Quality Management Annual Summary of
Quality Assurance Review Findings
FY 2009 -2010

The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida is the Lead Agency for Child Welfare in Circuit 20. There are two Case Management Organizations (CMO) under contract with the Children’s Network in a five county area. Lutheran Services of Florida provides services to children and families in Lee and Charlotte counties whereas Family Preservation Services works within Collier, Hendry and Glades counties.

The Children’s Network conducted case management reviews quarterly during the Fiscal Year 2009-2010.

During the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2009-2010, The Department of Children and Families did not require that reviews be completed, however the Children’s Network opted to complete case reviews. The first quarter sample consisted of twenty three (23) cases randomly selected from open cases pulled from the list of children active. The first quarter results may not be comparable for sections where the tool was updated since the tool was revised prior to the second quarter monitoring.

The Children’s Network Quality Management Department conducted Base Reviews of seventeen (17) cases each quarter as well as Side by Side Reviews with the Department of Children and Families of eight (8) cases per quarter in each of the second, third and fourth quarters. Two (2) cases were selected from the cases included in the Side by Side Review for In-Depth reviews during which case participants were interviewed. A random number generator was utilized to derive a sample from the list of cases provided by the Florida Department of Children and Families, organized by case plan goal who were in care during the designated review period for that quarter.

SUMMARY OF CASE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE TRENDS

OVERVIEW:

The Children’s Network achieved overall scores of 82% in the first quarter, 75% in the second, 74% in the third and 80% in the fourth quarter. These scores include the performance for safety, permanency, well-being and Federal Standards (CFSR). In order to maintain performance in areas of excellence and facilitate improvement where needed, trainings on all Quality of Practice Standards were completed at both Case Management Organizations with all Case Managers. In addition, a Quality Management Vault was created on the network computer drive for all case management staff to reference examples of the best practice work products. Documents include: supervisory reviews, family assessments, case plans, response to high risk cases, staffing forms, incident reports, etc.
SAFETY

The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida achieved an overall Safety Outcome of 79% in the second quarter, 65% in the third and 73% in the fourth quarter. Over the course of this fiscal year this outcome has fluctuated. The decrease in the third quarter was primarily a result of the lack of timeliness and completion of both initial and ongoing family assessments. Other factors were incomplete safety assessments and service referrals primarily at one CMO. Progress on family assessments is being tracked by the Children’s Network of Southwest Florida and will be discussed in more depth later in this report in greater detail later in the report.

Re-abuse

Throughout this fiscal year, there were seven cases of re-abuse of the focus children in the sample; occurring in the first and third quarters only. Three were in-home cases and four were out-of-home cases. During the second and fourth quarters, all children in the sample remained safe during the period under review with no reported abuse or neglect. The overall instance of re-abuse identified during monitoring is too low to determine a trend. It should be noted, in depth assessments are completed on cases involving re-abuse when the Children’s Network is notified.

PERMANENCY

The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida has made improvements in each quarter since the second quarter, resulting in an overall Permanency Outcome of 84% in the fourth quarter.
**Placement Stability**

Placement stability is an area of strength for the agency, with 100% of current placements being stable at the time of the review, throughout the fiscal year. Also, a positive trend is evident in the number of times children move during out-of-home placements; specifically, the number of children with no more than two placement changes has steadily increased from 69% to 95% from the second to fourth quarters. Initiatives implemented that impacted improvement in this area include greater emphasis on relative placements, 24 hours access to support for foster parents, requiring caretakers’ involvement in staffing / decision making.

![CNSWF Placement Stability Standards per Quarters 2009-2010](chart)

**Exit interviews**

The performance for timeliness of exit interviews has fluctuated over the fiscal year; however, the variance is not significant due to the small sample size. For instance, the 60% in the fourth quarter is the result of two late exit interviews. This measure is tracked by the Licensing Specialist at the Children’s Network of Southwest Florida and the CMO Licensing Supervisors. Overall both CMOs are in compliance with their contracted goal for the fiscal year, each having more than 80% of exit interviews submitted timely.

**WELL-BEING**

The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida maintained approximately 75% performance for the overall Well-Being Outcome for the second, third and fourth quarters.

