

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

**FINAL REPORT**  
**NEVADA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW**

**June 1, 2004**

## **Final Report: Nevada Child and Family Services Review Executive Summary**

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Nevada. The CFSR assesses State performance on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well being and on seven systemic factors related to the State's capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. The Nevada CFSR was conducted the week of February 23, 2004. At that time, the State was in the process of "integration," which involves a transition from a "bifurcated" child welfare system, in which the State child welfare agency is responsible for children in foster care in the State, while the two largest counties are responsible for child protective services (CPS), to a system in which the two largest counties are responsible for both CPS and foster care functions. Washoe County was fully integrated on January 1, 2003. The final phase of integration for Clark County will be completed on October 1, 2004.

The Nevada CFSR findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS);
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 2000 through 2002;
- Reviews of 49 cases at three sites in the State (Clark County [Las Vegas], Carson City, and Washoe County [Reno]).
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, Tribal representatives, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The Nevada CFSR found that the State is not in substantial conformity with the seven child welfare outcomes assessed through the CFSR. In addition, performance was low (i.e., less than 75% substantially achieved) on all of the outcomes assessed. With regard to safety outcomes, key CFSR findings indicate that DCFS is not consistent in responding to maltreatment reports in a timely manner or establishing face-to-face contact with an alleged child victim in a reasonable timeframe. CFSR findings also indicate that DCFS is not consistent in (1) providing services to children and families to ensure children's safety while they remain in the home, or (2) addressing risk of harm to children by monitoring case progress through ongoing safety and risk assessment. In addition, case reviews and the State Data Profile indicate that DCFS experiences challenges in preventing maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period.

With regard to permanency outcomes, key CFSR findings indicate that DCFS is not consistent in its efforts to achieve permanency for children in a timely manner or ensure that children in foster care experience placement stability. Identified barriers to achieving timely permanency were (1) a frequent practice of the courts and the agency of maintaining the goal of reunification even when the prognosis

is poor; (2) agency-related delays in preparing the paperwork necessary for TPR or for transfer to the adoption unit; (3) a reluctance to seek TPR if the child is not in an adoptive home; (4) a lack of available services to promote reunification; and (5) a lack of understanding of concurrent planning by the agency workers, courts, biological parents, and foster parents. CFSR case reviews also found that DCFS is not consistent in making concerted efforts to support or maintain a strong relationship between parents and children through providing sufficient visitation or through other efforts.

The lowest performance on the outcomes was found for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs). Key concerns identified pertained to a lack of consistency with regard to meeting the service needs of children and parents, involving parents in case planning, and establishing contact between caseworkers and the children and parents in their caseloads with sufficient frequency to ensure children's safety and well-being. Another concern was noted with regard to Well-being Outcome 3 (Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs) with regard to a lack of sufficient attention to meeting children's mental health needs. Stakeholders noted that the State is in a "crisis" due to the fact that the Medicaid system is not reimbursing doctors for services due to an ongoing problem with Medicaid's automated system, and consequently doctors are refusing to see Medicaid patients.

With regard to the systemic factors, the CFSR determined that the State was in substantial conformity with the factors of Statewide Information System; Training; Agency Responsiveness to the Community; and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The State did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Case Review System, Quality Assurance System, or Service Array.

The overall findings with regard to the State's performance on the safety and permanency outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in table 2. Table 3 presents the State's performance relative to the national standards and table 4 provides information pertaining to the State's substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. A summary of major findings for each outcome and systemic factor is presented below.

## **I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES**

### **Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect**

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two indicators. One pertains to the timeliness of initiating a response to a child maltreatment report (item 1), and the other relates to whether children experience a recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment (item 2).

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 69.6 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period.

However, Nevada did meet the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing maltreatment by a foster care provider or facility staff member. The State Data Profile indicates that there were 9 (0.17 percent) substantiated reports of maltreatment in foster homes or facilities in CY 2002.

Performance on this outcome did not vary substantively (i.e., more than 20 percent) across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 80 percent of Carson City cases, 70 percent of Washoe County cases, and 65 percent of Clark County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that DCFS is not consistent with regard to initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports or establishing face-to-face contact with the child subject of the report in accordance with the State-established timeframes or within reasonable timeframes. One concern identified pertained to the finding that the State does not have a uniform policy regarding responding to child maltreatment reports, and in Clark County, there is no time requirement for establishing face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim. In addition, both the State Data Profile and case reviews indicate that DCFS is not effective in preventing recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month period. Repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period occurred in 9 (43 percent) of the 21 cases in which there was at least 1 substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review.

### **Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate**

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two indicators. One indicator (item 3) addresses the issue of the child welfare agency's efforts to prevent children's removal from their homes by providing services to the families that ensure children's safety while they remain in their homes. The other indicator (item 4) pertains to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in reducing risk of harm to children.

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 62.5 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome did not differ substantively across CFSR sites. The outcome was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of Washoe County cases, 65 percent of Clark County cases, and 50 percent of Carson City cases.

Key concerns identified during the CFSR were (1) inconsistencies with regard to providing services to children to ensure their safety while in their homes; (2) instances of removing children from the home without conducting a safety assessment to determine whether they might be able to remain at home; (3) a lack of consistent ongoing safety and risk assessments to monitor case progress; (4) a lack of a safety and risk assessment at case closure, leaving children at home still at risk of harm; (5) frequent use of relatives as temporary guardians without providing services to the family or the relatives; and (6) the primary shelter facility in Clark County is not licensed by either the State or the county.

### **Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

There are six indicators incorporated in the assessment of permanency outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all children. The indicators pertain to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in preventing foster care re-entry (item 5), ensuring placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establishing appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining indicators focus on the child welfare agency's success in achieving permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9), or whether children who have "other planned living arrangements" as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 54.2 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year (FY) 2002, the State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children adopted who achieved a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care.
- Although data in the State Data Profile indicate that the State meets the national standard for the percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced no more than 2 placements, the State agrees that because of excessive missing data it does not meet the national standard for this measure.

The FY 2002 data provided in the State Date Profile indicate that the State meets the national standards for (1) the percentage of children entering foster care who were re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode and (2) the percentage of children reunified from foster care who were reunified within 12 months of the most recent entry into foster care.

Performance on this outcome was generally quite low across sites and there was little variation. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 60 percent of Carson City cases, 54 percent of Clark County cases, and 50 percent of Washoe County cases.

A key finding of the CFSR case review was that the child welfare agency is effective in preventing re-entry into foster care (item 5). However, all other indicators for this outcome were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviewers determined that the child welfare agency was not consistent in its efforts to (1) ensure children's placement stability while in foster care (item 6), (2) establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner (item 7), and (3) achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner (items 8, 9, and 10). Although the State met the national standard for the percentage of children reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care, the case review rated time-to-reunification (or guardianship) as a Strength in only 58 percent of the 19 applicable cases. Subsequent to the onsite review, the State agreed to accept the results of the case record review over the data profile.

Information from the case reviews and stakeholder interviews suggests that key barriers to attaining permanency in a timely manner are (1) a frequent practice of the courts and the agency of maintaining the goal of reunification even when the prognosis is poor; (2) agency-related delays in preparing the paperwork necessary for TPR or for transfer to the adoption unit; (3) a reluctance to seek TPR if the child is not in an adoptive home; (4) a lack of available services to promote reunification; and (5) a lack of understanding of concurrent planning by the agency workers, courts, biological parents, and foster parents.

### **Permanency Outcome 2. The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six indicators that assess the child welfare agency's performance with regard to (1) placing children in foster care in close proximity to their parents and close relatives (item 11); (2) placing siblings together (item 12); (3) ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); (4) preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); (5) seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and (6) promoting the relationship between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 54.2 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome did not differ substantively across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 60 percent of Carson City cases, 54 percent of Clark County cases, and 50 percent of Washoe County cases.

CFSR case review findings indicate that the child welfare agency makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families and to place siblings together when appropriate. However, the findings also indicate a lack of consistent effort on the part of the agency to (1) promote frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, (2) seek and assess relatives as placement resources, (3) preserve children's connections to their families and heritage, and (4) support or promote the parent-child relationship.

**Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.**

Well Being Outcome 1 incorporates four indicators. One pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and that the necessary services are provided to meet identified needs (item 17). A second indicator examines the child welfare agency's effectiveness with regard to actively involving parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two remaining indicators examine the frequency and quality of caseworker's contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 38.8 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although performance on this outcome was low in all sites, there was variation across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 55 percent of Carson City cases and 50 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 27 percent of Clark County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that all indicators for Well-Being Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviews found that the child welfare agency is not consistent in its efforts to assess children and families for services and provide necessary services, involve parents and children in the case planning process, and establish sufficient face-to-face contact between agency case workers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

**Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.**

There is only one indicator for Well-Being Outcome 2. It pertains to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in addressing and meeting the educational needs of children in both foster care and in-home services cases (item 21).

