Narrative Summary

1. ChildNet’s Adherence to the Quality Services Review Process:

Executive Summary:

Management has asked us to determine whether ChildNet’s Quality Services Review process is in conformance with the June 2011 “Quality Services Review (QSR) Protocol for a Child and Family” issued by the Department of Children and Families along with the associated Memorandum of Agreement. In our opinion, ChildNet’s satisfactorily adheres to the QSR process as specified in the “Protocol.”

Evaluation of ChildNet’s Conformance With the QSR Process:

Authoritative Documentation:

Effective July 1, 2011, ChildNet entered into a one year Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the DCF. Included in the tasks ChildNet is required to perform under this MOA are four quarterly Quality Services Reviews.
Per paragraph 3.2.2. of the MOA, ChildNet shall:

“Conduct In-depth QSRs on a minimum of six cases each quarter using the QSR protocols and web based tool established by the Department. The in-depth case-based quality review process will focus on child welfare practices involving ongoing cases. The review will appraise: the current status of a child in key life areas; the status of the parent/caregiver; and the performance of key system of care practices for the same child and family. The QSR protocol examines recent results for children receiving services and their caregivers as well as the contribution made by local service providers and the system of care in producing those results.”

The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Department’s Director, Mark Shults furnished us with the June 2011 “Quality Services Review (QSR) Protocol for a Child and Family” (the “Protocol”) referenced in the MOA. In order to determine the degree to which ChildNet is adhering to the MOA and following the QSR process delineated in the “Protocol”, we analyzed the QSR review work performed by the Continuous Quality Improvement Department Quality Advisor (QA) teams for the six cases selected in the first fiscal quarter along with the six cases chosen in the current quarter.

Quality Advisor Training Test:

Paragraph 3.2.9. of the MOA states that the Lead Agency shall:

“Ensure all internal QA staff who conduct quarterly in-depth QSRs are trained by the Department to conduct such reviews.”

At our request, Mr. Shults furnished us with a listing of all six of the Quality Advisors in his department who have performed QSR’s during this fiscal year. He then obtained from the DCF copies of the training session sign-in sheets, enabling us to agree, without exception, that each member of his team was present at the class. The DCF does not issue certificates to evidence the completion of this training. We recommended to the Department that consideration be given to the issuance of certificates proving that an individual attended and successfully completed the curriculum.

Review of Sample Selection Methodology:

Via a table on page seven listing all of the CBC’s state-wide, the “Protocol” specifically instructs the ChildNet review team to select six case samples each quarter. This is underscored on page 2, paragraph 3.2.2. of the MOA. Six cases were, in fact, selected for each quarter.
Per the “Acknowledgements” section on page two of the “Protocol”:

“This protocol is designed for use in an in-depth case-based quality review process focused on child welfare practices involving CPS ongoing and Permanency cases.”

Similarly, the MOA stipulates that the samples be drawn from “ongoing cases”. We verified that all twelve of the cases were open and active during the time that they were undergoing review.

Quarterly, the Office of Family and Community Services provides each Agency with an open case list from which samples must be drawn. For the first quarter, cases were chosen from this list using a random number generator provided by the DCF. As is permitted, in each quarter the CQI Department stratified the listing into the following categories:

- Maintain and Strengthen
- Reunification
- Adoption
- Permanent Guardianship
- Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

One case was then randomly selected from each of the above five permanency goal categories. The sixth case in quarter one was a Reunification case. The sixth case in quarter two had Adoption as its permanency goal.

The “Protocol” permits the replacement of one randomly chosen case with another if it meets any of the criteria cited on page nine. Per page eight of the “Protocol”:

“The QA Manager must... document the basis for the decision as it relates to the discard criteria.”

While cases were, in fact, discarded and replaced in the first quarter, we found no documentation explaining the reasons for the substitutions. We informed Mr. Shults who promptly added explanations to both the first and second quarter spreadsheets, adjacent to the cases which were rejected.