**Psychotropic Medication**

There has been continued improvement in the documentation and accuracy related to children on psychotropic medications with a focus on statutory and policy compliance regarding obtaining expressed informed consent, court approval and a medical treatment plan. Informed consent was present in all fourth quarter cases from both CMOs. A contributing factor to this improvement is a change in procedure which now involves information obtained by the Case Manager being previewed by the CMO QA Specialist for accuracy, completeness and
compliance. These standards will continue to be monitored during semi annual monitoring to ensure compliance with regards to informed consent and data entry into FSFN.

**FEDERAL STANDARDS**

The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida has seen continued improvement for the overall CFSR Outcome. The performance increased from 63% to 77% throughout the fiscal year. The timeliness and thoroughness of supervisory reviews contributed to the lower performance in the first quarter. This will be discussed in more depth further in this report.

**ICWA**

The requirement of this measure is that an inquiry be made to determine if the child is of Native American or Alaskan Native Heritage. The Children’s Network’s compliance has steadily increased since the second quarter. Initiatives that have been taken to ensure compliance of this measure include educational training, initiatives taken by DCF’s Protective Investigation, and a revised ESI (ITR) Staffing form to include initiation of ICWA procedure prior to acceptance by the CMO. In addition, the Children’s Network obtained policy clarification from the Family Safety Program Office regarding acceptable sources for verifying children’s ancestry.

**PRACTICE TRENDS**

**ASSESSMENT:** Achievements and Continued Initiatives

**Family Assessments**

During the first quarter review the Judicial Review report was utilized to meet the standard of the six-month family assessment, which attributes to the drastic decline in completed updated assessments in the second, third and fourth quarters when Judicial Reviews were no longer considered acceptable for this measure. Of the eleven cases in the sample in which initial family assessments were due during the review period, there were two that were not completed timely throughout the second, third and fourth quarters combined.
There is an opportunity for improvement with regards to the updated six-month family assessment at both CMOs, particularly Family Preservation Services. In the third quarter, there were five updated assessments due during the review period for the FPS cases in the sample; none of which were completed timely. Family assessments are being closely monitored by the Children’s Network. The tracking currently in place consists of a weekly spreadsheet showing initial and updated assessments that are due as well as assessments pending supervisor approval. These are disseminated to the CMOs for action. Since initiated in April 2010, improvement has been noted in timely completion. The Children’s Network has also developed a workgroup consisting of Case Managers, Supervisors, QA Specialists and Program Directors to assess the quality and content of the work products. The group will convene in September 2010.

Assessments are completed on high risk cases on a weekly basis by identifying the cases that were staffed to the Case Management Organizations by the Protective Investigators at DCF as High Risk. A review is completed to determine if procedures were followed such as the child being seen within two days and staffing the case with their supervisor. If there appears to be an issue with the case, a more in-depth review will be conducted and recommendations are made to the Case Manager and Supervisor.

**Educational/Physical/Dental/Mental Health**

Educational, physical health and mental health needs are being appropriately assessed, and concerted efforts are consistently being made to ensure those needs are met. Assessment of dental needs and concerted efforts to ensure dental needs are being met will be monitored for continued improvement. The Children’s Network has an established Dental Network of local dentists to provide service to children in care. The agency has engaged AHCA (Agency for Health Care Administration) in discussion regarding increasing the number of Medicaid approved dentists as the population is very limited and there are no providers for orthodontic services.

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: Continued Initiatives**

**Visitation**

CNSF has made vast improvements in placing siblings together or documenting those circumstances necessitating their separation. When not placed together, the data suggests visitation is consistently
appropriate within one CMO, while being an area requiring strengthening at the other. At the beginning of the monitoring year, documentation of the Case Manager’s contact with the focus child was superficial, lacking relevant details required to rate as sufficient. In subsequent quarters, the records reflected more details of the discussions conducted and were more qualitative in nature. The noted improvement can be attributed to:

- In October 2009, the Children’s Network mandated all 30 day face-to-face contact with the child take place in the home unless there are extenuating circumstances;
- The home visit form was revised to include documentation of a private discussion with the child during each face-to-face visit;
- In service documentation training for staff.

**Parental Involvement**

Case monitoring reveals a correlation in the parental involvement outcomes between parents who visit their children and attend court hearings as opposed to those who are minimally involved, maintain marginal contact with the supervising agency or are incarcerated. While a moderately affirming trend is noticed for the former group, generally, greater effort is needed to encourage parents to participate in activities related to their children. When it’s know to the Case Manager, the parents should be advised of medical, therapeutic, scholastic and enrichment events their children are engaged in. Appointments should be scheduled at times that are convenient for the parents’ schedules, and transportation assistance (for the child or parent) should be provided to facilitate the parent’s inclusion as appropriate.