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that the outcome was achieved in 70.4 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 87.5 percent of Carson City cases and 83 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 54 percent of Clark County cases.

The primary CFSR finding was that the child welfare agency is not consistently addressing children's education-related needs even when there is evidence indicating that some type of intervention is warranted.

**Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**

This outcome incorporates two indicators that assess the child welfare agency's efforts to meet children's physical health (item 22) and mental health (item 23) needs.

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 64.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 76 percent of Clark County cases, compared to 50 percent of Carson City and Washoe County cases.

The CFSR case reviews found that the child welfare agency was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical and mental health needs. A key concern identified was the lack of providers who will accept Medicaid for both physical and mental health services. Stakeholders noted that the State is in a "crisis" due to the fact that the Medicaid system is not reimbursing doctors for services (due to an ongoing problem with Medicaid's automated system) and consequently doctors are refusing to see Medicaid patients.



## **II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

### **Statewide Information System**

Substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System is determined by whether the State is operating a Statewide information system that can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care (item 24).

Nevada is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System because the CFSR determined that Nevada's Statewide information system, UNITY, can identify the status, demographics, location, and goals for children in foster care.

### **Case Review System**

Five indicators are used to assess the State's performance with regard to the systemic factor of Case Review System. The indicators examine the development of case plans and parent involvement in that process (item 25), the consistency of 6-month case reviews (item 26) and 12-month permanency hearings (item 27), the implementation of procedures to seek termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the timeframes established in the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (item 28), and the notification and inclusion of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers in case reviews and hearings (item 29).

Nevada is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Although CFSR findings indicate that 6-month case reviews and 12-month permanency hearings are being held in a timely manner, stakeholder comments and case review findings indicate that case plans are not routinely developed jointly with the child's parents, are too generic, do not address the needs of the child, and are not completed in a timely manner. The CFSR also found that (1) although Nevada has a statutory requirement for termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings, there are excessive delays that preclude meeting the ASFA provisions pertaining to the timeliness of these proceedings; and (2) there is no Statewide, consistent process to notify foster or pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of review or hearing dates or to afford them an opportunity to be heard at these hearings.

### **Quality Assurance System**

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System is based on whether the State has developed standards to ensure the safety and health of children in foster care (item 30), and whether the State is operating a statewide quality assurance system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement (item 31).

Nevada is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The CFSR determined that (1) the State has not developed and implemented procedures to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children, and (2) the State does not have a comprehensive Quality Assurance System that measures program strengths and areas needing improvement on a Statewide basis, although various, limited-focus reviews and evaluations conducted at either the State or county level were identified during the CFSR. Additionally, stakeholders expressed concerns that the standards established for foster family homes and child care institutions are not applied to the primary shelter facility in Clark County.

### **Training**

The systemic factor of Training incorporates an assessment of the State's new caseworker training program (item 32), ongoing training for child welfare agency staff (item 33), and training for foster and adoptive parents (item 34).

Nevada is in substantial conformity for the systemic factor of Training. The State has a formal initial training program for all new child welfare workers that includes a shadowing and mentoring component; requires ongoing training for staff and supervisors; and provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of licensed facilities that care for children. However, it is noted that there are no child welfare program specific supervisory training requirements and there is no administrative support for either case workers or supervisors to attend ongoing training.

### **Service Array**

The assessment of the systemic factor of Service Array addresses three questions: (1) Does the State have in place an array of services to meet the needs of children and families served by the child welfare agency (item 35)? (2) Are these services accessible to families and children throughout the State (item 36)? (3) Can services be individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and family served by the child welfare agency (item 37)?

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. The CFSR determined that the State does not have in place a sufficient array of services that would enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable or would help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. Critical gaps in the service array are bilingual services (particularly Spanish services), mental health services, substance abuse services, and health and dental services (because many providers will not accept Medicaid). In addition, the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicate that many services are not available at all in rural areas of the State. Finally, the CFSR found that DCFS does not have a sufficient service array to ensure that workers are able to individualize services for children and families served by the agency.

## **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community incorporates an assessment of the State's consultation with external stakeholders in developing the Child and Family Services Plan (items 38 and 39), and the extent to which the State coordinates child welfare services with services or benefits of other Federal or federally-assisted programs serving the same population (item 40).

Nevada is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The CFSR determined that DCFS engages many stakeholders in the process of developing the Child and Family Services Plan and in preparing the annual reports of progress. In addition, the CFSR found multiple examples of State efforts to coordinate services with other Federal or Federally-funded programs.

## **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**

The assessment of this systemic factor focuses on the State's standards for foster homes and child care institutions (items 41 and 42), the State's compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks for foster and adoptive parents (item 43), the State's efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of foster children (item 44), and the State's activities with regard to using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements for waiting children.

Nevada is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. The CFSR determined that State licensing standards are applied consistently to foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds and that Nevada completes criminal records checks in foster and adoptive homes before placing children in the home. There is a concern that there is a need to recruit more Hispanic and Spanish-speaking families, more therapeutic homes, and more foster and adoptive families for older youth.

The CFSR determined that there are processes in place for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

**Table 1. Nevada CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items**

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings			Item Ratings		
	<i>In Substantial Conformity?</i>	<i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i>	<i>Met National Standards?</i>	<i>Rating**</i>	<i>Percent Strength</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>
Safety Outcome 1-Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	69.6	Met 1, did not meet 1			
Item 1: Timeliness of investigations				ANI	74	
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment				ANI	80	No
Safety Outcome 2 - Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	62.5				
Item 3: Services to prevent removal				ANI	80	
Item 4: Risk of harm				ANI	67	
Permanency Outcome 1- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	54.2	Met 2, did not meet 2			
Item 5: Foster care re-entry				Strength	92	Yes
Item 6: Stability of foster care placements				ANI	62.5	No
Item 7: Permanency goal for child				ANI	71	
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship and placement with relatives				ANI	58	Yes***
Item 9: Adoption				ANI	33	No
Item 10: Other planned living arrangement				ANI	50	
Permanency Outcome 2 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	54.2				
Item 11: Proximity of placement				Strength	100	
Item 12: Placement with siblings				Strength	87	
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	71	
Item 14: Preserving connections				ANI	79	
Item 15: Relative placement				ANI	77	
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	57	

\*90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

\*\*Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).

\*\*\*State agreed to accept results of case record review over data profile.

**Table 2. Nevada CFSR Ratings for Child and Family Well Being Outcomes and Items**

<b>Outcomes and Indicators</b>	<b>Outcome Ratings</b>		<b>Item Ratings</b>			
	<i>In Substantial Conformity?</i>	<i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>	<i>Rating**</i>	<i>Percent Strength</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>
Well Being Outcome 1 - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs	No	38.8				
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents				ANI	51	
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning				ANI	47	
Item 19: Worker visits with child				ANI	55	
Item 20: Worker visits with parents				ANI	46	
Well Being Outcome 2 - Children receive services to meet their educational needs	No	70.4				
Item 21: Educational needs of child				ANI	70	
Well Being Outcome 3 - Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	No	64.4				
Item 22: Physical health of child				ANI	82	
Item 23: Mental health of child				ANI	62	

\*90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

\*\*Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).

**Table 3: Nevada Performance on the Six Outcome Measures for Which National Standards have been Established**

Outcome Measure	National Standard	Nevada Data FY 2002
Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report in the first 6 months of CY 2001, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period?	6.1% or less	7.6%
Of all children who were in foster care in the first 9 months of CY 2001, what percent experienced maltreatment from foster parents or facility staff members?	0.57% or less	0.17%
Of all children who entered foster care in FY 2001, what percent were re-entering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode?	8.6% or less	6.9%
Of all children reunified from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care?	76.2% or more	90.9%*
Of all children who were adopted from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were adopted within 24 months of their entry into foster care?	32.0% or more	29.2%
Of all children in foster care during FY 2001 for less than 12 months, what percent experienced no more than 2 placement settings?	86.7% or more	94.9%**

\*The State agreed to accept results of the case record review over the data profile.

\*\*The State reported that because of excessive missing data it is unlikely that the State would meet the national standard for this measure.

