Child and Family Connections
Community Based Care Annual Summary of Quality Assurance Review Findings

Report to Headquarters Office of Family Safety
July 2010

The findings discussed in this annual report for Fiscal Year 2009-2010 are from the 52 files assigned as Base Reviews conducted during the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Quarters by Child and Family Connections. The reviews were conducted utilizing the Quality of Practice Standards Case Management Services from the Family Safety Program Office.

Overall Performance in Achieving Safety, Permanency and Well-Being
Below are the results for safety, permanency, well-being and federal Child and Family Services Review for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Quarters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year 2009-2010</th>
<th>Quarter 2</th>
<th>Quarter 3</th>
<th>Quarter 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety Outcome 1 %Yes</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Outcome 2 %Yes</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanency Outcome 1 %Yes</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>88%</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well-Being Outcome 2 %Yes</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well-Being Outcome 3 %Yes</td>
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<td>Federal Child and Family Services Review %Yes</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall % of Yes Responses</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>84%</td>
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In Quarter 4, Child and Family Connections ended the quarterly case file reviews with an increase in the percentage of overall Yes Responses on the tool. In addition, the area of Safety, Outcome 1 which includes standards for re-abuse or re-neglect and actions taken to address the safety of the child continued to improve throughout the quarters, with compliance at 92% for the 3rd Quarter and 95% for the 4th Quarter. A decrease from the 2nd Quarter was noted in both subsequent quarters in the area of Safety, Outcome 2 which includes standards for assessments. The change may be attributed to the requirement that all family assessments must be in FSFN. During both the 3rd and 4th Quarters, Request for Actions (RFAs) were issued for the cases lacking a six-month family assessment or one that was not updated during a critical juncture in the case.

Continued improvement in standards associated with both Permanency Outcome groupings were noted this year. Most significant may be the increase between Quarters 3 and 4 for Permanency,
Outcome 2, which increased by 13%. Stability or improvement in Yes Responses for questions as to visitation with parents and siblings, maintaining important connections, ICWA inquiries, and parent participation in decision making were found in this particular grouping. When considering the Well-Being Outcomes, Outcome 1, resulted in a 13% improvement from the Quarter 2 to Quarter 4. Communication with service providers, ongoing assessment of the needs of the case participants, as well as service worker visits (frequency and quality) are all areas assessed for this Well-Being category and which demonstrated stability or improvement throughout the reviews this year.

Summary of Case Management Practice Trends
The following section is a summary of the practice trends noted during these reviews in an effort to provide an analysis and evaluation of the following areas: Assessment, Family Engagement, Service Planning and Provision, Promoting Case Progress, and Supervisory Review and Oversight.

Assessment

Six Month Family Assessment: The updated family assessment focused on the immediate and prospective safety of the child, as well as any changes and implication in the family’s situation related to emerging concerns and service needs. This year a notable decrease was seen in the compliance scores after Quarter 2. While Quarter 2 resulted in a finding of compliance at 53%, it decreased to 12% and 29% for Quarters 3 and 4 respectively. As stated previously, it appears this is due to the requirement that the assessment must be in FSFN. The low compliance percentage reflects cases in which no formal assessment was entered into FSFN although the Service Worker may have been completing informal ongoing assessments of the family. The overall finding for this area of assessment is 31%

Ongoing Assessment of the Child’s Needs: This area remained relatively stable throughout the reviews this year. The overall finding for this area of assessment is 94%.

Ongoing Assessment of the Parent’s Needs: In evaluating the ongoing assessment of the Mother’s Needs for case planning purposes, reviewers found a high level of compliance with the overall finding for this area of assessment being 94%. This is a significant improvement from the 2008-2009 fiscal year in which the overall was 68%. In evaluating the ongoing assessment of the Father’s Needs for case planning purposes, reviewers found an increase from the 2nd and 3rd Quarters (63% and 60% respectively) to a finding of 91% in the 4th Quarter. The overall finding for this area of assessment is 75%, which is a 19% improvement from the 2008-2009 fiscal year overall finding.

