

**Final Report
Illinois Child and Family Services Review
January 4, 2010**

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau**

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Illinois. 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 (HHS) 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 within HHS.

The Illinois CFSR was conducted the week of August 10, 2009. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from April 1, 2008, through August 14, 2009. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR data period ending March 31, 2008
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 31 cases in Cook County, 17 cases in McLean County, and 17 cases in Winnebago County
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys

All 65 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review. The key characteristics of the children in the cases reviewed are presented in the table at the end of this section. For this table, and for other tables in the report, figures displayed may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. 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.

Key Characteristics of Cases Reviewed

Case Characteristics	Foster Care	In-Home Services
Total Number of Cases	40	25
Date case was opened		
Open prior to the period under review	35 (87.5%)	11 (44%)
Open during the period under review	5 (12.5%)	14 (56%)
Child entered foster care during the period under review	13 (32.5%)	N/A
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than 10	22 (55%)	*
At least 10 but younger than 13	7 (17.5%)	*
At least 13 but younger than 16	3 (7.5%)	*
16 and older	8 (20%)	*
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-Hispanic	0	*
Asian Non-Hispanic	0	*
Black Non-Hispanic	26 (65%)	*
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic	0	*
Hispanic (of any race)	3 (7.5%)	*
White Non-Hispanic	9 (22.5%)	*
Unknown/Unable to Determine	0	*
Two or More Races Non-Hispanic	2 (5%)	*
Primary reason for opening case		
Physical abuse	5 (12.5%)	2 (8%)
Sexual abuse	0	2 (8%)
Emotional maltreatment	0	0
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	14 (35%)	8 (32%)
Medical neglect	0	3 (12%)
Abandonment	2 (5%)	0
Mental/physical health of parent	2 (5%)	1 (4%)
Mental/physical health of child	1 (2.5%)	0
Substance abuse by parent	13 (32.5%)	4 (16%)
Child's behavior	1 (2.5%)	0
Domestic violence in child's home	1 (2.5%)	4 (16%)
Child in juvenile justice system	0	0
Other	1 (2.5%)	1 (4%)

*Information on in-home services cases is not available for these characteristics.

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

In the Outcomes Section of the CFSR Final Report, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement is assigned to each of the 23 items reviewed. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent or more of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. The item ratings are used to determine the performance of a State on the seven outcomes, each of which incorporates one or more of the individual items. The evaluation 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 or more of the applicable 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 State performance with regard to six national data indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, both the national standards for each data indicator and the case review requirements must be met. A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan to address the areas of concern identified for that outcome.

The Children’s Bureau has established very high standards 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 approach 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 or the national standards for the six data indicators by the end of their Program Improvement Plan implementations. The Children’s Bureau recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often take time to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with the Children’s Bureau to establish a specified amount of improvement or to determine specified activities for their Program Improvement Plans. That is, for each outcome that is not in substantial conformity or item that is rated as 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 its Program Improvement Plan 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 CFSRs assesses 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 basis for continued Program Improvement Plans addressing areas in which a State still needs to improve, even though prior Program Improvement Plan goals may have been achieved. The purpose is to ensure that program improvement is an ongoing process and does not end with the completion of a Program Improvement Plan.

The following sections provide information on how Illinois performed on each outcome in the first round of the CFSR as well as the current CFSR. If the outcome was not substantially achieved during the first round, the key concerns observed at that time and the strategies implemented in the Program Improvement Plan to address those concerns are discussed.

Because many changes were made in the 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 its 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 case review process that make it difficult to compare performance across reviews include, but are not limited to, 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 noncustodial parents in planning for their children

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 Illinois’s status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State’s first CFSR, which was held in fiscal year (FY) 2003, the State’s status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Differences in findings across the sites included in the Onsite Review are presented in the tables. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate.

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	10	6	8	24	85.7
Partially Achieved	2	0	1	3	10.7
Not Achieved	0	0	1	1	3.6
Total Applicable Cases	12	6	10	28	
Not Applicable Cases	19	11	7	37	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	83%	100%	80%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (%)	State's Percent	Meets Standards?
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6 +	92.9	No
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68 +	99.47	No

Status of Safety Outcome 1

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 85.7 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. In addition to case review findings, Illinois did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to absence of maltreatment recurrence and absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that the State was not effective in preventing the recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month period.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented a regional and statewide review to examine certain allegations, decision-making, and service choices in investigations
- Implemented changes to the State's statewide information system to ensure the accurate coding of information regarding the date of occurrence of repeat maltreatment
- Convened a workgroup to make recommendations for changes to the Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol (CERAP), safety plan policies, and procedures
- Implemented changes to the State Central Registry (SCR) to improve documentation, staffing, and accuracy of investigations

The State did not meet all of its improvement goals by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

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

 X **Strength** **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 28 (43 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 State child welfare agency policy requirements.

State policy regarding initiating an investigation of reports of abuse or neglect is the following:

- Immediate Response. When there is immediate danger, the Investigation Specialist must initiate an investigation and make face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim immediately on receipt of the report without delay and at any hour of the day or night.
- 24-hour Response. The Investigation Specialist must initiate an investigation and make face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim within 24 hours of the time the report is received.

The results of the assessment of item 1 are presented in the table below.

Item 1 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	12	6	9	27	96
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	1	1	4
Total Applicable Cases	12	6	10	28	
Not Applicable	19	11	7	37	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	90%		

Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 27 cases when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was made within the timeframes required by State policy. Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case when the investigation was not initiated within the required timeframe of 24 hours.

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 96 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 1 also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS maintains a 24-hour, toll-free hotline, the SCR, to receive reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. State policy requires that reports of abuse and neglect meeting the criteria outlined in the State's Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act must be investigated within 24 hours, or immediately if circumstances indicate that the child is in immediate danger.

The Statewide Assessment reports that Investigative Specialists conduct all investigations, although allegations of serious harm, death, and/or sexual abuse are investigated in cooperation with law enforcement agencies. A response report is considered to have been initiated when all of the alleged child victims have been seen in person or a good-faith attempt (GFA) has been made to see the child victims. In situations in which an initial GFA does not result in contact with one or more of the children, the Investigations Specialist is required to continue to make all necessary contacts until all the alleged victims have been seen in person and their safety assured.

The Statewide Assessment notes that Illinois does not have an alternative response system and that all reports are investigated.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, between January 2005 and February 2008, DCFS conducted Outcome Enhancement Review (OER), a quality assurance (QA) process that mirrors the CFSR. OER results show that DCFS saw alleged child victims within 24 hours in 96.4 percent of the cases reviewed. State OER data show that the number of investigations being initiated within 24 hours has remained constant at 99.5 percent since State FY (SFY) 2005.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in conducting investigations in a timely manner. Several stakeholders noted that Investigative Specialists sometimes conduct investigations jointly with law enforcement officers and that the joint investigations do not result in delays in initiating a response.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 21 (32 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 if there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on 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. The results of the assessment of item 2 are presented in the table below.

Item 2 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	5	6	6	17	81
Area Needing Improvement	2	0	2	4	19
Total Applicable Cases	7	6	8	21	
Not Applicable	24	11	9	44	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	71%	100%	75%		

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 17 cases 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 four cases when there were at least two substantiated maltreatment reports on the family within a 6-month period.

In addition to the recurrence of substantiated maltreatment reports, reviewers reported the following findings with regard to the number of maltreatment reports on the family during the life of the case (“life of the case” refers to the time from the date of the first allegation of abuse or neglect to the time of the Onsite Review):

- In 17 cases, there was only one maltreatment report.
- In 39 cases, there were between two and nine maltreatment reports.
- In five cases, there were between 10 and 19 maltreatment reports.
- In one case, there were 21 maltreatment reports.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 81 percent of the applicable cases, there was no recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment within a 6-month period. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 2 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires the assigned investigator to conduct a search of any prior or current involvement the family may have had with DCFS. If there is a current open service case with DCFS, the investigator is expected to speak with the assigned caseworker to obtain information about the situation and coordinate an investigation.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show that 95.7 percent of foster care cases and 90.7 percent of intact cases (in-home services cases) reviewed were rated as a Strength for this item.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to prevent repeat maltreatment:

- Subsequent Oral Report (SOR) conferences examine cases in which repeat maltreatment has occurred to understand case dynamics, solve problems, and provide a clinical review of the investigation and repeat maltreatment.

- DCFS Regional Panel Reviews are conducted on a random sample of 15 percent of open intact cases and 5 percent of closed intact cases to provide administrative oversight and QA to intact family cases and ensure that services fully address the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few McLean County and Winnebago County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR suggested that repeat maltreatment is more likely to occur in cases involving neglect than in cases involving abuse. A few Cook County and McLean County stakeholders noted that the SOR conference is held weekly to review subsequent reports to identify trends in repeat maltreatment.

Safety Outcome 2

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	19	15	12	46	70.8
Partially Achieved	5	0	4	9	13.8
Not Achieved	7	2	1	10	15.4
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	61%	88%	71%		

Status of Safety Outcome 2

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 70.8 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- DCFS was not consistent in providing appropriate services to families to protect children in the home and prevent their removal.
- DCFS was not consistent in making concerted efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children.
- There was a lack of comprehensive risk and safety assessments.
- There was a lack of diligent monitoring of children’s safety while they were in residential and group care facilities.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed and implemented policy and procedures directly related to intact family services
- Conducted an annual review of the intact family service array
- Promoted the System of Care (SOC) to focus on stabilizing placements for children with behavioral health concerns
- Established the Residential Monitoring Unit to continuously assess the safety and well-being of youth in residential care

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in the home and prevent removal or reentry into foster care

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable for 39 (60 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded 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 applicable cases, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families that would prevent placement of children in foster care and at the same time ensure their safety. The results of the assessment of item 3 are presented in the table below.

Item 3 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	10	10	10	30	77
Area Needing Improvement	6	1	2	9	23
Total Applicable Cases	16	11	12	39	
Not Applicable	15	6	5	26	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	62.5%	91%	83%		

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

- Although no services were provided when the child was removed from the home, the removal was necessary to ensure the safety of the child (six cases).
- Services were provided to the family to ensure the safety of the child and prevent removal (24 cases).

Case review information indicates that a range of services was offered or provided to families. This included (but was not limited to) the following: safety planning, substance abuse assessment and treatment, domestic violence assessment and treatment, sexual abuse treatment, psychiatric evaluation and treatment, therapy and counseling, parenting, caseworker monitoring, transportation, referral for financial assistance, household budgeting, and housing assistance.

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

- Services were provided, but they did not target the key safety concern in the family, leaving the children at risk in the home (seven cases).
- No services were provided to prevent the children's removal from the home, although the removal was not immediately necessary to ensure the children's safety (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 3 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the goal of DCFS is to maintain children safely in their own home, whenever possible and appropriate. The Statewide Assessment reports that, prior to taking protective custody of a child, procedures require that investigative caseworkers must have evaluated the services available to the family and must have reason to believe that the following circumstances are true:

- Leaving the child in the home presents an imminent danger to the child's life or health even if services are provided to the family.
- There is insufficient time to obtain a juvenile court order authorizing Protective Custody.
- The alleged perpetrator cannot be removed and/or the nonoffending caregiver is uncooperative/unable/unwilling to protect the child.

The Statewide Assessment notes that CERAP is the primary assessment tool used to develop a safety plan for intact family cases to prevent the child from entering foster care whenever appropriate. The Statewide Assessment also notes that a service plan is developed with the family and referrals are made for appropriate diagnostic and treatment services based on the service plan.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that services provided by intact family caseworkers are available to intact families and families who have a child who has been reunified to prevent the child from coming back into the care of DCFS. The Statewide Assessment further notes that families are able to access voluntary services without having an abuse/neglect report made.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show that 81.3 percent of foster care cases and 87.6 percent of intact cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for this item. For this item the OERs examined the following issues: the array of services to protect

the child, the appropriateness of services to the family, the timeliness of service intervention, the attempts to maintain children with the family or rule out in-home services, and the appropriateness of the decision to take custody.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to provide intact family services:

- The Female Addicts and Their Children in Treatment program
- Support for families facing environmental issues such as housing
- The use of graduated sanctions to motivate parents to comply with needed services
- The provision of family preservation services
- Extended family support services for relatives
- The Safe Families for Children respite care program
- The Statewide Provider Database (SPD), used by caseworkers to identify supportive services

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State focuses on the provision of services to intact families to prevent removal and that families can access supportive services from contracted community service providers.