**Table 4: Nevada CFSR Ratings for the Seven Systemic Factors**

<b>Systemic Factors</b>	<b>In Substantial Conformity?*</b>	<b>Rating**</b>
<b>IV. Statewide Information System</b>	Yes (3)	
Item 24: System can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals of children in foster care		Strength
<b>V. Case Review System</b>	No (2)	
Item 25: Process for developing a case plan and for joint case planning with parents		ANI
Item 26: Process for 6-month case reviews		Strength
Item 27: Process for 12-month permanency hearings		Strength
Item 28: Process for seeking TPR in accordance with ASFA		ANI
Item 29: Process for notifying caregivers of reviews and hearings and for opportunity for them to be heard		ANI
<b>VI. Quality Assurance System</b>	No (2)	
Item 30: Standards to ensure quality services and ensure children’s safety and health		ANI
Item 31: Identifiable QA system that evaluates the quality of services and improvements		ANI
<b>VII. Training</b>	Yes (3)	
Item 32: Provision of initial staff training		Strength
Item 33: Provision of ongoing staff training that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge.		ANI
Item 34: Provision of training for caregivers and adoptive parents that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge		Strength
<b>VIII. Service Array</b>	No (2)	
Item 35: Availability of array of critical services		ANI
Item 36: Accessibility of services across all jurisdictions		ANI
Item 37: Ability to individualize services to meet unique needs		ANI
<b>IX. Agency Responsiveness to the Community</b>	Yes (3)	
Item 38: Engages in ongoing consultation with critical stakeholders in developing the CFSP		Strength
Item 39: Develops annual progress reports in consultation with stakeholders		Strength
Item 40: Coordinates services with other Federal programs		Strength
<b>X. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention</b>	Yes (3)	
Item 41: Standards for foster family and child care institutions		Strength
Item 42: Standards are applied equally to all foster family and child care institutions		Strength
Item 43: Conducts necessary criminal background checks		Strength
Item 44: Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect children’s racial and ethnic diversity		ANI
Item 45: Uses cross-jurisdictional resources to find placements		Strength

\*Systemic factors are rated on a scale from 1 to 4. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates “Not in Substantial Conformity.” A rating of 3 or 4 indicates Substantial Conformity

\*\*Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).

## **FINAL REPORT NEVADA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Nevada. The CFSR assesses State performance on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well being and on seven systemic factors related to the State's capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. The Nevada CFSR was conducted the week of February 23, 2004. At that time, the State was in the process of "integration," which involves a transition from a "bifurcated" child welfare system, in which the State child welfare agency is responsible for children in foster care in the State, while the two largest counties are responsible for child protective services (CPS), to a system in which the two largest counties are responsible for both CPS and foster care functions. Washoe County was fully integrated on January 1, 2003. The final phase of integration for Clark County will be completed on October 1, 2004.

The Nevada CFSR findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS);
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 2000 through 2002;
- Reviews of 49 cases at three sites in the State (Clark County [Las Vegas], Carson City, and Washoe County [Reno]).
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, Tribal representatives, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 49 cases reviewed are the following:

- Twenty-six cases were reviewed in Clark County, 11 cases in Carson City, and 12 cases in Washoe County.
- All 49 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- 24 cases were "foster care cases" (cases in which the State or county child welfare agency had care and placement responsibility and the child was in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 25 were "in-home services cases" (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained with their families and no child in the family was in out-of-home care during the period under review).



- Of the 24 foster care cases, 17 children (71 percent) were younger than age 10 at the start of the period under review; 3 children (13 percent) were at least 10 years old, but not yet 13 years old; and 4 children (17 percent) were 13 years of age or older at the start of the period under review.
- Of the 24 foster care cases, 11 children were male and 13 were female.
- Of the 49 cases reviewed, there were 8 cases (16 percent) in which all children in the family were African American (non-Hispanic); 27 cases (55 percent) in which all children in the family were White (non-Hispanic); 8 cases (16 percent) in which all children in the family were Hispanic; 4 cases (8 percent) in which children in the family were of two or more races/ethnicity; and 2 cases (4 percent) in which the race/ethnicity of the children was not identified.
- Of the 49 cases reviewed, reviewers identified the following as the **primary** reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case:
  - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 18 cases (37 percent)
  - Substance abuse by parents – 13 cases (27 percent)
  - Sexual abuse – 6 cases (12 percent)
  - Physical abuse – 5 cases (10 percent)
  - Mental/physical health of parent – 3 cases (6 percent)
  - Abandonment – 2 cases (4 percent)
  - Domestic violence in the home – 1 case (2 percent)
  - Medical neglect – 1 case (2 percent)
- Of the 49 cases reviewed, the most frequently cited of all reasons for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency were the following:
  - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 37 cases (76 percent of cases)
  - Substance abuse by parents – 30 cases (61 percent of cases)
- In 11 (46 percent) of the 24 foster care cases, the child entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in care during the entire period under review.

The first section of this report presents CFSR findings relevant to the State’s performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting key findings, a discussion of the State’s status with regard to the outcome, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the seven systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency’s ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

## SECTION 1: OUTCOMES

### I. SAFETY

#### Safety Outcome 1

<b>Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	8	17	7	32	69.6
Partially Achieved:	2	7	2	11	23.9
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	2	1	3	6.5
Not Applicable:	1	0	2		
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard (Percentage)</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Repeat maltreatment	6.1 or less	7.6		X	
Maltreatment of children in foster care	0.57 or less	.17	X		

#### STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 69.6 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period.

However, Nevada did meet the national standard for the percentage of children experiencing maltreatment by a foster care provider or facility staff member. The State Data Profile indicates that there were 9 (0.17 percent) substantiated reports of maltreatment in foster homes or facilities in CY 2002.

Performance on this outcome did not vary substantively (i.e., more than 20 percent) across CFSR sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 80 percent of Carson City cases, 70 percent of Washoe County cases, and 65 percent of Clark County cases.

A key CFSR finding is that DCFS is not consistent with regard to initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports or establishing face-to-face contact with the child subject of the report in accordance with the State-established timeframes. In addition, both the State Data Profile and case reviews indicate that DCFS is not effective in preventing recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month period. Repeat maltreatment within a 6-month period occurred in 9 (43 percent) of the 21 cases in which there was at least 1 substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review.

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

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 27 of the 49 cases. Twenty-two cases were not applicable because they did not have reports of child maltreatment 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 requirements. The State does not have a set of uniform requirements for response timeframes. The following are response requirements for Carson City, which is under the direct supervision of the State DCFS for CPS services, and for Clark County, which is county-supervised for CPS services:

- An immediate response (within 24 hours) is required if the child is 5 years of age or younger, there is a high risk of serious harm to the child, the child is living in a household in which another child has died, or the child is seriously injured or has visible signs of physical abuse.
- A response to all other reports must be initiated within 3 days of receipt of the report.
- There is no requirement for face-to-face contact in Clark County.
- In Carson City, face-to-face contact with the child and family is to occur by the next business day after the response has been initiated.

The response requirements for Washoe County, which has been fully integrated, are as follows:

- An immediate response (within 24 hours) is required under any of the following conditions: when the child is 5 years of age or younger; there is a high risk of serious harm to the child of any age; or the child is dead, seriously injured, or has visible signs of physical abuse.

- Other reports may be classified as Intermediate Risk (the response must occur within 48 hours) or Low Risk (the response must occur within 72 hours).
- If an investigation is initiated by telephone or review of a case record, a face-to-face meeting with the child and family must be attempted on the next business day.

The results of the assessment of item 1 were the following:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 20 (74 percent) of the 27 applicable cases (8 of the 20 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (26 percent) of the 27 applicable cases (6 of the 7 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for item 1 varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Carson City cases and 88 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 57 percent of Clark County cases. However, there were only 4 applicable cases in Carson City compared to 9 in Washoe County and 14 in Clark County.

Because of the lack of a consistent Statewide policy that delineates timeframes for initiating a response, including time-frames for establishing face to face contact with the alleged child victim, item 1 was rated based on whether a response was initiated within the required timeframes of the specific location in which the report was received. Because Clark County does not have a policy establishing a timeframe for face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim, the ratings for that county were based on whether face-to-face contact was established within a reasonable timeframe given the circumstances of the report.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when the response to a maltreatment report was initiated within the required timeframes. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when the response was not initiated with the required timeframe (1 case), face-to-face contact was not established with the child who was the subject of the report within a reasonable timeframe (4 cases), or face-to-face contact was never established with the child (2 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR had differing opinions regarding the initiation of an investigation within required timeframes. While most stakeholders expressed the opinion that investigations are initiated in a timely manner and usually within 24 hours of receipt of the report, several stakeholders noted that there is some confusion about what actually constitutes the initiation of an investigation. Some stakeholders, for example, reported that just conducting a history or criminal record check on the family is considered initiating an investigation. Others reported that contact must be made, even if by telephone, with someone involved in the report. Stakeholders noted that face-to-face contact may not be required for days after the report is received. Stakeholders also voiced concern about the lack of a statewide protocol for investigating maltreatment reports. Finally, several stakeholders reported that there is confusion about how priority levels are assigned to reports and that there is no consistency with

regard to the criteria for screening out reports. State-level stakeholders expressed the opinion that the larger counties tend to screen out more reports than do the smaller counties.

Stakeholders also noted that investigations often are initiated by the local law enforcement agency. Instances when law enforcement would respond are after hours or because of distances, particularly in the rural region. Washoe County stakeholders reported that the Reno Police Department has an investigative unit housed within the county child welfare agency.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 26 percent of the applicable cases, the agency had not initiated an investigation within the required timeframes or established face-to-face contact with the child subject of a maltreatment report in a reasonable timeframe.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada does not have a Statewide standard for substantiations. Washoe County requires court substantiation by Judge or Juvenile Court Master. Washoe and Clark Counties have responsibility for CPS in their counties. DCFS has responsibility for CPS in the rural regions. The Statewide Assessment also notes that some caseworkers are hesitant to substantiate reports because they fear that their decisions will be appealed.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that Clark County has no policy regarding face-to-face contacts. DCFS and Washoe County both require a face-to-face meeting with the child and family by the next business day after the investigation by telephone or case record review has begun.