Dental Health Needs Assessment: Although, small increases in compliance were noted throughout the quarterly reviews, the overall finding for this area of assessment is 47%.

Family Engagement

Visitation with Parents and Siblings: Concerted efforts were made to ensure visitation (or other contact) between the child and parents and between the child and siblings were sufficient to
maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship between them. Generally, findings in these areas of Family Engagement remained stable throughout the reviews with an overall finding of 90% compliance for the parental visitation and 87% for sibling visitation.

**Engaging the Child’s Mother and Father:** Concerted efforts were made to support parental engagement in services. These two areas of Family Engagement saw an increase each quarter, most significantly, the standard of engaging the Father increased by 35% between the 2nd and 4th Quarters. The overall finding for parental engagement is 91% for the Mother and 65% for the Father.

**Case Planning Process: Family Involvement:** This area remained relatively stable throughout the reviews this year. The overall finding for this area of assessment is 83%.

**Psychotropic Medications Express and Informed Consent or Court Authorization:** There were 10 applicable children reviewed during the quarterly file reviews this year for this area of Family Engagement. Fluctuation in compliance was experienced throughout the quarters, with an overall finding of 70%. Reviewers must consider several sub questions when determining compliance with the child’s well-being in terms of psychotropic medications. For involving the child and parents/legal guardian in the decision making process by facilitating contacts with physicians for treatment planning, the number of Yes responses increased during Quarters 3 and 4 resulting in an overall finding of 88%. In the related question, FSFN Data Accuracy for the child’s prescribed medications, only 44% of the reviews resulted in an overall Yes response, however, this has been monitored on a weekly basis during the 4th quarter and data errors have been eliminated for the last 8 weeks. This will continue to be monitored weekly using the psychotropic medications listing posted in the web portal.

**Service Planning and Provision**

**Service Referrals:** Completed service referrals were consistent with the needs identified. Reviewers continue to see documentation that referrals are being provided to families based on assessed needs. The overall finding for the year is 98%.

**Immediate and Emerging Safety Concerns:** All immediate and emerging safety concerns were addressed and additional needed interventions were provided to protect the child. Due to an unexplained decrease to 56% in the 3rd Quarter from 100% compliance otherwise, the overall finding for this year was 79%. In the most recent Quality Improvement Committee (QIC) held at Child and Family Connections with case management supervisors and Quality Assurance staff, a discussion was held regarding this question and the resulting RFAs to highlight potential issues with quality and compliance for this area of Service Planning and Provision. As a result of the QIC, supervisors identified that areas such as this relate directly back to quality Supervisory Reviews. Both case management agencies identified plans to increase quality and consistency in Supervisory Reviews and believe that this will impact outcomes in this area. CFC Quality Assurance staff will continue to monitor this area.
Efforts to Locate Other Potential Placements: Concerted efforts were made to identify, locate and evaluate other potential relatives and possible permanent placements for the child. The overall finding for this year is 86% with slight increases noted each quarter.

Service Worker Visits: Frequency and Quality of Visits: The frequency and quality of the service worker’s visits with all case participants was sufficient to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency goal, and well-being of the child. Both of these Service Planning and Provision areas increased from last year’s overall findings from reviews completed in 2008-2009. Each quarter resulted in either a slight increase from the previous quarter or overall stabilization. For Service Worker Visits: Frequency of Visits, the overall finding for this year is 83% and the overall for last year was only 65%. For Service Worker Visits: Quality of Visits, the overall finding for this year is 92% and the overall for last year was only 61%.

Promoting Case Progress

Stability of Child’s Placement: The child’s current placement is stable and appropriate to meet the child’s needs with no apparent or significant risks or projections of disruption. The overall finding for this area of Promoting Case Progress is 93% for this year. Also relevant, is the compliance found in the question involving the child experiencing no more than two out-of-home placement settings during the period under review. The overall finding was 91% for Yes Responses.