Improvement is needed in ongoing diligent search for parents when their whereabouts is unknown at the onset of the case or later relocate and fail to inform the Case Manager. Likewise, parents who are incarcerated or live outside the service area require focused attention as these populations result in the lowest performance indicators.

Further, case record documentation suggests case management activity is focused on engaging parents with services and case plan tasks. A more holistic approach which integrates the parent and the child should be utilized.

Initiatives implemented to promote parental involvement:

- The parents are notified of the Case Plan conference in Court;
- Parental involvement receives focused attention during Permanency Staffings; if they cannot attend in person efforts are made for them to participate by phone, or the provide a written statement;
- The Family Centered Practice model developed by the Family Safety Program Office was initiated in April 2010 in Circuit 20. All existing Child Welfare Staff at the Children’s Network and the CMOs are mandated to participate in the two day training between July and December 2010. Staff hired on or after July 1, 2010, will benefit from the revised pre-service curriculum that incorporates this model.
SERVICE PLANNING AND PROVISION: Achievements

**Independent Living**

The sample of cases which included children eligible for Independent Living services was not significant enough to note a trend. Independent Living will be an area of concentration during the next fiscal year and beyond. Several changes have been and will be implemented to ensure timeliness and quality in all areas of the Independent Living Program.

Independent Living Policies and Procedures were reviewed with all case management staff throughout the Circuit to ensure awareness of the timelines and requirements of the program. Timely referrals and assessments are tracked by the Independent Living Specialist at the Children’s Network as well as by the Quality Assurance staff at the CMO. Business Objects Ad hoc Reports have been created and are regularly accessed to determine eligibility of youth for services and to track the required 17½ year old Judicial Review.

In order to meet the growing population and provide specialized care of youths eligible for Independent Living services, the following actions have been taken:

- The Children’s Network has divided oversight of the Independent Living Program between two staff members by creating an additional full time position:
  - One position focuses solely on youths formerly in foster care; ages 18-23;
  - The other staff monitors services for 13-17 year old youths currently in foster care;
- The Children’s Network recently modified the contract for Children’s Home Society, who provides services to all IL youth and young adults in Circuit 20;
- The Children’s Network has partnered with Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) to create a mentoring project for youths in foster care;
- Each CMO has established a RTI Specialist to provide case management services to 18-23 year olds who have aged out of the foster care;
If warranted, the Children’s Network may develop specialized units within the CMOs to handle the majority of cases involving an Independent Living youth;

An Independent Living Court for youths ages 15 and above has been established in Collier County.

**Contract Oversight Unit (COU)**

In May 2010, The Department of Children and Families Contract Oversight Unit monitored Children’s Network of Southwest Florida for compliance with contractual requirements. Each component of Independent Living was monitored, and the results indicate overall compliance. Recommendations for improvement included ensuring youths sign staffing forms whether their participation was in person or by telephone, and exploring community resources prior to submitting requests for Aftercare funding. The Children’s Network has implemented intervention strategies to remediate the findings.

**SUPERVISORY REVIEW AND OVERSIGHT: Achievements and Continued Initiatives**

The overall score for this standard is based on timeliness, thoroughness, and follow through on guidance. The data for the fiscal year 2009-2010 reveals a promising trend. While performance for the prior fiscal year was less than 10%, this year’s performance demonstrates improvement, yielding a final score of 56% at the year’s closing (see graph below).

![Graph showing CNSWF Supervisory Reviews Standards per Quarters 2009-2010](image)

Further analysis indicates the performance outcome will significantly improve if the Supervisors ensure their recommendations are followed. The Quality Assurance Summary Report was reviewed in detail to the Supervisors and Program Directors in June 2010 at the Supervisors Quarterly Meeting and the July 2010 Directors Meeting, with emphasis focused on this area.

