

**Final Report
Louisiana Child and Family Services Review
August 2010**

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau**

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Louisiana. The CFSR is the Federal Government's program for assessing the performance of State child welfare agencies with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. It is authorized by the Social Security Amendments of 1994 requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promulgate regulations for reviews of State child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families within HHS.

The Louisiana CFSR was conducted the week of March 8, 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from October 1, 2008, through March 12, 2010. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS), Office of Community Services (OCS) and Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPSC), Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR target period ending September 30, 2008
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 17 cases in Iberia/St. Mary Parishes, 31 cases in Orleans Parish, and 17 cases in Rapides Parish
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys

All 65 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review. The key characteristics of the children in the cases reviewed are presented in the table at the end of this section. For this table, and for other tables in the report, figures displayed may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

The findings of this review may be best interpreted in light of the effects of hurricanes of 2005 and 2008. In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the State, killing over 1,500 people, destroying nearly 205,000 homes, and flooding the city of New Orleans. Clients and agency staff had to evacuate the city and were not able to return for months and, in some cases, years. The homes of many clients and staff were destroyed and these clients and staff members relocated to other parts of Louisiana and other States. On September 24, 2005, 3 weeks after Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Rita, the fourth-largest storm ever recorded in the Gulf of Mexico, hit the State, also

creating evacuations and relocations for child welfare agency clients and staff. In 2008, Hurricanes Gustav and Ike had additional impacts on the child welfare system and the recovery efforts implemented in 2005.

Before Hurricane Katrina, the State had achieved 82 percent of the benchmarks sought in its 2003 CFSR Program Improvement Plan. In June 2006, a renegotiated CFSR Program Improvement Plan was approved to reflect new challenges and needs for children and families brought about by the hurricanes. The revised Program Improvement Plan set goals for short-term recovery as well as a vision for long-term reform. Short-term recovery focused on the following three core objectives:

- In consultation with the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services (NRCCPS), analyze the factors relating to the increase in foster care placements
- In consultation with the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning (NRCFCPPP), develop a protocol for case management and decision-making for displaced foster children and their biological parents
- In consultation with the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) and the National Resource Center for Legal and Judicial Issues (NRCLJI), provide more qualified legal representation for children and/or parents in the child welfare system

Long-term reform focused on the following two major initiatives:

- Redesigning front-end services with special emphasis on prevention, child protection investigation (CPI) intake and decision-making, and the development of a continuum of services to prevent and respond to child maltreatment and to facilitate permanency for children
- Decreasing the number of children in residential and emergency care facilities and transitioning to a continuum of care service system

Key Characteristics of Cases Reviewed

Case Characteristics	Foster Care	In-Home Services
Total Number of Cases	40	25
Date Case Was Opened		
Opened prior to the period under review	29 (72.5%)	12 (48%)
Opened during the period under review	11 (27.5%)	13 (52%)
Child entered foster care during the period under review	13 (32.5 %)	N/A
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than 10	21 (52.5%)	*
At least 10 but younger than 13	3 (7.5%)	*
At least 13 but younger than 16	13 (32.5%)	*
16 and older	3 (7.5%)	*
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-Hispanic	0	*
Asian Non-Hispanic	1 (2.5%)	*
Black Non-Hispanic	27 (67.5%)	*
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic	0	*
Hispanic (of any race)	0	*
White Non-Hispanic	8 (20%)	*
Unknown/Unable to Determine	0	*
Two or More Races Non-Hispanic	4 (10%)	*
Primary reason for opening case		
Physical abuse	1 (2.5%)	5 (20%)
Sexual abuse	4 (10%)	1 (4%)
Emotional maltreatment	0	0
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	20 (50%)	8 (32%)
Medical neglect	2 (5%)	0
Abandonment	2 (5%)	1 (4%)
Mental/physical health of parent	0	1 (4%)
Mental/physical health of child	1 (2.5%)	1 (4%)
Substance abuse by parent	6 (15%)	8 (32%)
Child's behavior	0	0
Domestic violence in child's home	0	0
Child in juvenile justice system	3 (7.5%)	0
Other	1 (2.5%)	0

*Information on in-home services cases is not available for these characteristics.

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

In the Outcomes Section of the CFSR Final Report, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement is assigned to each of the 23 items reviewed. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent or more of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. The item ratings are used to determine the performance of a State on the seven outcomes, each of which incorporates one or more of the individual items. The evaluation options for these outcomes are “substantially achieved,” “partially achieved,” and “not achieved.” For a State to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent or more of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. Two outcomes—Safety Outcome 1 and Permanency Outcome 1—also are evaluated based on State performance with regard to six national data indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, both the national standards for each data indicator and the case review requirements must be met. A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan to address the areas of concern identified for that outcome.

The Children’s Bureau has established very high standards of performance for the CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our nation’s most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable. The standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being. This is consistent with the goal of the CFSR to promote continuous improvement in performance on these outcomes.

It should be noted, however, that States are not required to attain the 95-percent standard established for the CFSR Onsite Review or the national standards for the six data indicators by the end of their Program Improvement Plan implementations. The Children’s Bureau recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often take time to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with the Children’s Bureau to establish a specified amount of improvement or to determine specified activities for their Program Improvement Plans. That is, for each outcome that is not in substantial conformity or item that is rated as an Area Needing Improvement, each State (working in conjunction with the Children’s Bureau) specifies the following: (1) how much improvement the State will demonstrate and/or the activities that it will implement to address the Areas Needing Improvement, and (2) the procedures for demonstrating the achievement of these goals. Both the improvements specified and the procedures for demonstrating improvement vary across States. Therefore, a State can meet the requirements of its Program Improvement Plan and still not perform at the 95-percent (for outcomes) or the 90-percent (for items) levels established for the CFSR.

The second round of the CFSR assesses a State’s current level of performance by once more applying the high standards and a consistent, comprehensive, case review methodology. The results of this effort are intended to serve as the basis for continued Program Improvement Plans addressing areas in which a State still needs to improve, even though prior Program Improvement Plan goals may have been achieved. The purpose is to ensure that program improvement is an ongoing process and does not end with the completion of a Program Improvement Plan.

The following sections provide information on how Louisiana performed on each outcome in the first round of the CFSR as well as the current CFSR. If the outcome was not substantially achieved during the first round, the key concerns observed at that time and the strategies implemented in the Program Improvement Plan to address those concerns are discussed.

Because many changes were made in the CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State's performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the first round, particularly with regard to comparisons of data indicators or percentages regarding Strength and Area Needing Improvement ratings. Key changes in the CFSR process that make it difficult to compare performance across reviews include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items
- Changes in criteria for specific items to enhance consistency and ensure an assessment of critical areas such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents in planning for their children

For each outcome, there is a table presenting the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of Louisiana's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State's first CFSR report, which was held in fiscal year 2003, the State's status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Performance of individual sites included in the Onsite Review is presented in the tables. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate.

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	5	6	8	19	63.3
Partially Achieved	0	3	4	7	23.3
Not Achieved	2	2	0	4	13.3
Total Applicable Cases	7	11	12	30	
Not Applicable Cases	10	20	5	35	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	71%	55%	67%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (%)	State's Percent	Meets Standards?
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6+	93.5	No
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68+	99.53	No

Status of Safety Outcome 1

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 63.3 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. In addition to the case review findings, the State did not meet the national standards for the national data indicators pertaining to absence of maltreatment recurrence and to the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

A key finding from the 2003 review was that DSS/OCS was not consistent in responding to maltreatment reports in accordance with the timeframes set forth in State policy, including the timeframes for establishing face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim. The delays in initiating an investigation applied to reports classified as either "immediate priority" (response within 24 hours) or "high priority" (response within 3 days).

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in the Program Improvement Plan:

- Reviewed and revised policy to improve the intake process
- Developed and implemented a tracking procedure of cases closed within 60 days of the initiation of the investigation
- Developed and implemented a tracking procedure to monitor cases open over 6 months

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 1 are presented and discussed below.

Item 1. Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 30 (46 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable when there were no child maltreatment reports during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with the State child welfare agency policy requirements.

OCS policy requires that a response priority be assigned to each case accepted for investigation. The response priority establishes the timeframe for initiation of the investigation, which includes the first face-to-face contact with the alleged victim and his or her parent/caregiver. The following table provides a summary of the response time priorities:

Priority Type	Response Time in Hours	Response Time in Calendar Days
Immediate	24	1
High Priority	72	3
Non-Emergency	120	5

OCS policy also established that an Alternative Response Family Assessment (ARFA) is to be used when the allegations in the report do not indicate a serious and immediate threat to the child's health or safety. The required response time for initiating an ARFA case is within 5 calendar days, inclusive of weekends and holidays.

The results of the assessment of item 1 are presented in the table below.

Item 1 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	5	6	10	21	70
Area Needing Improvement	2	5	2	9	30
Total Applicable Cases	7	11	12	30	
Not Applicable	10	20	5	35	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	71%	55%	83%		

Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 21 cases when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was made within the timeframes required by State policy. It was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in nine cases when the investigation was not initiated within the required timeframes. The nine cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement included 10 reports that were not investigated in a timely manner. Of these 10 reports, 3 reports were assigned as a high priority, 6 reports were assigned as a non-emergency priority, and 1 report was assigned for ARFA.

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 70 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 1 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Louisiana continues to experience challenges in responding to reports in a timely manner and appropriately documenting timely initiation of investigations and alternative response interventions of reports of child maltreatment. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, data relevant to the outcomes and items reviewed in the CFSR are from the following sources:

- A Comprehensive Enterprise Social Services System (ACCESS) which serves as the electronic case record for child abuse and neglect reports and investigations
- Peer Case Reviews (PCRs), which were conducted in the 10 regions from 2007 to 2009 with an instrument similar to that used for the Federal CFSR
- The Quality Assurance Tracking System (QATS), which provides quality assurance (QA) tracking and reporting of specific compliance instruments as part of the State's quality review system

- WebFOCUS Quality Assurance and Outcome Reports, which provide a dashboard for reports on various performance, outcomes, and management data
- Administrative Reviews/Family Team Conferences (AR/FTCs), which are held for each child in foster care placement at prescribed interval

ACCESS data for Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2008 indicate that face-to-face contact with victims occurred within the assigned response time in 59 percent of the cases statewide.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on timeliness of investigations during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that OCS generally is timely in its response to reports of alleged abuse and neglect.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 23 (35 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review. For all applicable cases, reviewers were to determine if there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family during the period under review, and, if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report involving similar circumstances had occurred within a 6-month period before or after that identified report.

The results of the assessment of item 2 are presented in the table below.

Item 2 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	4	7	9	20	87
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	2	3	13
Total Applicable Cases	4	8	11	23	
Not Applicable	13	23	6	42	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	100%	87.5%	82%		

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 20 cases when there was only one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family within a 6-month period. Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases when there were at least two substantiated maltreatment reports on the family within a 6-month period. In one case, referrals were less than a month apart; in another case,

referrals were less than 2 months apart, and in the third case the referrals were less than 3 months apart. Two of the three cases involved recurrence of neglect caused by parent's substance abuse.

In addition to the recurrence of substantiated maltreatment reports, reviewers reported the following findings with regard to the number of maltreatment reports on the family during the life of the case ("life of the case" refers to the time from the date of the first allegation of abuse or neglect to the time of the Onsite Review):

- In 40 cases, there were fewer than three reports, including three with no maltreatment reports.
- In 15 cases, there were at least three reports but fewer than six reports.
- In eight cases, there were between 6 and 11 reports.
- In two cases, there were 14 or more maltreatment reports.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 87 percent of the applicable cases, there was no recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment within a 6-month period. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 2 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, this item was rated as a Strength in 87 percent of the 122 applicable cases reviewed for the PCR. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that performance on this item may have been negatively affected by the economic downturn combined with the cumulative stress on children, families, and communities related to four major hurricanes within 4 years.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, when there is maltreatment recidivism involving the same or similar concerns, and the recidivism occurs within a 12-month period, the case must be referred to the Family Service (FS) Unit for a staffing meeting. This staffing includes a review of the history of agency involvement, with particular attention given to the services already provided, the outcome of those services, the circumstances surrounding the recurrence of the abuse/neglect, and the client's current attitude toward working with the agency. If all available services have been provided in the past and the caregivers' abusive/neglectful behavior remains essentially unchanged, then a decision must be made as to whether court intervention is needed, either for removal of the child or perpetrator or for court-ordered participation in a service plan.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive stakeholder comments on repeat maltreatment during the onsite CFSR.

Safety Outcome 2

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	12	26	10	48	73.8
Partially Achieved	1	3	4	8	12.3
Not Achieved	4	2	3	9	13.8
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	71%	84%	59%		

Status of Safety Outcome 2

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 73.8 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The primary concern identified in the 2003 review was that OCS was not consistent in providing families with the necessary services to ensure children's safety while they remained in their homes.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in the Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed training for and trained OCS staff on assessing risk of harm to children in foster care at the time of initial placement and on an ongoing basis
- Trained OCS staff on the new risk assessment procedure
- Worked with NRCFCPPP to develop guidelines for caseworker contacts to ensure continued assessment of safety and well-being of foster children in foster homes or relative placements who were displaced due to the storms
- Enhanced OCS staff's clinical knowledge pertaining to risk and safety screenings of substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence by developing substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence training curricula for OCS staff
- Trained OCS staff on screening for substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence pertaining to risk and safety of children in their own homes
- Examined the effectiveness of Family Resource Centers (FRCs)
- Developed an assessment tool for use in risk assessment, the case decision-making process, and in-service plan development
- Worked with NRCCPS to analyze data, practice, and external factors related to a significant rise in foster care placements

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in the home and prevent removal or reentry into foster care

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 38 (58 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review, there were no other children in the home, or if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or identified risk of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For applicable cases, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families that would prevent placement of children in foster care and at the same time ensure their safety. The results of the assessment of item 3 are presented in the table below.

Item 3 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	8	15	7	30	79
Area Needing Improvement	4	2	2	8	21
Total Applicable Cases	12	17	9	38	
Not Applicable	5	14	8	27	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	67%	88%	78%		

Item 3 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- Although no services were provided when the child was removed from the home, the removal was necessary to ensure the safety of the child (eight cases).
- Services were provided to the family to ensure the safety of the child and prevent removal (15 cases).
- Services were provided after the child was reunified with his or her family (six cases).
- Efforts were made to provide services prior to removal (one case).

