian business directory affiliated with WPGC95.5 and Heaven 1580AM; the annual Kwanza Marketplace Booth; Metropolitan, East Friendship and Pilgrim Rest Baptist churches; the Urban League Parent's Expo; and the Howard University Alumni Dinner. Information about children is provided to prospective foster and adoptive parents in person and at orientation. Resources available to parents from the beginning to the end of the adoption process, as well as post-adoption services, are discussed at this time.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the District of Columbia is a diverse urban area; according to the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent population estimates (July 2004), 68 percent of children under age 21 in the District were African American. Due in part to the area's rich diversity, the agency has been successful in attracting a large number of African-American families through various recruitment strategies. In addition, the agency's recruitment materials, media campaigns, and recruitment events, such as churches and community events, target the ethnic and racial populations within the District that best match the children and families that are served. Through aggressive recruitment efforts, such as "Wednesday's Child" and recent Metrorail and Metrobus campaigns, the public is able to view first-hand the demographics of the children served.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There was a general consensus among stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR that CFSA makes diligent efforts to recruit foster and adoptive homes and implements a variety of strategies including ads on the Metro, buses, television, public outreach and child specific recruitment through the Heart Gallery, adoption parties, and Wednesday's Child. A few stakeholders suggested that because of the challenging behaviors of many of the children entering foster care, that child-specific recruitment is more effective than general recruitment.

Stakeholders noted, however, that despite the diligent efforts, there still are not enough foster homes to ensure that placements of children are based on appropriate matching rather than on the availability of a bed. They also noted that there are not enough foster families who speak Spanish to meet the need for these families. Agency stakeholders reported that CFSA is in the process of recruiting more bilingual staff to assist in recruiting bilingual or Spanish-speaking foster families.

Several stakeholders indicated that the District's recruitment efforts are hampered by an agreement with Maryland that the District will not recruit foster families in Maryland. Consequently, CFSA can only recruit relative foster families from Maryland.

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

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because CFSA uses cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive and permanency placements for waiting children. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the District of Columbia uses the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) to effect cross-jurisdictional placements for purposes of foster care or adoptive placement, but it is not particularly effective in facilitating timely placements for waiting children. This is largely due to the District's unique characteristic – it is the only jurisdiction in the country that is cut off from its suburban neighbors by State lines. This means that despite the fact that tens of thousands of Maryland and Virginia residents commute into the District each day for work, school or church, CFSA is not able to place children with them without complying with the ICPC requirements. Given the cost and size of housing in the District and its small population, the inability to place children in the suburban jurisdictions (particularly with kin) without complying with the ICPC is problematic.

The Statewide Assessment notes that except where the Court has ordered otherwise or pursuant to an agreement with Maryland, CFSA places children through the ICPC process. Specifically, for non-Maryland placements, once a home is identified, CFSA submits a request through the receiving State's ICPC office requesting permission to place the child. This process is followed for all types of interstate placements, including kin placements, traditional/therapeutic foster homes, and residential placements.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the District recruits nationwide for adoptive homes. After obtaining waivers of confidentiality, CFSA posts pictures and profiles of children on several national web sites. In addition, many children are featured on weekly segments of "Wednesday's Child." The segments air in the DC metropolitan area, which includes surrounding counties in Virginia and Maryland. In addition, the videos are available on the television stations website, which is linked to a national "Wednesday's Child" website. Wednesday's Child elicits many inquiries from out-of-State families.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, many foster homes are located in adjacent counties in Maryland, as many kin and the District's longstanding foster parents live in Prince George's and other nearby counties. CFSA reached an agreement with Maryland that allows CFSA, in emergencies when no District placement is available, to place a child into a licensed foster home as long as an ICPC request is submitted, with all documents underlying licensure, within 72 hours of the placement. However, this agreement does

not allow placement with kin, or placement in adoptive homes without prior ICPC approval. Because of the high numbers of children placed in Maryland, and in an attempt to expedite ICPC processing, the District has contracted with a number of Maryland child placement agencies to complete licensing and in many cases to provide the case management of children placed in Maryland, in an effort to relieve the burden on the counties. According to the Statewide Assessment, these efforts still have not achieved the goal of more timely placements of children with kin or in permanent homes and the Court and CFSA are collaborating on a request for technical assistance regarding the ICPC.

The Statewide Assessment reports that more than half of inquiries about foster care and adoption come from District residents, with approximately 44 percent of inquiries from Maryland or Virginia residents. As CFSA does not recruit foster parents from Maryland, the Recruitment Unit does not invite them to orientation unless they want to adopt or qualify as kinship parents. Instead, CFSA introduces them to local agencies in Maryland, including its partner consortium agencies that license foster parents residing in Maryland.

According to the Statewide Assessment, at one time CFSA recruited and approved foster parents in Maryland and Virginia. However, these recruitment efforts caused compliance issues with ICPC requirements and strained relations with neighboring jurisdictions because of a perceived competition for limited foster family resources. Consequently, CFSA agreed to only recruit kin resources outside of the District. CFSA has an agreement with Maryland, which is a key collaborator, to allow CFSA to keep the traditional foster homes that were licensed previously. However, CFSA may no longer recruit new traditional foster homes. Private agencies that CFSA contracts with that are also licensed in Maryland are permitted to recruit homes in Maryland; thus, many of the District's "therapeutic" homes are in Maryland.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There was general consensus among stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR that the District makes concerted efforts to place children cross-jurisdictionally, although they noted that often this is a challenge. Stakeholders reported that for most placements in bordering States (Maryland and Virginia), including relative placements, the District must use the ICPC process which can be time-consuming and results in lengthy delays in placing children. Stakeholders said that the primary time-related issue for the ICPC is that home studies through the ICPC process can take anywhere from one to six months. Stakeholders noted that this is a particular concern because most private agency therapeutic homes are in Maryland, and many of the relatives of the children in foster care reside in Prince Georges County, just across the city lines. Although the District has made efforts to negotiate border agreements to expedite the process, these have not been established.