Case Plan: Timeliness: The case record contained a current (not expired) case plan. Similar to the overall results from the 2008-2009 fiscal year (53%), this year the finding for this area of Promoting Case Progress is 60%. This has been an area of ongoing discussion in Quality Improvement Committees. Since the Case Plan is now contained in FSFN we expect to see an improvement in this measure for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Communication with Service Providers: Reviewers found proof of communication with service providers for case participants, increasing each quarter, with an overall finding of 80%. It is noted that the overall finding for compliance last year was only 66%

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Inquiry: Compliance increased with each quarter with the 4th Quarter resulting in 47% of applicable cases compliant with this inquiry; however, the overall finding is 28%.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Petition: If the child was in out-of-home care for at least 12 of the most recent 22 months or met other ASFA criteria for TPR, a TPR petition was filed or joined. In file reviews during Quarter 3 and 4, a decrease in compliance was noted. The overall finding for the year is 55%. Reviewers are also asked to determine if a TPR petition was not filed, if there were compelling reasons and an exception for not filing the petition was documented. For the 15 cases applicable, the overall finding is 60%. It is important to further note that this was a discussion item during the CFC Stakeholder Interviews conducted during the 2009-2010 year by Regional QA. The timeliness of filing of TPR petitions has generated concern among the stakeholders. In the past, delays in filing by CLS attorneys has resulted in
TPR petitions being filed by either the Foster Children’s Project or the Juvenile Advocacy Project. The CLS Managing Attorney has implemented new internal procedures in the handling of the assignment of cases in an effort to reduce these delays. In addition, stakeholders indicate fewer TPR petitions are being filed due to increased use of the permanent guardianship goal.

**Recruitment of an Adoptive Family:** Twelve files reviewed were applicable for this question in the area of Promoting Case Progress. The overall finding for this year is 83%.

**Independent Living Plans:** If the child is 13 years of age or older and in licensed foster care, the case management agency provided guidance and assistance in developing an educational and career path that is based on the child’s individual abilities and interests. Ten children were applicable during this year’s reviews. This area resulted in an overall finding of 100%.

**Judicial Review (Timeliness and Quality):** While a decrease occurred in Quarter 3, overall compliance with this area for the year is 82%.

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**Supervisory Review and Oversight**

**Supervisory Reviews:** Supervisory reviews are evaluated for the following three standards, resulting in an overall response: reviews are completed quarterly, supervisor considered all aspects of the child’s safety, well-being and permanency and supervisor ensured follow through on guidance and direction or documented the reasons the guidance and direction were no longer necessary. A decrease in compliance occurred after Quarter 2 (88%). Quarter 3 resulted in 61% compliance and Quarter 4 resulted in 65% compliance, with an overall for the year of 71%. This may not necessarily mean that supervisory reviews became less enhanced in quality but could be attributed to reviewers increasing their expectations due to the Mentoring and Modeling Quality Discussion Guides being in effect for some time. CFC Quality Assurance staff will continue to look closely at reviewer expectations and consistency in the 2010-2011 year. It is also important to look at this practice trend area by discussing the sub-questions as well. The requirement for reviews being completed quarterly, every 90 days, was met for 83% of the cases reviewed this year. The reviews included proof that the supervisor considered the child’s safety, well-being and permanency 73% of the time. Finally, indication that the supervisor ensured follow through and guidance occurred in 69% of the cases.

Supervisory reviews have been a focus for the Quality Improvement Committee for Quarter 3 and 4. Each case management agency has developed an action plan to enhance supervisory reviews that should result in increased performance on these standards for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. Also in the upcoming year, CFC will add questions regarding family engagement and discussion of psychotropic medications to our supplemental Supervisory Reviews tool for consideration during the reviews.