Case review information indicates that a range of support was offered or provided to families. This included, but was not limited to, the following: assessments for substance abuse, substance abuse treatment, Drug Court, anger management services, financial assistance services, domestic violence services, parenting education services, case management services, transportation services,

respite care services, psychological services (mental health screenings and treatment), behavioral therapy, Intensive Home Based Services (IHBS), evidence-based Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), daycare services, parent mentoring, General Educational Development programs, and medication management.

Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Services were not provided to the family to protect the children, and the children remained at risk in the home (two cases).
- Services were provided, but they did not target the key safety concern in the family, leaving the children at risk in the home (three cases).
- Services were provided to the custodial parents, but they did not address safety concerns involving noncustodial parents with whom the children had regular contact (two cases).
- Services were not provided to protect the children in the home, and the children were subsequently removed (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 79 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 3 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State law requires that the agency consider all alternatives regarding services and other options to prevent placement of a child out of the home. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the State implemented the Focus on Four reforms to improve assessments of families and to expand the array of evidence-based, front-end services available to children and families in the child welfare system. The following strategies/processes were implemented as part of the reform:

- Structured Decision Making (SDM)
- Assessment of Family Functioning (AFF) tools
- Comprehensive case planning
- ARFA model for low-risk cases

Additionally, the Statewide Assessment reports that, as a result of Focus on Four, the following services or options are available to maintain children in their homes or to assist in reunification efforts:

- Evidence-based IHBS
- Evidence-based MST
- Voluntary placement of the child out of the home with consent of the court
- Removal of the perpetrator

- Preventive Assistance Fund (PAF)
- Daycare services
- Services from Nurturing the Families of Louisiana

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, this item was rated as a Strength in 96 percent of the 171 applicable cases reviewed for the PCR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that OCS attempts to provide services to prevent removal. However, a few stakeholders indicated that parents frequently do not participate in the recommended services and are not held accountable for nonparticipation, and that these cases will be closed for services.

Item 4. Risk assessment and safety management

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing item 4, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to address the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. The results of the assessment of item 4 are presented in the table below.

Item 4 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	12	26	10	48	74
Area Needing Improvement	5	5	7	17	26
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	71%	84%	59%		

Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 48 cases when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was addressed appropriately by the agency through the following: conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children's home or in the children's foster home and addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment.

Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 17 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was no initial risk assessment (three cases).
- There was no ongoing risk assessment (nine cases).
- There was no initial safety assessment (four cases).

- There was no ongoing safety assessment (12 cases).
- There were safety concerns in the child's home that were not addressed by the agency (14 cases).
- There were safety concerns regarding the child's placement that were not addressed by the agency (one case).
- A safety assessment was not completed when the child was discharged from foster care (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 74 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to assess and address the risk of harm to the child. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 4 was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, risk assessment and safety management are addressed through the Focus on Four practice model. The specific activities of the model that address risk assessment and safety management are the following:

- Training/retraining staff how to complete the safety assessment tool and how to develop appropriate safety plans
- Teaching staff how to complete the SDM risk assessment instruments and how to use these instruments to guide case decision-making
- Teaching staff how to conduct an AFF with the family with a focus on safety and risk issues
- Teaching staff how to develop a case plan with the family that integrates the information captured through the safety, risk, and family assessments to focus interventions on improving safety and reducing risk to children in the family

The Statewide Assessment also indicates that risk and safety are addressed through agency policy established on October 1, 2009, requiring that the SDM process and instrument be used to assess risk during the investigation and to assess risk for cases transferring to in-home or foster care services. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires that subsequent risk reassessments be completed every 3 months for all in-home services families and for families served by the foster care program as long as the goal is reunification. Changes in the SDM risk level are to be used to support and guide intervention, including when to intensify services, when to move toward termination of services, and when to reunify children.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that, with regard to safety management, agency policy requires that the initial safety decision be made within 5 days of the initial contact with the alleged child victim and the parent/caregiver. A safety plan must be initiated by the caseworker if the safety decision is "Unsafe." The safety plan is based on the caseworker's understanding of the parent/caregiver's protective capacities to keep the children safe from any current or impending threats to their safety. If a safety concern is determined, the caseworker and the family discuss the steps to immediately ensure the safety of the children. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, safety is assessed throughout the life of all cases and is formally reviewed at each SDM reassessment and the FTC meeting.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the agency generally is effective in conducting safety and risk assessments. Stakeholders reported that the agency provides caseworkers with formal tools to conduct the assessments. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the SDM assessment tools used by the agency are helpful in determining the safety and risk issues in the family.

Two key State-level stakeholders reported that OJJ assesses safety and risk in families both formally and informally.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	4	9	4	17	42.5
Partially Achieved	5	9	5	19	47.5
Not Achieved	1	2	1	4	10.0
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	40%	45%	40%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (Scaled Score)	State Score (Scaled Score)	Meets Standards?
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	122.6+	123.6	Yes
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	106.4+	108.2	Yes
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods	121.7+	97.1	No
Composite 4: Placement stability	101.5+	86.4	No

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 42.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. In addition to case review findings, Louisiana did not meet the national standard for the data indicators pertaining to permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods or placement stability. However, the State met the national standard pertaining to timeliness and

permanency of reunification, and timeliness of adoptions. The State was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State did not consistently establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- The State did not make concerted efforts to finalize adoption in a timely manner.
- The State did not meet the national standard during the first round of the CFSR for the measure pertaining to placement stability.
- The State did not meet the national standard during the first round of the CFSR for the measure pertaining to reunification of children with parents or relatives in a timely manner.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in the Program Improvement Plan:

- Educated OCS staff on McKinney-Vento in order to support stability by maintaining children in their schools when foster care placements change
- Incorporated supervisory foster care case staff throughout the life of the case
- Identified legal and court-related barriers to permanency by developing strategies to better engage courts and by reinforcing Federal performance measures with OCS staff related to reunification within 12 months
- Reduced adoption process delays, including reviewing and revising the termination of parental rights (TPR) packet and by implementing a supervisory review of the TPR packet within 30 days of permanency goal change
- Worked with the State General Counsel to identify barriers to and strategies for expediting filing TPR petitions
- Strengthened support services for youth transitioning to independent living
- Worked with the NRCFCPPP to develop guidelines for caseworker contacts to ensure continued assessment of safety and well-being of foster children in foster homes or relative placements who were displaced due to the storms
- Developed plans to locate biological parents after the storms
- Developed visitation guidelines for families separated by the storms
- Worked with the courts to develop a case decision-making model to help caseworkers make the best placement decisions for children evacuated out of the State as a result of the storms
- Worked with NRCOI and NRCLJI to provide more qualified legal representation for children and parents in the child welfare system

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 are presented and discussed below.

Item 5. Foster care reentries

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 13 (32.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not enter foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of the assessment of item 5 are presented in the table below.

Item 5 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	4	6	3	13	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	6	3	13	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	14	7	27	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	100%		

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 13 cases when the child's entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. In two of these cases, reentry did occur within 12 months, but reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to prevent the reentry.

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the cases reviewed. Item 5 also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Composite 1 Measure Relevant to the Permanency of Reunification

The data below are presented to provide additional information about foster care reentry. There is no national standard for the measure of foster care reentry. National standards with regard to permanency have been established only for the scaled composite scores. The measure of foster care reentry is part of Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification. The State's performance on Composite 1 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

Louisiana's performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was the following: In the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period for the data indicators, 6.7 percent of children exiting foster care to reunification reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage is less than the national 25th percentile of 9.9 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Louisiana Abuse/Neglect Recurrence Screening Protocol assists staff with identifying and making recommendations in cases by identifying factors more likely to lead to recurrence and foster care reentry. The agency utilizes supportive services after reunification to assist in preventing reentry into foster care. Additionally, the Statewide Assessment also indicates that reentry is prevented through the following:

- Having a 30-day trial placement in the home to facilitate a smooth transition
- Providing ongoing supervision for up to 3 months after custody is transferred

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive stakeholder comments regarding reentry into foster care during the onsite CFSR.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 40 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs. Reviewers also assessed the stability of the child's most recent placement setting.

The results of the assessment of item 6 are presented in the table below.

Item 6 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	8	13	7	28	70
Area Needing Improvement	2	7	3	12	30
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	80%	65%	70%		

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's current placement was stable and that the child either did not experience a placement change during the period under review (25 cases) or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interests (i.e., they were intended to further achievement of the child's permanency goal or to provide specialized services for the child) (3 cases).

Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 12 cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The child was in multiple placement settings during the period under review, and at least one placement change was not planned by the agency to attain the child's permanency goal (12 cases).
- The child's placement setting at the time of the onsite CFSR was not stable (four cases).

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 25 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in three cases experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Children in nine cases experienced three to five placements during the period under review.
- Children in three cases experienced seven or more placements during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 70 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the State's 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 4: Placement stability

The data below are presented to provide additional information about placement stability. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 4 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Louisiana's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 4: Placement stability was the following:

- C4.1: 79.1 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is less than the national median of 83.3 percent.
- C4.2: 54.4 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is less than the national median of 59.9 percent.
- C4.3: 28.3 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is less than the national median of 33.9 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to a Statewide Assessment, when a placement is at risk of disruption, policy requires that an intervention or preservation staffing be held to support the placement. Caseworkers are required to make every reasonable effort to provide or arrange for supportive services to relatives and foster parents to minimize the number of placements a child experiences while in foster care. For children in residential facilities, quarterly residential treatment staffings are held to determine resources that the child may need to meet permanency goals and to maintain or step down to a less restrictive placement. OCS State-level staff also facilitate contacts with the courts, field staff, and provider agencies to maintain and preserve placements and can grant approval for additional staff to support youth in crisis situations.

The Statewide Assessment notes that stakeholders reported the following factors as contributing to placement disruptions:

- Foster caregivers not having adequate information on the specific needs of children
- Inadequate training of and inadequate supports for foster caregivers in addressing the complex developmental, behavioral, educational, and other needs of children entering foster care
- Lack of effective communication between the caseworker and foster parent, and lack of participation by the foster parents in case planning and decision-making

However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that foster parents indicated that support and visitation by agency staff is helpful in managing difficult behaviors and maintaining children in their homes.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR addressed the issue of support services for foster parents and expressed the opinion that OCS provides the necessary services to prevent placement disruptions, including IHBS and respite. Other stakeholders raised the concern that decisions about placing children routinely are not based on the skills and training of foster parents to meet the needs of those children. Some stakeholders also suggested that placement disruptions occur because foster parents are not willing to parent older youth or children with behavioral issues.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 40 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established a permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and whether the most current permanency goal was appropriate. Reviewers also were to determine whether the agency had sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA).

The results of the assessment of item 7 are presented in the table below.

Item 7 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	6	13	6	25	62.5
Area Needing Improvement	4	7	4	15	37.5
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	60%	65%	60%		

Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 25 cases when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate, had been established in a timely manner and, if relevant, that the agency had filed for TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA.

Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 15 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child's permanency goal at the time of the onsite CFSR was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (four cases).
- The child's permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (five cases).
- The agency had not sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA, particularly with regard to documenting compelling reasons in the case file for not seeking TPR (10 cases).

ASFA requirements with regard to filing for TPR were met in 58 percent of 24 applicable cases.

The following case goals were identified for the 40 foster care cases:

- Adoption only (15 cases)
- Reunification only (including reunification with relatives) (seven cases)
- Other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA) only (11 cases)
- Concurrent goals of reunification with parents and adoption (four cases)
- Concurrent goals of reunification of parents and guardianship (two cases)
- Concurrent goals of reunification with parents, reunification with relatives, and adoption (one case)

In one case, the concurrent goal of reunification with a relative was achieved within 12 months; therefore, item 9, which pertains to the concurrent goal of adoption, was not rated.

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 62.5 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and had met ASFA requirements

when relevant. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 7 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods

The data below are presented to provide additional information about permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards were established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 3 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Louisiana's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods was the following:

- C3.1: 30.4 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the 12-month CFSR target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 29.1 percent.
- C3.2: 92.0 percent of the children exiting foster care during the target period who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home. This percentage is less than the national median of 96.8 percent.
- C3.3: 54.8 percent of the children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month target period with a discharge reason of emancipation had been in foster care for 3 years or longer at the time of discharge. This percentage is greater than the national median of 47.8 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, policy requires that each child in foster care be assigned a permanency goal. Reunification generally is the first permanency goal for a child entering foster care and the agency pursues reunification with a parent or primary caregiver until another plan is agreed on. After another plan is established, the agency continues to offer services to the parent related to the goal of reunification until the parent's legal status in relation to the child has changed. The Statewide Assessment indicates that efforts to place a child for adoption or to finalize another permanency goal may be made concurrently with efforts to reunify when this is the most appropriate approach for the child.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, permanency planning staffings are held prior to the 12-month AR/FTC and permanency hearings or earlier when appropriate. During the staffing, which is attended by the caseworker, supervisor, district supervisor, foster parents, and other relevant parties, the progress on the current permanency goal is assessed and a decision is made on the permanency goal that would be most appropriate for the child.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following information with regard to establishing the case goal:

- The goal of adoption is established as a permanency goal when it is determined that the child's family is either unable or unwilling to resume care of the child, and the child's need for safety, permanency, and well-being are best achieved through adoption.
- The goal of OPPLA is established when there are documented, compelling reasons why reunification, adoption, and guardianship were not chosen for the child.
- The court must approve OPPLA as the permanency goal for the child and OCS policy requires that OPPLA cannot be approved as the permanency goal for a child under 7. OPPLA can be approved for a child under age 12 when it has been demonstrated that all other placement options have been exhausted and continued efforts to finalize another permanency goal would be detrimental to the child.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that, in some jurisdictions, the courts are reluctant to change a child's goal from reunification even when the ASFA time-in-foster-care requirement has been met, and parents have not made significant progress in reducing risks. The Statewide Assessment also reports that although the courts often express support for concurrent planning, concurrent planning is an Area Needing Improvement for both the agency and the courts.

The Statewide Assessment notes that 84 percent of the 177 applicable cases reviewed for the PCR were rated as a Strength for this item. However, the Statewide Assessment also reports that, in a 2009 survey of the youth members of the Louisiana Youth Leadership Advisory Council (LYLAC), youth said that they do not understand the permanency planning process, were not included in the process, and did not know what permanency means.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The key issues addressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were whether a goal was appropriate to the needs of the child, the use of concurrent goals, and whether a petition for TPR was filed in a timely manner.