## **Item 2. Repeat maltreatment**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 44 of the 49 cases. Five cases were not applicable because there was never a substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report on any of the children in the family. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had ever been a substantiated report on the family. Reviewers also were to determine if there was at least one substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, if another substantiated or indicated report occurred within 6 months of that report. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 35 (80 percent) of the 44 applicable cases (36 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (20 percent) of the 44 applicable cases (8 of the 9 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for item 2 did not vary substantively (i.e., by more than 20%) across CFSR sites. However, the item was rated as a Strength in 84 percent of Clark County cases and 80 percent of Carson City cases, compared to 67 percent of Washoe County cases.

Item 2 was rated as a Strength under the following circumstances:

- There was a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report involving the family prior to the period under review, but no substantiated or indicated report during the period under review (23 cases).
- There was a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report involving the family during the period under review, but there was no substantiated or indicated report within 6 months of that report (12 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when a substantiated maltreatment report occurring during the period under review was within 6-months of another substantiated maltreatment report involving the same perpetrator and similar circumstances. Repeat maltreatment occurred in 9 (43 percent) of the 21 cases in which there was at least one substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review.

Additional findings with respect to the frequency of maltreatment reports (both substantiated and unsubstantiated) on the family prior to and during the period under review for all 49 cases were the following:

- In 11 cases, there was 1 maltreatment report.
- In 16 cases, there were between 2 and 5 maltreatment reports
- In 11 cases, there were between 6 and 10 maltreatment reports.
- In 11 cases, there were more than 10 maltreatment reports (4 had more than 15 reports).

Although in 22 (45 percent) of the 49 cases reviewed there were 6 or more maltreatment reports on the family during the life of the case, it is not known how many of these reports were substantiated.

Reviewers reported that there were several cases in which a maltreatment allegation was received on an open case and was classified as “information and referral” rather than being investigated. In one case, the reviewers noted that multiple “information and referral” reports were received during the period under review without a formal response.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed concern that there are no standard guidelines in the State for substantiating maltreatment reports and that many reports are not being substantiated when there is evidence to warrant a substantiation. In addition, while some stakeholders noted that all reports on open cases are formally reported for investigation, other stakeholders said that reports received on open cases are more likely to be sent to the existing worker as Information and Referral reports rather than being investigated in a formal manner. This latter perception is consistent with the findings of the case reviews regarding this issue. A few stakeholders expressed concern about repeat maltreatment when children are voluntarily placed with relatives in a temporary custody

arrangement. These stakeholders expressed the opinion that the relatives permit parents to have unlimited and unmonitored access to the children.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following findings:

- In 18 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that at least 2 substantiated maltreatment reports occurred within a 6-month period; and
- The State's rate of maltreatment recurrence for 2002 (7.6 percent), as reported in the State Data Profile, does not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent or less.

According to the Statewide Assessment, in calendar year 2002, the rate of maltreatment recurrence in Clark (7.9 percent) and Washoe (8.0 percent) Counties exceeded the national standard of 6.1 percent or less. However, in the rural regions of the State, the rate of maltreatment recurrence was 6.2 percent, which is close to the national standard. The Statewide Assessment also notes that Clark County's recurrence rate declined from 9.9 percent in 2001 to 7.9 percent in 2002, but Washoe County's recurrence rate increased from 6.8 percent in 2001 to 8 percent in 2002. As noted above, the finding of the case reviews was that the highest percentage of maltreatment recurrence occurred in the Washoe County cases.

In addition, information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that in 2002, cases with substantiated sexual abuse reports were more likely to have recurrences than cases with substantiated physical abuse or neglect, and that children younger than 12 months old had the highest rate of maltreatment recurrence (9.7 percent), while children ages 13-15 had the lowest rate of maltreatment recurrence (4.6 percent); 9.4 percent of children age 6 to 9 experienced two substantiated maltreatment incidents within a 6-month time period.

**Safety Outcome 2**

<b>Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	5	17	8	30	62.5
Partially Achieved:	3	5	2	10	20.8
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	4	2	8	16.7
Not Applicable:	1	0	0		

**STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2**

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 62.5 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity

Performance on this outcome did not differ substantively across CFSR sites. The outcome was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of Washoe County cases, 65 percent of Clark County cases, and 50 percent of Carson City cases.

Key concerns identified during the CFSR were (1) inconsistencies with regard to providing services to children to ensure their safety while in their homes; (2) instances of removing children from the home without conducting a safety assessment to determine whether they might be able to remain at home; (3) a lack of consistent ongoing safety and risk assessments to monitor case progress; (4) a lack of a safety and risk assessment at case closure, leaving children at home still at risk of harm; and (5) frequent use of relatives as temporary guardians without providing services to the family or the relatives.

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 home and prevent removal**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** There were 40 cases for which an assessment of item 3 was applicable. Nine cases were not applicable because the children entered foster care prior to the period under review, remained in foster care during the period under review, and/or there were no substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to any children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 32 (80 percent) of the 40 applicable cases (12 of the 32 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (20 percent) of the 40 applicable cases (4 of the 8 cases were foster care cases)

Ratings for this item did not vary substantively across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 82 percent of Clark County and Washoe County cases, and 71 percent of Carson City cases.



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

- Appropriate services were provided to parents and children to prevent removal (14 cases).
- Children were placed on a voluntary basis with relatives (usually as temporary guardians) while parents received services (8 cases).
- The family received appropriate post-reunification services to prevent re-entry into foster care (3 cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home to ensure their safety (7 cases).

Services provided to the families included, but were not limited to, individual and family counseling, substance abuse treatment, medical and dental services, transportation services, homemaking services, parenting education, educational advocacy, sexual offender assessment and treatment services, sexual abuse victim assistance and counseling, mental health evaluations and services, home health nurse services, domestic violence counseling, early childhood education services, nutritional and food services, concrete services such as furniture and household goods, family preservation services, day care services, speech therapy services, and drug court.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency did not provide services to ensure the child's safety while in the home (3 cases).
- The agency removed the child from the home without conducting a safety assessment and providing preventive services (4 cases).
- The agency provided services, but they were insufficient to maintain the child or children safely in the home (1 case).

In the three cases in which services were not provided to ensure the child's safety while in the home there was a subsequent substantiated maltreatment report on the family during the period under review.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the agency and the community do not have extensive resources to provide services to families while children remain in the home. They noted that a frequently used prevention "service" is voluntary placement of the child with relatives. Carson City stakeholders reported that relatives can be given temporary guardianship for 6 months and this can be renewed every 6 months. This practice does not occur in either Washoe or Clark Counties.

Clark County stakeholders indicated that the agency has a safety assessment tool that is used on all child protective services (CPS) cases and that investigators can initiate services and work with a family for a period of weeks while making a decision regarding whether the child will be placed in foster care or remain in home. However, many Clark County stakeholders voiced concern that often this decision is based on the fact that the necessary treatment and concrete service resources to ensure the child's safety while in the home are not available in the community. These stakeholders noted, for example, that family preservation services in Clark County will not take families in which there are children younger than 6 years old. In contrast, Carson City stakeholders indicated

that they have access to concrete services and homemaker services, although they also reported that children frequently are placed voluntarily with relatives as an alternative to foster care placement.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 20 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to provide the services necessary to maintain children safely in their own homes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there is a lack of preventive, intervention, and support services to address the stressors contributing to child abuse and neglect, such as substance abuse and lack of income/employment/insurance. However, it was noted that in Washoe County, there is a Human Support Specialist program that provides in-home support with case management to families in need.

#### **Item 4. Risk of harm to child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 4 was applicable for 48 of the 49 cases. In assessing item 4, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 32 (67 percent) of the 48 applicable cases (16 of the 32 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 16 (33 percent) of the 48 applicable cases (8 of the 16 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item did not differ substantively across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 69 percent of Clark County cases, 67 percent of Washoe County cases, and 60 percent of Carson City cases. Ratings for the item also did not differ as a function of case type, with the item rated as a Strength in 67 percent of both foster care and in-home services cases.

Item 4 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from the home either prior to or during the period under review and providing services to the parents (15 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from the home either prior to or during the period under review and seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) (1 case).