**Areas of Excellence**

Ongoing Assessment of the Child’s Needs
Ongoing Assessment of the Parent’s Needs
Visitation with Parents and Siblings
Engaging the Child’s Mother
Service Referrals
Service Worker Visits: Quality of Visits
Stability of Child’s Placement

Child and Family Connections demonstrated strengths in the reviews for the above areas. Two areas of excellence have been noted in prior reviews and continue to be notable strengths. Both Service Referrals and Stability of Child’s Placement are areas where some of the success can be attributed to internal processes that help to ensure continued improvement. The CFC Clinical Department is the single point of access for mental health and behavior services and handles all service referrals through their department. In the community stakeholder interviews conducted by Regional QA for this year, stakeholders acknowledged a growing local service provider network. Stakeholders also acknowledged the availability of services specific to our system of care through local social services agencies and mental health related providers. Stakeholders indicated the service array and availability in the community seems to meet the needs of the families involved within our system of care. The creation of the CFC Resource Specialists, in a joint venture by CFC, the Department and the Community Services Counsel, is seen as being very beneficial in maintaining intact with families and preventing removal. Additionally, Stability of Child’s Placement can be in part credited to the internal standardized review of the CFC Placement department on a semi-annual basis as well as our Child Placing Agencies’ commitment to participate in trainings that affect the population they serve. Family Engagement remains a priority and clearly supporting the Mother’s engagement in services resulted in substantial progress since last year’s reviews. Also, Permanency Staffings are scheduled regularly and facilitated by CFC Permanency Specialists which helps to ensure the high levels of compliance seen in this year’s reviews in the areas of assessment of child and parental needs.

Opportunities for Improvement
Six Month Family Assessment
Dental Health Needs Assessment
Engaging the Father
Case Plan: Timeliness
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Inquiry
Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Petition
Supervisory Reviews

The review also noted the above opportunities for improvement. To address the findings, CFC plans to continue to monitor these areas through the Semi-Annual QA reviews planned for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. These areas that include safety, permanency and well-being objectives will be focal points during upcoming Quality Improvement Committees. While improvement is still necessary, gains were noted in both the areas of Engaging the Father and ICWA.

Summary and Recommendations
The Quality Assurance Department at Child and Family Connections believes that a system wide focus on quality will lead to better safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for the children
we serve. Improving quality is an ongoing process. Identifying qualitative areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement enhances our ability to focus on initiatives and bring this information to the case management organizations. We operate with the idea that quality in casework and services provided to families begins with case management supervisors as they have the responsibility of guiding the front line case managers. This year, CFC approached Quality Improvement Committees differently by stressing the importance of case management supervisory level staff attendance. The focus became bringing data and results directly to the supervisors and action planning for improved results. Also this year, each unit supervisor was provided the detailed report of the review findings for their unit. Supervisors gave positive feedback in regards to the reviewer comments and being able to see the overall scores for their cases. In the 2010-2011 fiscal year, CFC QA plans to begin a new monitoring process with supervisors that will include observing the face-to-face Supervisory Reviews, with QA Managers having the opportunity to track compliance and provide immediate feedback.
Community stakeholder interviews were conducted in Circuit 15 by Regional Quality Assurance staff. Interviews were conducted to address the seven Systemic Factors identified by the Office of Quality Assurance in the “Guidelines for Completing Quality Assurance Reviews.” Interviews consisted of standardized questions for each systemic factor. This summary includes trends identified in the Circuit for the following systemic factors: 1) Statewide Information System, 2) Case Review System, 3) QA System, 4) Staff and Provider Training, 5) Service Array and Resource Development, 6) Agency Responsiveness to Community, and 7) Foster and Adoptive Licensing, Recruitment and Retention.

1) An interview regarding the **Statewide Information System** was conducted with the Southeast Region Administrator. Focus group interviews of child protective investigators and supervisors and case managers and supervisors were not held regarding the Statewide Information System due to extenuating circumstances. If available, this information may have enhanced feedback regarding the use of the Florida Statewide Information System (FSFN). The interview revealed that the Regional Administrator relies upon analytical staff to obtain and analyze FSFN data. The Region has two child protection specialists who extract and analyze FSFN data and reports for management purposes. Daily and monthly reports are routinely captured and distributed to child protection staff and management. This information is utilized for the daily management of child protection investigative activities as well as assessing performance and outcome on a staff and system level.