Only a few stakeholders commented on the appropriateness of goals, and most of them indicated that the State generally is effective in establishing timely, appropriate permanency goals.

With regard to concurrent planning, the few stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the State establishes concurrent goals in some cases. Additionally, a few stakeholders indicated that when concurrent goals are established, they tend to be pursued sequentially rather than simultaneously.

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that OCS generally files for TPR in accordance with ASFA timeframes. However, most New Iberia/St. Mary Parishes stakeholders and a few State-level stakeholders expressed the opinion that filing for TPR frequently is delayed due to an inadequate number of OCS attorneys in some parishes.

Several stakeholders from the New Iberia/St. Mary Parishes site reported that the timeframe from the decision to file TPR to the actual filing of the TPR petition may be as long as 12 months.

Additional stakeholder information pertaining to the TPR process is provided under item 9 and item 28 of this report.

Item 8. Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 14 (35 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the permanency goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of the assessment of item 8 are presented in the table below.

Item 8 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	5	4	2	11	79
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	1	3	21
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	5	3	14	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	15	7	26	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	83%	80%	67%		

Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 11 cases when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to achieve reunification or guardianship in a timely manner. The key concerns identified pertained to not engaging the parent in services and a general lack of effort to achieve reunifications.

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 79 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 8 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Pertaining to Timeliness Included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification

The data below are presented to provide additional information about the timeliness of reunification. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 1 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Louisiana's performance on the individual timeliness measures included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was the following:

- C1.1: 65.3 percent of the reunifications occurred in at least 8 days but less than 12 months of the child's entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 69.9 percent.
- C1.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children discharged to reunification was 9.6 months. This length of stay is greater than the national median of 6.5 months. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)
- C1.3: 45.7 percent of children entering foster care in the 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in more than 7 days but less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage is greater than the national median of 39.4 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 48.4 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, in an attempt to ensure a safe and successful family reunification, OCS facilitates family participation in an individualized, strengths-based, family-focused assessment that includes service and permanency plan development. The Statewide Assessment notes that to accomplish this goal, OCS has access to reunification assistance funds (RAF) that can be used for families for purchase of key household items or payments of rental deposits, rent, and utilities. Additionally, OCS often refers families to existing community services when appropriate and available. The Statewide Assessment reports that OCS has implemented the following statewide programs to support early and permanent reunification:

- FTC Decision Making Process
- SDM Risk Assessment System
- Out-of-Home Reunification Assessment
- IHBS

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PCR data indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 88 percent of the 76 applicable cases.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Only a few stakeholders commented on this item during the onsite CFSR. Most of them reported that RAF are available to purchase services for children and families to expedite reunification.

Item 9. Adoption

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 9 was applicable for 19 (47.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. The results of the assessment of item 9 are presented in the table below.

Item 9 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	0	6	0	6	32
Area Needing Improvement	4	4	5	13	68
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	10	5	19*	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	10	5	21	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	0%	60%	0%		

*Note: Although 20 cases had children with the permanency goal of adoption, only 19 cases were rated because in 1 case the concurrent goal of reunification with relatives was achieved within 12 months.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in six cases when reviewers determined that the State had made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 cases when reviewers identified one or more of the following:

- Delays in filing for TPR (six cases)
- Delays in the TPR process (after filing) (three cases)
- Delays in completing home studies (one case)
- Delays in finalizing the adoptive placement (three cases)
- Delays in the identification of an adoptive home (one case)

Additional findings relevant to this item were the following:

- Of the 20 children with a goal of adoption, 8 achieved the goal during the period under review.
- Of the eight children who had a finalized adoption during the period under review, three had been in foster care for 24 months or less.
- Of the children with a goal of adoption who were not adopted during the period under review, three had been in foster care for at least 24 months.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 32 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 9 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Performance on the Individual Measures Included in Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions

The data below are presented to provide additional information about the timeliness of adoptions. There are no national standards for performance on these measures individually. National standards have been established only for the scaled composite score. The State's performance on Composite 2 is shown in the table for Permanency Outcome 1.

For the target 12-month CFSR period established for the data indicators, Louisiana's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions was the following:

- C2.1: 23.7 percent of the children exiting to adoption were discharged in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 26.8.
- C2.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 32.4 months. This median length of stay is equal to the national median of 32.4. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)
- C2.3: 25.5 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the year. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 22.7 percent.
- C2.4: 11.3 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within the first 6 months of the year. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 10.9 percent.
- C2.5: 53.1 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percentage is greater than the national median of 45.8 percent but less than the 75th percentile of 53.7 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the OCS adoption policy describes specific activities to be conducted by agency staff to achieve a timely adoption, including the interactions that are to take place with foster and adoptive parents and relatives. The Statewide Assessment notes that when a child enters foster care, efforts must be made to place children with family members or foster/adoptive families that can provide a permanent placement if necessary. If a child is not placed with a caregiver who could potentially adopt the child, the foster care caseworker is expected to use child-specific recruitment methods to identify a family that could provide an adoptive home for the child if that were to become necessary.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that if reunification efforts are not successful, and the permanency goal of adoption is established during the permanency planning staffing and the court concurs, assigned staff are expected to begin the process of legally freeing the child for adoption and formally preparing the child for the adoption process.

The Statewide Assessment identifies the following additional State policies as relevant to the adoption process:

- Children available for adoption without an adoptive resource must be registered on the Louisiana Adoption Resource Exchange (LARE) photo listing and on **AdoptUsKids** within 60 days of becoming free for adoption.
- The caseworker must document that a voluntary surrender was explored with the parents before pursuing TPR.
- Prior to adoption finalization, there must be an assessment and identification of the child's current and future service needs and a decision made regarding the adoption subsidy.

The Statewide Assessment reports that State efforts in the past few years to overcome barriers to timely adoptions include the following:

- Identifying and remediating delays in the TPR process
- Early and ongoing assessment of children's special needs
- Simplifying the adoption subsidy approval process
- Identifying issues related to judicial delays
- Addressing problems with specific juvenile courts with the assistance of the Court Improvement Project
- Improving timeliness of case transfer from foster care to adoption staff
- Increasing emphasis on locating relative placement resources
- Providing dual certification of foster/adoptive parents

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PCR data indicate that 38 percent of 73 applicable cases were rated as a Strength for this item.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that OCS generally files for TPR in a timely manner, but that TPR hearings frequently are delayed. Additionally, most New Iberia/St. Mary Parishes stakeholders and a few State-level stakeholders expressed the opinion that filing for TPR and the TPR hearings themselves frequently are delayed due to an inadequate number of OCS attorneys in certain parishes. Several stakeholders from the New Iberia/St. Mary Parishes site reported that the timeframe from the TPR decision to the adoption finalization may be as long as 12 months.

Item 10. Other planned permanent living arrangement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 11 (27.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to OPPLA. The results of the assessment of item 10 are presented in the table below.

Item 10 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	0	3	3	6	55
Area Needing Improvement	1	4	0	5	45
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	7	3	11	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	9	13	7	29	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	0	43%	100%		

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in six cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a long-term placement for the child and/or to provide the necessary service to prepare the child for independent living. Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in five cases when reviewers determined that the child was not in a permanent placement.

The table below provides the ages of the children when the goal of OPPLA was established.

Age of Child When OPPLA Was Established	Number of Children
8 to 12 years of age	3
13 to 15 years of age	5
Age 16 or older	3
Total	11

Rating Determination

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 55 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 10 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OPPLA is formalized in a written agreement with the child's caregiver and incorporated into the case plan and/or reports to the court. Once OPPLA is approved by the court, case staffings must be conducted quarterly to ensure the permanency plan is still appropriate.

The Statewide Assessment notes that when OPPLA becomes the child's permanency goal, OCS's focus becomes preparing the child for adulthood, including assisting the child in identifying a positive, permanent connection. Two of the tools that are used to aid in the transition are the Youth Transition Plan (YTP) and the Educational/Vocational Plan (YAP1). The YTP, implemented in April 2009, is first administered to youth on their 15th birthdays. The YTP reviews the service systems that a youth may encounter in his/her life and any life area that warrants additional services is noted and transferred to the youth's case plan. The plans are reviewed and updated every 6 months at the FTC until the youth is 18 years of age. The YAP1 is created within 30 days of the youth's 18th birthday and is used to document the youth's educational/vocational track and identify any needed services. The YAP1 is updated at least every 6 months.

The Statewide Assessment notes the following assessments and services are available in the State for transitioning youth:

- Chafee Independent Living Program (CILP)
- Socialization Skills training
- Ansell-Casey assessments
- Independent living housing
- Young Adult Program
- Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETV)

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, LYLAC conducts quarterly meetings that are attended by youth in foster care, youth who have aged out, CILP and ETV providers, and agency staff. The Statewide Assessment notes that OCS has used input from LYLAC members in redesigning services for transitioning youth. Additionally, policy development meetings pertaining to youth issues are held through videoconferences so that youth can participate. The Statewide Assessment also notes that LYLAC is forming regional youth leadership groups to increase participation and visibility for youth aging out of care.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PCR results indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 83 percent of the 35 applicable cases.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive comments from stakeholders on the permanency goal of OPPLA during the Onsite Review.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed different opinions regarding the State's effectiveness in providing independent living (IL) services to youth. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State is providing beneficial services to youth to assist in the transition to independence. Other stakeholders reported that IL services are not individualized and that the State lacks adequate services for youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care.

Some stakeholders reported that the YTP was implemented in 2009, and that many youth are familiar with the YTP and participate in the development of the plan.

Permanency Outcome 2

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	9	15	3	27	69.2
Partially Achieved	1	3	7	11	28.2
Not Achieved	0	1	0	1	2.6
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	19	10	39	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	0	1	0	1*	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	90%	79%	30%		

*One foster care case was not applicable for this outcome because the child's parents' parental rights were terminated prior to the period under review, and the child is in a specialized placement because of her numerous medical and developmental issues.

Status of Permanency Outcome 2

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 69.2 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The State was in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Permanency Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 11 was applicable for 32 (80 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if TPR was attained prior to the period under review, contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interests, and/or parents were deceased or their

whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's most current foster care setting was near the child's parents or close relatives. The results of the assessment of item 11 are presented in the table below.

Item 11 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	8	16	8	32	100
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	8	16	8	32	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	4	2	8	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	100%		

Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 23 cases when reviewers determined that the child was placed either in the same community as the parents or near the parents' community. The item was rated as a Strength in nine cases when reviewers determined that even though the child was placed out of his or her community, the placement was necessary to meet the needs of the child and/or support attainment of the permanency goal.

Rating Determination

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 100 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed children in locations close to their parents or relatives when appropriate. Item 11 also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State law requires that foster children be placed in the least restrictive (most family-like), most appropriate setting available, and in close proximity to the parents' home, consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child. The Statewide Assessment further notes that children should be placed in their home parishes or an adjoining parish unless there are clear and compelling reasons for the children to be placed at a further distance from their families. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, a child requiring a high level of specialized care and or supervision frequently has to be placed outside his or her community until a suitable placement resource can be developed or identified in the community of origin.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that although the agency attempts to place children in close proximity to their families, children are sometimes placed outside their communities because of a lack of placement resources there.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 12 was applicable for 21 (52.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not have a sibling in foster care at any time during the period under review. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were currently, or had been, placed together, and if separated, whether the separation was necessary to meet the service or safety needs of one or more of the children. The results of the assessment of item 12 are presented in the table below.

Item 12 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	5	11	2	18	86
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	3	3	14
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	11	5	21	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	9	5	19	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	40%		

Item 12 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child was placed with siblings (eight cases), or that the separation of siblings was necessary because one of the siblings had special placement needs or because placement with siblings was not in the child's best interests (10 cases). Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to place siblings together. In two of the cases rated as Areas Needing Improvement, five siblings had been placed in five separate foster homes, and in one case four siblings had been placed in three separate foster homes.

Rating Determination

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 86 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 12 was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS policy requires that siblings be placed in the same foster home when at all possible, unless an assessment of the sibling relationship indicates that joint placement would not be in the best interests of one or more of the siblings. The Statewide Assessment also notes that OCS policy allows related children to be placed in a treatment foster home even if only one of the children is determined to need that level of care. This placement, however, requires the approval of the OCS State Office, Division of Foster Care Services. However, as indicated in the Statewide Assessment, there are a limited number of foster families that will accept and/or have space for sibling groups.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, this item was rated as a Strength in 94 percent of the 111 applicable cases reviewed during the PCR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally makes concerted efforts to keep siblings together in foster care. A few stakeholders reported that it is difficult to locate placements for large sibling groups.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 13 was applicable for 30 (75 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item if the child had no siblings in foster care and if one of the following conditions was met with regard to the parents: TPR was established prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the child's life or were deceased; or visitation with a parent was not considered in the best interests of the child. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate sufficient visitation between children in foster care and their parents and between children in foster care and their siblings also in foster care, and whether the visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The results of the assessment of item 13 are presented in the table below.

Item 13 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	4	12	3	19	63
Area Needing Improvement	1	5	5	11	37
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	17	8	30	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	3	2	10	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	80%	71%	37.5%		

Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 19 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visitation with parents and siblings met the needs of the children. Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 11 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the mother (five cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the father (six cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with siblings in foster care (three cases).

Additional information about visitation frequency is provided in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Child's Visits During the Period Under Review	With Mother	With Father	With Siblings in Foster Care
Visits occurred at least once a week	4 (16%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (8%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	8 (32%)	2 (12.5%)	4 (33%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	6 (24%)	1 (6.25%)	3 (25%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	5 (20%)	8 (50%)	3 (25%)
There were no visits during the period under review	2 (8%)	4 (25%)	1 (8%)
Total Applicable Cases	25	16	12

The data indicate that children visited at least once per month with their mothers in 72 percent of the 25 applicable cases, with their fathers in 25 percent of the 16 applicable cases, and with their siblings in 67 percent of the applicable cases.

Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 63 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the family. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 13 was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, a detailed visitation contract is to be agreed on in the FTC and include a provision for changing scheduled visits. A copy of the visitation contract is provided to each person involved with the child, including the child's foster caregiver. The Statewide Assessment notes that visits should be held in the biological family or relative's home when possible, although visits may occur in the foster home or placement facility when designated in the visitation contract. If there is concern for the child's safety or a need to control and/or structure the parent/child interaction during the visit, the OCS office setting may be used with supervisory approval.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the child's first visit with his/her parents should be held within 5 days of placement and can be denied only with court approval. However, a child who enters foster care due to abuse or neglect is not forced to visit with his/her parents if he/she refuses to do so. A child's refusal to visit with parents is reported to the court. Parental visits are to occur at least every 2 weeks unless case circumstances indicate otherwise and should increase in frequency and duration as the family proceeds toward reunification. The caseworker is required to observe a parent/child visit at least once a month and document the parent/child interactions and relationships. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that the frequency of visits with an incarcerated parent is based on the best interests of the child and at the request of the incarcerated parent. The Statewide Assessment also notes that OCS has

recently implemented the Visit Coaching program in the FRCs. This program is designed to help parents take charge of their visits and to be responsive to their children's needs.

With regard to sibling visitation, the Statewide Assessment reports that visits among siblings in custody are required unless a youth is 16 years of age or older and does not want sibling visitation or if sibling visitation is not in the best interests of one of the siblings. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, sibling visits, if appropriate, are to occur at least quarterly, and are expected to take place even if parents do not visit, if the parent's whereabouts are unknown, or if one or all of the children are available for adoption and awaiting adoptive placements. When the sibling of a foster child in custody is being adopted, a Continuing Contact Agreement for the adopted child to continue to visit the sibling in foster care may be arranged if all parties agree.

The following data from the Foster Care/Adoptions QATS reports were provided in the Statewide Assessment as relevant to item 13:

- In FFY 2008 children had visits of sufficient frequency with their mothers in 68.1 percent of the 631 applicable cases reviewed.
- In FFY 2008 children had visits of sufficient frequency with their fathers in 51.3 percent of the 419 applicable cases reviewed.
- In FFY 2008 children had visits of sufficient frequency with their siblings in 74.3 percent of the 506 applicable cases reviewed.

Additionally, PCR data indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 87 percent of the 146 applicable cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the State is effective in promoting visitation between the child in foster care and his or her parents and siblings. Some stakeholders reported that visitation between parents and older children generally occur weekly or at least twice a month. They noted that visitation between parents and children occur more frequently, sometimes two or three times a week, when children are between the ages of birth and 3 years of age. A few stakeholders indicated that visitation increases as the family progresses toward reunification. Some stakeholders also reported that visitation regularly occurs for children and their siblings in foster care.

Despite these opinions, a few stakeholders suggested that the existing level of visitation often is not sufficient to meet the needs of the children and families and that visitation with siblings does not occur on a consistent basis.

Item 14. Preserving connections

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 14 was applicable for 38 (95 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child's connections to neighborhood, community, heritage, extended

family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care. The results of the assessment of item 14 are presented in the table below. One foster care case was not applicable for this item because the child's parental rights were terminated prior to the period under review and the child is in a specialized placement due to her numerous medical and developmental issues. Another foster care case was not applicable for this item because the child was in foster care only 3 days.

Item 14 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	7	16	10	33	87
Area Needing Improvement	2	3	0	5	13
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	9	19	10	38	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	1	0	2	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	78%	84%	100%		

Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 33 cases when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child's connections with extended family members, religious or cultural heritage, schools, communities, and friends. Reviewers noted that the agency provided transportation to children to ensure the children maintained contact with extended family members, allowed extended family to attend activities with the children in foster care, and coordinated visits with siblings not in foster care.

Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in five cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections to extended family (five cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections to his or her community (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 87 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections with extended family, culture, religion, community, and school. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 14 was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS makes the following efforts to maintain children's connections:

- The AFF includes a section related to the extended family.
- OCS policy allows children to visit and have other contacts with extended family.
- The biological parents are encouraged to bring any children residing in their home for visits with siblings in custody.
- OCS policy requires that, to the extent possible, children who enter foster care are to be placed within their own school districts.

- Public elementary and secondary schools are required by law (passed in 2009) to establish a policy to ensure that a child who is placed in foster care is allowed to remain enrolled in the school he/she attended when he/she entered foster care if it is determined to be in the best interests of the child. In FFY 2008, 40.3 percent of the 357 children who came into foster care or had placement moves had to change schools as a result of foster care entry or a placement change.
- OCS policy requires that children be placed with caregivers who can communicate in the child's language.
- OCS has policies and practices governing the identification of American Indian children, and guiding case planning, service delivery, family preservation, and family support services for American Indian families.
- OCS has policies that address Tribal notifications, Tribal jurisdiction, foster care placement, TPR, pre-adoptive placement, and adoptive placement for American Indian children.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, continuity of family relationships and connections was preserved for children in 93 percent of the 165 applicable cases reviewed during the PCR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in notifying the Tribes in the beginning stages of a case and in coordinating services with the Tribe as needed.

Item 15. Relative placement

 X **Strength** **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

Item 15 was applicable for 33 (82.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period, or the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency made diligent efforts to locate and assess both maternal and paternal relatives as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of the assessment of item 15 are presented in the table below.

Item 15 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	8	17	5	30	91
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	3	3	9
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	8	17	8	33	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	2	3	2	7	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	62.5%		

Item 15 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed with relatives (13 cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives, but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives when applicable (17 cases).

Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency had not made efforts to search for maternal relatives (one case).
- The agency had not made efforts to search for paternal relatives (two cases).

Rating Determination

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 91 percent of cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 15 also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS makes concerted efforts to place children with relatives when children enter foster care. State law provides rules for placement with relatives and policy indicates that the search for relative resources should begin during the CPI. Additionally, OCS policy provides methods by which caseworkers should search for relatives. The Statewide Assessment reports that all relatives are informed of the option of becoming certified foster parents, and many relatives choose to be certified to receive the foster care board rate. Relatives who opt to provide placement as a noncertified relative caregivers do not receive room and board payments; however, OCS policy requires that these families receive a clothing allotment as well as reimbursement for mileage and school fees.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that relatives receive services through OCS and through other programs in the State that provide support and services to relatives caring for children, including the Louisiana Relatives as Parents Program.

WebFOCUS data reported in the Statewide Assessment indicate that in FFY 2009, of the 4,735 children in foster care placements, 410 children were placed with certified relative foster caregivers, and 1,065 children were placed in noncertified relative placements. Additionally, data from AR/FTC indicate that the number of relative placements has increased from 19.9 percent in 2003 to 31.1 percent in 2009.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in searching for relatives when children enter foster care and throughout the life of the case. Additionally, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State is effective in placing children with relatives whenever possible.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 16 was applicable for 27 (67.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if parental rights had been terminated before the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child; a relationship with the parents was not considered in the child's best interests throughout the period under review; or both parents were deceased. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers through efforts other than arranging visitation.

The results of the assessment of item 16 are presented in the table below.

Item 16 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	5	10	0	15	56
Area Needing Improvement	1	3	8	12	44
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	13	8	27	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	7	2	13	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	20	10	40	
Strength by Site	83%	77%	0		

Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 15 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children through various activities. Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 12 cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the mother (nine cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the father (seven cases).

Specific findings pertaining to this item are shown in the table below.

Efforts Made	With Mother (Number of Cases)	With Father (Number of Cases)
Encouraging the parent's participation in school or after-school activities and attendance at medical appointments and special events	10	3
Providing transportation so that parents can participate in these events, activities, or appointments	7	1
Providing opportunities for family therapeutic situations	9	5
Encouraging foster parents to mentor biological parents and serve as parenting role models for them	2	1
Encouraging and facilitating contact with incarcerated parents (when appropriate) or with parents living far away from the child	2	1
Total Applicable Cases	15	8

Rating Determination

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 56 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 16 was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS encourages and supports meaningful involvement of parents with their children in foster care in many ways, including the following:

- Allowing parents and children to celebrate birthdays
- Encouraging parents to take pictures during visits
- Encouraging parents to participate in school activities
- Encouraging parents to attend medical appointments
- Encouraging parents to provide letters, cards and other items to the child
- Involving the parent and the child in family therapy when deemed appropriate by the therapist
- Providing transportation to parents to participate in visits, appointments, and activities
- Allowing children to attend family events, such as funerals
- Having foster parents create Lifebooks for children placed in their homes
- Making concerted efforts to locate noncustodial parents and incarcerated parents and to establish paternity for children when it is unknown.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PCR data indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 75 percent of the 127 applicable cases.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to locate absent fathers. However, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that even when the father's whereabouts are known, the father is not engaged by the agency.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well-Being Outcome 1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	9	15	5	29	44.6
Partially Achieved	7	11	7	25	38.5
Not Achieved	1	5	5	11	16.9
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	53%	48%	29%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 44.6 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 65 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 12 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State was not consistent in assessing and addressing the service needs of children or parents, particularly in the in-home cases.

- The State was not consistent in involving parents and children in the case planning process, particularly in the in-home cases.
- The frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with parents receiving in-home services was not of sufficient quality or quantity to ensure the children's safety or well-being.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in the Program Improvement Plan:

- Increased the capacity of the FS program
- Reduced the FS caseload standard
- Revised the family assessment process so caseworkers could better target interventions
- Improved monitoring processes for contracted in-home psychotherapy services
- Trained caseworkers and stakeholders on the revised assessment process, case plan, and other relevant forms
- Trained caseworkers and stakeholders to more thoroughly assess for domestic violence and substance abuse issues during the family assessment process
- Engaged the Tribes in QA by including the Tribal Social Service Directors in quarterly Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) meetings
- Expanded the FTC Decision Making Process and/or mediation and educated staff on strategies and new policy to improve child and family involvement in case planning
- Clarified OCS policy to improve caseworker visits with parents
- Developed plans to locate biological parents after the hurricanes of 2005 and 2008
- Developed visitation guidelines for families separated by the hurricanes
- Worked with the courts to develop a case decision making model to help caseworkers make the best placement decisions for children evacuated out of the State as a result of the hurricanes
- Worked with the NRCFCPPP to develop guidelines for caseworker contacts to ensure continued assessment of safety and well-being of foster children in foster homes or relative placements who were displaced due to the hurricanes
- Worked with the NRCOI and NRCLJI to provide more qualified legal representation for children and parents in the child welfare system
- Developed action plans and procedures to locate absent biological parents, including maximizing the use of parent locator services

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Well-Being Outcome 1 are presented and discussed below.

Item 17. Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 17 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents and provided the services necessary to meet those needs. This item excludes the assessment of children's (but not parents') needs pertaining to education, physical health, and mental health. These areas are addressed in later items.

The results of the assessment of item 17 are presented in the table below.

Item 17 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	9	19	5	33	51
Area Needing Improvement	8	12	12	32	49
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	53%	61%	29%		

Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 67.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 24 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 33 cases when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met.

Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 32 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- There was an inadequate assessment of children's needs (six cases: one foster care, five in-home).
- There was an inadequate assessment of mothers' needs (eight cases: four foster care, four in-home).
- There was an inadequate assessment of fathers' needs (26 cases: 8 foster care, 18 in-home).
- There was an inadequate assessment of foster parents' needs (three foster care cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address children's needs (seven cases: two foster care, five in-home).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address mothers' needs (12 cases: 6 foster care, 6 in-home).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address fathers' needs (26 cases: 8 foster care, 18 in-home).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address foster parents' needs (two foster care cases).

Additional case review findings pertaining to needs assessments and service provisions are shown in the table below.

Target Person for Needs Assessment and Services	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable	Yes	Applicable
Mother's needs assessed and met	22 (79%)	28	19 (76%)	25
Father's needs assessed and met	11 (58%)	19	5 (22%)	23
Foster parents' needs assessed and met	28 (90%)	31	N/A	N/A
Child's needs assessed and met	38 (95%)	40	20 (80%)	25

The children in the foster care cases and foster parents were more likely to have their needs assessed and met than mothers and fathers whose children are in foster care. Additionally, children receiving in-home services were more likely to have their needs assessed and met than their mothers or particularly their fathers. In general, fathers were unlikely to have their needs assessed and met, particularly in the in-home services cases.

Rating Determination

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 51 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 17 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS uses a web-based instrument called the AFF/Case Plan to summarize the family's ability to protect the child and other concerns and problems as perceived by the family and other relevant parties. The Statewide Assessment notes that the AFF is used to assess the needs of the children and parents in 10 areas and determine the appropriate interventions.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PCR data and review results indicated the following:

- This item was rated as a Strength in 77 percent of the 300 cases reviewed.
- The agency is more likely to provide services to a father who lives in the home than if he does not live in the home.
- For foster care cases, if the whereabouts of a parent are unknown, there frequently is no documentation in the case record indicating that diligent efforts were made to locate the absent parent.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that, with regard to services to youth, OJJ implemented the SAVRY assessment tool in 2009. SAVRY provides information that helps OJJ assess treatment needs and provide services.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed varying opinions on the State's effectiveness in assessing and meeting the needs of children and parents. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers use the information from the assessment tools to ensure that families are referred to the appropriate services. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that many families needed services are not provided. Some stakeholders reported that providing appropriate services sometimes is difficult due to the lack of available services.

In addition, while some stakeholders indicated that caseworkers generally address the needs of foster parents, others expressed the opinion that caseworkers are not responsive to the needs of foster parents. A few stakeholders indicated that foster parents are not always provided with complete information about the children placed in their homes or about the services that are available for the children.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 18 was applicable for 60 (92 percent) of the 65 cases. A case was not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review, parents were not involved with the child in any way, and/or the child was too young or had cognitive delays or other conditions that were barriers to participation in case planning. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents and children (when appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and, if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interests. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent or child actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan.

The results of the assessment of item 18 are presented in the table below.

Item 18 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	7	13	6	26	43
Area Needing Improvement	8	15	11	34	57
Total Applicable Cases	15	28	17	60	
Not Applicable Cases	2	3	0	5	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	47%	46%	35%		

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 66 percent of the 35 applicable foster care cases and 12 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 26 cases when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had participated actively in the

case planning process or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in the case planning process. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 34 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process.

Specific information about involving mothers, fathers, and children in case planning is shown in the table below.

Person Involved in Case Planning	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable Cases	Yes	Applicable Cases
Mother involved in case planning	23 (82%)	28	19 (76%)	25
Father involved in case planning	11 (58%)	19	4 (17%)	23
Children involved in case planning	23 (88%)	26	6 (40%)	15

The children and mothers in the foster care cases were more likely to be involved in case planning than their fathers, but the mothers in the in-home services cases were more likely to be involved in case planning than either the children or the fathers. In general, fathers were least likely to be involved in case planning, particularly in in-home services cases.