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remained in the home (7 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by placing them voluntarily with relatives while providing services to parents (8 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the perpetrator from the home (1 case).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Either no services were provided or the services provided were not adequate to reduce risk of harm for all children in the family (6 cases).
- There was insufficient assessment of risk of harm to a child when the case was closed, and there was evidence that risk issues were not resolved (9 cases).
- The agency has permitted contact with parents and relatives considered “unsafe” while child was in foster care even after TPR (1 case)

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that in many instances comprehensive safety assessments and risk assessments are being conducted at the beginning of a case. However, it was noted that these assessments are not consistently conducted on an ongoing basis to assess progress and often are not conducted prior to returning the child home to determine if risk issues have been adequately addressed before case closure. Carson City stakeholders reported that the agency addresses risk by providing families with wrap around services and using collaborative case planning and clinical consultation to identify needs.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item also were in agreement that the incidence of maltreatment of children in foster family homes is low. They attributed this to strict licensing requirements, mandated training for foster parents, and the availability of supports for foster parents. Stakeholders noted that in Washoe County, a clinician is available to provide home-based services to support foster families. However, some Clark County stakeholders voiced concern that group homes are not visited with sufficient frequency and that children are not well supervised in those homes. Clark County stakeholders also noted that the primary shelter facility in the county is not licensed either by the State, the county, or the City of Las Vegas.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 33 percent of the applicable cases reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to address the risk of harm to the children. One key concern was that cases were being closed without conducting a safety assessment when there was substantial evidence that risk issues had not been addressed. In most of these cases, reviewers noted that there was no indication that parents had participated in services. Another concern was that in some cases, the agency focuses on just the child in the family who was the subject of the maltreatment report and did not conduct assessments or provide services to the other children, even when they were also at risk.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada has no common protocol for assessing safety and criteria to assess risk are not used uniformly within or across regions. It is noted in the Statewide Assessment that a new uniform Safety Assessment tool and Risk Assessment tool will be implemented in 2004.

## II. PERMANENCY

### Permanency Outcome 1

<b>Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	3	7	3	13	54.2
Partially Achieved:	2	4	3	9	37.5
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	2	0	2	8.3
Not Applicable:					
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard (percentage)</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Foster care re-entries	8.6 or less	6.9	X		
Length of time to achieve reunification	76.2 or more	90.9	X		
Length of time to achieve adoption	32.0 or more	29.2		X	
Stability of foster care placements	86.7 or more	94.9		X*	

\* Nevada has advised that because of excessive missing data used to calculate this measure, they did not meet the national standard.

### STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 54.2 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year (FY) 2002, the State did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children adopted who achieved a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care.

Although data in the State Data Profile indicate that the State meets the national standard for the percentage of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced no more than 2 placements, the State does not believe that these data are accurate.

The FY 2002 data provided in the State Date Profile indicate that the State meets the national standards for (1) the percentage of children entering foster care who were re-entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode and (2) the percentage of children reunified from foster care who were reunified within 12 months of the most recent entry into foster care.

Performance on this outcome was generally quite low across sites and there was little variation. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 60 percent of Carson City cases, 54 percent of Clark County cases, and 50 percent of Washoe County cases.

A key finding of the CFSR case review was that the child welfare agency is effective in preventing re-entry into foster care (item 5). However, all other indicators for this outcome were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviewers determined that the child welfare agency was not consistent in its efforts to (1) ensure children's placement stability while in foster care (item 6), (2) establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner (item 7), and (3) achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner (items 8, 9, and 10). Although the State meets the national standard for the percentage of children reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care, the case review rated time-to-reunification (or guardianship) as a Strength in only 58 percent of the 19 applicable cases.

Information from the case reviews and stakeholder interviews suggests that key barriers to attaining permanency in a timely manner are (1) a frequent practice of the courts and the agency of maintaining the goal of reunification even when the prognosis is poor; (2) agency-related delays in preparing the paperwork necessary for TPR or for transfer to the adoption unit; (3) a reluctance to seek TPR if the child is not in an adoptive home; (4) a lack of available services to promote reunification; and (5) a lack of understanding of concurrent planning by the agency workers, courts, biological parents, and foster parents.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 are presented below.

#### **Item 5. Foster care re-entries**

X   Strength                           Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Thirteen of the 24 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of foster care re-entries because they involved children who entered 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 this assessment were the following:

- Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 12 (92 percent) of the 13 applicable cases.
- Item 5 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (8 percent) of the 13 applicable cases.

Item 5 was rated as a Strength when a child’s entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. Most of the applicable cases were in Clark and Washoe Counties. There was only one applicable case in Carson City.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that re-entry into foster care is relatively rare. They attributed this to the agency practice of maintaining custody of the child for up to 6 months after the child has been physically reunified. This practice is designed to ensure that parents are continuing services and to provide post-reunification services, including intensive family preservation services, when problems arise.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following:

- In 98 percent of the applicable cases, children entering foster care during the period under review were not entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.
- The data from the State Data Profile indicate that Nevada’s re-entry rate (the percentage of children entering care who were entering within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode for FY 2002) of 6.9 percent meets the national standard of 8.6 percent or less.

Despite the overall rating of Strength and the data from the State Data Profile, case reviewers identified three cases in which children were physically reunified with parents for several months and later returned to foster care due to risk of harm. However, because custody was never legally transferred from the State to the parents in these cases, the return to foster care was not considered a “true” re-entry. Consequently, the re-entry rate reported in the State Data Profile may not capture those cases in which physical reunification occurred without legal transfer of custody and the child was later removed from the home again due to risk issues.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Clark County has experienced success in preventing re-entry into foster care for seriously emotionally disturbed children because of a grant from the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration that

has been used to fund a program of wrap-around services for these children and their families. Washoe County works to prevent re-entry into foster care by requiring a re-assessment of the situation and prior approval from a unit supervisor before a child is returned home. The court decides when custody is terminated, which could be months after child's return home, and then the case may be closed.

### **Item 6. Stability of foster care placement**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 24 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. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 15 (62.5 percent) of the 24 applicable cases.
- Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (37.5 percent) of the 24 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. All nine of the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement were in Clark County. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Carson City and Washoe County cases, compared to 31 percent of Clark County cases.

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 9 cases experienced only 1 placement during the period under review (no placement changes).
- Children in 5 cases experienced 2 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 7 cases experienced 3 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 3 cases experienced 4 placements during the period under review.

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (9 cases), or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest (6 cases), such as moving a child from a foster home to a pre-adoptive placement or relative home.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The child experienced multiple placement changes because of a lack of appropriate resources to meet the child's placement needs (2 cases).
- The child experienced multiple placement changes because the agency did not make diligent efforts to find an appropriate permanent or long-term placement when the child entered foster care (5 cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support a placement that was at risk of disruption (2 cases).
- The child's current placement is not stable (2 cases).

Four of the 9 children in the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were under the age of 5, including a 5-month old infant and two 2-year olds. All of these children experienced placements in an unlicensed shelter facility for an extended period of time in addition to multiple placements during the period under review. Only one of the children in the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item was an adolescent.

Carson City and Washoe County stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that most children in foster care in those counties experience placement stability. Washoe County stakeholders attributed placement stability to the availability of supports for foster families, particularly the availability of in-home clinical services. However, Washoe County stakeholders also expressed concern about the extensive use of shelter care as a first placement and often as a temporary placement when another placement disrupts. Although shelter stays are not to exceed 30 days, stakeholders reported that there are many instances in which children are in the shelter for longer than 30 days.

There was general agreement among Clark County stakeholders that children in foster care in that county experience too many placement changes and that this has a negative impact on the children with respect to lack of continuity of services, schooling, and general well-being. Stakeholders attributed placement instability to (1) the child's behaviors, (2) a lack of adequate placement resources to permit matching the needs of the child with the placement setting or family; (3) a lack of supports for foster families, (4) a failure to provide foster families with sufficient information about the child prior to placement to ensure that the family is able to meet the needs of the child; and (5) insufficient resources for children with mental health service needs. However, some Clark County stakeholders reported that there are many foster families that have been licensed but are not being used by the caseworkers. They noted that the agency does not have a Placement Team to determine where a child will be placed; instead it is left up to the caseworker to find a placement for the child. Stakeholders noted that caseworkers often use families that they are familiar with rather than exploring the possibility of new families. One stakeholder noted that some licensed foster families drop out because they are not being used.



Clark and Washoe County stakeholders also voiced concern about the number of infants and very young children who are placed in a shelter setting (such as Child Haven or Kids Cottage) and who remain in the shelter for long periods of time, often well past the 30 day limit that is established for these care facilities.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 37.5 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to ensure placement stability for the children in foster care.
- The State agrees that because of excessive missing data it did not meet the national standard in FY 2002 for the percentage of children experiencing no more than 2 placements in their first 12 months in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada's bifurcated child welfare system results in a minimum of at least two placements (first a county foster home, then a State foster home) for each case. The system that has been in operation (although it is now being changed) is that for counties with large populations (i.e., Washoe and Clark Counties), child protective services and short-term foster care (out-of-home placement for less than 90 days) has been under the supervision of the county, while long-term (beyond 90 days) foster care was under the supervision of the State. Therefore, if a child is removed in those counties, the county would provide the initial placement until the case is transferred to the State.

#### **Item 7. Permanency goal for child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 24 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 7 was rated Strength in 17 (71 percent) of the 24 applicable cases.
- Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (29 percent) of the 26 applicable cases.