2) Interviews regarding the **Case Review System** were conducted with a Circuit Court Judge, Children’s Legal Services (CLS) Managing Attorney, Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), Circuit Director, a representative from the Foster Children’s Project of Legal Aid and a foster parent. Interview questions regarding the development and effectiveness of case plans revealed most are developed through a legal process, Mediation, rather than the traditional family centered process addressing the needs of the individual. This perspective allows the individual services and required tasks of parents to be negotiated down due the involvement of the attorneys. The parent’s attorney may not allow specific tasks or services to be included if they are of the opinion it may have an adverse effect on the parent’s rights or legal status. In addition, as the Mediation process is driven by the legal process the development of the case plan does not allow for consideration of all of the necessary evaluations and recommendations. Interviewees acknowledged the judicial system allows for the timely review of cases by scheduling Judicial Reviews every five months rather than every six months. Child and Family Connections (CFC) also hold quarterly Permanency Staffings on all cases addressing the timeliness of achieving case plan goals. Participation of children, foster parents and GALs in hearings and staffings is encouraged by all but those interviewed state there is a need for improvement. The Judge voiced concern about the need for
Community Stakeholder Interviews

children to miss school to attend hearings. However, there have been local efforts made to allow older youth to attend hearings via video conferencing. Several interviewees indicated further efforts need to be made to notify and include the foster parents in the hearings and staffings. The timeliness of filing of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petitions has generated concern among the stakeholders. In the past, delays in filing by CLS attorneys has resulted in TPR petitions being filed by either the Foster Children’s Project or the Juvenile Advocacy Project. The CLS Managing Attorney has implemented new internal procedures in the handling of the assignment of cases in an effort to reduce these delays. In addition, stakeholders indicate fewer TPR petitions are being filed due to increased use of the permanent guardianship goal. There is also generally acknowledged there is a need for improvement in the level and effectiveness of communication between the CLS attorney and case management staff.

3) Interviews regarding the Quality Assurance System were conducted with the Chief Executive Officer and Quality Assurance Director of CFC and the CFC Board of Directors Vice Chair. Interviews revealed CFC’s Quality Assurance system is consistent with the statewide QA plan and design. CFC’s Quality Assurance staff conducted quarterly case management base reviews and participated with Regional Quality Assurance staff in the quarterly case management side-by-side reviews. Other special reviews may be conducted based on need. In addition, CFC Quality Assurance staff has responsibility for annually monitoring all contracts as determined by their Risk Matrix system. Corrective action plans are implemented if necessary. Stakeholders identified that a strength of CFC’s Quality Assurance process and procedures is the ability to gather and analyze pertinent data regarding performance and outcomes. Feedback from review activities and performance reports regarding deficiencies or gaps in performance is routinely shared with the sub-contracted case management providers. The Board of Directors is routinely presented with information which is used to formulate policy and direction. CFC prides itself on the ability to respond quickly to identified needs. All departments, such as Licensing, Training, Administration and Quality Assurance collaborate periodically to determine needs, develop or modify policies and procedures so the agency remains relevant to their clients and the agency’s mission.

4) Interviews regarding the Staff and Provider Training were conducted with the CFC Training Coordinator and a foster parent. All training is conducted in compliance with Florida Administrative Code requirements. CFC staff that provide child welfare services must attain certification in accordance with the DCF requirement. CFC conducts in-house training with classes held on a regularly scheduled basis. The training classes are 6-7 weeks in length with a break of one to two weeks between them. CFC trainers follow the trainees through their field based assessment while the individual supervisors are responsible for ensuring required field based tasks are met. CFC tracks all training activities in a spreadsheet to ensure all requirements are met timely. In addition, trainers shadow trainees in the field to provide guidance and feedback on their performance. The CFC training department also collaborates with the CFC Quality Assurance department and agency administration to determine training needs in order to implement timely specialized training for staff as needed. CFC training staff also conducts “Supervising for Excellence” classes. The foster parent indicated in the
Community Stakeholder Interviews