Item 4. Risk assessment and safety management

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing item 4, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to address the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. The results of the assessment of item 4 are presented in the table below.

Item 4 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	19	15	13	47	72
Area Needing Improvement	12	2	4	18	28
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	61%	88%	76%		

Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 47 cases when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by the agency through the following: conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children’s home or in the children’s foster home and addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment.

Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 18 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was no initial safety or risk assessment (one case).
- There was no ongoing safety and risk assessment in the child's home during the period under review (nine cases).
- There were continued risk concerns in the home that were not addressed and/or monitored by the agency (12 cases).
- Although safety and risk were assessed for some children in the family, safety and risk were not assessed for all children in the family (four cases).
- There was no ongoing safety and risk assessment in the foster home during the period under review (one case).
- The case was closed without any safety and risk assessment (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 72 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to assess and address the risk of harm to the child. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 4 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the primary assessment tool that caseworkers utilize when assessing the safety of a child in any setting is the CERAP. The CERAP is required to be used in the following situations:

- During the first 24 hours of the investigation process
- Whenever a child's safety may be in jeopardy
- Every 5 working days following the determination that any child in a family is unsafe and a safety plan was implemented
- At the conclusion of a formal investigation
- Prior to and after a child is reunified

The Statewide Assessment notes that the CERAP is used to ensure the immediate safety of the children and that Investigative Specialists have 60 days to complete a full investigation to determine whether abuse or neglect occurred, the level of future risk, and what service interventions might mitigate that risk.

The Statewide Assessment reports that DCFS has the following system for triaging cases to determine the appropriate level of care:

- Level 1: Children are safe, and neither a safety plan nor ongoing services are needed.
- Levels 2-4: Services are needed to mitigate low to significant risk factors for a duration between 60 days and 12 months.
- Level 5: Risk is such that the only safe solution is to remove the children from the home.

The Statewide Assessment notes that an initial service plan must be completed within the first 45 days of service provision. The Statewide Assessment also notes that services are initiated at the time the need is identified, regardless of the status of the investigation. To develop a safety plan, information is gathered and analyzed in order to make a determination as to what service interventions may mitigate the identified risk.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, according to the SFY 2008 CERAP evaluation, CERAP use and effectiveness varied among regions of the State. For example, the evaluation found that investigators in Cook County were more consistent than investigators in other areas of the State in completing a CERAP prior to closing an investigation.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that, in addition to the CERAP, caseworkers use the following practices and tools to assess safety: caseworker visits, SOC services, substance abuse screens, domestic violence screens, the paramour assessment, the Integrated Assessment (IA) of family history, the home safety checklist, the Trauma Informed Practice Program (TIPP), and the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) instrument. In developing the service plan, information from a range of practices and tools is used to make a determination about the service interventions that are most likely to mitigate the identified risk.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results from 2006 show that, in different parts of the State, between 86.3 and 100 percent of foster care cases and between 83.6 percent and 96.2 percent of intact cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for this item. For this item the OERs examined the following issues: the services implemented to address safety/risk, the efforts made to reduce risk, whether the safety plan was implemented when necessary, whether a comprehensive child and family assessment was completed, the appropriateness of the decision to place in substitute care, whether safety was assured in placement, and whether an assessment was conducted of the child’s current safety.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some State-level and Cook County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there are a number of tools available to caseworkers to assess the safety and risk of children in intact family cases and in foster care. These include the IA, CERAP, and CANS. A few Cook County and McLean County stakeholders indicated that only a very few intact family cases result in opening a foster care case.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	1	2	2	5	12.5
Partially Achieved	19	6	8	33	82.5
Not Achieved	0	2	0	2	5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	5%	20%	20%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (Scaled Score)	State Score (Scaled Score)	Meets Standards?
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	122.6 +	62.3	No
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	106.4 +	80.0	No
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods	121.7 +	103.6	No
Composite 4: Placement stability	101.5 +	99.4	No

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 12.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity. In addition to case review findings, as shown in the table above, Illinois did not meet the national standards for any of the data indicators. Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- DCFS was not consistent in making concerted efforts to ensure children’s placement stability while in foster care.
- DCFS was not consistent in establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- DCFS was not consistent in making concerted efforts to achieve children’s permanency goals in a timely manner.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented the Integrated Assessment (IA) program, the Child and Youth Investment Team (CAYIT), and the Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM)
- Developed the concurrent planning and reunification model
- Implemented mechanisms to ensure timely movement of cases through the Cook County court system
- Restructured foster care contracts to support the ability of caseworkers to deliver comprehensive and timely reunification planning and services
- Designed a system to track children with a goal of substitute care pending termination of parental rights (SCpTPR)
- Developed systems, including tracking and assessments, to support the provision of appropriate services to older youth
- Created a voluntary community-based support program for foster parents in Cook County
- Increased the use of foster parents as resource families for birth parents working toward reunification with their children
- Strengthened overall Juvenile Court practices related to the achievement of timely adoptions

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 are presented and discussed below.

Item 5. Foster care reentries

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 13 (32.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable 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 the assessment of item 5 are presented in the table below.

Item 5 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	6	3	4	13	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	3	4	13	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	7	6	27	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	100%		

Item 5 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child’s entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode (12 cases).
- There was evidence that concerted efforts were made to prevent reentry (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 5 also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’ 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Composite 1 Measure Relevant to the Permanency of Reunification

The data below are presented to provide additional information about foster care reentry. There is no national standard for the measure of foster care reentry. National standards with regard to permanency have been established only for the scaled composite scores.

The measure of foster care reentry is part of Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification. The State's performance on Composite 1 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

Illinois'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: In the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period for the data indicators, 8.6 percent of children exiting foster care to reunification reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage is less than the 25th percentile of 9.9 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following strategies were identified as facilitating the ability of DCFS to prevent foster care reentries:

- Cook County initiatives, including Home Focus for post-adoptive families and the Foster Family Support Project, that prevent reentry
- Post-adoption and guardianship in-home preservation services
- The availability of financial reimbursement for families for post-reunification services and monitoring
- Structured post-reunification planning including the use of Practice Memos and the Supervisory Reunification Checklist

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show that 90 percent of cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for this item.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive comments from stakeholders regarding this item during the onsite CFSR.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 40 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 most recent placement setting. The results of the assessment of item 6 are presented in the table below.

Item 6 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	18	8	8	34	85
Area Needing Improvement	2	2	2	6	15
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	90%	80%	80%		

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

- The child’s current placement was stable and the child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (30 cases).
- The child’s current placement was stable and the placement changes experienced were intended to further achievement of the child’s permanency goal or to provide specialized services for the child (four cases).

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 attain the child’s permanency goal (six cases).
- The child’s placement setting at the time of the onsite CFSR was not stable (one case).

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 30 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in five cases experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Children in five cases experienced three or more placements during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 85 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 4: Placement stability

The data below are presented to provide additional information about placement stability. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State’s performance on Composite 4 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Illinois’s performance on the individual measures included in Composite 4: Placement stability was as follows:

- C4.1: 84.1 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the national median of 83.3 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 86.0 percent.
- C4.2: 70.0 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 65.4 percent.
- C4.3: 40.9 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the national median of 33.9 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 41.8 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State rules and procedures stipulate that all initial and any subsequent placements are to be made consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child and to ensure stability for the child while in substitute care.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to increase stability for children in foster care:

- The SOC program provides short-term services, interventions, and support to children and youth with emotional and/or behavioral problems who are identified as being at risk of placement disruption.
- The CAYIT process is designed to improve the quality of life for children and youth in foster care and stabilize foster care placements.
- The Foster Family Support Project provides foster parents with the types of supports they need in order to fully meet the increasingly challenging needs of the children placed in their care.
- The Family-Supported Adolescent Care Program supports foster parents in keeping adolescents in family home placements.
- Planned and unplanned moves are reviewed quarterly to determine if placement changes could have been prevented through casework practices.
- The Residential and Group Home Transition and Discharge Protocol promotes service continuity for each youth following their discharge from residential and group homes to a less restrictive setting.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in maintaining stable foster care placements for children. Various McLean County and Winnebago County stakeholders indicated that the following factors contribute to placement stability:

- The availability of a crisis telephone number for foster parents who need immediate assistance
- A casework practice focus on the skills of foster families in relation to the needs of foster children
- The SOC program to stabilize placements at risk of disruption

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 40 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. Reviewers also were to determine whether the agency had sought termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The results of the assessment of item 7 are presented in the table below.

Item 7 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	4	6	5	15	37.5
Area Needing Improvement	16	4	5	25	62.5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	20%	60%	50%		

Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 15 cases when reviewers determined that the child’s permanency goal was appropriate, had been established in a timely manner, and, if relevant, that the agency had filed for TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA.

Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 25 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child’s permanency goal at the time of the onsite CFSR was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (12 cases).
- The child’s permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (19 cases).
- The agency had not sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA (12 cases).

ASFA requirements with regard to filing for TPR were met in 7 (37 percent) of 19 applicable cases.

The following case goals were identified for the 40 foster care cases:

- Adoption only (15 cases)
- Reunification only (including reunification with relatives) (11 cases)
- Guardianship only (three cases)
- Other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA) only (eight cases)
- Concurrent goals of Adoption and Reunification with parents (three cases)

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 37.5 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and had met ASFA requirements when relevant. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 7 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods

The data below are presented to provide additional information about permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards were established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 3 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Illinois's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods was the following:

- C3.1: 22.6 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the 12-month CFSR target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage is less than the national median of 25.0 percent.
- C3.2: 98.7 percent of the children exiting foster care during the target period who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 98.0 percent.
- C3.3: 68.8 percent of the children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month target period with a discharge reason of emancipation had been in foster care for 3 years or longer at the time of discharge. This percentage is greater than the national median of 47.8 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, permanency goals are established as part of the service plan, which must be completed 45 days from the time of the child's placement in foster care. The Statewide Assessment identifies the following activities as mandatory elements of the permanency planning process:

- An initial comprehensive assessment
- A diligent search for missing parents, when necessary
- Caseworker interventions and in-person contacts
- The convening of family meetings, including initial family meetings, CFTMs, and CAYIT meetings
- The development and implementation of a service plan
- Selection of a permanency goal
- The use of concurrent planning, when appropriate
- An evaluation of whether families are substantially fulfilling their obligations under the service plan and correcting the conditions that led to the placement of their children to enable the children to return home

- Consideration of alternatives to reunification
- Preparation for, attendance at, and participation in Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), court hearings, and permanency hearings
- Preparation for termination of DCFS services and aftercare planning

The Statewide Assessment notes that the following goals are developed for children in foster care:

- Return home within 5 months
- Return home within 12 months
- Return home pending status hearing
- SCpTPR
- Adoption
- Guardianship
- Independence (selected for children over age 15 provided that other permanency goals have been ruled out and an assessment has been made that the child has demonstrated the ability to maintain progress toward and achieve independence)
- Home Environment not Appropriate (HENA) (selected for children who have an extreme or complicated physical or mental disability and require long-term care)

The Statewide Assessment reports that the following strategies facilitate the ability of DCFS to establish an appropriate permanency goal for a child in foster care in a timely manner:

- The IA Program provides an early comprehensive assessment of the family.
- The Concurrent Planning and Reunification Model defines a permanency path and concurrent planning actions early in the case.
- The partnership between DCFS and the Administrative Office of the Illinois Court (AOIC) provides a forum for the resolution of problems to facilitate timely permanency for children.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show that an appropriate permanency goal was assigned in 85 percent of the cases reviewed. Further, OER results indicate that the selection of the permanency goal of independence or HENA was appropriate in 94 percent of the cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State employs concurrent planning by considering an alternative to reunification after it has been determined that it is unlikely that the goal of reunification will be achieved. However, various McLean County stakeholders indicated that there are delays in changing a child's goal from reunification to consideration of other permanency options when psychiatric evaluations are unavailable and/or when substance abuse treatment continues beyond what is specified in the service plan.

Item 8. Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 17 (42.5 percent) of the 40 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, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of the assessment of item 8 are presented in the table below.

