Eckerd Community Alternatives
Second Quarter QA Side by Side Review
Exit Conference

Outcomes:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>4th Quarter FY 08/09</th>
<th>2nd Quarter FY 09/10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanency</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-Being</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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The ECA second quarter review was held in October of 2009 and the review period spanned nine months from January 1, 2009 through September 30, 2009. The sample was comprised of five out of home cases, two in home cases and one case which was both in home and out of home during the review period. Two cases had a goal of maintain and strengthen while three were reunification. The remaining three cases had goals of APPLA, permanent guardianship and adoption respectively. Six cases were opened in 2008 and two initiated in 2007. Five of the eight cases involved families who had been previously involved in protective supervision. One case began in 2001 when the child was removed from the parents. Reunification with the father occurred in 2002 but in 2005 the father voluntarily gave his child to an aunt. Two years later the child returned to out of home care when the aunt physically abused the child. A second case was a reactivation but this time the child was placed with the father rather than the mother. In another out of home care case, there had been three previous agency involvements; including previous removals. A fourth situation described a child who had come into care in 2004, was reunified with the mother but removed again just prior to the review period. In the final case, the child has been involved with the child welfare system since 1996 with multiple removals and reactivations. During the review period the child lived with a non-relative but was reunified with the father and completed six months of post placement supervision.

Compliance Areas

- No incidents of re-abuse or neglect in 7 of 8 cases.
- In the 3 applicable cases exit interviews were completed and appropriate action was taken if necessary.
- Frequency of supervisory reviews. All 8 cases were found to have a minimum of quarterly reviews and 7 cases had them more frequently.
- ICWA – in 5 of 8 cases there was evidence that an inquiry had been made to determine Native American or Alaskan Native heritage.
In the past this section was referred to as strengths or positive steps, however; this review presented a challenge to find examples to fit into either of those categories. As a result the category was renamed Compliance Areas. This title best captures the highlights of the review. As seen in the examples above the greatest strides were made in areas that are compliance driven rather than quality driven. The only exception to this is the absence of re-abuse or neglect, which was seen in 7 of 8 cases. There was one case where a report was closed with verified findings during the review period. There is greater compliance with making inquiries for Native American or Alaskan Native heritage. Compliance in this area in five of eight cases reflects improvement from past reviews.

Opportunities for Improvement

- **5 of 8 cases were the result of multiple removals or reactivations.**
  One of the characteristics of this review was the reoccurrence of abuse or neglect that led to the initiation or reactivation of protective service supervision. These incidents took place prior to the review period and were the reasons the family came back into the dependency system. With a high rate of reactivations, questions are raised about the effectiveness of previous interventions to ameliorate the underlying reasons for dependency involvement in the first place.

- **Lack of family engagement and absent family assessments. All 8 cases did not have family assessments completed in FSFN.**
  Eckerd concluded their training in completing FSFN family assessments in January of 2009, however; there is little evidence the training has translated into action as of this date. None of the cases reviewed contained a family assessment completed in the FSFN system. In addition, there was little indication in the documentation that these assessments were taking place in a less formal manner.

- **50 % of the cases had expired case plans.**
  4 out of 8 cases did not have current case plans. In two of the cases the case plan had been extended by the court in error when a new plan needed to be completed and filed with the court. The other two cases with expired case plans illustrated situations where there had been a change in goal and a new case plan reflecting this goal had never been filed.

- **Number of case managers assigned to cases. 5 of the 8 cases had two or more case managers during the period under review.**
  In two cases there were four case managers assigned throughout the review period. The remaining three cases had two and three case managers respectively during the review period.

- **Staffings are being held frequently on cases but they do not seem to be driving permanency.**
  Reviewers noted that there was evidence of frequent staffings being held on cases but there is little indication that these meetings are speeding the road to permanency for children. There were questions about the thoroughness and veracity of the information being presented at staffings because they did not
appear to be contributing positively to case progression. Reviewers posited that staffing chairs were not being provided adequate information in order to make appropriate recommendations.

- **There is a decision to close cases after significant delays in moving the case forward, even when there remain unresolved issues.** Reviewers observed that cases were open for extended periods of time without achievement of goals. After an extended time cases were often closed although there remained outstanding concerns such as lack of parental engagement, incomplete case plans, unstable placements or unresolved legal matters.

- **Supervisory reviews are often repetitive and lack qualitative oversight. 7 of 8 cases were found to have inadequate supervisory reviews.** The over-riding element in the supervisory reviews was the absence of directives provided. Reviewers commented that even in cases where supervision was held more than quarterly, there was a noticeable absence of individualized, date specific follow up given to case managers. Aspects of permanency, well-being and safety were addressed more often than not but the lack of directives provided and follow up by the supervisor was ultimately reflected in the overall rating of this standard.

**Continuing Improvement Initiatives**

- The effort to implement the Supervisory Discussion Guide is evident, however; it appears to have become a compliance driven task rather than a quality process. Continuing to use the guide to have *one on one qualitative conversation* with case managers will enhance improvement in this area.

- It is recommended that a proactive strategy be developed to track the timely completion of a quality family assessment in Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) where the family has been engaged in order to make the determination of immediate and long term family strengths and needs.