Children’s Network of Southwest Florida (CNSWFL)
Third Quarter QA Side by Side Review for FY 09/10
Exit Conference 2/04/2010

Outcomes:

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<tr>
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<th>4th Quarter FY 08/09</th>
<th>2nd Quarter FY 09/10</th>
<th>3rd Quarter FY 09/10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanency</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well – Being</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
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The Side by Side Quality Assurance Review was held February 1 and 2; a de-briefing with case managers and supervisors took place February 3 and the exit conference was held on February 4, 2010 with representatives from the lead agency, the two case management organizations, the Circuit 20 Administrator and members of the side by side review team participating. The period of review was April 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009. The ages of the children in this sample ranged from two to eighteen years. The breakdown of the type of cases included in this side by side review sample consisted of two children living in their own home and six children placed in out of home care during the entire review period. One of the in-home cases was closed with the goal of Maintain and Strengthen while one out-of-home care cases was closed as Permanent Guardianship during the period under review. The eighteen year old focus child with a goal of Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement (APPLA); aged out of foster care but jurisdiction was extended through December 1, 2010. The remaining children in this sample had the following goals as of the end of the review period: Maintain and Strengthen – 1; Adoption – 2; Reunification – 1; and APPLA – 1. The number of months the case had been opened as of the end of the review period ranged from 11 months to 3 years, 4 months.

Strengths

- **There were no reports of re-abuse, re-neglect during the period under review nor were any immediate safety concerns noted in any case in the review sample.**
  The absence of repeat maltreatment has been a common thread over several quarters indicating that case management has identified child safety as a critical factor warranting ongoing assessment.

- **Consistent use of the FSFN Family Assessments, Case Plans and Visitation Plans.**
  There is evidence documented in the case record of the agency’s concerted efforts to use the FSFN automated case file documents despite numerous obstacles and ongoing system updates.
• Child’s current placement was stable and appropriate to meet the child’s needs with no apparent or significant risks or projections for disruption. Of the eight focus children in the sample, only two teens experienced more than two placement changes during the review period. One of the youth’s placement settings changed as a result of his commitment to a DJJ program and the other young adult experienced a placement disruption with a half sibling out-of-state.

• There were current case plans in every case and all of the plans had an appropriate permanency goal. Mediation/Family Group Conferencing was utilized by the court to expedite the permanency process. Each of the case files contained a current (not expired) case plan with an appropriate goal identified. In cases where problems had been encountered when trying to establish permanency for the child; the court initiated Mediation which proved successful in bringing the case closer to resolution.

• Concerted efforts were made to ensure visitation was sufficient between the child and parents (both mother and father) to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship in out of home cases; and efforts were made to identify, locate and evaluate other potential relatives and possible permanent placements for the child in all appropriate cases. This occurred 100% for both parents which indicates improved performance.

• Exit interviews were conducted on the two teens in the sample when the child moved from one placement to another to discuss the previous placement experience; and appropriate action was taken if a concern was documented. Exit surveys were located for each of the applicable placement changes while in licensed care and no concerns were identified.

• Appropriate steps were taken to process and approve an adoptive family that matched the child’s needs for children placed in identified adoptive placements as well as those needing recruitment. Adoption staff completed the necessary recruitment steps to identify adoption placements and also worked with foster parents who are considering adoption of the child in their care.

• Age appropriate IL assessments and services were provided to all the teens in the sample (3); and the agency appropriately monitored their progress towards successfully transitioning from foster care to independence through regular informative staffings. Evidence of IL staffings and assessments were included in the case file and these activities were made known to the court.

• When educational needs were identified, necessary services were engaged and services effectively reduced or resolved the issues that interfered with the child’s education. This was applicable to 3 children.
Appropriate services were provided to the children with educational needs to remedy the problem and to increase their individual educational skills.

- Informed consent or court order was obtained for the use of each psychotropic medication deemed necessary by a physician to address the child’s mental/behavioral needs and all data fields in FSFN related to the medications were completed appropriately. Applies to 2 children.

Information obtained in the case file and in FSFN confirmed that case management was in compliance with policy and procedure when children were prescribed psychotropic medications.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Although six month family assessments have been completed in FSFN, continued efforts are needed to ensure that they adequately reflect an assessment of immediate and emerging safety concerns pertaining to the family. Additionally, it is critical that they are updated at least every six months and at critical junctures in the case, such as when new reports of abuse and/or neglect are received or if there are changes in family factors. Several of the case files did not reflect that six months assessments were completed timely or approved in a timely manner. Additionally, current information needs to be included in all updated assessments to adequately reflect the case activity and changes in family situations.

- Documentation of ongoing communication with service providers regarding the effectiveness of services for case participants.

Documentation of ongoing communication with service providers to assess what if any progress was being made occurred in four of the eight cases. This was an opportunity for improvement in the last side by side review as well.

- Concerted efforts to engage case participants in the case planning process.

This involves more than the process of developing the case plan. It includes ongoing discussions with parents, the child, and caregivers regarding the goal/tasks or changes to the goal/tasks as required.

- Improvement was noted in engaging the parent removed from or the custodial parent; however increased efforts are still needed to engage the other parent, including incarcerated parents.

Reviewers noted that the “out of sight out of mind” phenomenon was prevalent. Case managers tended to focus on the parent who was perceived to be critical to goal achievement and have not made a practice of demonstrating concerted efforts to engage the other parents as required. It is hoped that the upcoming focus on family centered services will provide a better understanding of the need to engage each parent.
Initiatives to be Considered

1. It is recommended that multi-disciplinary staffings be utilized at critical junctures such as when an abuse report is received on an open case or the case process is not making progress toward the permanency goal.

2. It is recommended that the Case Management Organizations consider adopting a more "hands on" mentoring approach by supervisors to guide staff in learning and improving skills needed to more effectively engage families/children, such as supervisors going out in the field with case managers to better assess each case manager's interviewing skills. In addition, after returning from the field the supervisor would review the note created from the home visit to address the quality of the documentation when necessary.

3. Continue efforts to track the timely completion of a qualitative initial family assessment upon meeting with the family in order to make a determination of immediate and long term family strengths and needs. Ensure that ongoing assessments continue throughout the life of the case, utilizing information obtained from case participants, service providers, observations and interaction, as well as, information learned from other sources to provide a complete and accurate assessment of current family functioning as long as the case remains open to services.

4. Implement the statewide Family Centered Practice initiative which is heavily focused on improving family assessment and engagement.