Item 8 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	0	1	1	2	12
Area Needing Improvement	7	3	5	15	88
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	4	6	17	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	13	6	4	23	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	0%	25%	17%		

Item 8 was rated as a Strength in two cases when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 15 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to achieve reunification or guardianship in a timely manner. Case reviewers identified the following concerns:

- There was a lack of effort by the agency to achieve reunification (six cases).
- There was a lack of service provision to support the goal of reunification (three cases).
- There were delays in establishing paternity (three cases).
- The goal of reunification or guardianship was maintained inappropriately (two cases).
- There were delays in the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) process (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 12 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 required for a rating of Strength. Item 8 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Pertaining to Timeliness Included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification

The data below are presented to provide additional information about the timeliness of reunification. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 1 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Illinois's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification is presented below for the measures pertaining to timeliness:

- C1.1: 42.2 percent of the reunifications occurred in more than 8 days but less than 12 months of the child's entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 69.9 percent.
- C1.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children discharged to reunification after being in foster care for at least 8 days was 14.6 months. This length of stay is greater than the national median of 6.5 months. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)
- C1.3: 18.3 percent of children entering foster care in the 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in more than 7 days but less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 39.4 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Illinois has three Return Home permanency goals that can be selected and set by the court based on time expected to achieve reunification: Return Home within 5 months, Return Home within 12 months, and Return Home pending status hearing. The last goal is used when progress by parents has been marginal and the court is actively involved in moving the case toward an alternate permanency goal. In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that DCFS implemented the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship and Adoption Program which provides an enhanced service package of transition services for children 14 years of age or older.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, beginning in SFY 2006, the DCFS Agency Performance Team (APT) conducted quarterly reviews of cases assigned to private Purchase of Service (POS) agencies that were open for 18 months or less and that had Return Home permanency goals. DCFS QA staff began conducting similar reviews of cases assigned to DCFS beginning in SFY 2007.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to achieve reunification, reunification with relatives, and guardianship in a timely manner:

- The IA program defines a permanency path early in the case.
- The CANS Readiness for Reunification and Permanency Report expedites reunification.
- The Concurrent Planning and Reunification Model engages families and supports sound permanency plans for each child.
- The CFTM process engages families in collaborative service planning.
- The Diligent Search System locates parents and other family members to expedite the permanency planning process.

- The Illinois Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) project provides for recovery coaches to work with the parent, caseworker, and AODA treatment agency to remove barriers to treatment, engage the parent in treatment, and provide support to the parent and family.
- Family Advocacy Centers provide parents with support and encouragement to achieve the goals that will allow them to regain custody of their children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Various stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFPSR identified the following barriers to the agency’s timeliness in achieving the goal of reunification:

- Parents with substance abuse issues require more time in treatment than 12 months.
- The case plan requirements parents must accomplish before their children can be returned home are unreasonably high.
- Some judges are not focused on timeliness for reunification and are reluctant to reunify too early.
- There is a need for a higher level of supervision over casework practice, particularly in engaging families.

With regard to guardianship, some Cook County and McLean County stakeholders expressed the opinion that delays in achieving guardianships in a timely manner can be attributed in part to high caseworker caseloads and extensive documentation requirements.

Item 9. Adoption

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 9 was applicable for 18 (45 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. The results of the assessment of item 9 are presented in the table below.

Item 9 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	0	1	1	2	11
Area Needing Improvement	10	4	2	16	89
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	5	3	18	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	5	7	22	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	0	20%	33%		

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in two cases when reviewers determined that the State had made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 16 cases when reviewers identified one or more of the following:

- Delays in filing for TPR (four cases)
- Delays in the TPR process (after filing) (two cases)
- Delays in finalizing adoptions after TPR was achieved (13 cases)
- Delays in identifying an appropriate adoptive placement (two cases)

Additional findings relevant to this item were the following:

- Of the 18 children with a goal of adoption, 6 achieved the goal during the period under review.
- Of the six children who had a finalized adoption during the period under review, one had been in foster care for less than 24 months, two had been in foster care for at least 36 months, and three had been in foster care for at least 48 months.
- Of the 12 children with a goal of adoption who were not adopted during the period under review, 4 had been in foster care for less than 24 months, 1 had been in foster care for 30 months, 3 had been in foster care for at least 36 months, and 4 had been in foster care for at least 72 months.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 11 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 9 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions

The data below are presented to provide additional information about the timeliness of adoptions. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 2 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Illinois's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions is presented below:

- C2.1: 15.2 percent of the children exiting to adoption were discharged in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 26.8 percent.
- C2.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 39.5 months. This median length of stay is greater than the national median of 32.4 months. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)
- C2.3: 15.0 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the year. This percentage is less than the national median of 20.2 percent.
- C2.4: 9.3 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within the first 6 months of the year. This percentage is greater than the national median of 8.8 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 10.9 percent.
- C2.5: 53.4 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percentage is greater than the national median of 45.8 but less than the national 75th percentile of 53.7 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Illinois has two permanency goals that culminate in adoption: SCpTPR and adoption (selected once TPR has occurred or rights have been relinquished). The Statewide Assessment reports that an automated system tracks cases with a goal of SCpTPR to ensure that appropriate and timely progress is made toward permanency.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to achieve adoptions in a timely manner:

- The Adoption Listing Service Book is used to match waiting children with potential adoptive families.
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids works closely with DCFS to find an appropriate adoptive family for each child.
- The Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship and Adoption Program provides an enhanced service package of transition services for children 14 years of age or older.

The Statewide Assessment reports that internal DCFS data illustrate that the time lapse to finalize adoptions increased from March 2004 to March 2009:

- The average number of days from assignment of the goal of adoption until finalization increased from 410.4 to 434.3.
- The average number of days from TPR to finalization increased from 353.3 to 469.6.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges the following factors that delay the finalization of adoptions:

- Legislation stipulates that an adoption interim order cannot be filed until at least 70 days after the TPR hearing has been completed.
- DCFS staffing in the area of adoptions is insufficient to meet the need.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Various stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR identified the following barriers to the agency's timeliness with regard to achieving the goal of adoption:

- There are inherent delays in statute that delineate specific waiting times between key events: A waiting time of 30 days is required after granting TPR, and cases must be transferred to a different court to finalize adoptions.
- There are extensive assessment and documentation requirements to prepare an adoption subsidy packet that often create significant delays, and caseworkers from both DCFS and POS agencies are inexperienced in preparing this packet.
- There are cases in which the preadoptive placement is disrupted and there has been insufficient planning for an alternative adoptive home.
- There are delays and continuances in court hearings related to finalizing adoption.
- There are an insufficient number of caseworkers handling adoption cases.

Item 10. Other planned permanent living arrangement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 8 (20 percent) of the 40 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 OPPLA. The results of the assessment of item 10 are presented in the table below.

Item 10 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	2	1	1	4	50
Area Needing Improvement	2	2	0	4	50
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	3	1	8	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	16	7	9	32	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	50%	33%	100%		

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in four cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a long-term placement for the child and/or to provide the necessary service to prepare the child for independent living. Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- No independent living (IL) services were provided to assist children in transitioning from foster care to independent living (three cases).
- The child was not in a permanent living arrangement (one case).

The following provides information about the age of each child at the time the goal of OPPLA was established:

- One child was age 14.
- Seven children were age 16 or older.

Rating Determination

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 50 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 10 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, transition services to support self-sufficiency and emancipation begin for all children in DCFS custody at age 14 and continue until the age of 21. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that youth in college may receive continued support and services up until their 23rd birthdays.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that DCFS uses the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment to establish baseline life skills needed for youth. Caseworkers are required to administer the assessment to adolescent youth no later than 30 days after the youths' 14th and 16th birthdays, 6 months prior to the youths' planned discharges from State guardianship, or no later than 60 days after their entries into substitute care.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show that, although the selection of the permanency goal of independence or HENA was appropriate in 94 percent of the cases reviewed, the State struggled with ensuring that proper assessments were completed. The completion rate for assessments was 69.2 percent.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to meet the needs of children transitioning to independence:

- Transitional living programs and IL programs have increased and include life skills, vocational training, scholarships, education and training vouchers, cultural and recreational programs, and career development.
- The Family Supported Adolescent Care program identifies a cadre of foster parents singularly committed to serving older adolescents during their transition to adulthood.
- The Intensive Relative Search Project facilitates the identification, location, and contact of a responsible relative or other adult to foster a connection for youth that will sustain beyond emancipation.
- Caseworkers focus on the critical high school years to ensure that all DCFS youth are prepared for post-secondary education, vocational training, or employment.
- The Youth Advisory Board assists DCFS with service planning and represents the voice of youth in foster care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has an adequate array of transitional living and IL services for youth in foster care. Several stakeholders indicated that services are available for youth up to age 21 and that services for these older youth include scholarships, community college stipends, and Education Training Vouchers.

Permanency Outcome 2

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	8	6	8	22	55.0
Partially Achieved	11	4	2	17	42.5
Not Achieved	1	0	0	1	2.5
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	40%	60%	80%		

Status of Permanency Outcome 2

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 55 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- DCFS was inconsistent in its efforts to ensure that visitation between parents and children was of sufficient frequency to meet children's needs.
- DCFS was inconsistent in its efforts to ensure that relatives, particularly paternal relatives, were located and assessed as potential placement resources.
- DCFS was inconsistent in its efforts to ensure that the parent-child relationship of children in foster care, particularly the child's relationship with an absent or noncustodial parent, was supported and strengthened.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Increased the use of foster parents as resource families working with birth parents and provided reimbursement to foster parents for the facilitation of sibling visits
- Increased the use of the diligent search process as a mechanism for locating relatives
- Expanded the Intensive Relative Search Project in Cook County for youth with a goal of Independence
- Implemented the IA program to assess and address the parent-child relationship
- Restructured foster care POS contracts to support caseworkers in ensuring that visitation requirements were met
- Implemented the Fatherhood Initiative

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the 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 29 (72.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if TPR was attained prior to the period under review, contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interests, and/or parents were deceased or their whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's most current foster care setting was near the child's parents or close relatives. The results of the assessment of item 11 are presented in the table below.

Item 11 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	13	7	9	29	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	13	7	9	29	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	3	1	11	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	100%		

Item 11 was rated as a Strength in all 29 applicable cases when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed either in the same community as the parents or in close proximity (21 cases).
- Even though the child was placed out of his or her community, the placement was necessary to meet the needs of the child and/or support attainment of the permanency goal (eight cases).

Rating Determination

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 100 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed children in locations close to their parents or relatives when appropriate. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 11 also was rated as a Strength in Illinois' 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State procedure requires that, whenever possible, a child's foster care placement should be located in the same community and the same school district as the home from which he or she was removed. When the permanency goal is to return home, a child should be placed in reasonable proximity to his or her family to allow for visitation. The Statewide Assessment notes that caseworkers must document any special needs that may have resulted in a child being placed more than 50 miles from his or her family.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the School Minder geographic information system and geo-mapping identify available foster homes and new foster care cases to target placement decisions.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show that 40.2 percent of children were placed in the same community as a parent's current residence, and 65.9 percent were placed in the same county. OER results show that this item was rated as a Strength in 93.9 percent of the cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State’s effectiveness in placing children in foster care in close proximity to their families. Some McLean County stakeholders indicated that DCFS places children in close proximity to their families of origin. However, a few Winnebago County stakeholders indicated that there are not enough foster placement resources available to enable DCFS to find a placement for every child in foster care in his or her home county.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 12 was applicable for 30 (75 percent) of the 40 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 currently, or had been, placed together, and if separated, whether the separation was necessary to meet the service or safety needs of one or more of the children. The results of the assessment of item 12 are presented in the table below.

Item 12 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	14	7	5	26	87
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	4	4	13
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	7	9	30	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	3	1	10	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	56%		

Item 12 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed with siblings (10 cases).
- The separation of siblings was necessary because one of the siblings had special placement needs or because placement with siblings was not in the child’s best interests (16 cases).

Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in four Winnebago County cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to place siblings together. For these four cases, case review findings indicate that the size of the sibling groups ranged from two to eight children.

Rating Determination

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 87 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 12 was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS is required to place siblings together in most instances and if siblings are separated, ongoing, diligent searches must be made to secure a placement that can accept the whole sibling group. The Statewide Assessment notes the following exceptions to the requirement to place siblings together:

- It is in the best interests of one or more of the children to be placed apart.
- DCFS has been unable to locate a joint placement for the siblings despite a diligent search.
- A court has ordered that the siblings be placed apart.
- It is in the best interests of the child or his or her sibling(s) to be placed with a relative and the relative is not willing to accept all the children.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show that, in 93.6 percent of cases reviewed, efforts were made to place and keep siblings together and the item was rated as a Strength. In addition, although DCFS QA data show that the number of sibling groups placed apart has increased from about 150 groups to 200 groups between 2001 and 2008, the percentage of cases in which there has been compliance with the sibling placement requirements has improved from 91 percent to 98 percent over this same period.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few McLean County and Winnebago County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally makes a diligent effort to keep siblings together in foster care.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 13 was applicable for 33 (82.5 percent) of the 40 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 was met with regard to the parents: TPR was established prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the child's life or were deceased; or visitation with a parent was not considered in the best interests of the child. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and between children in foster care and their siblings also in foster care, and whether the visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The results of the assessment of item 13 are presented in the table below.

