In Broward County every year, several hundred children enter the child welfare system due to abuse, abandonment or neglect. As the local Community Based Care lead agency, ChildNet manages the local system of services and supports for Broward’s most vulnerable children. Our mission is to protect abused, abandoned and neglected children in the communities we serve.
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Summary of Case Management Practice Trends

Over the course of the 2011 – 2012 contract year, 24 youth were reviewed using the Quality Service Review (QSR) process. This process includes a review of case files followed by interviews with all case participants including the target child, parents and caregivers as appropriate, and providers. Each indicator is scored on a six (6) point scale with scores of 1 – 3 in the unacceptable range and 4 – 6 acceptable. Scores of 3 and 4 are in the marginal range with the score of 4 being acceptable if nothing were to change and a 3 not acceptable.

The files reviewed were stratified by goal to include:

- Reunification: 6 children
- Maintain and Strengthen: 6 children
- Adoption: 5 children
- Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA): 4 children
- Permanent Guardianship: 3 children

The overall average score for the cases reviewed across all items was more than acceptable. The findings for the child and family status averaged just a bit higher that the system status overall. The scores indicate that ChildNet does a great job ensuring children are safe and their well-being needs are addressed across all cases. The youth with the goal of APPLA had higher system status scores than the child and family status scores. This made sense in that the system has worked very hard to meet the needs of what can be a more challenging population. Many of these youth have criminal histories and exhibit runaway behaviors making stability challenging. Another interesting finding from this small sample was that the system status scores were lower for children in relative caregiver or in-home living arrangements.

Twenty of the youth reviewed scored in the acceptable range for the Child and Family status. Three for the four youth rated as not reaching acceptable had permanency goals of APPLA. One youth was in-home and rated lower because of a delay in completing a home study when the parent moved. The youth with goals of APPLA had extensive criminal and run-a-away behaviors which contributed to the lower ratings.

Only one youth scored less than acceptable in the System Status, or Practice Performance Indicators. This one youth had a permanency goal of Permanent Guardianship which is reflective of a need for greater support for children in non-licensed placements and the work we have already started in this area.

The below chart shows the average scores by permanency goal.
Child and Family Status Indicators
As the sample size is very small for each quarter, the findings are not statistically significant; however, do provide enough information to identify strengths and any areas for improvement. The overall strengths in the child and family status include:

- Safety
  - Home
  - School
- Living Arrangement (the degree to which the child is living in the most appropriate and least restrictive living arrangement)
- Physical Health of the Child
- Child Vulnerability
- Stability
- Emotional Well-Being
- Academic
- Parent and/or Caregiver Functioning

For the year, Permanency and Independent Living scored a bit lower but in the acceptable range and both are already an ongoing area of focus for the agency. The QSR highlighted that we are on the right track with our improvement efforts. The chart below show the quarterly and average scores for the child and family status section of the review.
Practice Performance Indicators
The System status scored slightly lower than the child and family status which is typical for this type of review. That being said, the overall score is in the acceptable range with a number of strengths and in fact, no indicator averaged less than fully acceptable. The greatest strengths include:

- Engagement
- Maintaining Connections of children to their families
- Allowing the families to have their Voice and Choice
- Implementation of the family’s plan
- Assessment of the child
- Assessment of the family

Scoring less than 4.5 (but at least 4.0) include:

- Teaming (formulation, actually 4.54, and functioning)
- Planning closure of cases
- Transition planning
- Adjusting the plans
- Psychotropic Medications (only two youth were reviewed)
These findings indicate that we are doing great in family engagement and assessment and are looking to improve our team facilitation. Just as with the child and family status findings, these results were expected. The chart below shows the performance across all four quarters including an average for the year.

Addressing Findings
As noted above the findings were not unexpected by the agency. The policies, procedures, and practices in place were significantly updated over the last few years during ChildNet’s journey toward achieving accreditation. ChildNet has shown improvement in the quality of care as well as documentation over the last year which is evidenced in the consistence top performance in the Department of Children and Family’s scorecard. Regardless, ChildNet is a firm believer in Continuous Quality Improvement with a few examples below.

Child and Family Status Indicators
Permanency
- Permanency Round Tables: ChildNet is part of the Casey project of implementing Permanency Round Tables to facilitate the achievement of permanency for our youth. This project began with some of the longest staying youth in foster care and is being expanded to include any youth for whom a goal of APPLA is recommended. In addition, case managers can refer any case to the process if they are experiencing difficulties moving the case along.
- Reunification: ChildNet has developed a champion for reunification in order to monitor and report progress on this indicator. This person works with each case
manager supervisor to ensure that children are reunified as quickly and as safely possible. This reunification champion analyzes data within FSFN to focus the attention where it is needed to show improvement in this area. This also includes the achievement of the goal of Permanent Guardian.

- **Stability:** I Lead Six Sigma group was convened to improve the placement stability of youth, particularly in their first year in out-of-home care. This group is led by a Six Sigma Black Belt and is comprised of staff from several areas within the agency. Another Six Sigma group is being planned to review and reduce the number of children re-entering out-of-home care after a reunification with their families.

- **Adoptions:** ChildNet is continuously focused on finding the most appropriate adoption match for youth who cannot return home or to family. ChildNet has recently strengthened our work with the Heart Gallery and has created a program called FaithNet that works with our faith-based community similar to the One Church One Child programs.

**Independent Living**

- ChildNet recently convened a workgroup of our Board of Directors to review and address Independent Living. The focus of this workgroup includes service provision and finances.

- ChildNet is involved in two workgroups working to better serve the youth considered locked out of their homes due to their criminal behavior as many of these children are court ordered into foster care directly from the Juvenile Justice bench. More work is needed to ensure that these youth receive the kinds of services that will not only help them, but keep the communities safe from their behavior.

- ChildNet and the local community developed a top notch Independent Living drop in center for youth that provides one place where youth can continue their education, receive counseling and life skills training, and meet with their case managers and life coaches.

- ChildNet redesigned staffing forms and Independent Living plans to better comply with requirements.

**Practice Performance Indicators**

**Teaming:** ChildNet has shown overall acceptable scores in teaming; however, recognizes that case managers would benefit from training on facilitation. The Professional Development team at ChildNet is in the process of bringing in an expert in facilitation to provide training to case managers. This should not only improve the teaming scores, but touch on nearly all of the system status indicators.
**Planning:** ChildNet was already aware of the planning needs for a case, particularly as it relates to safe case closures. A strong Aftercare Planning process was implemented to improve the family’s knowledge of how to access community resources without having to re-enter the child welfare dependency system.

**Relative Caregiver:** The local community has already recognized that more services are needed to support relative and non-relative placements. ChildNet is strengthening its representation on the sub-committee of our local community alliance formed to address this issue to ensure that ChildNet’s voice is heard. In addition to the community alliance sub-committee, a ChildNet workgroup was established to ensure that our relatives and non-relatives are better prepared to care for the children placed in their homes. The action plan from this workgroup is under construction at this time from the various committee leads.

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Mark Shults, MPA, Date