Interview that it is felt staff does not always receive enough training and this may contribute to turnover which can be problematic for the individual foster parents. All foster parents complete the required Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) classes. In addition, CFC requires the individual child placing agencies to track foster parent in-service training. In-service training is made available both through classes and on-line. Foster parents are afforded opportunities to attend training being provided through any licensed child placing agency rather than being limited to the training provided by their own licensing agency. Day care services are also made available to encourage participation traditional class setting. In addition, CFC conducts an annual survey of foster parents to determine their in-service training needs.

5) Interviews regarding the Service Array and Resource Development were conducted with an Independent Living Youth, Child Protection Team Director, and a social worker for the Children's Advocacy Project. Stakeholders acknowledged a growing local service provider network. Services being abundantly utilized are the Behavioral Analysts and services for victims of domestic violence. However, waiting lists continue to exist for housing and day care. Specialized programs for domestic violence batters are also still in need. Stakeholders also acknowledged the availability of services specific to our system of care through local social services agencies and mental health related providers. Stakeholders indicated the service array and availability in the community seems to meet the needs of the families involved within our system of care. Delays in service provision are believed to be on the part of the individual rather than the lack of the available services. The community providers as a whole are able to track clients and provide feedback to counselors on family engagement. The creation of the Resource Specialists, in a joint venture by CFC, the Department and the Community Services Counsel, is seen as being very beneficial in maintaining intact with families and preventing removal. The Independent Youth who was interviewed stated he was very satisfied with the services he received while in care. Although he entered care at age 17, he was provided with the services which he most needed and they “helped me to succeed”. He also stated he received support from his attorney and Guardian Ad Litem.

6) Interviews regarding the Agency Responsiveness to Community were conducted with the Regional Administrator, CFC Chief Executive Officer and the CFC Board of Directors Vice Chair. Agency Responsiveness to Community speaks to how effectively CFC engages in on-going consultation with various stakeholders and how input from the community is incorporated into the system of care. Interviews revealed there is a sense open communication and interactions exist but there is always room for improvement. CFC maintains a very good level of engagement with their service providers through frequent meetings and reporting. Constant communication is achieved among numerous community agencies, providers and the judiciary through regular meetings. CFC has been effective in working with community partners on several recent projects.
such as mediation, domestic violence and more recently implementing a foster parent initiative. Input from the community is incorporated into the system of care through participation on numerous community committees such as the Independent Living Advisory Council and Independent Living Stakeholders group, the Early Learning Coalition and a Community Service Council committee working on issues addressing the 0-5 age group. In addition, regular meetings are held with all Child Placing Agencies, group care providers and mental health providers.

7) Interviews regarding the **Foster and Adoptive Licensing, Recruitment and Retention** were conducted with a foster parent and CFC’s Program Operations Coordinator for Licensing. CFC conducts recruitment activities in conjunction with their sub-contracted child placing agencies. One agency specializes in medically involved children while two Christian based agencies reach out to the community. All completed foster parent licensing studies are reviewed by the Program Operations Coordinator for approval. This review process also ensures each child placing agency has tracked the required foster parent in-service training annually. A monthly training calendar is shared with all licensing agencies. CFC staff review children’s normalcy plans, exit interviews and incident reports to ensure there are appropriate life style standards in place in the foster homes. Licensing agency staff makes monthly visits to all of the foster homes monthly, (which is in addition to the case manager’s visits), to ensure foster parents continue to be in compliance with requirements and to provide them with support and guidance. In addition, foster parents receive additional support through the Foster Parent Association and the Relative Caregiver Support Group. Collaborative communication amongst all Child Placing Agencies is ensured through monthly meetings held to address pertinent and timely issues and resolve concerns.