Item 13 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	7	5	8	20	61
Area Needing Improvement	9	3	1	13	39
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	16	8	9	33	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	2	1	7	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	44%	62.5%	89%		

Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 20 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visitation with parents and siblings met the needs of the children. Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the mother (seven cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the father (eight cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with siblings in foster care (three cases).

Additional information about visitation frequency is provided in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Child's Visits During the Period Under Review	With Mother	With Father	With Siblings in Foster Care
Visits occurred at least once a week	15 (56%)	4 (25%)	7 (39%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	3 (11%)	2 (12.5%)	3 (17%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	2 (7%)	1 (6%)	4 (22%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	5 (19%)	5 (31%)	4 (22%)
There were no visits during the period under review	2 (7%)	4 (25%)	0
Total Applicable Cases	27	16	18

The data indicate that children visited at least once per month with their mothers in 74 percent of the applicable cases, with their fathers in 44 percent of the applicable cases, and with their siblings in foster care in 78 percent of the applicable cases.

Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 61 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 percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 13 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires that, if the goal is to return home, parent-child visits must occur weekly or, if the goal is something other than to return home, parent-child visits must occur monthly until parental rights are terminated or voluntarily surrendered. State policy requires that when siblings are placed separately, visits must occur twice per month for a minimum of 2 hours per visit unless there is a court order for less frequent visits, the child does not want visits, one sibling poses a safety risk, or the sibling is in a residential facility more than 150 miles away. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that sibling visitation may continue after an adoption or guardianship if the children wish to continue the visits.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to ensure that sufficient visitation occurs between children and their parents and between children and their siblings:

- The First Family Meeting is to be convened within 48 hours of case assignment to ensure that a visitation plan is developed.
- Foster parents are provided with financial incentives to support reunification activities including visitation.
- The Fatherhood Initiative promotes the involvement of fathers in visitation.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following OER results:

- In 88 percent of applicable cases, there was evidence that “flexible” parent-child visitation was used.
- Visitation plans were developed for mothers in 84.1 percent of the cases, for fathers in 62.3 percent of the cases, and for siblings in 87.0 percent of the cases.
- The frequency of parental visits was rated as a Strength in 44.9 percent of the cases reviewed and the frequency of sibling visits was rated as a Strength in 68 percent of the cases reviewed.
- The item overall was rated as a Strength in 68.2 percent of cases.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that DCFS QA data show that the percentage of cases with a sibling visitation plan increased from 69 percent in 2001 to 84 percent in 2008, and the percentage of sibling groups that had regular visitation increased from 31 percent in 2001 to 69 percent in 2008.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few McLean County and Winnebago County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally promotes visitation for children in foster care with their parents and with their siblings placed separately and that foster parents support and facilitate such visitation.

Item 14. Preserving connections

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 14 was applicable for all 40 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 of item 14 are presented in the table below.

Item 14 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	14	6	10	30	75
Area Needing Improvement	6	4	0	10	25
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	70%	60%	100%		

Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 30 cases when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child’s connections with extended family members, religious or cultural heritage, schools, community, and friends.

Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 10 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to extended family (10 cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to his or her religious or cultural heritage (one case).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child’s connections to his or her school, community, and friends (three cases).

Rating Determination

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 75 percent of the applicable 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 percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 14 was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires that, whenever possible, placements must be made in the child’s school district to support the preservation of connections with the child’s school, community, and friends. In addition, diligent searches for relatives must be conducted to maintain those connections. The Statewide Assessment notes that placement decisions should be made with religious preference in mind, and if the family or child states a desire for the child to receive religious instruction in a specific faith, the foster family is required to make appropriate arrangements. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that grandparents may petition the court to receive visitation rights. The Statewide Assessment indicates that Illinois complies with the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) with regard to notification and placement decisions through the ICWA Advocacy Program. The

Statewide Assessment also indicates that DCFS is required to provide services in Spanish to Hispanic clients whose primary language is Spanish.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that OER results indicate that, in 93.1 percent of cases reviewed, efforts were made to assess, support, and maintain the important primary connections of the child.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the State’s effectiveness in preserving important connections for children in foster care. A few stakeholders indicated that caseworkers support connections for children; however, other stakeholders indicated that this effort does not occur.

Item 15. Relative placement

___ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 15 was applicable for 36 (90 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period, or 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 made diligent efforts to locate and assess both maternal and paternal relatives as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of the assessment of item 15 are presented in the table below.

Item 15 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	10	5	9	24	67
Area Needing Improvement	8	3	1	12	33
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	18	8	10	36	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	2	2	0	4	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	56%	62.5%	90%		

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

- The child was placed with relatives (16 cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives, but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives or a search for maternal and paternal relatives was not applicable (eight cases).

Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 12 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency had not made efforts to search for maternal relatives (11 cases).

- The agency had not made efforts to search for paternal relatives (10 cases).
- Although the child was placed with a relative, the placement was not stable (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 67 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 15 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy stipulates that a child may be placed with a relative who has been assessed as safe and appropriate and that placement shall be made only with relative caregivers who are licensed as foster family homes or, if unlicensed, who meet the placement selection criteria and requirements. The Statewide Assessment notes that caseworkers are required to conduct ongoing diligent searches to identify both maternal and paternal relatives.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to place children in foster care with relatives:

- The IA program identifies known relatives and their ability to be a placement resource.
- The Diligent Search System locates parents and other family members to expedite the permanency planning process.
- The Department of Human Services (DHS) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program reimburses families for costs associated with the relative children for whom they are caring to enable children to remain together safely with caring relatives.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that OER results indicate that, in 2007, in 89.5 percent of cases, efforts were made to identify and assess both maternal and paternal relatives when the child was not placed with a relative. The Statewide Assessment reports that approximately one-half of the children in the Illinois foster care system are placed with kin.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive comments from stakeholders regarding this item during the onsite CFSR.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

___ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 16 was applicable for 29 (72.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if parental rights had been terminated before the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, a relationship with the parents was not

considered in the child’s best interests throughout the period under review, or both parents were deceased. 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 the assessment of item 16 are presented in the table below.

Item 16 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	3	2	6	11	38
Area Needing Improvement	11	5	2	18	62
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	7	8	29	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	3	2	11	
Total Foster Care Cases	20	10	10	40	
Strength by Site	21%	29%	75%		

Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 11 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children through various activities. Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 18 cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the mother (14 cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the father (10 cases).

Specific findings pertaining to this item are shown in the table below.

Efforts Made	With Mother Number of Cases	With Father Number of Cases
Encouraging the parent’s participation in school or after-school activities and attendance at medical appointments and special events	12	5
Providing transportation so that parents can participate in these events, activities, or appointments	5	1
Providing opportunities for family therapeutic situations	7	3
Encouraging foster parents to mentor biological parents and serve as parenting role models for them	8	4
Encouraging and facilitating contact with incarcerated parents (when appropriate) or with parents living far away from the child	1	1
Total Applicable Cases	28	16

Rating Determination

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 38 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 16 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, activities that support the involvement of the parents in the child's life while the child is in foster care include shared parenting with foster caregivers, the CFTM, the CAYIT, the ACR, and service planning. The Statewide Assessment notes that the principles of the Concurrent Planning and Reunification Model encourage foster caregivers to support the return home of the children in their care. In addition, the Family Reunification Support Special Service Fee provides financial reimbursement to caregivers for their efforts to support reunification.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to support the involvement of parents in their children's lives:

- The diligent search process has resulted in an increase in the number of requests from caseworkers to locate parents.
- The IA program is used to determine the service needs for parents with regard to their relationships with their children.
- The Fatherhood Initiative focuses on enabling fathers to become positive forces in the lives of their children.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that OER results indicate the following data:

- Paternal involvement in the life of his child increased from 28.6 percent in 2005 to 47.4 percent in 2007.
- Caseworker efforts to facilitate paternal involvement increased from 64.3 percent in 2005 to 84.2 percent in 2007.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the State offers financial incentives to foster parents to facilitate and support the relationship of children in foster care with their parents through transportation and facilitating and supervising visitation.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well-Being Outcome 1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	6	11	11	28	43.1
Partially Achieved	19	4	4	27	41.5
Not Achieved	6	2	2	10	15.4
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	19%	65%	65%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 43.1 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 18 (45 percent) of the 40 foster care cases and 10 (40 percent) of the 25 in-home services cases.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- DCFS did not consistently make concerted efforts to assess the needs of, and provide services to, children, parents, and foster parents.
- DCFS did not consistently make concerted efforts to involve children and parents, particularly fathers, in case planning.
- DCFS did not consistently make concerted efforts to establish face-to-face contact with children and parents with sufficient frequency and quality to ensure children’s safety and promote attainment of case goals.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented the following programs: IA, CAYIT, CFTM, SOC, and an intensive stabilization program for older youth
- Evaluated AODA services
- Implemented the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Instrument for youth and developed systems to support appropriate provision of services to older youth

- Improved the diligent search process to locate and engage birth parents and implemented the Fatherhood Initiative
- Updated policy and provided training on caseworker visitation
- Created a voluntary, community-based support program for foster parents

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X 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 adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents and provided the services necessary to meet those needs. This item excludes the assessment of children’s (but not parents’) needs pertaining to education, physical health, and mental health. These areas are addressed in later items. The results of the assessment of item 17 are presented in the table below.

Item 17 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	12	13	11	36	55
Area Needing Improvement	19	4	6	29	45
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	39%	76%	65%		

Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 22 (55 percent) of the 40 foster care cases and 14 (56 percent) of the 25 in-home services cases. Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 36 cases 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 in 29 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was an inadequate assessment of children’s needs (three cases).
- There was an inadequate assessment of mothers’ needs (15 cases).
- There was an inadequate assessment of fathers’ needs (15 cases).
- There was an inadequate assessment of foster parents’ needs (two cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address children’s needs (six cases).

- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address mothers' needs (21 cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address fathers' needs (19 cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address foster parents' needs (five cases).

Additional case review findings pertaining to needs assessments and service provision are shown in the table below.

Target Person for Needs Assessment and Services	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable	Yes	Applicable
Child's needs assessed and met	37 (92.5%)	40	22 (88%)	25
Mother's needs assessed and met	12 (46%)	26	18 (72%)	25
Father's needs assessed and met	6 (40%)	15	10 (50%)	20
Foster parents' needs assessed and met	33 (87%)	38	N/A	N/A

Rating Determination

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 55 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the State had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 17 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires that a comprehensive assessment must be conducted to determine the needs of the family so that appropriate intervention and services can be provided. In addition, State policy requires that ongoing assessments must be conducted throughout the duration of time the children and family are receiving services.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to conduct assessments and provide services to children and families:

- For families and children in foster care, the IA provides a clinical assessment within 45 days of case opening and on an ongoing basis. This assessment is conducted jointly by caseworkers and clinicians within DCFS and forms the basis for the service plan.
- For families receiving intact family services, an early assessment must be completed by a caseworker within 45 days after case opening. This assessment forms the foundation for the development of the comprehensive family service plan.
- The CERAP is required to be completed every 6 months to monitor risk and safety.
- The SPD, launched in 2008, provides a resource for caseworkers to locate services for families, via a computerized geo-mapping system. The database shows where all children are placed and their proximity to needed services.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results indicate that, between 2005 and 2008, 69.1 percent of cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for this item for all case types. In addition, OER results indicate that cases with an IA show improved outcomes in the

following areas: appropriate match of service, adequacy of services in place to meet identified needs, and timeliness of service referral.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that, despite the requirement to conduct an IA, budget reductions have limited the number of IA screeners who can be hired, preventing the expansion of the program to additional cases. In addition, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment is not conducted in a timely manner for all youth across the State.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The key concerns addressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR are whether the State adequately assesses the needs of children and families and provides needed services, and also whether the State adequately assesses and meets the needs of foster parents.

With regard to whether the State adequately assesses the needs of children and families and provides needed services, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in assessing the needs of children and families through the use of the IA, CFTM, CAYIT, and other screening and assessment tools used to develop service plans. In addition, most stakeholders indicated that the State meets the needs of children and families and that the SPD is instrumental in identifying available services for families. However, a few stakeholders indicated that the State does not have the resources required to meet the needs of children and families in the areas of substance abuse and mental health.