Rating Determination

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 43 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 18 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS requires that the case plan be developed with input from parents and children. The case plan for both in-home services cases and foster care cases is to be developed during a face-to-face meeting with the parents and children. The Statewide Assessment also notes that an FTC meeting must be conducted to formalize any changes and that birth parents can request a case plan modification at any point during the life of the case.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PCR findings indicate that child and family involvement in case planning was a Strength in 76 percent of the 279 applicable cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed different opinions regarding the State's effectiveness in engaging parents in case planning. Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that FTC meetings, which are conducted in all parishes, facilitate meaningful engagement of parents in case planning. Also, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that age-appropriate children generally are involved in case planning, including participation in FTC meetings and court procedures.

However, some stakeholders maintained that case plans are developed with minimal or no involvement of the parents or youth. A few stakeholders suggested that when youth are involved, their input is not valued. Additionally, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers do not involve noncustodial parents in the case planning process.

Additional information on stakeholder perceptions of the case planning process and the involvement of parents in case planning is provided under item 25 in the Systemic Factors section of this report.

Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 19 was applicable for all 65 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the caseworkers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being, and whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment.

The results of the assessment of item 19 are presented in the table below.

Item 19 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	16	23	12	51	78
Area Needing Improvement	1	8	5	14	22
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	94%	74%	71%		

Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 87.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 64 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 51 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's well-being and promote attainment of case goals.

Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 14 cases when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, and if visits did occur, they did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (four cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (nine cases).
- The caseworker did not have contact with the child during the period under review (one case).

Specific information regarding the frequency of visitation is provided in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Child During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases (Number and Percent)	In-Home Services Cases (Number and Percent)
Visits occurred at least once a week	3 (7.5%)	1 (4%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	7 (17.5%)	5 (20%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	28 (70%)	16 (64%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	2 (5%)	2 (8%)
There were no visits during the period under review	0	1 (4%)
Total Cases	40	25

Rating Determination

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 78 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and quality. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 19 was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the required frequency of caseworker contacts with children receiving in-home services is based on the assigned risk level. Policy requires that foster care caseworkers visit children at least monthly and that they spend time alone with each child, when age appropriate, to allow the child an opportunity to share any concerns. The Statewide Assessment notes that there are certain case situations that require more than monthly contacts between the caseworker and the child, including the following:

- A child who has just been placed in foster care or who has experienced a placement move
- A child who has been the reported victim of neglect or abuse in a foster placement
- A child with special needs who is placed in a certified or noncertified foster home (this requirement does not apply to children placed in therapeutic foster homes or residential settings that provide a professional level of intervention)

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PCR results determined that this item was rated as a Strength in 83 percent of the 300 applicable cases reviewed. Additionally, PCR findings indicate that caseworkers are not consistently documenting the information discussed during visits with children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that generally caseworkers are having at least monthly contacts with children. Some stakeholders also indicated that when visiting children, caseworkers spend individual time with the children in the home setting. Some stakeholders, however, suggested that the quality of visits varies across caseworkers.

Item 20. Caseworker visits with parent(s)

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 20 was applicable for 57 (88 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this assessment if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of their children. All cases that were not applicable are foster care cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker's face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and ensure the children's safety and well-being.

The results of the assessment of item 20 are presented in the table below.

Item 20 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	7	13	4	24	42
Area Needing Improvement	8	14	11	33	58
Total Applicable Cases	15	27	15	57	
Not Applicable Cases	2	4	2	8	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	47%	48%	27%		

Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 62.5 percent of the 32 applicable foster care cases and 16 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 24 cases when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment.

Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 33 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency or quality (three cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency or quality (nine cases).
- Visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency but did not focus on issues pertaining to case planning or service delivery (five cases).

- Visits with the father were of sufficient frequency but did not focus on issues pertaining to case planning or service delivery (one case).
- There were no visits with the mother (five cases).
- There were no visits with the father (18 cases).

Additional information from the case reviews is provided in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Parents During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Visits occurred at least once a week	2 (7%)	1 (6%)	2 (8%)	0
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	3 (11%)	0	6 (24%)	0
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	13 (48%)	3 (17%)	14 (56%)	2 (9%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	5 (19%)	9 (50%)	2 (8%)	8 (35%)
There were no visits during the period under review	4 (15%)	5 (28%)	1 (4%)	13 (57%)
Total Applicable Cases	27	18	25	23

Rating Determination

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 42 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with parents were sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 20 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS has established the following policies regarding caseworker visits with parents:

- The frequency of caseworker contacts with parents receiving in-home services and with parents with a child in foster care who has a goal of reunification is based on the assigned risk level.
- If a parent is in prison or a residential placement for an extended period of time, visits with the parent may not need to be as frequent but must occur at least once every 3 months, as long as the parent remains in the State and retains parental rights.
- If the child's permanency goal is OPPLA, the frequency of caseworker visits with parents is determined by the circumstances of the case but must occur in the parent's home at a minimum of once every 3 months, unless safety concerns contraindicate home visits.
- If the permanency plan is adoption or transfer of custody to a relative or nonrelative, monthly visits are required until the parent's case is closed.

- If a biological father has not legally acknowledged the child or shown any interest in the child and refuses to visit and to work on a permanent plan for the child, the caseworker is not required to visit the father; however, this information must be documented in the case record and court reports.

The following data were reported in the Statewide Assessment as relevant to this item:

- FS/QATS data indicate that during FFY 2008, parents were visited monthly by the caseworker in 74.2 percent of 803 FS cases reviewed.
- FS/QATS data indicate that during FFY 2008, a parent not living in the home was visited monthly by the caseworker in 40.2 percent of 87 applicable FS cases reviewed.
- Foster care/QATS data indicate that during FFY 2008, caseworker visits with mothers occurred as required by policy in 58.1 percent of 668 applicable foster care cases reviewed.
- Foster care/QATS data indicate that during FFY 2008, caseworker visits with fathers occurred as required by policy in 41.0 percent of 427 applicable foster care cases reviewed.
- PCR data indicate that caseworker visits with parents was rated as a Strength in 69 percent of the 231 cases reviewed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that generally caseworkers have face-to-face contacts with parents at least once a month. Stakeholders did not comment on the quality of visits between caseworkers and parents.

Well-Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	7	19	10	36	83.7
Partially Achieved	0	1	0	1	2.3
Not Achieved	2	2	2	6	14.0
Total Applicable Cases	9	22	12	43	
Not Applicable Cases	8	9	5	22	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	78%	86%	83%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 2

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 83.7 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 94 percent of the 35 applicable foster care cases and 37.5 percent of the 8 applicable in-home services cases. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The 2003 review found that OCS was not consistent in meeting children's educational needs.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Identified and addressed critical educational problems and issues for children and improved communication across service providers
- Worked with the NRCFCPPP to develop guidelines for caseworker contacts to ensure continued assessment of safety and well-being of foster children in foster homes or relative placements who were displaced due to the hurricanes in 2005 and 2008

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

Findings pertaining to the single item assessed under Well-Being Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 21 was applicable for 43 (66 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if children were not of school age, or children in the in-home services cases did not have service needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs.

The results of the assessment of item 21 are presented in the table below.

Item 21 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	7	19	10	36	84
Area Needing Improvement	2	3	2	7	16
Total Applicable Cases	9	22	12	43	
Not Applicable	8	9	5	22	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	78%	86%	83%		

Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 36 cases when reviewers determined that the child's educational needs were appropriately assessed and services were provided, if necessary. Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The child's educational needs were not assessed or addressed (six cases).
- The child had identified educational needs that were not addressed (one case).

Rating Determination

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 84 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for this item to be rated as a Strength. A 95-percent standard is established for this item because it is the only item assessed for this outcome. Item 21 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the AFF determines agency involvement regarding the educational services and needs of children for families receiving in-home services. For children in foster care, the child's educational needs are assessed during the preremoval staffing throughout the AFF and FTC processes. State policy requires that an educational history and all educational information be maintained in the case record of each child in foster care.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that when the birth parent is unable or unwilling to participate in the development and approval of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the agency is responsible for ensuring that the child's foster parent or a surrogate parent is available to assist in advocating for the child's education-related needs.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that OCS is responsible for covering the expenses of services provided to meet the child's educational needs, including the following:

- Limited tutoring for grades 3 through 12

- Summer school
- Driver education
- School supplies
- School uniforms
- Activity fees

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, State law requires that each public school establish a policy to allow a child who is placed in foster care through DSS to remain enrolled in the same public school if it is determined by DSS that it is in the best interests of the child. From October 2008 through June 2009, 36.9 percent of 274 children who entered foster care or who experienced a placement move were maintained in the same school placement.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the agency generally is effective in assessing and meeting children's educational needs. Some stakeholders indicated that the agency makes every attempt to maintain children in the same school; however, transportation sometimes is an issue. Some stakeholders in Orleans Parish reported that caseworkers will personally transport children to school or arrange for transportation to prevent children from having to change schools. A few stakeholders also noted that foster parents make efforts to ensure that educational needs are met and are generally present at IEP meetings. However, some stakeholders noted that caseworkers do not always attend the IEP meetings.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	11	22	13	46	82.1
Partially Achieved	1	2	0	3	5.4
Not Achieved	1	4	2	7	12.5
Total Applicable Cases	13	28	15	56	
Not Applicable Cases	4	3	2	9	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	85%	79%	87%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 82.1 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 90 percent of the 39 applicable foster care cases and 65 percent of the 17 applicable in-home services cases. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2003 CFSR

The key concerns identified in the 2003 review was that the State was not consistent in its efforts to meet children's mental health needs and that mental health services were not readily accessible.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Revised assessment tools, policies, and procedures developed in the clinical evaluation program to better target assessments and services to the needs of clients
- Trained OCS staff on revised policy, forms, and expectations regarding assessment for mental health needs
- Worked with the NRCFCPPP to develop guidelines for caseworker contacts to ensure continued assessment of safety and well-being of foster children in foster homes or relative placements who were displaced because of the hurricanes

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

Findings pertaining to the items assessed under Well-Being Outcome 3 are presented and discussed below.

Item 22. Physical health of the child

 X **Strength** **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

Item 22 was applicable for 46 (71 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were in-home services cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's physical health needs, including dental needs, had been assessed appropriately, and the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided.

The findings of the assessment of item 22 are presented in the table below.

Item 22 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	9	21	12	42	91
Area Needing Improvement	0	3	1	4	9
Total Applicable Cases	9	24	13	46	
Not Applicable Cases	8	7	4	19	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	100%	87.5%	92%		

Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 97 percent of the 39 applicable foster care cases and 57 percent of the 7 applicable in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 42 cases when reviewers determined that children's medical and dental needs were routinely assessed and necessary services were provided. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The child's physical health needs were not adequately assessed or addressed (one in-home case).
- The child's physical health needs were not adequately addressed (one in-home case).
- The child's dental health needs were not adequately assessed or addressed (two cases: one foster care, one in-home).

Rating Determination

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 91 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was effective in assessing and meeting children's physical health needs. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 22 also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, each child who enters foster care must have a medical examination completed within 7 days of entering foster care, unless the child had a complete physical exam within 30 days prior to entering foster care. The medical examination must include a screening for communicable diseases and identification of medical needs and referral for services. If a physical exam was completed prior to the child entering foster care, the child will be referred for the following assessments that are to be completed within designated timeframes:

- Dental screening
- Assessment of the need for age-appropriate immunizations
- Hearing and vision screenings and lead-exposure screening or testing
- Developmental screening for children under 5 years of age

The Statewide Assessment reports that although it is the caseworker's responsibility to ensure that screenings are completed, to coordinate the services to address the physical health care needs of children in foster care, and to ensure all medical needs are met, the agency delegates the responsibility for the provision of routine medical care to foster parents and other caregivers. The Statewide Assessment notes that medical examinations for children younger than age 1 are to be obtained as recommended by the physician. Medical examinations for all foster children age 1 year or older are required to be completed within 14 months of the previous medical examination.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the AFF determines agency involvement regarding the physical and dental services and needs of children for families receiving in-home services. Medical examinations may be paid for by OCS in FS cases for children when there are no other resources available, the examination is necessary to provide information to the court to decide the agency's disposition of the case, or to ensure the safety of a child.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that this item was rated as a Strength in 85 percent of the 237 applicable cases reviewed for the PCR. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that focus group participants expressed concern over the large number of doctors who will not accept Medicaid as a method of payment to treat children. The focus group participants also expressed concern that orthodontic services are not readily available for children in foster care. However, information obtained from a focus group of youth indicates that agency staff, foster parents, and other caregivers are attentive to their physical and dental needs and ensure that they receive the medical care needed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in routinely assessing and addressing the medical and dental needs of children.

Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 23 was applicable for 35 (54 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or if there were no mental health concerns. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided.

The results of the assessment of item 23 are presented in the table below.

Item 23 Ratings	Iberia/St. Mary	Orleans	Rapides	Total	Percent
Strength	9	15	4	28	80
Area Needing Improvement	2	3	2	7	20
Total Applicable Cases	11	18	6	35	
Not Applicable Cases	6	13	11	30	
Total Cases	17	31	17	65	
Strength by Site	82%	83%	67%		

Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 87 percent of the 23 applicable foster care cases and 67 percent of the 12 applicable in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 28 cases when reviewers determined that children's mental health needs were appropriately assessed and the identified mental health needs were addressed.

Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Mental health needs were neither assessed nor addressed (two in-home cases).
- Mental health needs were assessed but services were not provided to address identified needs (five cases: three foster care, two in-home).

Rating Determination

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 80 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 23 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, a mental health screening must be conducted and documented on the Child/Adolescent Initial Mental Health Evaluation form within 15 days of a child entering foster care. The evaluation addresses mental health/behavioral symptoms and child/family mental health history, including outpatient and inpatient mental health services. The Statewide Assessment reports that, if it is deemed relevant, psychologists should be used for testing and psychiatrists for medication and/or medication management.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that treatment for the resolution of emotional, behavioral, or psychiatric problems is available for children in foster care when necessary. If services are not available through the mental health center and/or Medicaid-payable resources, services can be purchased through private social service agencies or through the OCS Mental Health Provider Network of licensed mental health practitioners. The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that availability of mental health resources varies from community to community.