Case reviews found that the children in the 24 foster care cases had the following primary permanency goals:

- 3 children had a goal of adoption.
- 13 children had a goal of reunification.
- 1 child had a goal of guardianship.
- 2 children had a goal of long-term foster care/emancipation.

- 5 children had concurrent goals. For four of these children, the concurrent goals were reunification and adoption. For one child, the concurrent goals were reunification and permanent placement with relatives.

At the time of the onsite review, 11 of the 24 children had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. The agency had filed for termination of parental rights (TPR) in 3 of these cases. An “exception” or a reason for not filing for TPR was provided in two of the eight cases for which TPR had not yet been filed. No reason was provided in the remaining 6 cases.

Ratings for item 7 varied somewhat across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 83 percent of Washoe County cases and 80 percent of Carson City cases, compared to 62 percent of Clark County cases. Five of the seven cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were in Clark County.

Item 7 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The goal is appropriate but was not established in a timely manner (2 cases).
- The goal is not appropriate given the needs of the child and the circumstances of the case (7 cases).

The findings of the case reviews indicated that in some instances there was inconsistency around the permanency goals. In two cases, for example, case reviewers reported that the caseworker was working toward a goal that was different from the goal identified in the case plan or from the court-ordered goal. In one case, the case plan indicated a goal of adoption by a relative, but case reviewers found that this plan had never been discussed with the relative. In another case, the goal of adoption by grandparents living in another State was proceeding through an ICPC although the grandparents had never been told that the child has severe mental health needs and education-related problems and no assessment was conducted of the grandparents' ability to meet these needs. In two cases, the goal of reunification has been maintained despite lack of efforts on the part of parents to meet case plan requirements. In one case, the child had already been in foster care for 16 months and in the other case, the child had been in foster care for 19 months. In both cases, no efforts had been made to seek TPR.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the effectiveness of the agency in establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner. Although some stakeholders indicated that permanency goals are being established appropriately, others voiced concern that the State is particularly slow to change the goal of reunification and to seek termination of parental rights (TPR). In addition, although most stakeholders said that efforts are being made to engage in concurrent planning to expedite permanency, they also expressed the opinion that concurrent planning is not well understood by caseworkers, biological families, foster families, or the courts. Stakeholders noted that even when concurrent goals are established, the agency tends to focus efforts on those goals in a linear way rather than concurrently. Stakeholders also noted that caseworkers believe that it

is difficult to work toward reunification and adoption concurrently. Consequently, there is a lack of focus on long-term planning for the child.

Clark County stakeholders reported that for most children entering foster care, the permanency goal is automatically established as reunification for the first 6 months. Consequently, concurrent goals may not be established until the permanency hearing.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 29 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the child welfare agency had not established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner. A key concern identified by reviewers was that the goals in the case file were not appropriate given the needs of the child and/or the circumstances of the case.

As shown in the Statewide Assessment, State Data Profile information indicates that of cases reported to the Federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) in FY 2002, 51.5 percent were reported as “case plan goal not established” and 5.8 percent were found to be “missing goal information.”

### **Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship, or Permanent Placement With Relatives**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Item 8 was applicable for 19 of the 24 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives for children 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 this assessment were the following:

- Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 11 (58 percent) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (42 percent) of the 19 applicable cases.

Ratings for item 8 varied considerably across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Carson City cases, compared to 55 percent of Clark County cases and 40 percent of Washoe County cases. However, there were only 3 cases in Carson City that were applicable for an assessment of this item.

At the time of the onsite CFSR, the goal had been achieved in 11 of the 19 applicable cases (10 children were reunified and 1 child was placed permanently with a relative). In 8 of these cases, the goal had been achieved within 12 months of the child's entry into foster care.

Item 8 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had made or was making concerted efforts to achieve the child's goal in a timely manner. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the child welfare agency had not made diligent efforts to achieve the child's goal in a timely manner.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency is effective in expediting reunifications. They noted that it is a common practice for the agency to maintain custody for up to 6 months after physical reunification occurs to support the re-integration of the family and ensure that parents continue to participate in services. This practice also allows the family to continue to receive wraparound services that are available only for foster care cases. Washoe County stakeholders reported that the county has a special family visitation program that facilitates reunification by permitting at least 30 families per week to visit with their children in foster care outside of regular business hours. The program has weekday evening and weekend visitation.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although data from the State Data Profile indicate that for FY 2002, the State's percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (90.9 percent) met the national standard of 76.2 percent or more, in 42 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the child welfare agency had not made concerted efforts to attain the goal of reunification in a timely manner. The State must meet the criteria for both indicators to receive a rating of Strength for this item.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Clark County has a large number of short-term placements at Child Haven. The median number of months to achieve reunification was .13 months (or 4 days). Washoe County had a median number of months to achieve reunification of .76 months (or about 23 days). The Statewide Assessment also notes that Clark County was awarded a 5-year Caring Communities Demonstration Project Grant to use System of Care principles to increase placements with, and supports for, relatives and to improve safety, stability, timely permanency, and well-being of children in kinship care. The focus of this effort is to support permanency through guardianship and/or permanent placement with relatives.

## Item 9. Adoption

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Six of the 24 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 9. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. The results were the following:

- Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 2 (33 percent) of the 6 applicable cases.
- Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (67 percent) of the 6 applicable cases.

Because of the small number of cases with a permanency goal of adoption, it is not possible to assess variation across sites. There were two cases with this goal in Carson City, three cases in Clark County, and 1 case in Washoe County.

At the time of the onsite CFSR, the goal of adoption had not been finalized for any of the 6 applicable cases. TPR had been filed in three of the cases, but not in the other three. In addition, only two of the six children were in an adoptive placement.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength in the two cases because reviewers determined that the agency was making concerted efforts to achieve the goal of adoption within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- There were unnecessary delays and a lack of diligent effort to finalize adoption in a timely manner (2 cases: in one case the child was in foster care for 5 years at the time of the onsite CFSR, and in the other case the child was in foster care for 13 years).
- The caseworker was working toward permanent placement with relatives rather than adoption even though the case plan goal was adoption (1 case).
- The caseworker knows that the goal is adoption, but has not established a plan for achieving this goal and has not informed the biological mother that the goal is no longer reunification (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the agency in finalizing adoptions in a timely manner. Clark and Washoe County stakeholders suggested that adoptions are not as timely as they could be and attributed this to various barriers such as (1) agency delays in preparing social summaries due to workload issues (social summaries provide potential adoptive parents with a history of the child and a description of the child's needs). They are reported to be very time consuming and they are required before a case can be transferred to the adoption unit); (2) agency delays in preparing home studies; (3) a lack of clear procedures in the State for approaching foster parents about the possibility of adoption; (4)

a reluctance to file for TPR if no adoptive home has been identified; (5) a lack of understanding of ASFA and of concurrent planning among judges in rural areas; (6) high caseloads for State adoption workers (40-45 cases); and (7) delays in approving subsidies because of incomplete documentation (subsidies usually are approved within 30 days when full documentation is available).

State-level stakeholders, however, noted that if a child is perceived as likely to have a case goal of adoption, the agency will try to place the child in a “resource family” or a “flexible family.” These are foster parent families who have indicated a willingness to adopt. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that placement in these families not only increases placement stability but expedites adoption finalization. Carson City stakeholders reported that the number of adoptions in that county has increased considerably as a result of a new adoption unit created in the agency. They noted that 25 adoptions were finalized in the past 6 months and that there is a strong pool of available adoptive families and the possibility of doing comprehensive matching of children and parents. Carson City stakeholders also reported that the agency does a good job facilitating legal-risk adoptions.

Despite these differences across sites, stakeholders at the State and county levels were in general agreement that the option of adoption is not handled well for older children. Stakeholders noted that children age 14 and older must consent to adoption before a permanency goal can be changed to adoption. They reported that usually, workers ask the youth if they want to be adopted, and if they say “no,” the matter is dropped. Stakeholders voiced concern about the lack of communication with youth about adoption as a permanency option and the general lack of policies and procedures for discussing adoption with older children.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's percentage of finalized adoptions in FY 2002 occurring within 24 months of entry into foster care (29.2 percent) does not meet the national standard of 32.0 percent or more.
- In 67 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the State had not made concerted efforts to achieve an adoption in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Washoe County has the highest proportion of timely adoptions and actually met the national standard in 2001. However, Clark County has a backlog of cases waiting for completed social summaries for children waiting to be adopted. It was noted in the Statewide Assessment that the backlog could be the result of chronic social work vacancies. The Statewide Assessment also notes that Clark County courts frequently find that reasonable efforts have not been made to achieve permanency because of the inability to complete adoptions in a timely manner due to agency delays in preparing social summaries and/or legal paper work.

It also was noted that Nevada statute requires filing for TPR if a child is in care 14 of 20 months; Clark County requires TPR at 15 of 22 months; and in Washoe County, if a child is placed outside of home for 14 of any 20 consecutive months, the best interest of child

must be presumed to be served by filing for TPR. However, the case reviews found that TPR was filed in only 3 of the 11 cases in which the child had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, although a “reason for not filing” had been entered in the case file in 2 of those cases.