With regard to whether the State adequately assesses and meets the needs of foster parents, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in assessing the needs of foster parents through the use of the CFTM, the CAYIT, and during licensing visits and that the State is responsive to the needs of foster parents.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 18 was applicable for 61 (94 percent) of the 65 cases. A case was not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review, parents were not involved with the child in any way, and/or 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 (when appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and, if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interests. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent or child actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. The results of the assessment of item 18 are presented in the table below.

Item 18 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	8	9	12	29	48
Area Needing Improvement	22	6	4	32	52
Total Applicable Cases	30	15	16	61	
Not Applicable Cases	1	2	1	4	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	27%	60%	75%		

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 15 (42 percent) of the 36 applicable foster care cases and 14 (56 percent) of the 25 in-home services cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 29 cases when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in the case planning process. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 32 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process.

Specific information about involving mothers, fathers, and children in case planning is shown in the table below.

Person Involved in Case Planning	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable Cases	Yes	Applicable Cases
Mother involved in case planning?	12 (41%)	29	22 (88%)	25
Father involved in case planning?	7 (41%)	17	12 (63%)	19
Children involved in case planning?	24 (86%)	28	9 (56%)	16

Rating Determination

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 48 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 18 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, both the CFTM and CAYIT facilitate the engagement of families in case planning. An initial family meeting is to occur within 48 hours of temporary custody and then within 35 days of case assignment in foster care cases and within 45 days for intact families. Subsequent CFTMs are to occur within 90 days of case opening and quarterly thereafter for all cases. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the diligent search process and the Fatherhood Initiative facilitate the identification and engagement of birth parents for inclusion in the CFTM and CAYIT case planning processes. The Statewide Assessment

acknowledges that, despite the success of the Fatherhood Initiative, stakeholders indicated that the child welfare system generally does not involve fathers.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show the following findings:

- There was an increase in the occurrence of CFTMs in reviewed cases from 56.7 percent in 2005 to 66.7 percent in 2008.
- When the CFTM occurred, it guided the case toward the achievement of permanency in 84 percent of cases.
- For foster care cases, efforts were made to engage mothers in 83.3 percent of cases, fathers in 66.2 percent of cases, and age-appropriate children in 91.7 percent of cases.
- For intact cases, efforts were made to engage mothers in 91.8 percent of cases, fathers in 81.8 percent of cases, and age-appropriate children in 79.8 percent of cases.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that State data show that more than 80 percent of wards over 12 years old have participated in a CAYIT.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in engaging parents and children in case planning primarily through the use of the IA, ACR, CFTM, and CAYIT. Some stakeholders indicated that parents do not always participate in case planning activities even though caseworkers make an effort to engage them. Some stakeholders also indicated that case plans are reviewed and updated in collaboration with family members during caseworker visits and court review hearings.

Additional information on stakeholder perceptions of the involvement of parents in the case planning process is provided under item 25 in the Systemic Factors section of this report.

Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

Item 19 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing 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 of item 19 are presented in the table below.

Item 19 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	23	14	15	52	80
Area Needing Improvement	8	3	2	13	20
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	74%	82%	88%		

Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 33 (82.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases and 19 (76 percent) of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 52 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child’s well-being and promote attainment of case goals. Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, and if visits did occur, they did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (five cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (eight cases).

Specific information regarding the frequency of visitation is provided in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Child During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases (Number and Percent)	In-Home Services Cases (Number and Percent)
Visits occurred at least once a week	2 (5%)	3 (12%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	16 (40%)	9 (36%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	20 (50%)	10 (40%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	2 (5%)	2 (8%)
There were no visits during the period under review	0	1 (4%)
Total cases	40	25

The data indicate that caseworkers visited with children at least once per month in 95 percent of the foster care cases and 88 percent of the in-home services cases.

Rating Determination

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 80 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and quality. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 19 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following requirements are in place for caseworker contacts with children:

- For foster care cases, the caseworker is required to visit every child in substitute care, including residential facilities, in the child's living arrangement at least once every 2 weeks for the first month following initial placement or a change in placement and at least once a month thereafter.
- For reunified cases, the caseworker must conduct a face-to-face meeting with the child in the home within 24 to 72 hours after the child's return home, weekly during the first month, and at least monthly until such time as safety and risk assessments indicate there are no longer sufficient factors present to require continued contact.
- For intact cases, caseworkers are required to visit at least weekly for the first 45 days and at least twice per month unless otherwise specified by a manager.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that contacts by other professionals and service providers do not take the place of the visits required by the caseworker. The Statewide Assessment notes that all verbal children must be seen outside the presence of their caregivers and that caseworkers must have the ability to interact with a client using his or her primary language or through the use of an interpreter. Despite these requirements, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that caseworker shortages limit compliance with visitation requirements.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results show that children are seen regularly in between 65 and 86.6 percent of the cases, depending on the case type, region, and review date.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that caseworkers visit with children in foster care and in intact cases at least once per month and often more frequently. Most stakeholders indicated that visits include a discussion of activities and the case plan. However, some stakeholders indicated that visits are not of high quality with regard to ensuring the child's safety and well-being.

Item 20. Caseworker visits with parent(s)

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 20 was applicable for 53 (82 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 are 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 ensure the children's safety and well-being. The results of the assessment of item 20 are presented in the table below.

Item 20 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	3	9	11	23	43
Area Needing Improvement	21	5	4	30	57
Total Applicable Cases	24	14	15	53	
Not Applicable Cases	7	3	2	12	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	12.5%	64%	73%		

Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 8 (29 percent) of the 28 applicable foster care cases and 15 (60 percent) of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 23 cases 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 in 30 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency (20 cases).
- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient quality (12 cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency (18 cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient quality (nine cases).

Additional information from the case reviews is provided in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Parents During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Visits occurred at least once a week	2 (7%)	0	3 (12%)	2 (10%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	3 (11%)	0	8 (32%)	5 (25%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	5 (19%)	4 (27%)	9 (36%)	5 (25%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	11 (41%)	6 (40%)	4 (16%)	4 (20%)
There were no visits during the period under review	6 (22%)	5 (33%)	1 (4%)	4 (20%)
Total Applicable Cases	27	15	25	20

The data indicate that caseworkers visited at least once per month with mothers in 37 percent of applicable foster care cases and 80 percent of applicable in-home services cases; caseworkers visited at least once per month with fathers in 27 percent of applicable foster care cases and 60 percent of applicable in-home services cases.

Rating Determination

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 43 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and 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 percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 20 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following requirements have been established for caseworkers with regard to contacts with parents:

- For foster care cases, caseworkers must attempt face-to-face contact with the family in the home within 5 working days of case assignment and families are to be seen monthly or more frequently thereafter.
- For intact family cases, caseworkers must make contact with families weekly during the 45-day assessment period and twice per month thereafter.

Despite these requirements, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that caseworker shortages limit compliance with visitation requirements.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results indicate that parents in intact cases were seen monthly in 82.9 percent of cases reviewed, mothers in foster care cases were seen monthly in 70 percent of cases reviewed, and fathers in foster care cases were seen monthly in 71.4 percent of cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the Fatherhood Initiative has strengthened the ability of DCFS caseworkers to have productive contacts with fathers.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that caseworkers generally visit with families in foster care and intact cases at least once per month and discuss issues related to case planning and safety. Some stakeholders indicated that sometimes caseworker visits with families are not of high quality due to lack of cooperation from the family.

Well-Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	20	11	10	41	91.1
Partially Achieved	1	0	2	3	6.7
Not Achieved	1	0	0	1	2.2
Total Applicable Cases	22	11	12	45	
Not Applicable Cases	9	6	5	20	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	91%	100%	83%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 2

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 91.1 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 33 (94 percent) of the 35 applicable foster care cases and 8 (80 percent) of the 10 applicable in-home services cases.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that DCFS was not consistent in its efforts to assess children's educational needs and provide appropriate services to meet those needs.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Created an Educational Passport to track educational needs and services
- Coordinated work between local area networks and the Educational Access Project to provide timely education advocacy and support
- Implemented the IA which includes an assessment of educational needs

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

Findings pertaining to the single item assessed under Well-Being Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 21 was applicable for 45 (69 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if either of the following applied: Children were not of school age, or children in the in-home services 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 the assessment of item 21 are presented in the table below.

Item 21 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	20	11	10	41	91
Area Needing Improvement	2	0	2	4	9
Total Applicable Cases	22	11	12	45	
Not Applicable	9	6	5	20	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	91%	100%	83%		

Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 41 cases 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 when reviewers determined the following:

- The child’s educational needs were neither assessed nor addressed (one case).
- The child had identified educational needs that were not addressed (three cases).

Rating Determination

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 91 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a rating of Strength. A 95-percent standard is established for this item because it is the only item assessed for this outcome. Item 21 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State procedure requires DCFS to prepare an educational plan for all children as part of the overall case plan within 30 days of temporary custody. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the educational plan and the child’s

progress are to be reviewed, evaluated, and updated at least every 6 months as part of the case planning process. Children's case records should contain current school information, progress, educational history, and basic educational screenings. The Statewide Assessment notes that DCFS ensures the provision of educational services outside of the mandated responsibility of public school districts or the Illinois State Board of Education. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that all children younger than 5 years old receive a developmental screen when they enter substitute care as part of the IA program.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that, for intact families, efforts must be made by caseworkers to obtain parental consent to access educational information on all children and provide advocacy and assistance in acquiring educational services on an ongoing basis.

According to the Statewide Assessment, children should be enrolled in school within 2 days of entering substitute care or being moved to a new placement requiring a change in schools. Whenever possible, the placement for the child should be located in the same community and the same school district.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to meet the educational needs of children:

- DCFS established the Educational Passport, a database that provides a comprehensive picture of the youth's academic performance.
- The DCFS Educational Access Project provides technical assistance to caseworkers, parents, foster and adoptive parents, school personnel, court officials, and others on behalf of individual youth who experience education-related problems.
- The IA includes an educational assessment.
- School Minder, a geographic information system that identifies placements within a school district, ensures that children entering the child welfare system are placed within the same school district whenever possible.
- The Family Centered Services initiative, a coordinated and integrated statewide network of services, has a focus on educational support services.
- The DCFS Statewide School Readiness Team ensures that all children from age 3 to 5 years old are enrolled in a quality early learning program.
- The DCFS Alternative School Network consists of 17 community-based alternative high schools for DCFS youth who are out of school and do not have a high school diploma or general education degree.
- DCFS provides tuition payment for DCFS youth attending one of the 50 community colleges in the State and a scholarship program to provide 4 years of supplemental services through the Youth in College and the Youth in Transition programs.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 91.1 percent of the foster care cases reviewed and 78.5 percent of the intact family cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DCFS works collaboratively with educational systems on behalf of children in foster care. Various stakeholders identified the following programs as addressing the educational needs of children in foster care:

- Early Intervention developmental assessments are available for children younger than 5 years of age.
- There is an effort to place children in the same school district to minimize disruption.
- Every child between 3 and 5 years old must be enrolled in an educational program.
- There are scholarships and financial support for youth to attend college and vouchers for education and training programs for youth.
- Services such as Individualized Educational Plans and tutoring are routinely implemented and reviewed as needed.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	23	11	10	44	78.6
Partially Achieved	3	2	1	6	10.7
Not Achieved	2	2	2	6	10.7
Total Applicable Cases	28	15	13	56	
Not Applicable Cases	3	2	4	9	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	82%	73%	77%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 78.6 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 33 (82.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases and 11 (69 percent) of the 16 applicable in-home services cases.

Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that DCFS did not consistently make concerted efforts to meet children’s physical and mental health needs. Meeting mental health needs was a particular concern, as was the inadequate number of health-care providers that accept Medicaid.

To address the identified concern, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented the IA, including an assessment of physical and mental health needs
- Established linkages with vision care centers to provide children with options for vision care
- Implemented the DCFS Children’s Mental Health Plan
- Implemented the CAYIT and SOC programs
- Established a partnership among DCFS, DHS, and the Department of Public Aid (DPA) to create a single-entry point for foster parents to access crisis and psychiatric services

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

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

Item 22. Physical health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 22 was applicable for 50 (77 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 children’s physical health needs (including dental needs) had been appropriately assessed, and the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of the assessment of item 22 are presented in the table below.