Per our review, effectively all of the rationales for rejecting first and second quarter, randomly generated clients from the QSR met criteria that are permissible per the “Protocol”.
Preparation For Reviews:

Page eight of the “Protocol” outlines the steps that each pair of reviewers must perform prior to conducting their interviews of the stakeholders involved in their assigned case. We evaluated whether each team completed these preliminary tasks. In our opinion, adequate preparations were made for the reviews in accordance with the “Protocol”:

Identifying interviewees - Mr. Shults avowed that, in his opinion, all relevant first quarter stakeholders that needed to be interviewed were identified in preparation for the reviews. In addition, he obtained for us five written schedules evidencing the names of the interviewees.

We were provided with “In-Depth Appointment Schedules” for all six of the second quarter reviews. These “Schedules” contained each individual’s name and relationship to the child (the child him/herself, parent, foster parent, sibling, teacher, therapist, etc.) as well as their contact information.

Scheduling dates and times for the joint file review - Five of the six second quarter “In-Depth Appointment Schedules” evidenced that joint file review meetings were scheduled with the Child Advocates (and their Supervisors). We attended two of them. Mr. Shults assured us that not only were all five of these meetings held, but that a meeting for the sixth case was held as well.

We observed one instance where the both the Child Advocate and the Supervisor were interviewed on October 19th, yet the child and the other interviewees were not met with until November 1st and 2nd. We wondered if this ran counter to the “Protocol's” repeated references to appraising the current status of the child as well as that of the parent/caregiver? Had anything of significance happened to this child during this period?

We read the chrono notes in FSFN relating to this case for the period in question. An investigation had, in fact, begun on October 27th. The child claimed he was spanked, but the PI was unable to corroborate and no further action was taken.

Mr. Shults explained that the delay between the mid-October and early November interviews was due to the resignation of the Child Advocate. Coincidentally, the Supervisor lost another Child Advocate during the same time period. The Supervisor had to handle their assigned cases personally and did not have time to set up the QSR schedules. This task fell to the QAs, which resulted in what we believe is an understandable delay.

Scheduling interviews with case participants, including directions to the different locales - Interview dates and times were posted to the second quarter “In-Depth Appointment Schedules”. We could appreciate how, at times, scheduled interviews were subject to
change due to the vagaries of individuals' availability. We observed notations on the “Schedules” reflecting open items, i.e., attempts made to contact potential interviewees.

Mr. Shults discussed with us the difficulties his team had, especially in the first quarter, creating meaningful “Schedules”.

While the “Protocol” mentions that “directions to the different locales” be included on the “Schedules”, we felt that the use of readily available internet tools such as “MapQuest” obviated the need to physically include directions on this document.

Arranging for the debriefing with staff after the review is completed - While only one second quarter “In-Depth Appointment Schedule” actually listed a scheduled debriefing, Mr. Shults assured us that the other five were held. We attended this debriefing.

Client File Review:

Per the “Protocol” (page 8):

“A limited file review will be conducted prior to interviews, but reviewers may find it necessary to refer back to the file throughout the process. Becoming familiar with the circumstances of the case through a review of the record will enable the reviewer to explore pertinent issues with the person being interviewed. At a minimum, the team lead must ensure that the file review process includes a review of the following documents:”

Assessment of Safety/Risks/Needs

Recent contact case notes

Case Plans/Child and Family Team Meeting Documents

Court Reports, Judicial Review Reports

Evaluations such as the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment, Child Protection Team Assessments, etc.

The results of the reviews of the first quarter’s six cases are detailed in ChildNet’s “First Quarter 2011 - 2012 In-Depth Service Reviews for Children and Families”. Per the “Introduction” on page three:

“The files of six (6) children were reviewed during the QSR for the first quarter of fiscal year 2011-2012.”
However, the specific areas and documents reviewed were not always delineated for each case, so it is not possible to know if the above “Protocol” minimums are being adhered to. In answer to our inquiry, Mr. Shults felt that there was no realistic way to quantitatively verify which documents were studied, but he assured us that all of the above minimums had to have been scrutinized in order to evaluate the case adequately.