Evaluation of the data reveals one CMO performed significantly higher (by at least 20%) than its counterpart every quarter. This variance can be attributed to several factors: cases in the low performing service area remain open longer than those assigned to other areas of the Circuit; unusually high staff attrition resulted in...
Supervisors being assigned cases for lengthy periods of time; and a disproportionate Supervisor to staff ratio. An additional Supervisory position has been added to each CMO which will reduce the number of required reviews per Supervisor per quarter. Additional system enhancements include:

- Supervisory Reviews are monitored by the Children’s Network’s Quality Management Department through a weekly report which indicates when the last review was completed compared with the previous one. This monitors timeliness of completion and is provided to CMO Management;
- Supervisory Review workgroups consisting of CMO Management, QA Staff, a Supervisor from each CMO and the Network’s QM Staff are held bi-monthly to review a sample of each Supervisor’s reviews. The group assesses the work product then provides a written evaluation which CMOs’ QA staff use to provide feedback to the Supervisors;
- Beginning in April 2010, Supervisors are required to conduct at least one monthly field visit with a Case Manager to provide hands-on mentoring and assess the worker’s assessment / documentation skills. It will also be assessed during semi-annual monitoring.

PROMOTING CASE PROGRESS: Achievements

Judicial Reviews

The performance for this measure has maintained above 80% in the second, third and fourth quarters; there was no standard for measuring Judicial Reviews during the first quarter. Although they were completed timely, five of the seven Judicial Review Social Study Reports that did not meet the standards lacked thorough and current information. It should be noted that the lack of thoroughness within the Judicial Review report may be due to implementation of the FSFN template which presented numerous user challenges; subsequent template revisions were made throughout the year.

Case Plans

Overall there has been a steady increase in compliance in this measure. Case plans are current, with appropriate goals designed to achieve permanency. In February 2010, the Children’s Network implemented a process to ensure Case Plan conferences are streamlined and occur throughout the Circuit as they were in the centralized counties. The result has been increased parental participation, especially in the outlying communities. Areas requiring improvement include ensuring the case plan addresses emergent matters, communicating the Case Plan tasks to all case participants, and documenting discussions with parents who are marginally / uninvolved in the case when contact is made with them.
**TPR/Adoption**

The Children’s Network surpassed the contracted goal of 95 Adoption Finalizations for Fiscal Year 2009-2010 by 20%, finalizing 114 adoptions. This is also a 10% improvement over the prior fiscal year.

The timeliness of Termination of Parental Rights fluctuated over the course of the fiscal year. There were cases where no compelling reason was evident for TPR not being achieved timely. Discussion will be held with Children’s Legal Services to ensure court orders include language pertaining to compelling reasons for not pursuing TPR. Also, a sample of cases will be reviewed to determine if there is a trend with regards to barriers to timely termination of parental rights.

**SUMMARY:**

The Children’s Network of Southwest Florida and its contracted Case Management Organizations in Circuit 20 utilized the Regional Quality Assurance Model to conduct quarterly case reviews during fiscal year 2009 -2010. As stated earlier in this report, the monitoring instrument was revised in the second quarter, making it difficult to compare data in some areas. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, the elements which remained consistent throughout all four quarters were presented with the only exception being the family assessment.

The Children’s Network performance indicates strengths in the following areas:

- preventing re-abuse and neglect in open cases;
- maintaining stability of the child’s current placement;
- assigning appropriate case plan goals which are designed to achieve permanency;
- assessing and providing for educational, physical health and mental health needs;
- placing children in out of home care within close proximity to their parents;
- sibling visitation when appropriate;
- securing adoptive families for children with the goal of adoption.

These achievements positively impacted permanency, well being and CFSR outcomes in every review period since the second quarter.
Opportunities for improvement were identified and initiatives will be implemented to address the following concerns:

- conducting timely and thorough family assessments, particularly updated six-month assessments;
- involving and engaging families; especially fathers
- completing timely and qualitative supervisory reviews and ensuring appropriate follow through.

The Department of Children and Families Spinner (Trend) Report which provides comparative performance data of Community Based Care agencies within the state indicates that the Children’s Network exceeds our peers within the State and Region in the following areas:

- The removal rates based are lower for the Children’s Network than for the State and Region. A downward trend has been noted which may be attributed to the Diversion Initiative that is now in place in Lee, Collier and Charlotte counties. This program is designed to provide services to family to offset deeper involvement in the dependency system. Since its initiation, the program has documented success in achieving these goals.

- The numbers of children in out-of-home care and licensed care have seen a continuing downward trend that is significantly lower than Region and lower than the State.

- The Children’s Network has a lower number of children in licensed care than the Region and the State, with a significant downward trend.