Item 22	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	22	9	9	40	80
Area Needing Improvement	5	2	3	10	20
Total Applicable Cases	27	11	12	50	
Not Applicable Cases	4	6	5	15	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	81%	82%	75%		

Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 33 (82.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases and 7 (70 percent) of 10 applicable in-home services cases. Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 40 cases when reviewers determined that children's medical and dental needs were routinely assessed and necessary services were provided. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 10 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child's physical health needs were not assessed (five cases).
- The child's physical health needs were not addressed (eight cases).
- The child's dental health needs were not assessed (five cases).
- The child's dental health needs were not addressed (four cases).

Rating Determination

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 80 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was effective in assessing and meeting children's physical health needs. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 22 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS policy requires that each child in protective custody receive an Initial Health Screening within 24 hours and prior to placement. A Comprehensive Health Evaluation is required within 21 days of temporary custody. The Statewide Assessment notes that preventive dental services are provided to all children. The Statewide Assessment reports that, for intact families, caseworkers must make efforts to obtain parental consent to access medical health information on all children to monitor and meet their medical health needs on an ongoing basis.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to meet the medical health needs of children:

- DCFS nurses are assigned to each of the six DCFS regions and provide consultation with child welfare staff.
- The IA includes an assessment of physical health needs.
- DCFS established a procedure to consolidate practices for children with special health-care needs.
- Medicaid coverage is extended for youth transitioning to independence.
- The SPD provides a resource for caseworkers to locate services for families, including health services.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 85.0 percent of foster care cases reviewed and 83.1 percent of intact cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that access to Medicaid-funded specialized services, such as orthodontic and general dental care, vision care, and hearing services, is not uniformly available throughout the State, particularly in rural counties and smaller towns where provider availability is a significant issue.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in assessing and meeting the medical needs of children. Several stakeholders noted that DCFS uses the SPD to identify available health services for families. Some Winnebago County stakeholders indicated that dental services are available but special services such as orthodontia are not available. Most Cook County and McLean County stakeholders indicated that there are not enough dentists available who will accept Medicaid outside of Cook County and that there are waiting lists for dental services.

Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 23 was applicable for 35 (54 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 mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The results of the assessment of item 23 are presented in the table below.

Item 23 Ratings	Cook	McLean	Winnebago	Total	Percent
Strength	18	6	7	31	89
Area Needing Improvement	0	2	2	4	11
Total Applicable Cases	18	8	9	35	
Not Applicable Cases	13	9	8	30	
Total Cases	31	17	17	65	
Strength by Site	100%	75%	78%		

Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 24 (96 percent) of the 25 applicable foster care cases and 7 (70 percent) of the 10 applicable in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 31 cases 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 four cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- Mental health needs were not assessed (two cases).
- Mental health needs were not addressed (four cases).

Rating Determination

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, for intact families, caseworkers must make efforts to obtain parental consent to access mental health information on all children to monitor and meet their needs on an ongoing basis. Mental and behavioral health services are available to the children in intact cases who qualify for Medicaid. For foster care cases, mental and behavioral health services are available for all children and youth for whom DCFS has placement and care responsibility.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following strategies as facilitating the ability of DCFS to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of children:

- The IA includes an assessment of mental health and behavioral health needs.
- The Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership provides a comprehensive, coordinated approach to prevention, early intervention, and treatment of children up to the age of 18.
- The SOC program wraps services around a child with behavioral health needs to stabilize the placement and minimize disruption.
- The Residential Placement Monitoring Unit ensures that children in residential care receive quality services.
- The Screening, Assessment, and Support Services program provides services to children in psychiatric crisis.
- The Transitional Living Program provides continuity of care for children making the transition into the adult mental health system.
- The DCFS Office of Psychiatric Services provides temporary but immediate services through clinics until a permanent psychiatrist is found in the community.
- DCFS consulting psychologists provide assistance to caseworkers and coordinate service provision.
- TIPP provides training and certification to caseworkers.
- The SPD provides a resource for caseworkers to locate services for families, including mental health services.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OER results indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 87.5 percent of foster care cases reviewed and 83.5 percent of intact cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that in some areas of the State, there are limited or no mental health resources available.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that mental health, substance abuse treatment, psychological, or psychiatric services for children are not always readily available in various parts of the State. Some Stakeholders indicated that caseworkers have been trained to assess the effects of the trauma that children in foster care have experienced. Several stakeholders noted that DCFS uses the SPD to identify available mental health services for families.

SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

This section of the CFSR Final Report provides information regarding the State’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors examined during the CFSR. Information on the items included under each systemic factor comes from the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders held during the onsite CFSR. Additional information may come from other Federal reports or assessments.

Each item included in a systemic factor reflects a key Federal program requirement relevant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) for that systemic factor. The overall rating for each systemic factor is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor. For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” with that factor (i.e., a score of 3 or 4) or “not in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 1 or 2). Specific requirements for each rating are shown in the table below.

Rating the Systemic Factor

Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
1	2	3	4
None of the CFSP or program requirements is in place.	Some or all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

It should be noted that ratings for the items included in each systemic factor are not based on single comments from an individual stakeholder; however, these comments are included in the report when they provide important insights or clarification on the State’s performance on a particular systemic factor.

If a State is not in substantial conformity with a particular systemic factor, then that factor must be addressed in the State’s Program Improvement Plan. For each systemic factor, information is provided about the State’s performance in its first CFSR as well as in the current CFSR. If the systemic factor was part of the State’s Program Improvement Plan, the key concerns addressed in the Program Improvement Plan and the strategies for assessing those concerns are noted.

I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

Status of Statewide Information System

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the item assessed under Statewide Information System are presented and discussed below.

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

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength. Illinois's primary child welfare information systems can readily identify the legal status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for every child in foster care. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Illinois is operating statewide information systems that identify the status, demographic characteristics, placement type, location, and permanency goal for every child who is or has been in the care of the State. The State's primary information systems are linked and include the following:

- Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) is a management information system that allows public agency and private agency staff to enter and retrieve information related to investigations, assessments, case records, and service planning.
- Child and Youth Centered Information System (CYCIS) is a historical management information system that maintains demographic data, and placement and goal information, and provides authorization for payments to providers of foster care services. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data are obtained from CYCIS.

- The Management Accounting and Reporting System tracks information regarding service providers and licensed caregivers, including criminal background history, and generates payments to service providers.

The Statewide Assessment notes that DCFS produces a range of data management reports using data from the information systems on a regular basis.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State’s information systems—SACWIS and CYCIS—capture the legal status, demographics, location, and goals for every child in foster care. Some stakeholders noted that DCFS and POS caseworkers enter information directly into SACWIS regarding investigations, assessments, service planning, and court reports, although DCFS and POS caseworkers have different levels of access. Some stakeholders indicated that CYCIS and SACWIS produce useful reports and reminders that are used by management and supervisors to track key case milestones and case progress.

II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

Status of Case Review System

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- In many of the cases reviewed, case plans did not reflect the needs and problems identified in the assessment process.
- Case plans were not consistently developed jointly with the child’s parents, particularly fathers.
- There were barriers to pursuing TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA, including the extensive screening process that agency attorneys must conduct in order to file a TPR petition.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Implemented a CFTM process and the Fatherhood Initiative to increase the involvement of parents in case planning
- Implemented mechanisms to help ensure timely approval of permanency goal changes and timely movement of cases through the Cook County court system

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Case Review System are presented and discussed below.

Item 25. The State 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 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although Illinois makes concerted efforts to ensure that every child has a case plan, information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that parents are not consistently involved in case planning. In addition, during the onsite CFSR, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve mothers in case planning in 63 percent of the applicable cases and fathers in case planning in 53 percent of the applicable cases. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State statute requires that each child served directly by DCFS or through POS agencies must have a case plan. The initial service plan for families is developed at the time of case handoff from the investigative unit to the follow-up unit, whether to an intact case unit or to a placement unit. The plan must be completed and reviewed within the first 45 days. The Statewide Assessment notes that the service plan must be updated at frequent intervals or when the dynamics of a family change.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the following processes are in place to engage parents in the development of the case plan:

- The initial comprehensive assessment for intact cases and the IA for placement cases
- The initial family meeting and ongoing CFTMs
- The discussion of the written plan with the family members and the incorporation of their feedback into the plan
- The requirement that the family must sign the case plan
- The ACR, which is conducted every 6 months

The Statewide Assessment reports the following OER results:

- A current service plan was found in 97.2 percent of placement cases and 86.4 percent of intact cases (including those in which a child has been reunified).
- For foster care cases, efforts were made to engage mothers in 83.3 percent of cases and fathers in 66.2 percent of cases.
- For intact cases, efforts were made to engage mothers in 91.8 percent of cases and fathers in 81.8 percent of cases.
- CFTMs occurred in 55 percent of reviewed cases.

The Statewide Assessment identified the following concerns expressed by stakeholders surveyed pertaining to the involvement of parents in case planning:

- Birth parents in the Southern and Northern Regions do not have input into the contents of the case plan.
- CFTMs are not helpful in engaging parents in case planning.
- High caseworker caseloads affect the ability of the caseworker to schedule and convene quarterly CFTMs.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The key concerns addressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were whether every child has a case plan and whether parents are involved in developing the child’s case plan.

With regard to whether every child has a case plan, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State generally ensures that a case plan is developed for each child in a timely manner.

Stakeholders expressed different opinions with regard to whether parents are involved in developing the child’s case plan. Although some McLean County stakeholders indicated that DCFS consistently engages parents in case planning, many Cook and Winnebago County stakeholders indicated that case plans are not developed jointly with parents, due to both a lack of effort on the part of the agency to engage parents in case planning, and a lack of cooperation on the part of the parents. Despite this difference in opinions, most stakeholders agreed that, when parents are engaged in case planning, they are engaged through the use of the CFTM, CAYIT, and IA processes.

Item 26. The State 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. Illinois has a process to periodically review the status of each child in foster care every 6 months through an ACR. Data from the Statewide Assessment indicate that the ACR was held in a timely manner in 94.1 percent of cases in SFY 2009. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State procedure ensures the periodic review of the status of every child in foster care no less frequently than every 6 months through the ACR. The ACR is an independent review conducted 6 months after a child's placement in substitute care and every 6 months thereafter to review the agency's efforts and family's progress toward achieving the permanency goal. An independent child welfare administrative case reviewer who is not responsible for the case management of the case conducts the ACR. The ACR results in feedback on case status in the form of reports on critical issues such as violations of a rule or law which endanger the safety, well-being, and permanency of children, or chronic issues such as the continued lack of needed services for children. The ACR is scheduled using a database tracking system.

The Statewide Assessment reports that ACR database results show the following information:

- The ACR was held in a timely manner in 94.1 percent of cases statewide in SFY 2009 and 95 percent of cases statewide in SFY 2008.
- The average number of days from the time that the child's permanency goal was established to the time it was achieved decreased from 541 days in SFY 2006 to 327 days in SFY 2009.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the results of the ACR are not included routinely in court reports prepared for the permanency hearing.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The key concerns addressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were whether periodic reviews are conducted in a timely manner and whether these periodic reviews address the status of the child.

With regard to whether periodic reviews are conducted in a timely manner, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that ACRs are held every 6 months for each child in foster care.

With regard to whether periodic reviews address the status of the child, most stakeholders indicated that the ACR reviews the case plan and the goals for the child, assesses progress made by the parents, and makes recommendations to DCFS. A few Cook County and Winnebago County stakeholders indicated that ACR findings are transmitted to the court for review at the permanency hearing. However, a few stakeholders indicated that the court review of ACR findings during the permanency hearing does not occur on a consistent basis because ACR scheduling does not always result in an ACR being held prior to a permanency hearing.

Item 27. The State 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. Illinois ensures that each child in foster care has a permanency hearing in court no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and usually earlier. In addition, Illinois statute requires that permanency hearings must occur every 6 months. Data from the Statewide Assessment indicate that permanency hearings were held within 12 months in 97.71 percent of cases in SFY 2009. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Illinois statute requires that permanency hearings must occur every 6 months. The Statewide Assessment reports that, at the permanency hearing, the court establishes the goal for the child and determines whether the services included in the case plan are appropriate to achieve the goal, whether the child's current placement is necessary and appropriate, and whether all parties have made reasonable efforts to achieve the goal.

The Statewide Assessment reports that Illinois's standard of cases receiving judicial permanency hearings every 6 months exceeds the Federal requirement of 12 months. The Statewide Assessment reports that compliance with the Federal 12-month permanency hearing standard has ranged from 95.77 percent in SFY 2005 to 97.71 percent in SFY 2009. However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that compliance with the State's 6-month permanency hearing requirement has declined from 57.7 percent statewide in SFY 2006 to 55.4 percent statewide in SFY 2008.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in ensuring that the permanency hearing occurs within 6 months of a child's entry into foster care and every 6 months thereafter. These stakeholders reported that, if the 6-month hearing is not held in a timely manner, the hearing always occurs at least within 12 months. Some Cook and Winnebago County stakeholders indicated that delays and continuances in permanency hearings occur in some cases because services are not available to provide to the family or because the family needs more time to complete service requirements.