### **Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Two of the foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 10. 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 other planned permanent living arrangements. The results were the following:

- Item 10 was rated as a Strength in 1 (50 percent) of the 2 applicable cases.
- Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (50 percent) of the 2 applicable cases.

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in one case when reviewers determined that the child was close to the age of emancipation and was receiving appropriate services to make a successful transition from foster care to independent living. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the other case when reviewers determined that the agency was not working toward the goal of Other Permanent Planned Living Arrangement, which was established by the court. Reviewers noted that the worker believed that the plan was still reunification and was working toward that goal instead. Reviewers determined that the caseworker had not addressed the issue of independent living services with the child or with the child’s present caretaker. The child was 15 years old at the time of the onsite CFSR case review.

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed opinions regarding the quality and quantity of independent living services provided to youth who are expected to transition from foster care to independent living. Most of these stakeholders noted that older children in foster care have independent living plans, that independent living services are available in most areas of the State, and that the State will maintain care of a child up to age 21 or until the youth finishes school. However, several stakeholders voiced concern about the consistent quality of these services and whether all youth are able to receive them. State-level stakeholders reported that the State contracts with group homes to provide independent living skills training to residents, but there is no quality assurance review to monitor whether these services are being provided. Stakeholders also noted that the State is developing additional services for this population with funds from the Federal Chaffee Foster Care Independent Living Program. Also, a special fund has been allocated by the legislature for youth who are emancipated from foster care. The funds come from a portion of the court filing fees.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in one (50 percent) of the two applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to assist the child in attaining his goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements.

**Permanency Outcome 2**

<b>Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	3	7	3	13	54.2
Partially Achieved:	2	4	3	9	37.5
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	2	0	2	8.3
Not Applicable:	0	0	0		

**STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2**

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 54.2 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome did not differ substantively across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 60 percent of Carson City cases, 54 percent of Clark County cases, and 50 percent of Washoe County cases.

CFSR case review findings indicate that the child welfare agency makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families and to place siblings together when appropriate. However, the findings also indicate a lack of consistent effort on the part of the agency to (1) promote frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, (2) seek and assess relatives as placement resources, (3) preserve children's connections to their families and heritage, and (4) support or promote the parent-child relationship.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 2 are presented below.



### Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Of the 24 foster care cases, 22 were applicable for an assessment of item 11. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which (1) TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, (2) contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest, and/or (3) parents were deceased or whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's most recent foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. This assessment resulted in the finding that all 22 cases (100 percent) were rated as a Strength for this item.

Item 11 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child was placed in the same county as the family of origin (parents or relatives) (20 cases).
- The child's out-of-county placement was necessary to meet the child's needs (4 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in agreement that the agency makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their communities of origin. However, they noted that if a child needs inpatient psychiatric services, they may need to be placed out of State or far from their communities of origin.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 100 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to ensure that children were placed in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives.

### Item 12. Placement with siblings

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Fifteen of the 24 foster care cases involved a child with siblings who were also in foster care. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether the separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 13 (87 percent) of the 15 applicable cases.
- Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (13 percent) of the 15 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Carson City and Washoe County cases, compared to 75 percent of Clark County cases.

In 12 of the 15 applicable cases, the child was in a placement with at least one other sibling; in 6 of those cases, the child was in a placement with all siblings.

Item 12 was rated as a Strength if the child was in placement with all of his or her siblings (6 cases), or if reviewers determined that the separation of the siblings was necessary to meet at least one child's safety or treatment needs (7 cases). The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that there was no valid reason for the separation of the siblings.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to ensure that siblings are placed together while in foster care, if that is appropriate for the needs and well-being of all siblings. However, some Clark and Washoe County stakeholders suggested that the agency often keeps siblings together by placing them all in a shelter setting.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 87 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to place siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate.

Placement with siblings was not addressed in the Statewide Assessment.

### **Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care**

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 13 was applicable for 21 of the 24 foster care cases. Three cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item because TPR had been established prior to the period under review and the parents were no longer involved in the children's lives (or parental visitation was terminated by court order), and the child had no siblings in foster care (or visitation between siblings was not considered to be in the child's best interest). In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine (1) whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care and (2) whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 15 (71 percent) of the 21 applicable cases.
- Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (29 percent) of the 21 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 64 percent of Clark County cases and 60 percent of Carson City cases.

Typical visitation between children and their mothers for the 20 cases for which this assessment was applicable was the following:

- Weekly visits – 11 cases.
- Less than monthly visits – 5 cases.
- No visits – 4 cases.

In five of the nine cases in which visits with mother occurred less frequently than once a month, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation. In the other four cases, reviewers determined that this effort had not been made.

Typical visitation between children and their fathers for the 14 cases for which this assessment was applicable was the following:

- Weekly visits – 8 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 1 case.
- Monthly visits – 1 case.
- No visits – 4 cases.

In one of the four cases in which there were no visits with the father, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation. In the other three cases, reviewers determined that this effort had not been made.

An assessment of visitation among siblings was applicable in 8 cases. Typical visitation between siblings was the following:

- Weekly visits – 4 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 1 case.
- Monthly visits – 1 case.
- No visits – 2 cases.

In both of the cases in which there were no visits between siblings in foster care, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to promote visitation.

Item 13 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency of visitation met the needs of the children and parents, or that, when visitation was less frequent than needed, the agency had made diligent efforts to promote more frequent visitation. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not promote sufficient visitation between the child and his/her father (3 cases).
- The agency did not promote sufficient visitation between siblings (3 cases).
- The agency did not promote sufficient visitation between the child and his/her mother (4 cases).

The opinions of stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR differed widely. Many stakeholders reported that visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care is frequent and meets the needs of the child and the family. These stakeholders noted that visitation is provided so siblings can spend time together, that weekly visits between parents and children are not uncommon, and that visits often increase as the family moves closer to reunification. Other stakeholders reported that the agency is not diligent in promoting frequent visitation among families and that visitation often is scheduled during regular business hours, which does not accommodate working parents. They voiced concern that parents have to take time off from work to visit their children. Stakeholders in Washoe County, however, indicated that there is a visitation program in the county that permits 30 families a week to visit with their children on weekday evenings and on weekends.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 29 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation between parents and children and between siblings was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the child.

Although visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care was not addressed in the Statewide Assessment, the State’s policy document notes that in Clark County, after a CPS hearing, it is a child’s right to visit and have telephone contact with parents and siblings unless prohibited by court order. In addition, in the rural regions, to restrict visitation to less than weekly (when parent is available) requires a court order. Washoe County policy is that visitation between children and parents should be scheduled at regular intervals (at least once a week).

**Item 14. Preserving connections**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 14 was applicable for all 24 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, family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 19 (79 percent) of the 24 applicable cases.
- Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (21 percent) of the 24 applicable cases.

Ratings for item 14 varied substantively across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 80 percent of Carson City cases, and 69 percent of Clark County cases.

In 19 of the 24 cases, case reviewers determined that children's primary connections had been “significantly” preserved while they were in foster care; in 3 of the 24 cases, reviewers determined that children’s primary connections had been “partially” preserved; and in 2 cases, reviewers determined that primary connections were “not at all” preserved. In one case, the child was reported to be part Native American. For this case, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to ensure that the child’s connections to the Tribe were maintained, although the Tribe was notified in accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Item 14 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to achieve one or more of the following:

- Preservation of child’s primary connections with extended family members (17 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with school, community, and friends (7 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with religion and ethnic/racial heritage (4 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with former foster parents (2 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency had not made appropriate efforts to ensure that the child’s connection with his Native American heritage was preserved by supporting contact with Native American grandparents (1 case).
- The agency had not made efforts to preserve the child’s connections to extended family (3 cases).
- The agency had not made efforts to preserve the child’s connections to school and community (1 case).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item reported that the agency makes concerted efforts to maintain children’s ties to their extended families, culture, school, community, and friendships. However, a few stakeholders expressed concern about the number of times children have to change schools while they are in foster care, which they considered disruptive to maintaining connections as well as to achieving educational goals.

State- and county-level stakeholders reported that the child welfare agency also makes concerted efforts to adhere to the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). They noted that Tribes are routinely notified if a child enters foster care who is a member of a Native American Tribe. Concern was expressed by some stakeholders, however, that children are not always placed in Native American homes because these homes do not always meet the State’s licensing requirements. It was noted that the Tribes have recently completed a first draft of a tribal foster home licensing protocol and it is hoped that once this is implemented, it will help keep

children in Tribal homes. Stakeholders also noted that the Tribes are working with the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to develop cultural packets that will help foster parents keep children connected to their Native culture. However, some stakeholders expressed concern that there are judges in the State who do not follow the provisions of ICWA.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 21 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections. A key concern identified by case reviewers was that even when the child requested contact with specific extended family members, the agency did not follow up on this request.