PCR results reported in the Statewide Assessment indicate that 86 percent of the 173 applicable cases reviewed for this item were rated as a Strength. During focus groups conducted as part of the PCR process, foster children, biological parents, foster parents, OCS staff, child advocates, and other community partners reported the following:

- Therapists help children and youth cope with anger, sadness, and stress.
- Psychotropic medications are overly prescribed for children in foster care.
- Follow-up medical care is not always provided.
- Emergency beds in hospital settings and rehabilitation clinics are not available when needed.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in assessing and addressing children's mental health needs. Although many stakeholders reported that there are waiting lists for all mental health-related services, some stakeholders indicated that children in the custody of, or receiving services from, OCS are given priority for services and generally are more likely to bypass the wait list. Additionally, many stakeholders expressed concern about the availability of mental health services; however, many stakeholders indicated that OCS is effective in ensuring the provision of mental health services.

SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

This section of the CFSR Final Report provides information regarding the State's substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors examined during the CFSR. Information on the items included under each systemic factor comes from the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders held during the onsite CFSR. Additional information may come from other Federal reports or assessments.

Each item included in a systemic factor reflects a key Federal program requirement relevant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) for that systemic factor. The overall rating for each systemic factor is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor. For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either "in substantial conformity" with that factor (a score of 3 or 4) or "not in substantial conformity" with that factor (a score of 1 or 2). Specific requirements for each rating are shown in the table below.

Rating the Systemic Factor

Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
1	2	3	4
None of the CFSP or program requirements is in place.	Some or all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

It should be noted that ratings for the items included in each systemic factor are not based on single comments from an individual stakeholder; however, these comments are included in the report when they provide important insights or clarification on the State's performance on a particular systemic factor.

If a State is not in substantial conformity with a particular systemic factor, then that factor must be addressed in the State's Program Improvement Plan. For each systemic factor, information is provided about the State's performance in its first CFSR as well as in the current CFSR. If the systemic factor was part of the State's Program Improvement Plan, the key concerns addressed in the Program Improvement Plan and the strategies for assessing those concerns are noted.

I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Statewide Information System

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Statewide Information System are presented and discussed below.

Item 24. The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or, within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that Louisiana's Tracking, Information, and Payment System (TIPS) can readily identify the legal status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for every child in foster care. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State uses a combination of seven child welfare-related automated data systems. TIPS, which was established in 1988, functions as the primary statewide information management and payments system for OCS. TIPS is used to track client information and generate payments on behalf of OCS. TIPS also serves as the State's legally mandated Central Registry and houses the LARE. The Statewide Assessment notes that TIPS meets Federal and State requirements for tracking the demographics, location, legal status, and goals for all children in foster care and is used to generate the required data for the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). The

Statewide Assessment also notes that, with regard to the child's placement location, TIPS identifies both the location of the child's foster care placement as well as the provider agency, when relevant.

With regard to children in the juvenile justice system, the Statewide Assessment reports that the automated system for OJJ, the Juvenile Electronic Tracking System (JETS), tracks the legal status, demographics, location, and goals for youth in the custody of OJJ. Although JETS is not linked specifically to TIPS, foster children in OJJ custody are given a TIPS number and their cases are integrated into the AFCARS reports.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that TIPS is effective in identifying the legal status, demographics, location, and goals of children in foster care. In addition, some stakeholders indicated that in general, the data are current and reliable.

Two key State-level stakeholders expressed the opinion that JETS is effective in identifying the demographics and location of children served by the OJJ.

II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
	1	2X	3	4

Status of Case Review System

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Case Review System are presented and discussed below.

Item 25. The State provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State provides a process to ensure that each child has a written case plan that is routinely reviewed and updated, the case plans are not consistently developed jointly with the child's parents. During the onsite CFSR, case reviewers determined that OCS made diligent efforts to involve mothers in case planning in only 79 percent of the 53 applicable cases and to involve fathers in only 36 percent of the 42 applicable cases. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS policy requires that the initial case plan for a child in foster care be developed with both parents and that the contents of the case plan are to be guided by information gathered during the AFF and the FTC, both of which involve participation by parents. Additionally, each case must be reviewed during an FTC meeting at least once every 6 months, and the case plan must be updated at that time.

The Statewide Assessment notes that birth parents can request a case plan modification at any point during the life of the case but that all requested changes must be submitted to and approved by the court. The agency is required to provide copies of the case plan to the parents at least 10 days prior to any scheduled dispositional hearing. Case plans are developed with each parent until the parent's rights are terminated or the agency no longer has custody of the child.

According to the Statewide Assessment, parents of children in the custody of OJJ are invited to participate in service plan development. An individual service plan is developed within 14 days of initial placement and reviewed at a 6-month AR. A second case review is held and an individual service plan is developed 5 months from the date of the initial case review if the child remains in placement.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review addressed the issues of the timeliness of case plans and the involvement of parents in case planning. With regard to timeliness, many stakeholders expressed the opinion that case plans are routinely prepared in a timely manner and are updated at the required intervals.

Stakeholders expressed different opinions regarding the State's effectiveness in engaging parents in case planning. Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that FTC meetings, which are conducted in all parishes, facilitate meaningful engagement of parents in case planning. Additionally, some stakeholders suggested that the AFF, FTC meetings, and other meetings with parents result in

individualized plans that guide the parents and the agency in achieving case goals. However, a few stakeholders reported that parental involvement with developing the case plan varies by location and caseworker. A few stakeholders also maintained that case plans are developed with minimal or no involvement of noncustodial parents, especially fathers.

In addition, several stakeholders expressed the opinion that the current case plan is very long, covers a lot of areas, and is difficult for parents to understand.

Item 26. The State provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as a Strength. Information provided by stakeholders indicates that reviews are held at least once every 6 months and that the periodic reviews assess the well-being of children and move the cases toward permanency. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, prior to the judicial review, an FTC meeting is conducted in conjunction with an AR. The AR/FTC is attended by OCS staff and the parents, and is facilitated by a supervisor, district manager, or designee. According to the Statewide Assessment, during the AR/FTC, the case plan and case progress are reviewed, and the case plan is revised as needed. The Statewide Assessment reports that court hearings to review a case are held at 6-month intervals from the time a child is placed in agency custody. According to the Statewide Assessment, an AR must be held within 6 months of initial placement for children in the custody of DPSC/OJJ.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, a federally funded program, ZERO TO THREE, is currently being piloted in the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court. The program provides intense services and monitoring to ensure that children under 3 years of age achieve permanency quickly. The program partners the judicial system and child welfare agency with community stakeholders and child advocates to provide services to abused and neglected infants and toddlers, and their families.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally ensures that a periodic review of the status of each child is held at least every 6 months if not more frequently. Most stakeholders indicated that the judicial reviews are helpful and that judicial reviews assess the well-being of children and are useful in moving children toward permanency. Some stakeholders indicated that an AR/FTC is conducted every 6 months prior to the periodic review to review the case and revise the case plan as needed.

Several stakeholders in Orleans Parish reported that cases assigned to ZERO TO THREE are reviewed by the court on a monthly basis and that these judicial reviews expedite permanency for the children in these cases.

Additionally, stakeholders at the State level and in Orleans Parish noted that the court in Orleans Parish conducts quarterly benchmark hearings for older youth to review and monitor school performance, IL skills, plans for emancipation, etc. These hearings are attended by the youth and other parties relevant to the case and are generally conducted on school holidays or at other times that do not interfere with school attendance. A few stakeholders reported that other judicial jurisdictions, including Iberia/St. Mary Parishes, are beginning to conduct benchmark hearings.

A key State-level stakeholder expressed the opinion that ARs occur every 6 months for children in the custody of OJJ.

Item 27. The State provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 27 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that permanency hearings are held in a timely manner. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State law requires that the courts conduct a permanency hearing within 12 months of a child being removed from the home and every 12 months thereafter until permanency is achieved. Additionally, State law requires that a permanency hearing be held within 30 days of a judicial determination that reunification efforts are not required.

The following data from QATS was reported in the Statewide Assessment as relevant to this item:

- The initial permanency hearing was held in a timely manner by Federal standards in 93.6 percent of the 911 applicable cases from October 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009.
- Subsequent permanency hearings were held in a timely manner by Federal guidelines in 90.1 percent of the 1,418 applicable cases from October 1, 2008, through June 30, 2008.

The Statewide Assessment notes that OJJ policy requires that a permanency hearing be conducted within 12 months of a child's placement in OJJ custody and annually thereafter.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that permanency hearings generally are held in accordance with State and Federal guidelines, and the hearings focus on issues pertaining to achieving permanency.

Item 28. The State provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although information from the Statewide Assessment indicates that the State has a process for filing a petition for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA, the State did not provide recent data pertaining to the timeliness of filing for TPR. In addition, information from stakeholder interviews suggests that filing for TPR in some areas of the State is delayed due to insufficient legal resources. The findings of the onsite CFSR indicate that ASFA requirements for filing TPR were met in 58 percent of the 24 applicable cases. This item was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires that a petition for TPR be filed for children who have been in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months and in other circumstances required by ASFA. Additionally, the State requires that TPR be filed in the following circumstances:

- The child is considered abandoned by the State's definition.
- The child has been in foster care at least 1 year with no substantial parental compliance with the case plan, and there is no reasonable expectation of improvement in the parent's condition in the near future.
- The child is in foster care, and the parent has been convicted and sentenced to a period of incarceration for an extended period of time, will not be able to care for child, and refuses or fails to provide a reasonable plan for the care of the child other than foster care.
- The commission of felony rape by the natural parent resulted in the conception of the child.
- The parents relinquished the infant.

The Statewide Assessment notes that a staffing to discuss TPR is held when the child has been in foster care for 12 months. If the decision is made to pursue TPR, the caseworker develops a TPR packet that is presented to the regional attorney for use in development of the petition. If the decision is made to not pursue TPR, the compelling reason for this decision is documented in the case plan.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DPSC/OJJ policy requires that at the 15th month of nonsecure placement, a TPR hearing must be conducted if there is not a permanent plan in place. However, if there is a permanency plan, a status letter must be submitted to the court to notify the court that a hearing is not required.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that OCS generally files for TPR in accordance with ASFA timeframes. However, most New Iberia/St. Mary Parishes stakeholders and a few State-level stakeholders expressed the opinion that filing for TPR frequently is delayed due to an inadequate number of OCS attorneys in some parishes. According to a few stakeholders in New Iberia/St. Mary Parishes, a vacant staff attorney position has contributed to the backlog of 70 cases in need of a TPR petition in that parish. Several stakeholders from this site reported that the timeframe from the decision to file TPR to the actual filing of the TPR petition may be as long as 12 months.

Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that when OCS does not file for TPR, compelling reasons usually are documented and presented to the court. Various stakeholders identified the following as frequent reasons for not filing for TPR:

- The child is placed with a relative.
- The child has a relationship with the biological family and does not wish to be adopted.
- The parents are diligently working toward reunification but will not complete the case plan within the required timeframe.

Item 29. The State provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, only 64.9 percent of foster caregivers received notice of permanency hearings from October 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009. Additionally, some stakeholders reported that the opportunity to be heard in court depends on the presiding judge. This item was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the caseworker is expected to provide foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, or relative caregivers notice of case reviews and court hearings and advise the caregivers of the right to be heard in any court proceedings while the child is in the care of that individual. If a caregiver does not attend a court proceeding, the caseworker must report to the court whether notice was provided. The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that participation of foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers in hearings is not tracked by the agency or the court.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, notification of proceedings is not an issue currently reviewed in any of the OCS or court review processes. However, the Statewide Assessment reports the data from QATS indicate that from October 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009, 64.9 percent of the foster caregivers in the 390 applicable cases were notified of upcoming permanency hearings.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that foster caregivers receive written notice of reviews and hearings involving children in their care. In addition to the written notification, some stakeholders reported that foster caregivers also receive verbal notification from the children's caseworker. A few Orleans Parish stakeholders reported that a copy of the notification letter must be attached to the court report that is submitted to the court prior to the hearing. Some stakeholders noted that if the foster caregiver is not in attendance, the court will inquire if notification was provided to that caregiver.

Although most stakeholders said that foster caregivers are given the opportunity to be heard in court hearings, a few stakeholders said that the opportunity to be heard depends on the judge.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Quality Assurance System

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. The State also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under QA System are presented and discussed below.

Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and from stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has standards and procedures in place to ensure the quality of services to protect the safety and health of children. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State has policy that provides specific details about the quality of care and services required to protect the safety and health of the children. In addition to policy pertaining to health care and caseworker visitation, the State has policy and procedures that apply to efforts to locate children who run away from foster placements and to assessments of alleged maltreatment of a child in a foster placement. The State requires quarterly staffings on children in foster care to ensure that their health and safety needs are met. Additionally, the State conducts case crisis reviews on fatalities, near fatalities, and serious abuse/neglect cases in a foster care placement.

The Statewide Assessment reports that residential and child-placing agencies have regulations that provide for the safety and health of foster children served by these facilities. The State requires an annual licensing survey and renewal of license for these programs. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, all foster care placements, including congregate care resources, are required by policy and/or licensing regulation to maintain an emergency plan for the family or facility, including plans for foster children. Foster care caseworkers obtain updated copies of these plans from foster homes annually, and congregate care plans are monitored during licensing reviews.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has effective standards in place to address the quality of services provided to children in foster care. A few stakeholders suggested that standards regarding quality of care are applied to contracted services and are monitored by OCS staff. Additionally, services to children in foster care are evaluated through QA case reviews, supervisory case reviews and staffings, FTC meetings, ARs, and judicial reviews.

Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 31 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has a clearly identifiable and functioning QA system that addresses key practice areas and provides feedback on key findings. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CQI system is the agency's comprehensive QA system that monitors practice and systemic factors affecting the child welfare practice daily. The CQI system is comprised of several statewide processes.

A key CQI process is the PCR, which includes case record reviews using a CFSR-like instrument to review a sample of cases from each region and focus groups with various stakeholders. The information obtained from the PCR is used by CQI teams and management to identify and initiate process, program, and outcome improvement plans. After each PCR, the region submits an improvement plan.

According to the Statewide Assessment, because of staff cuts, staff turnover, new practice initiatives, and reorganization, the regions and the State office have not been as consistent as needed with improvement plans and follow-up to improvement plans. However, the Statewide Assessment reports that the Division of Field Services manages the improvement of performance through direct supervision of regional managers and by integrating extensive data.