Some stakeholders indicated that the permanency hearing focuses on the permanency plan and goals for the child and the parents' compliance with the case plan.

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

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although Illinois has a process for TPR proceedings, information in the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that this process is not in compliance with the provisions of ASFA. In addition, onsite case review findings show that ASFA requirements with regard to filing for TPR were met in 37 percent of applicable cases. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, when at least one of the grounds for TPR appears to exist and returning home as a permanency goal for the child is no longer appropriate, DCFS conducts an internal legal screening to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to support a finding that there are grounds for TPR and whether it is in the best interests of the child to seek TPR. The Statewide Assessment reports that, following the internal legal screening, DCFS must submit all necessary paperwork to the State's Attorney, who files petitions for TPR within 30 days.

The Statewide Assessment acknowledges that, despite efforts to improve the timeliness of filing for TPR, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the provision of the Illinois Adoption Act, designed to fulfill ASFA requirements regarding filing for TPR for children who have been in foster care 15 of the past 22 months, is unconstitutional. DCFS cites this Illinois Supreme Court ruling, specified in the Statewide Assessment, as a barrier to ensuring that TPR petitions are filed in accordance with ASFA provisions. No statewide data are provided in the Statewide Assessment to quantify compliance with filing TPR petitions in accordance with the provisions of ASFA.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Key issues addressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were whether the State files TPR petitions in compliance with the provisions of ASFA and whether the State documents compelling reasons not to file TPR petitions.

With regard to whether the State files TPR petitions in compliance with the provisions of ASFA, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State generally does not meet the ASFA requirements for filing TPR petitions. Several stakeholders noted that, due to an Illinois Supreme Court ruling, the decision to file a TPR petition is based on the merits of the case, rather than on how long the child has been in foster care. Some stakeholders indicated that State's Attorneys are reluctant to file TPR petitions even when there has been no improvement in the parent's ability to care for the child. However, some McLean and Winnebago County stakeholders indicated that the legal screening is conducted when a child has been in foster care for 9 months and parents have not progressed in completing case plan goals for reunification.

With regard to whether the State documents compelling reasons not to file TPR petitions, most stakeholders indicated that the State documents compelling reasons not to file TPR petitions in the court report, court order, and/or transcript of the court hearing. Some stakeholders noted that compelling reasons include the provision of additional time for parents to pursue case plan requirements in support of reunification.

Item 29. The State 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 is rated as a Strength. Illinois has a process for notifying caregivers of the ACR and court hearings involving the children in their care. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that this process is implemented as

intended and that caregivers are given the opportunity to be heard in the ACR and court hearings. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, written notice of the ACR shall be mailed to the child’s foster parents or relative caregiver at least 21 calendar days prior to the review to ensure that the notice is received 14 days prior to the scheduled review. The Division of ACR uses an automated system of mailed notices. The Statewide Assessment notes that caregivers have the right to participate and every effort is made for their inclusion in the ACR, either in person or via telephone. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that caseworkers are to inform and invite foster parents to the ACR.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Juvenile Court Act gives foster parents the right to notice of all court hearings and the right to be heard.

The Statewide Assessment reports that ACR data indicate that attendance by foster parents at the ACR was low: In SFY 2008 21.6 percent of foster parents attended the ACR, and in SFY 2009 23.9 percent attended the ACR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in providing notice to foster parents of the ACR and court hearings. Most stakeholders indicated that the agency provides notice to foster parents of the ACR and court hearings and that the ACR automatically generates notices to foster parents sent by mail.

Stakeholders expressed different opinions regarding whether foster parents have the opportunity to be heard in the ACR and in court hearings. Most stakeholders indicated that foster parents have the opportunity to be heard in hearings, both in person and by writing a letter, and that the judge solicits input from foster parents in court hearings. A few stakeholders indicated that caseworkers do not encourage foster parents to participate in hearings.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Status of Quality Assurance System

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under QA System are presented and discussed 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. Illinois has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. The State provides many child welfare services through performance-based POS contracts. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS is responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring standards to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of children in foster care. There are rules and procedures in place defining standards for investigation, assessment, case planning, service provision, placement decisions, and licensing. The Statewide Assessment notes that DCFS has been accredited by the national Council on Accreditation (COA) since 2000 and adheres to COA's nationally recognized standards of excellence in child welfare.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that maltreatment reports that constitute licensing violations on child care facilities are forwarded to the appropriate licensing unit for investigation. The Residential Monitoring Unit provides onsite monitoring of the safety and well-being of children in residential care.

The Statewide Assessment also indicates that performance contracting with the State's 62 POS child welfare agencies recently underwent revisions to better align vendor obligation with timely and progressive permanency planning activities. In addition, the Statewide Assessment indicates that DCFS and POS agencies have developed a comprehensive approach to risk prevention and management to protect the safety and health of children in foster care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that POS agencies operate under performance-based contracts that are reviewed regularly. Some stakeholders indicated that standards of safety are reviewed at the case

level by the ACR process and at the organizational level by the APT. Some stakeholders noted that standards are in place with regard to the administration of psychotropic medication for children, the licensing of caseworkers, and the licensing of foster homes and child care institutions with regard to the protection of the safety and health of children in foster care.

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. Illinois has a multifaceted QA system that evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides management reports, and evaluates program improvement measures. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that QA findings result in local Program Improvement Plans that are monitored at the State level. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the DCFS Division of QA and Division of Program Monitoring are responsible for ensuring that structured QA, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), and other monitoring activities are implemented by DCFS and POS agencies.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following QA processes:

- The OERs and Regional Program Improvement Plan Workgroup process are outcome-based review processes that mirror the Federal CFSR and include both DCFS and POS agencies.
- The CQI process is based on Regional Quality Councils that have been established in each of the six DCFS regions. Local CQI teams conduct peer record reviews and monitor program evaluation data.
- The DCFS APT is responsible for monitoring the provision of quality services by contracted POS agencies and by DCFS.
- POS agencies operate under performance-based contracts and use a variety of CQI activities to evaluate their own internal casework activities and outcomes.
- The Statewide Licensing Quality Improvement process includes a quarterly peer review of licensing records, a survey of foster and adoptive parents, an evaluation of programs, and the review of licensing complaints.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State conducts statewide QA activities on a consistent basis. Several stakeholders indicated that a sample of foster care cases, intact family cases, DCFS cases, and POS cases are reviewed quarterly using the APT, OER, and supervisory and peer review processes. Some stakeholders also noted that

stakeholder surveys are used as part of the QA process. Several stakeholders noted that data are used regularly to review practices and make improvements.

Several stakeholders reported that the results of QA reviews are analyzed at local, regional, and State levels; include a feedback loop; and are used to create and monitor local and agency-specific Program Improvement Plans and inform State policy. Some stakeholders also indicated that individual DCFS and POS agencies are ranked according to the results of QA reviews.

IV. STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

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

Status of Staff and Provider Training

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Staff and Provider Training are presented and discussed below.

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

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as a Strength. Illinois provides a Foundations Training course for new caseworkers, licensing staff, investigators, and their supervisors that supports the goals and objectives of the CFSP. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the training is comprehensive, prepares participants for their job duties, and is completed prior to receiving a caseload. Training participation is tracked by the State and participants must pass an examination. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all new DCFS and POS intact and placement caseworkers, licensing staff, investigators, and their supervisors are required to complete the DCFS 9-week Foundations Training course, pass an examination, and obtain a Child Welfare Employee License prior to carrying a caseload. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that Foundations Training includes 5 weeks of field-based training and is offered frequently enough that new hires have a course available to them shortly after they are hired. The Statewide Assessment indicates that, for learning purposes, new child welfare staff have up to four cases assigned to them. However, these cases are also assigned to a veteran caseworker who has primary case responsibility.

In addition to the license, the Statewide Assessment notes that all DCFS and POS child protection investigators, child welfare specialists, and their supervisors must obtain and maintain certification in their specialized position. Certification is issued on completion of the required job-specific Foundations Training course. The Statewide Assessment also notes that all supervisors must complete 10 days of DCFS management training in addition to Foundations Training.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the Virtual Training Center (VTC) tracks staff participation in training and the Office of Training assesses the effectiveness of the Foundations Training curriculum.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that Foundations Training is required for all DCFS and POS caseworkers and must be completed prior to the assignment of a caseload. Several stakeholders noted that Foundations Training is effective in preparing caseworkers for skills required on the job.

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. Illinois requires caseworkers and supervisors to obtain at least 20 hours of ongoing training within every 2-year period. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the training addresses the skills relevant to the job duties of specific staff members. Participation in training is tracked by the State. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all DCFS and POS child welfare specialists, child protection investigators, and their supervisors are required to obtain at least 20 hours of ongoing, in-service training within every 2-year period. The Statewide Assessment indicates that ongoing training for DCFS and POS staff is tracked in the VTC.

The Statewide Assessment notes that ongoing training needs of caseworkers are identified through the following practices:

- The Professional Development Plan is prepared for each individual caseworker by a trainer and the caseworker's supervisor and is evaluated and updated annually.
- The Statewide Quality Council uses QA data to identify ongoing training needs of staff.
- The Training Request Process allows for individual requests for training from staff.

In addition to ongoing training provided through the VTC, the Statewide Assessment notes that DCFS has developed Learning Collaboratives to enhance knowledge and provide support to field staff.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that ongoing training is required for DCFS and POS caseworkers and supervisors to maintain their licenses and that compliance with ongoing training requirements is tracked. Some stakeholders indicated that caseworkers meet the ongoing training requirements. Some stakeholders also indicated that the Learning Collaboratives and other training opportunities are widely available and relevant to the demands of the job.

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. Illinois provides initial and ongoing training for foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of child care institutions. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that training is provided prior to the placement of children in a home and prepares foster and adoptive parents to meet the needs of children in their care. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following training is required for caregivers:

- Both DCFS and POS foster caregivers are required to complete 27 hours of Foster Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) or Adopt PRIDE training prior to licensing.
- DCFS and POS relative caregivers are required to complete 6 hours of Foster PRIDE or Adopt PRIDE training prior to licensing.
- DCFS and POS licensed foster and relative caregivers are required to complete 16 hours of in-service training every 4 years to maintain their licenses.
- Adoptive parents are required to complete a minimum of 10 hours of adoption conversation training.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the VTC tracks caregiver training and that compliance with training requirements is at 100 percent.

The Statewide Assessment notes that caregivers also have the opportunity to attend the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Conference and Caregiver Institutes and that feedback on evaluations of these events was overwhelmingly positive.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the initial PRIDE training and ongoing training provided to caregivers is both required and helpful in preparing foster and adoptive parents to meet the needs of children in their care. Some stakeholders indicated that, although there may be short waiting lists for initial or ongoing training, there are few delays in licensing or placement. A few stakeholders indicated that training is available to relatives whether they wish to pursue licensing or not.

V. SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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

Status of Service Array and Resource Development

Illinois is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. Illinois also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- Although the State allocated significant resources to services, the level of existing services did not meet the needs of children and families involved in the child welfare system.
- There were significant service gaps including the following: appropriate out-of-home placement resources, particularly for adolescents; children’s mental health services; culturally responsive services; and services to address family issues of substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence.
- Services were not accessible in all parts of Illinois, and in some areas where services were available there were long waiting lists to access the services.