Stakeholder Interviews:

At the time of this writing, “Case Review Summaries” have not as yet been completed for the six second quarter cases sampled and reviewed by the CQI team. Therefore, we tested for compliance with the “Protocol” in the area of stakeholder interviews using the first quarter “Summaries”. We believe these six first quarter “Summaries” are a sufficient resource for us to draw our conclusions in this area. In our opinion, ChildNet is conforming to the requirements of the “Protocol” insofar as case interviews are concerned.

Per the “Case Interviews” section (page nine) the “Protocol”:

*Interviews should be conducted face-to-face* - Unless the “Summary” clearly indicated a face-to-face meeting, we felt we couldn’t assume it. (See Recommendation #1a.) We submitted our findings in this area to Mr. Shults who supplied us with the missing data. All of the key stakeholders were interviewed in person unless they lived out of state. Mr. Shults has asked the QAs to post their interview formats (i.e., face-to-face or by telephone on future “Case Review Summaries”.

*A minimum of five people should be interviewed for each case.* Interviewees should include the following, unless the individual is unavailable or completely unwilling to be interviewed and/or seen: case manager and the supervisor (highly recommended that they be the first parties interviewed), child (must always be seen and if age appropriate, interviewed), parents, foster parents, teacher or day care provider, Guardian ad litem. - This criterion was met for all six first quarter cases. However, we questioned why the foster parents of one child had not been interviewed. According to Mr. Shults, his team had tried repeatedly to schedule the meeting, but could not do so in the narrow time-frame of the review. In addition, as we corroborated from the “Case Review Summary”, the child was in the process of transitioning to adoptive parents.

*If any of the above parties cannot be interviewed, the reason must be documented in the case review instrument* - We felt that the “Summaries” adequately explained why stakeholders that were slated for interviews were not, in fact, interviewed; examples - refused to cooperate, out of the country.

*Family status and system performance/case work practice should be qualitatively assessed* - While we lack the programmatic expertise to determine the quality of these assessments, all six of the “Summaries” contained them.
Per page eight of the “Protocol”:

“Reviews will be conducted in teams of two trained reviewers. The team must identify a team lead and determine each member’s role and responsibility in preparing for the reviews.”

It appears, from the reading of the respective “Summaries”, that three of the first quarter reviews were each conducted by only one Quality Advisor. However, according to Mr. Shults, pairs of QAs performed all of the reviews in both the first and second quarters. (See Recommendation #1b.) He has instructed his team to list both members on their “Summaries” going forward.

Importantly, per our readings of the first quarter “Case Review Summaries”, we believe that the aforementioned MOA paragraph 3.2.2. has been satisfactorily addressed; the “Summaries” do, in fact, focus on “recent results for children receiving services and their caregivers as well as the contribution made by local service providers and the system of care in producing those results.”

QSR Scoring:

The “Protocol” provides an in-depth rating system replete with both status and performance indicators to qualitatively assess both the child and the family. Optimally, it can also be one of the tools available to an agency to help it evaluate its overall system of care.

We examined both a detailed Excel schedule as well as the narrative and accompanying table in ChildNet’s “First Quarter 2011 - 2012 In-Depth Service Reviews for Children and Families” (pages three and four). Both clearly evidence the attention paid to scoring of the QSRs.

In addition, we observed a QA team’s scoring process first hand. While we may lack the programmatic expertise to evaluate their numeric results, it was apparent that they carefully weighed the facts and circumstances involved with each question/criteria. Their scoring decisions were a product of discussion and mutual agreement.

Debriefing the Child Advocates:

Child Advocate debriefings by the Quality Advisors are done in a discussion, as opposed to a written format. Thus, there is no evidentiary matter that one can examine to test conformance to this portion (page 95) of the “Protocol”.

In answer to our inquiry, Mr. Shults assures us that debriefings were held for all twelve cases covering the two fiscal quarters.
We can attest to the fact that at the one debriefing we attended, the QAs’ reviewed with the Child Advocate and Child Advocate Supervisor the findings from all of interviews that had been conducted. Suggestions were made for the betterment of the child and the family as well as an outline of potential goals that might be achieved.