The following additional CQI processes were identified in the Statewide Assessment:

- **CQI Committees:** These committees hold quarterly meetings with stakeholder members to identify issues that need to be addressed at State and regional levels. These committees also synthesize the extensive QA data from all sources to identify and resolve issues pertaining primarily to clinical and practice issues.
- **Individual Case Monitoring:** Supervisors are required to have a case staffing with the caseworker every 90 days on all cases.
- **Licensing Review Monitoring:** DSS/OCS and each of its Regional Offices are licensed child-placing agencies and are monitored by the Bureau of Licensing. Each regional office undergoes a licensing review to maintain its license.
- **QA Review Monitoring:** Regional QA staff monitor standards of care in all service areas from a data perspective by reviewing a random sample of cases stratified by location. After each individual QA review is completed, the reviewer meets with the supervisor and the caseworker (if available) to provide the feedback immediately and individually on each case. The reports from these reviews are part of the management process and CQI. Additionally, information from the reports is used during supervisory staffings.
- **Data Reports Monitoring:** Child welfare quality care is monitored through the use of proximal and distal outcome measures. The 17 CFSR data measures are available through a data dashboard to all child welfare staff at all times for any length of time. These measures have drill-down capacity to the region, parish, caseworker, and case level.

- OCS Customer Service Survey: All individuals who enter a Louisiana DSS child welfare office are asked to complete the 11-question survey on service they received in the DSS office. Approximately 2,482 individuals completed this survey in FFY 2009.
- OJJ Monitoring: OJJ conducts monthly reviews of youth files and visits with youth and their families for foster children served by OJJ. OJJ conducts semiannual QA reviews of foster care programs; monthly monitoring by OJJ Central Office staff and Regional Offices; and joint QA visits by OCS, OJJ, and the Bureau of Licensing.
- Peer-to-Peer Review: This process was piloted in the Lake Charles region. Partnering with the Children's Research Center, a group of volunteer staff from other regions reviewed, along with State office staff and some consultants, a sample of cases from the region. An assessment of each case review was written with specific goals and tasks needed, and the peer reviewer taught skills needed by the caseworker that were identified through the review process. A summary of all the case reviews led to a comprehensive report of patterns of strengths and needs in staff functioning.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, CQI also is supported by TIPS, which can produce over 600 reports and has the capacity to generate on-demand reports to staff at State and local offices. These reports are used by all levels of agency staff to monitor and improve programs and outcomes. The Statewide Assessment indicates that regional managers are directly responsible for integrating data collected through various QA processes, planning local improvements, and monitoring change.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the CQI/QA processes are effective, constructive, and recognize the strengths and challenges within the child welfare system. Stakeholders indicated that the processes allow OCS to obtain an accurate picture of what is occurring in practice. Stakeholders reported that supervisors use the data from the review process to guide caseworkers in bringing about practice change. Many stakeholders also indicated that various TIPS reports are available from the multiple data systems to assist in monitoring caseloads and the completion of case-related tasks.

Stakeholders' explanations and understanding of the CQI processes were generally consistent with the information provided in the Statewide Assessment. In addition, a few stakeholders reported that regional QA staff participate in FTC meetings to further assess the quality of services provided in foster care cases.

IV. STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Staff and Provider Training

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. The State also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Staff and Provider Training are presented and discussed below.

Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State provides knowledge- and skills-based training to new child welfare caseworkers and ensures that caseworkers are trained on relevant issues prior to assuming a full caseload. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS policy requires that all professional staff having direct contact with families and children, regardless of program assignment, attend New Worker Orientation (NWO) training. The Statewide Assessments notes that NWO training is an 88-hour curriculum (3 weeks) that covers the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for child welfare services delivery that are common to the CPI, ARFA, FS, and FC program areas.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that in conjunction with NWO, new employees must participate in Structured Activity Time, which consists of planned activities the caseworker completes and discusses with the supervisor, or various aspects of casework practice with children and families that are scheduled by the supervisor for the new employee to observe. Other activities range from learning how to access online policy to shadowing experienced caseworkers as they perform aspects of their job.

At the conclusion of training, trainers provide feedback to regional administrators about the participation and performance of each trainee. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, regional training coordinators assist in the coordination and tracking of training for all OCS staff. In addition, the Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (MOODLE) is a new centralized training data tracking and reporting system that provides quick access to a list of staff completions of mandated trainings.

The Statewide Assessment reports that each cohort of new employees is asked to participate in two follow-up teleconferences approximately 1 month and 2 months following completion of NWO. During these teleconferences, new employees have the opportunity to discuss their current work assignments, identify information that was helpful to them from NWO training, and identify gaps in the training.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the teleconferences are part of the strategy to improve transfer of learning. The Statewide Assessment indicates that within 4 to 5 months of completing NWO, new caseworkers receive 32 hours of specialized training related to their program assignment.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the Louisiana Child Welfare Comprehensive Workforce Project (LCWCWP) partnered with OCS to assess the new caseworker training process. In June 2009, the LCWCWP released the report “Summary of Findings from the OCS Statewide Training System Assessment,” which compiled and analyzed data from training system assessment tools and focus group discussions. The LCWCWP made a series of recommendations, including short-term recommendations to be implemented over a 2-year period regarding the redesign of NWO.

The Statewide Assessment reports that all new supervisors must participate in a basic child welfare supervision course conducted by a nationally recognized expert in child welfare supervision. The curriculum consists of six modules provided in 11 days over a 6-month period. In addition to the classroom-based instruction, the trainer conducts site visits with the supervisors to provide one-on-one observation and mentoring. Additionally, OCS-experienced child welfare professionals within the State are providing coaching and mentoring to new supervisors as a part of the new supervisor training process.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the training provided to new caseworkers is effective in providing foundational skills and knowledge of the child welfare system. Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that shadowing veteran caseworkers and observing the actual tasks related to their assigned program areas is very beneficial to the training process. Several stakeholders reported that new caseworkers generally do not assume a caseload until the completion of NWO training. A few stakeholders also expressed the opinion that the specialized training in specific practice areas was beneficial.

Despite these positive perspectives, a few stakeholders across the sites reported that the NWO training did not prepare new caseworkers to use the automated systems or complete the required case management forms. Some stakeholders also indicated that a new caseworker may have to wait for 1 month to attend NWO training. However, it was noted that the new caseworkers are allowed to shadow an experienced caseworker while waiting for the NWO training.

A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State recognizes the importance of competent, well-trained child welfare supervisors, which is why OCS has instituted supervisor training. Stakeholders commenting on the supervisors' training expressed the opinion that the training is very effective in providing supervisors with the knowledge and tools necessary to support and mentor caseworkers. New supervisor training, according to a few stakeholders, is offered twice a year.

A few stakeholders reported that some of the changes recommended by LCWCWP have already been made, including the recommendation that trainers provide direct feedback to supervisors on new caseworker performance.

Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that MOODLE effectively tracks training for new caseworkers.

Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State requires ongoing training for all caseworkers and supervisors. Ongoing training is provided through various venues and participation and completion are tracked by the regional training coordinator and in MOODLE. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, State statute mandates that each OCS caseworker and supervisor receive 32 hours of in-service training annually in the second and third full years of employment and at least 20 hours of in-service training annually every year thereafter. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, training opportunities are offered through the following venues:

- The Training and Staff Development Section of OCS
- Conferences held within the State
- Trainings by organizations and community partners within each region

- Training and staff development provided either by in-house training staff or by content experts funded through contracts or other available resources
- Training opportunities provided by a series of monthly child welfare supervisory teleconferences that allow all 200 supervisors statewide to participate in an innovative learning environment centered on best practices and clinical case consultation in child welfare supervision

The Statewide Assessment also reports that each region receives funding to meet the ongoing training needs of its staff. However, it was noted that funding for this has decreased in recent years due to budget cuts. Course listings are available through MOODLE and the DSS Policy Management System. The DSS Policy Management System also offers opportunities for managers to build e-Learning courses for staff, evaluation tools, and quizzes. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, regional training coordinators help coordinate and track training received by staff.

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS also fosters professional development of qualified OCS employees, contingent on the availability of funds, by providing some limited tuition reimbursement for permanent employees pursuing degrees in social work on a part-time basis and by offering a limited number of stipends for employees to pursue M.S.W. degrees on a full-time basis.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review indicated that ongoing training is required for caseworkers and supervisors. Although some stakeholders reported that budget cuts have had a negative impact on training, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that multiple training opportunities across the State are available through various venues reported in the Statewide Assessment, as well as others. Additionally, many stakeholders expressed the opinion that ongoing training is beneficial and enhances caseworker and supervisor abilities.

Stakeholders generally confirmed the information provided in the Statewide Assessment regarding the role of the regional training coordinator and MOODLE in tracking training participation.

Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that OCS provides initial and ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents and has training requirements for child residential facilities staff that are monitored by the Bureau of Licensing. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS provides 30 hours of pre-service training to all applicants for the foster/adoptive parent program, which must be completed prior to a child being placed in the home. Once a family is certified, it is required to obtain 15 hours of ongoing training annually to maintain certification. The Statewide Assessment reports that a variety of in-service training topics are offered each year for foster parents through the State Foster/Adoptive Parent Conference in classroom settings and on the Internet through agency-approved websites.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that OCS policy allows for other situations to be counted as in-service training, including formal training from a medical provider, a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, or licensed clinical social worker/professional counselor for purposes of implementing an individualized behavior management program or other therapeutic treatment on behalf of a child placed in the home.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, compliance with training requirements is monitored by regional Home Development (HD) staff. When a family has not completed the required hours, a licensing waiver must be approved to allow the family to remain certified. However, since June 2005, only two waivers have been submitted and approved for noncompliance in in-service training.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Bureau of Licensing requires that staff of child residential facilities obtain 24 hours of orientation training, which includes specific topics as outlined in State regulations, within the employee's first week of employment. Additionally, annual training is required on specified topics of residential foster care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State provides initial training for foster and adoptive parents through the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) curriculum. Several stakeholders reported that the MAPP curriculum recently has been updated and revised with input from the Casey Foundation. Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that the information provided in the initial training is beneficial, although in the opinion of a few stakeholders, nothing can actually prepare someone for the reality of being a foster parent. Most stakeholders reported that ongoing training is required, helpful, and readily available through various conferences and through online sources. Additionally, information provided by stakeholders in reference to earning training hours was consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment.

One key State-level stakeholder reported that OJJ foster parents are required to complete OCS MAPP and additional hours required by OJJ.

V. SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
	1	2X	3	4

Status of Service Array and Resource Development

Louisiana is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Service Array and Resource Development are presented and discussed below.

Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as a Strength. Although concerns were identified during the onsite CFSR about the accessibility of services (as indicated in item 36), information in the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that Louisiana has an adequate array of key services in the State to meet the needs of children and families. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, OCS delivers services directly or through contracts or referrals. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that budgetary limitations have greatly affected the array of services provided by all agencies and by nonprofit community services and programs due to modified and/or terminated contracts with State agencies.

Despite these concerns, the Statewide Assessment indicates that the following services and programs are available statewide:

- In-home FS
- ARFA
- AFF
- Child Screening, Assessment, Referral, and Treatment (the model concept is available statewide)
- Child welfare FRCs
- Family violence prevention and intervention
- Early Steps Program
- IHBS
- In-home substance-abuse counseling
- Louisiana 2-1-1
- Louisiana Advocacy Support Team
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- MST
- PAF
- Protective day care services
- RAF
- Adoption Subsidy Program

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State worked with the NRCOI to redesign the FS program to improve its service array and create a positive presence in the community by identifying what brings families to agency attention and determining the underlying issues that result in agency involvement. The NRCOI, NRCFCPPP, and NRC for Child Welfare Data and Technology assisted the agency in evaluating current family assessments regarding needs, analyzing assessment data and the service array, and designing a continuum of services.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that although the State has a wide array of services, the number of services and service providers has been reduced due to budget cuts resulting from the current economic situation. Stakeholders noted that these cuts have had a negative effect on service delivery to families and children for both in-home and foster care cases.

Additionally, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that Medicaid providers for medical services are available statewide. According to some stakeholders, OCS is willing to create collaborations and work closely with State and community partners to

address needs and gaps in services. Currently, several ongoing collaborations are occurring to address service gaps including the LCWCWP and the Systems of Care Initiative. Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that accessibility is often a problem (see item 36).

Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that some key services are not accessible to families and children in all jurisdictions. In addition, there are waiting lists for such key services as psychological evaluations, substance abuse treatment, and mental health treatment. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, participants in focus groups conducted in preparation for the Statewide Assessment reported that the accessibility of services is a concern throughout the State, particularly in rural parishes, and that there is insufficient funding for services. The Statewide Assessment notes that lack of transportation is a barrier to many families being able to access services. Additionally, the Statewide Assessment notes that the State has experienced a reduction in the number of psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists statewide due to the devastating hurricanes and the economic downturn.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, 120 respondents participating in a survey of court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) provided the following responses to the question, "How accessible are services to families and children and foster children/youth in Louisiana?"

- 15.0 percent said services are very accessible.
- 38.3 percent said services are usually accessible.
- 35.0 percent said services are sometimes accessible.
- 10.8 said services are rarely accessible.
- 0.8 percent said services are not accessible.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the availability and accessibility of services has declined considerably due to budget cuts and the economic situation in the State, although some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the accessibility of services is better in urban areas than it is in rural areas. Stakeholders indicated that many services in Orleans Parish were forced to close after Hurricane Katrina and have never reopened, which has resulted in a decrease in services in

that parish. Many stakeholders also noted that families living in rural areas frequently have to drive long distances to access needed services and that a lack of transportation can restrict access to services. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that the hours of operation of most service providers decrease the families' ability to access those services.

Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the greatest accessibility concern is for mental health services for all ages. Various stakeholders expressed the following concerns regarding mental health services:

- The mental health system in the State has been reorganized recently, which has contributed to the difficulty in obtaining these services.
- A New Orleans adolescent psychiatric hospital closed recently, which has resulted in children having to travel long distances to receive similar services.
- There is a lack of psychologists, psychiatrists, public mental health services, and therapists/counselors trained in child maltreatment issues.
- Agency funding for "paid" services is available but limited.
- There are waiting lists for all mental health services, although children receiving services from OCS may receive priority attention and not have to go on the waiting list.
- Some children are in the custody of OCS in order to receive mental health services that are otherwise difficult to obtain.

In addition to the lack of mental health services, the availability of substance abuse treatment is limited. Some stakeholders reported that the Office of Addictive Services has a liaison in the parish offices of OCS, which increases the accessibility of some substance abuse services and that frequently families receiving services from OCS are given priority to substance abuse treatment. However, many stakeholders reported that there are waiting lists for detoxification services and inpatient services, including family inpatient services.