- The DCFS assessment process was not consistently effective in identifying the unique needs of children and families and there was a lack of individualization of services in Cook County.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Conducted an assessment of services available to address developmental needs, educational needs, physical health needs, and mental health needs
- Implemented contractual enhancements with providers to improve service accessibility and ensure accountability of services being provided to children and families

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Service Array and Resource Development are presented and discussed below.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that Illinois has a comprehensive array of assessment and treatment services to meet the needs of children and families. Although performance in the onsite case reviews indicates that, in practice, children and families are not consistently receiving the services that they need, information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has an adequate array of services. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS is required to conduct an annual Statewide Assessment of service needs and service delivery problems leading to issue identification, resource development, and other administrative action. For example, the Statewide Assessment reports that DCFS conducts an annual review of the intact family services array to review contracts on an ongoing basis to identify gaps in services or change contracts with existing providers to ensure that needed services are being made available to children and families. The Statewide Assessment reports that services delivered to children and families include comprehensive assessment, CAYIT, CFTM, ACR, family preservation, FCS, children’s mental health and behavioral services, AODA programs, foster care, family reunification, adoption, and youth development.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the SPD provides a resource for caseworkers to locate services for families via a computerized geo-mapping system. The database shows where all children are placed and their proximity to needed services.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State provides a comprehensive array of key assessment and treatment services to meet the needs of children and families in the State. Some stakeholders also indicated that the SPD provides useful information regarding the services available and the proximity of those services to children and families.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that, although Illinois has programs in place to facilitate access to needed services, there are many jurisdictions with waiting lists for key services such as parenting classes, IL services, health services, and mental health services. Furthermore, some of these services are not available in certain areas, particularly Downstate. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the SPD identifies gaps in services and is designed to incorporate features of services that can overcome barriers to access and utilization such as transportation vouchers, child care, and flexible service delivery. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the information in the SPD is used to develop services to fill the gaps identified in service coverage throughout the State.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following concerns regarding the accessibility of services:

- In some areas of the State, there are limited mental health resources available or, in some areas, none at all.
- Access to Medicaid-funded specialized services, such as orthodontic and general dental care, vision care, and hearing services are not uniformly available throughout the State, particularly in rural counties and smaller towns where provider availability is a significant access issue.
- Staff in the field are not using the SPD as extensively as possible due in part to ineffective training on how to use the system.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that stakeholders surveyed in the preparation of the Statewide Assessment reported that there are waiting lists and a lack of sufficient service providers for parenting skills groups; IL services; health and mental health services; and dental, vision, and hearing services.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Various stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR identified the following gaps in services in various parts of the State:

- There are fewer services located Downstate than in other areas of the State.
- Although the agency makes transportation services available to families, families sometimes have to travel long distances to access services.
- There are not enough service providers that will accept Medicaid.
- There are not enough foster homes to meet the need for foster homes in general, and particularly for older youth and youth with developmental disabilities.
- There are waiting lists for the following services: teen parenting, sexual abuse treatment for victims and offenders, affordable housing, orthodontia, child psychiatry, mental health treatment, counseling, substance abuse screening and treatment, residential treatment, parenting, and independent living.

Several stakeholders noted that DCFS uses the SPD to identify gaps in services and to focus resources on developing the services that are missing.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has developed various mechanisms and has flexible funding to individualize services, information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State does not have the capacity to provide linguistically appropriate services consistently to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking families. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CANS, used during the IA, the CAYIT, in residential settings, and within other programs for service planning, is the main tool used by caseworkers to assess the individual needs of children and families served by DCFS and POS agencies. The Statewide Assessment notes that there is a flexible funding process to provide for POS and ensure that services are provided to families and children, including foster parents, that meet their unique needs.

However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that, although DCFS is required to provide services in Spanish to Hispanic clients whose primary language is Spanish, it is a challenge to hire bilingual Spanish-speaking caseworkers, investigators, and mental health testing providers, particularly in the Northern Region and Cook County.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there is a shortage of Spanish-speaking service providers in many, but not all, areas of the State. Some stakeholders noted that this shortage applies to a range of services including investigations, assessment services, parenting services, and foster homes.

Some stakeholders indicated that, despite the ability to tailor services, sometimes families have identical case plans. Several stakeholders indicated that the State uses the following tools to individualize and tailor services and service plans for children and families: CANS, IA, CFTM, and CAYIT. Some stakeholders indicated that flexible funds are available to stabilize families and provide payment for housing, education, or other services.

VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Illinois is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Agency Responsiveness to the Community are presented and discussed 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. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that, in preparing the CFSP, Illinois engages in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders including Tribes, clients, youth, staff, the court, statewide advisory councils, and service providers. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS draws expertise from various members of the child welfare stakeholder community in preparing the CFSP including children in foster care, substitute caregivers and adoptive parents, local communities, employees, the legislature, the court, the law enforcement community, service providers, university partners, statewide advisory councils, and child advocacy organizations.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following advisory relationships with various advocacy groups:

- DCFS created the Partnering with Parents Program and established Parent Partner Councils to advise DCFS on issues affecting families involved with DCFS.
- The DCFS partnership with the Citizen Review Panels resulted in recommendations and implementation of new training curricula.
- The ICWA Advocacy Program ensures DCFS compliance with ICWA.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that, in developing the CFSP, DCFS consults with a variety of advisory groups and committees representing the following groups: the judiciary, private agency providers, foster care providers, youth, diverse racial and ethnic populations, community based providers, Tribes, and other government agencies.

Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, Annual Progress and Services Reports pursuant to the CFSP

 X Strength ___ Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength. Illinois works collaboratively with advisory groups and additional community stakeholders on an ongoing basis and incorporates into the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) input from stakeholders throughout the State. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, advisory groups and service providers prepare annual reports for DCFS that are the basis for the development of the APSR. The Statewide Assessment notes that DCFS shares data and information with advisory groups, including CFSR standards, outcomes, Program Improvement Plan action steps, and the CFSP.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive comments from stakeholders regarding this item during the onsite CFSR.

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. Illinois DCFS coordinates services with the services and benefits of other programs including those administered by DHS, child support, education agencies, the Department of Public Health (DPH), and DPA. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, there is coordination between DCFS and DHS regarding services to families who are eligible for TANF. In addition, DCFS collaborates with the DHS Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse to fund substance abuse treatment for individuals with active DCFS cases. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that DCFS collaborates with other State and public agencies including the Illinois Attorney General, the Illinois State Board of Education, DPH, DPA, the DHS Division of Disability and Behavioral Health Services, Community Operations, and Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, the Illinois State Police, State’s Attorneys, local school districts, and county and local police departments.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that, to address the needs of mutual populations being served by different agencies, DCFS coordinates services with the services provided by other programs administered by DHS, AOIC, child support enforcement, education agencies, and juvenile justice agencies.

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

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

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

Illinois is in substantial conformity with this systemic factor. Illinois also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2009 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention are presented and discussed below.

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

 X Strength _____ Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that Illinois has implemented standards in statute and policy for foster homes and child care institutions. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State statute requires that all foster homes and child care institutions meet licensing standards and maintain a valid license in order to have children placed in their care, without exception. DCFS is accredited by COA and sets licensing standards accordingly. The Statewide Assessment notes that the Office of Licensing ensures that the licensing standards are reviewed every 3 years, at a minimum.

The Statewide Assessment reports that DCFS issues all licenses, although foster and adoptive families can be supervised either by contracted POS agencies or by DCFS. Child care institutions are only supervised and licensed by DCFS. The Statewide Assessment also reports that caseworkers have 6 months to complete the licensing process once an application has been received and that licenses are valid for 4 years. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that monitoring visits for all licensed foster homes are conducted at least twice each calendar year and that monitoring visits for child care institutions are conducted at least annually.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the Statewide Licensing Quality Improvement process includes quarterly peer review of licensing records, quarterly surveying of foster and adoptive parents, evaluation of programs through data collection and analysis, and the review of licensing complaints.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has licensing standards that are in accordance with COA standards and are applied to all licensed foster homes, adoptive homes, and child care institutions. Several stakeholders indicated that monitoring visits are conducted to review licensed placements every 6 months and that caseworkers visit children in foster homes at least monthly. A few stakeholders indicated that licensed homes found to be out of compliance with standards are addressed through corrective action plans and closed if necessary.

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. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the same licensing standards are applied to all DCFS- and POS-licensed foster homes and child care institutions. Licensed relative caregivers must meet the same standards except that the required number of training hours is reduced. In addition, the title IV-E Eligibility Review held in August 2007 found that the State was in compliance with all title IV-E requirements, including licensing requirements. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment

According to the Statewide Assessment, all foster and adoptive homes and child care institutions must meet the same criteria for licensing. There are no exceptions. However, relative caregivers are not required to be licensed and, if they choose to become licensed, modified training requirements apply. In addition, the director has the ability to waive any standard not prohibited by law for foster and adoptive home licenses. Safety standards are not waived.

The Statewide Assessment notes that relative homes must meet a set of prescribed standards and DCFS strongly encourages relatives to become licensed. The goal of the Unlicensed Home of a Relative Initiative is to license 80 percent of eligible relative homes by June 2010, and the initiative has already increased the number of applications for licensure by unlicensed relatives from 24 in 2007 to 1,263 between January and April 2009. Currently there are 4,313 children placed in 2,850 unlicensed relative homes. The Statewide Assessment reports that an evaluation of the incidence of maltreatment by care type and licensing status showed that the lowest rate of maltreatment was for children in licensed kinship placements, followed by licensed non-relative foster care placements, and the highest rate of maltreatment for children in foster care was for children in non-licensed kinship placements.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that, although standards generally are the same for licensed relative and non-relative foster parents, the training provisions for licensing are modified for relative caregivers. Some stakeholders noted that safety standards are not waived and that waivers of non-safety licensing provisions are issued in very

few cases when placement is in the best interests of the child. Several stakeholders reported that unlicensed relative caregivers are encouraged to become licensed.

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. Information in the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that Illinois complies with Federal criminal background clearance requirements for prospective foster and adoptive parents and all adults in licensed foster and adoptive placements. In addition, the title IV-E Eligibility Review held in August 2007 found that the State was in compliance with all title IV-E requirements, including requirements for criminal background clearances. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS Office of Licensing fingerprints all adult members of the household in order to ensure uniform application of the criminal history check. The criminal history check includes a check of child abuse/neglect, sex offender registries, and the National Crime Information Database.

The Statewide Assessment reports that DCFS collaborated with the Illinois State Police and the Office of Inspector General to revise the criminal background check protocol resulting in improved information and coordination. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that DCFS collaborated with the National Crime Information Databases and other State central registries to revise the foster home background check protocol.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the Placement Clearance Process established a central repository of information about unlicensed relatives and licensed foster homes.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State conducts criminal background checks on all prospective foster and adoptive parents and adults living in foster care placements consistently. Some stakeholders noted that fingerprints are required and that there are no delays in receiving the results of fingerprint checks.

Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who 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. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that Illinois has a targeted localized Diligent Recruitment Plan to develop placement resources that mirror the ethnicity and race of children in foster care. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State’s Diligent Recruitment Plan develops and supports current foster parents in meeting the needs of children in foster care. The plan directs targeted and individualized recruitment to develop placement resources for children and youth with unique needs and to develop placement resources that mirror the ethnicity, race, and culture of children in foster care.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following recruitment strategies:

- In March 2007, DCFS launched the Permanency Enhancement Initiative to convene a symposium to address the disproportionate number of African-Americans in foster care in each region. The symposium resulted in the formation of local action teams that were charged with developing local action plans, including recruitment strategies.
- The School Minder geographic information system and geo-mapping identify available foster homes and new foster care cases to target recruitment efforts.
- Targeted recruitment is conducted for the following populations: adolescents, sibling groups, Latino children, African-American children, children of Asian and Pacific Islander descent, and children of Native American descent.
- Nine Regional Recruitment Councils increase the availability of licensed DCFS foster homes to meet specific placement needs of children coming into foster care in specific locations.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following data, as of June 2009, with regard to the race/ethnicity of licensed foster parents and children in foster care.

Cook County	Foster Homes	Children in Foster Care
African-American	78.6%	79.2%
Hispanic	4.3%	8.4%
White	14.8%	10.2%
Downstate		
African-American	31.4%	38.2%
Hispanic	1.7%	4.2%
White	64.7%	54.9%

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in developing and conducting targeted recruitment activities at the State and local level that focus on increasing the pool of foster homes

to meet the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of children in foster care. Some stakeholders indicated that there is a need for more Latino foster homes for Latino children across the State and Winnebago County stakeholders indicated that there are not enough foster homes of any type for the children in foster care in that county.

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. Illinois uses several cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate the timely placement of children including the ICPC and **AdoptUsKids**. This item also was rated as a Strength in Illinois’s 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State uses the following strategies to identify and facilitate timely adoptive and permanent placements for waiting children:

- The One Family One Child program identifies placements for youth with juvenile justice histories.
- The Adoption Information Center of Illinois’s Adoption Listing Services and Heart Gallery provide photo listing and media campaigns.
- The ICPC process expedites placement across State lines.
- The **AdoptUsKids** national recruitment campaign registers children nationwide.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that the ICPC unit manages requests from other States and that there are delays from other States in processing ICPC requests from Illinois.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there are no delays in making placements across county or State lines. Some stakeholders also indicated that there are no barriers to placing children in permanent placements with suitable relatives that are identified across county or State lines.