Grand Rounds Presentation:

In conformance with the page 94 of the “Protocol”, a “Grand Rounds Presentation” was held after all of the first quarter review was completed. A member of each team presented their findings in approximately ten minutes time, followed by a question and answer period.

We attended the second quarter’s “Presentation” which underscored the fact that ChildNet adhered to this aspect of the “Protocol”.

Summary Report:

The “Introduction” portion of the aforementioned “First Quarter 2011 - 2012 In-Depth Service Reviews for Children and Families” summarizes the scoring for the six sampled cases. The body of this “In-Depth Review” is devoted to the presentation of the QA teams’ reports of their respective reviews. When combined with the associated “Case Review Summaries”, the formats of these six presentations conform exactly to that which is specified on pages 96 and 97 of the “Protocol”.

2. ChildNet Monthly Invoice Review – September 2011 Expenses:

Executive Summary:

We have examined on a test basis the transactions and documentation underlying ChildNet’s September 2011 Expenditure Report (“Attachment II-D”) as submitted to the Department of Children and Families, and believe the expenditures therein are reasonable, allowable, and necessary.

Further, we compared ChildNet’s accounting for these costs to their approved Cost Allocation Plan (CAP), agreeing them in all instances.

Methodology and Findings:
We reviewed and tested, at a confidence level greater than 90% (using a 10% margin of error), the costs incurred by contract providers for services performed during September 2011, finding them to be reasonable, allowable, and necessary.

The contract provider services accrual is, in our opinion, substantially correct.

We reviewed and tested, at a confidence level greater than 90% (using a 10% margin of error), ChildNet’s payroll expenses incurred during September 2011, finding them to be reasonable, allowable, and necessary.

We tested and agreed the appropriateness of the payroll accrual.

We reviewed September cash disbursements on a test basis (at a 90% confidence level and a 10% margin of error). In addition, we performed a specific review of individual items greater than $10,000. We found all tested disbursements to be reasonable, allowable, and necessary.

We sampled and agreed (at a 90% confidence level and a 10% margin of error) the following:

- Independent Living payments to ICWSIS, the number of program participation days to FSFN.
- Foster care payments to ICWSIS, the number of program participation days to FSFN.
- Adoption payments to ICWSIS.

Pro-rating ChildNet’s budget (source: “CBC Annual Budget by Service Category”), we performed an analysis of the year to date costs incurred through September versus the respective levels budgeted. We did not observe any sufficiently material negative variances to warrant discussion with management. However, we note that at this early point in the fiscal year, licensed care residential group homes/emergency shelters are 5% over the pro-rated budget.

We note that through September 2011, expenditures for the various PSSF programs were $80,000 higher than the budget. Road To Independence/Independent Living program costs were $240,000 higher than budgeted.

ChildNet’s cumulative excess of revenue received from the Department over expenditures incurred through September 2011 is $5,293,000, inclusive of a net $5,192,000 carryforward surplus from the prior fiscal year.

We examined the providers’ efforts at fulfilling their PSSF match requirements. At this early stage of the fiscal year, we are relatively unconcerned about those that have only partially met
their obligatory match. The total contract provider year-to-date match meets the required levels through September 2011.

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<tr>
<th>Conditions Identified for Improvement</th>
<th>Recommendations and Timeline for Improvement</th>
<th>Expected Results from Implementation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1a.</strong> Face-to-face interviews as required by the “Protocol” are not always identified as such in the “Case Review Summaries”.</td>
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<td>1a. Improved compliance with the QSR “Protocol”.</td>
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<td><strong>1b.</strong> “Case Review Summaries” do not always list both members of the QA review team. The “Protocol” mandates the use of two-person review teams.</td>
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**Resource Deficiencies**

None observed or indicated to us by ChildNet.

**Updates to the Previous Reports’ Recommendations**

Our understanding is that our prior month’s recommendation has been adopted.