Various stakeholders across the three sites identified the following additional services as insufficient to meet the need:

- Parenting classes
- Domestic violence services for victims and batterers
- Sexual abuse treatment for perpetrators
- Affordable housing
- Services for emancipating youth
- Housing for youth with special needs and older youth
- Medicaid providers in rural areas

Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency

 Strength **X** **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 37 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the agency is not consistently effective in individualizing services to meet the unique needs of children and families. Stakeholders attributed this primarily to the lack of accessibility and availability of services in many areas of the State. This item was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the agency's assessment tools and policies encourage and promote the individualization of services because information gathered through the assessment process is used to provide services to the family, including development of a case plan to address the identified concerns and problems. Additionally, the agency attempts to seek and provide culturally appropriate services for families and children by using interpreter services when needed and by using providers who match the race and ethnicity of the clients whenever possible. The Statewide Assessment also reports that PAF and RAF are available to purchase items or services (or both) for families who are at risk of out-of-home placement or need these services to promote reunification.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, 120 respondents participating in the CASA survey provided the following responses to the question, "How effective is OCS in individualizing or tailoring services to meet unique needs of children and families?"

- 9.2 percent of the respondents indicated very effective.
- 37.5 percent of the respondents indicated usually effective.
- 35.0 percent of the respondents indicated sometimes effective.
- 15.8 percent of the respondents indicated rarely effective.
- 2.5 percent of the respondents indicated not effective.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed varying opinions on the State's effectiveness in individualizing services to meet the needs of children and families. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in individualizing services and that caseworkers use the information from the assessment tools to ensure that families are referred to the appropriate services. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that effectiveness in individualizing services varies across caseworkers.

In addition, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that individualizing services is difficult due to the lack of services or the lack of available appropriate services in certain parishes. As a result, children and families may be offered or provided services that are

available in the community rather than services they actually need more. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that culturally competent services and interpreters are not consistently available.

Several stakeholders commented that PAF and RAF are available to individualize services for children and families.

VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Agency Responsiveness to the Community are presented and discussed below.

Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment indicates that the State has engaged in ongoing consultation with a variety of stakeholders in developing and implementing the provisions of the CFSP. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the *CQI Plan and Procedures Handbook* addresses stakeholder involvement in the development of the CFSP. Specific efforts to engage stakeholders in CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) development include making sure it is an agenda item at CQI and stakeholder committee meetings where plans, reports, and data are shared, along with Internet postings, electronic correspondence, and public announcements in the Louisiana Register and major daily newspapers. Interested parties are encouraged to provide comments by mail or in person at a public hearing.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, stakeholder involvement in the 2010-2014 CFSP development began with a kickoff meeting on March 10, 2009, attended by OCS staff and representatives of the following departments, agencies, and Tribes:

- Department of Education (DOE)
- Louisiana Foster Parent Association
- FRCs
- Chitimacha Tribe
- Coushatta Tribe
- Catholic Charities
- Private mental health providers
- OJJ
- Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH)
- Louisiana Supreme Court

Attendees were given OCS baseline data, and workgroups were established to develop goals, objectives, and strategies. Subsequent goal development was coordinated via e-mail and telephone.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that three groups provide feedback to OCS in quarterly meetings. The CQI Statewide Community, Consumer Stakeholder Committee, and the regional CQI committees. The groups identify issues related to safety, permanency, well-being, agency policy, and service provision, and offer suggestions for improvement. The Citizens Review Panels examine the policies, procedures, and (when appropriate) specific cases to evaluate the State Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act plan and specific areas of the child protective system addressed in the plan.

Additionally, consumer satisfaction surveys are made available to all visitors—including service consumers, foster parents, and other service providers—to OCS offices. The results of these surveys are reviewed and acted on through the regional CQI Committees and the Statewide Consumer Satisfaction/Feedback Mechanisms Committee.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that OCS meets regularly with other agencies and with providers to solicit input for the CFSP. Additionally, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that participants are very comfortable engaging with OCS and that participant's opinions are valued by OCS. Many stakeholders reported that OCS follows up with participants after meetings, and a few stakeholders reported that they were provided a copy of the CFSP to review.

Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, Annual Progress and Services Reports delivered pursuant to the CFSP

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the APSR is completed with input from various stakeholders. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, APSRs pursuant to the CFSP are developed in consultation with stakeholders as an ongoing process. It was noted that this process allows the agency to identify and respond to areas needing improvement quickly.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that OCS meets regularly with stakeholders to solicit input for the APSR.

Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that OCS is effective in coordinating with other Federal and federally assisted programs in the provision of services to shared populations. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, coordination of services with other Federal or federally funded programs is addressed in the *CQI Plan and Procedures Handbook* and in program policy as related to specific collaborative efforts.

The Statewide Assessment contains the following examples of collaboration with other federally funded programs to improve child welfare outcomes:

- Through the collaboration of OCS, DHH, Office of Addictive Disorders, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), substance abuse counselors have been placed in OCS offices to assess and refer clients to treatment and prioritize inpatient treatment beds for OCS and TANF service recipients.
- DHH and OCS collaborated to continue Medicaid benefits for youth who have aged out of foster care.
- Through a collaboration between DHH and OCS, services are provided for developmentally delayed children in order to identify and treat mental health disorders in children, youth, and parents.
- There has been ongoing collaboration between OCS and DOE to track education progress of children in foster care and establish transportation modes for educational stability.
- OCS and OJJ have worked together to assure that caseworker visits occur monthly, that title IV-E eligibility is calculated accurately for children in OJJ custody, and that OJJ youth receive life skills training.
- OCS, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, and the Workforce Investment Board collaborated to improve the referral method for training and employment of youth aging out of foster care.
- OCS partners with Youth Oasis to support a transitional living program for youth funded under Part B of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974.
- In conjunction with the Governor's office, DSS (which includes OCS), OJJ, DHH, and the DOE have joined together to develop a coordinated system of mental health care for children in the custody of the State.
- The No Wrong Door initiative, established by DSS in 2003, provides needed and available social services to DSS clients in a coordinated and seamless manner.

Additionally, four federally recognized American Indian Tribes are located in Louisiana. Tribal representatives participate in quarterly meetings of the Statewide Stakeholder Committee and in the respective regional CQI committees. Additional collaboration with the Tribes includes the following:

- Tribal Social Service Directors are invited to OCS training.
- OCS foster home recruiters contact Tribal Social Service Directors quarterly to develop placement resources within the Tribal community.
- CILP and ETC providers make outreach efforts to Tribes.
- OCS provides Tribes with funding announcements and requests for proposals that have been published in the Federal Register.
- OCS has offered assistance and support to Tribes who wish to establish title IV-E programs.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, child welfare national resource centers provide technical assistance to Louisiana through the Court Improvement Project to improve collaboration with Tribes.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in the coordination of services of Federal and federally assisted programs for children and families. Additionally, many stakeholders expressed the opinion that the OCS is open to collaboration.

VII. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		In Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Louisiana is in substantial conformity with this systemic factor. The State also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

The findings pertaining to the items assessed under Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention are presented and discussed below.

Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, all child care facilities and child-placing agencies, including facilities owned and operated by any governmental, profit, nonprofit, private, or church agency, must meet the minimum requirements for a license, and the facility or agency must be in compliance with all other State and local laws and regulations.

The Statewide Assessment reports that OCS has provider agreements with agencies and facilities that provide residential, emergency shelter, supervised apartment, foster care, and therapeutic foster care services to children and youth in foster care or in transitional living. Each provider agreement contains a set of contract terms, standards applicable to all providers, and separate standards for each service provided. The standards are compatible with licensing standards and OCS policy with standards specific for the program design, the level of therapeutic intervention, and expectations for child care. The period of license is 1 year, as provided for in the published regulations, and applications for renewal are due 60 days prior to expiration of the license. The department is to inspect at regular intervals not to exceed 1 year or as deemed necessary by the department. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, some licensing standards are considered outdated. However, the Statewide Assessment indicates that the State is in the process of writing and implementing new licensing standards and regulations for child residential care and child-placing agencies.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the certification or home study process for becoming a foster/adoptive parent for children in OCS custody consists of, but is not limited to, the following:

- Completing the application and the Family Assessment Packet
- Completing pre-service training
- Participating in home consultation meetings and individual interviews
- Completing the home study
- Supervisory approval

The HD unit monitors the foster homes for compliance with standards. The HD caseworker conducts a re-certification study on each family foster/adoptive home 6 months after the initial certification and another re-certification study is completed 1 year after the 6-month re-certification. If the home remains in “good standing” without any valid investigations of abuse/neglect, child care deficiencies, or other concerns, re-certification for the foster home is not required for another 3 years. When a family does not meet an agency requirement or licensing regulation, the home may be considered for re-certification with a corrective action plan in effect if the safety of the child is not a factor.

Louisiana does not have a separate set of licensing regulations for kinship care providers. Relatives, fictive kin who are not legally responsible for a child, or friends of a foster child are made aware that a foster care board rate will not be paid until the home is certified. The relative or friend should meet the eligibility criteria for foster homes per DSS licensing and OCS policy based on a preliminary home assessment.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Although most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the State's standards regarding safety in foster homes and child care institutions are in place and are reflected in certification and licensure procedures, there were different opinions on the quality of these standards. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the standards currently in place are adequate to maintain children's safety in foster homes. It was noted that the standards the State has established include training, physical examinations, criminal history checks, as well as a home study process that includes a safety and environmental check. A few State-level stakeholders, however, indicated that the current foster home and child care institution standards have been in place for a long time and are currently being rewritten.

Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or title IV-B funds

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength. The State applies standards equally to all licensed residential facilities and certified foster and adoptive homes receiving title IV-E or title IV-B funds. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, standards are applied equally to all foster homes and institutions. The Statewide Assessment notes that waivers can be issued for a home to complete the certification process or non-safety licensing or policy standards, usually for relative caregivers. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, there were 29 waivers granted during the reporting period ending September 30, 2009, to allow family foster home certifications of relative caregivers. The types of waivers were for:

- Age: over age 65 at initial certification
- Marital status: separated from spouse and not divorced
- Sharing bedroom: children over age 6 sharing with a child of opposite sex or children sharing bedroom with an adult (under approved circumstances)

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that standards are applied equally to all certified foster parents and to all licensed child care institutions. A few stakeholders reported that waivers are rarely issues and only for non-safety related issues. The examples of waivers provided by the stakeholders were consistent with the information provided in the Statewide Assessment.

Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 is rated as a Strength. According to information provided in the Statewide Assessment and information from stakeholders, the State provides for a criminal record clearance, including fingerprinting, as a component for all prospective public and private foster and adoptive caregivers, all noncertified relative caregivers, and all child-placing agency and residential placement staff. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, licensing standards and agency policy require that a criminal record clearance be conducted on prospective foster/adoptive applicants and all household members 18 years of age or older, noncertified caregivers, child placing agency staff, private foster/adoptive applicants, and other potential caregivers. This is accomplished through fingerprints submitted to the State Police and Federal Bureau of Investigations via Printrak Livescan equipment in the Regional Offices. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the use of the Printrak equipment has resulted in timely certification of foster families and hiring of staff at private agencies due to the quick response time. The agency's licensing staff monitors to ensure compliance in this area.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State requires fingerprints of all foster and adoptive parents, including relatives, and of residential facility staff.

Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that data pertaining to the demographic characteristics of children coming into foster care are used by recruiters to recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnicity and race of these children. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, plans for recruitment and retention of foster parents are created at the State level to provide for greater uniformity of efforts and outcomes throughout the State. The State currently has nine regional foster/adoptive home

recruiters who are jointly trained in the areas of general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment. The Statewide Assessment reports that data pertaining to the demographic and geographic makeup of children coming into foster care are used by recruiters to target homes and communities to meet the needs of the children in foster care.

The demographic breakdown of certified foster parents also is monitored monthly and incorporated into recruitment efforts. Public service announcements via various media outlets and dissemination of information to local community centers, faith-based institutions, and other local resources are used by recruiters in all areas of the State to assist the agency in finding safe and nurturing homes for foster and adoptive children. Particular emphasis is placed on parishes and communities with the greatest need for placement resources. Regional recruiters provide monthly reports of their activities reflecting the recruitment and retention efforts in their region.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, as of December 31, 2008, there were 4,681 children in foster care with the following racial/ethnic breakdown:

- African-American: 50.3 percent (2,357)
- Caucasian: 47.7 percent (2,233)
- Hispanic: 1.6 percent (76)
- Not identified: 0.4 percent (15)

As of December 31, 2008, there were 2,695 certified foster homes with the following racial/ethnic breakdown:

- African-American: 45.1 percent (1,215)
- Caucasian: 52.3 percent (1,412)
- Other: 0.6 percent
- Not identified: 2.0 percent

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that OCS is effective in recruiting foster and adoptive homes to meet the racial and ethnic needs in each region. Many stakeholders reported that each region has a designated recruiter who uses regional foster care demographic data to focus recruitment efforts to meet the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care. Stakeholders indicated there is still a need for foster and adoptive homes for older youth and children with special needs. Various stakeholders at the review sites indicated that recruitment efforts include media advertisements and presentations at community events and churches.

Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children

 X **Strength** **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 45 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State uses cross-jurisdictional adoption exchanges including **AdoptUsKids** and the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) to support permanent placements for children. This item also was rated as a Strength in Louisiana's 2003 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the agency uses purchase of service agreements with private agencies within and outside the State in an effort to overcome geographic barriers and to expedite adoptive placements across geographical boundaries. Additionally, the State uses LARE and **AdoptUsKids** to facilitate adoptive and permanent placement for waiting children. Regional recruiters have bimonthly adoption mini-exchanges, and Tribal representatives and the adoptions program manager are invited to share information regarding recruitment needs of children and families.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the State uses the ICPC to have families living outside the State assessed for placements. However, timely completion and receipt of home study requests through ICPC provides a challenge to adoptive and permanent placement of children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in its use of cross-jurisdictional resources on behalf of children awaiting permanency. Some stakeholders reported that the State uses the ICPC to facilitate out-of-State placements. Several stakeholders, however, expressed the opinion that the use of ICPC can often delay permanency.

The State also has a border agreement with the State of Mississippi. Additionally, stakeholders noted that the State uses LARE, **AdoptUsKids**, Wendy's Wonderful Kids, matching parties, and the regional recruiter's "mini-exchange" meetings to locate cross-jurisdictional placements for children who are free for adoption.