### Item 15. Relative placement

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength       X   Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 15 was applicable for 22 of the 24 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 17 (77 percent) of the 22 applicable cases.
- Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (23 percent) of the 22 applicable cases.

Ratings for this item varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Carson City cases and 80 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 67 percent of Clark County cases.

Item 15 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children were placed with relatives (12 cases) or that the agency had made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives (5 cases). The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the child was not placed with a relative and that the agency had sought maternal but not paternal relatives as potential placement resources (5 cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State makes concerted efforts to search for relatives. State-level stakeholders reported that there has been more of a push for this since ASFA. Clark County stakeholders noted that a new half-time position was established to conduct relative searches. Washoe County stakeholders reported that the court orders parents to provide information about relatives and that relatives are actively sought as placement resources.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 23 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess paternal relatives in addition to maternal relatives.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Clark County was awarded a 5-year Caring Communities Demonstration Project Grant to use System of Care principles to increase placements with, and supports for, relatives and improve the safety, stability, permanency, and well-being of children in kinship care. The Statewide Assessment also notes that in 2002, 1.8 percent of children in foster care were placed with a relative using a point-in-time analysis, while 1.7 percent of children in foster care were placed with a relative using an entry cohort analysis. The Statewide Assessment also notes that “due to the changing, tougher criteria for receiving TANF, some families may be coming into or staying in the child welfare system to obtain assistance/support.” Support for kin caregivers 62 and older used to allow payments of 90 percent of the foster care rate for each child in kinship placements. Program changes now allow for kin caregivers to receive 90 percent of the foster care payment only for the first child, with payments for the second and subsequent children reduced by nearly half.

#### **Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 16 was applicable for 23 of the 24 foster care cases. A case was considered not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child, or if a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child’s best interests. 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/or fathers. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 13 (57 percent) of the 23 applicable cases.
- Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 10 (43 percent) of the 23 applicable cases.

Ratings for item 16 varied considerably across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 60 percent of Carson City cases and 38 percent of Clark County cases.

Item 16 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote the parent-child bond of children in foster care. These efforts included promoting visitation between the parent and child. In one case, this was supported by providing transportation. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the

agency did not promote parental involvement with the child or attempt to strengthen the parent-child relationship through visitation or participation in other activities. In one of these cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the mother-child relationship, but not to support the father-child relationship, although the father was known to the agency.

Stakeholders commenting on this item reported that most caseworkers make concerted efforts to encourage strong positive relationships between children and parents. They reported that parents are encouraged to attend their children’s doctor’s appointments and school activities. Children are encouraged to write letters to parents who are incarcerated.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 43 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care.

### III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

#### Well-Being Outcome 1

<b>Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	6	7	6	19	38.8
Partially Achieved:	1	12	4	17	34.7
Not Achieved or Addressed:	4	7	2	13	26.5
Not Applicable:	0	0	0		

#### STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 38.8 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although performance on this outcome was low in all sites, there was variation across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 55 percent of Carson City cases and 50 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 27 percent of Clark County cases.



A key CFSR finding is that all indicators for Well-Being Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviews found that the child welfare agency is not consistent in its efforts to assess children and families for services and provide necessary services, involve parents and children in the case planning process, and establish sufficient face-to-face contact between agency case workers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

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

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 49 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had (1) adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents; and (2) provided the services necessary to meet those needs. The results were the following:

- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 25 (51 percent) of the 49 applicable cases (16 of the 25 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 24 (49 percent) of the 49 applicable cases (8 of the 24 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for item 17 differed substantively as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services case). The item was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of foster care cases compared to 36 percent of in-home services cases. Item ratings also differed across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 64 percent of Carson City cases and 58 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 42 percent of Clark County cases.

Item 17 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to (1) assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents; and (2) provide appropriate services to meet identified needs. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Children's needs were not assessed (9 of 49 applicable cases, 3 of which were foster care cases).
- Mother's needs were not assessed (10 of 45 applicable cases, 3 of which were foster care cases).
- Father's needs were not assessed (12 of 34 applicable cases, 5 of which were foster care cases).
- Foster parent's needs were not assessed (5 of 20 applicable cases).
- Needed services were not provided to children (11 of 49 applicable cases, 5 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to mothers (14 of 45 applicable cases, 4 of which were foster care cases).

- Needed services were not provided to fathers (16 of 34 applicable cases, 5 of which were foster care cases).
- Needed services were not provided to foster parents (6 of 20 applicable cases).
- Services provided to children were not appropriate to meet their needs (8 cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that while the agency routinely conducts initial needs assessments, there is a lack of follow up in many cases with regard to conducting more indepth evaluations to identify underlying problems such as mental illness, domestic violence, or substance abuse. In addition, stakeholders noted that the focus of needs assessment and services often is on one child in the family rather than including the parents and other children in the family in the assessment process. Stakeholders also reported that independent living services do not fully prepare youth for independence and that youth need a mentor who they can contact once they leave foster care. Finally, stakeholders voiced concern that foster parents are not receiving full information on the children placed in their homes.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 49 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the child welfare agency had not adequately assessed and/or addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. A key concern pertained to the lack of assessment and service provision to fathers. The father’s needs were not assessed in 35 percent of the applicable cases; services were not provided to the father to address identified needs in 47 percent of applicable cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada policy requires development of a case plan within 45 days of removal from home for foster care cases and 45 days from case opening for in-home cases. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, among 104 cases reviewed in a Quality Services Review, only 5 percent of children remaining in the home (in-home services cases) had a service plan on file. In addition, of all cases with a service plan, only 89 percent included goals and objectives designed to increase the safety of the child and alleviate underlying causes of agency involvement.

**Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 18 was applicable for all 49 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents (including pre-adoptive parents or permanent caregivers) and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in the case planning, and if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interest. A determination of involvement in case

planning required that a parent or child had actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. This assessment produced the following findings:

- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 23 (47 percent) of the 49 applicable cases (13 of the 23 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 26 (53 percent) of the 49 applicable cases (11 of the 26 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item differed somewhat by type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 54 percent of foster care cases compared to 40 percent of in-home services cases. Ratings also differed across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of Washoe County cases and 55 percent of Carson City cases, compared to 35 percent of Clark County cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Fathers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (18 [53 percent] of 34 applicable cases).
- Mothers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (14 [31 percent] of 45 applicable cases).
- Children who were old enough to have been involved in case planning were not involved (17 [74 percent] of 23 applicable cases).

The opinions of stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR differed. Many Carson City and Clark County stakeholders reported that children and parents are not routinely involved in the case planning process. A key concern identified pertained to the inclusion of fathers in case planning. Stakeholders reported that it is difficult for many workers to do this, but the agency is making an effort to engage fathers more fully in the process. Also, Clark County stakeholders noted that families raise concerns about having two case plans (if the child is in foster care), one from the county and one from the State. Most stakeholders suggested that the child is involved in case planning when old enough, but it was noted that some young people do not have copies of their case plans and are not fully cognizant of what is in the plan.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 53 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. A key concern pertained to the lack of involvement of children in case planning. Almost three-fourths of the children who were old enough to be involved in the case planning process were not involved. Another concern pertained to the lack of involvement of fathers in 53 percent of the applicable cases. Even though mothers were more likely than fathers or children to be involved in case planning, only 69 percent of the mothers were determined by reviewers to have been appropriately involved.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a Quality Services Review indicated that there was limited family involvement in the case planning process. The Statewide Assessment notes that there may be a correlation between length of caseworker tenure (10+ years) and increased tendency not to involve birth parents, foster parents, relatives, and children over 12 in the case plan process.

### Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 49 cases were applicable for an assessment of item 19. In conducting this assessment, 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 were the following:

- Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 27 (55 percent) of the 49 applicable cases (13 of the 27 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 22 (45 percent) of the 49 applicable cases (11 of the 22 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item did not differ by type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 54 percent of foster care cases and in 56 percent of in-home services cases. Ratings also did not differ across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 58 percent of Clark County cases, 55 percent of Carson City cases, and 50 percent of Washoe County cases.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of caseworkers' face-to-face visits with children in the 49 cases:

- In 6 cases, visits typically occurred once a week.
- In 6 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 18 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 18 cases, visits typically occurred less frequently than once a month.
- In 1 case there were no visits.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child and when visits did occur, they did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (11 cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, but when visits did occur, they focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (6 cases).

- The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient to meet the needs of the child, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (5 cases).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that there is frequent face-to-face contact between caseworkers and the children in their caseloads. They cited that contact occurs at least once a month, and usually more frequently. However, in 19 (39 percent) of the 49 cases reviewed for the onsite CFSR, visits occurred less frequently than once a month, while in 12 cases (24 percent), visits occurred more frequently than once a month.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 45 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality to ensure children’s safety and promote attainment of case goals.

The Statewide Assessment reported the following data:

- A Quality Services Review showed that during the most recent 3 months of case activity, 30 percent of children in foster care and 34 percent of children in in-home cases were seen by their caseworker at least once per month.
- A survey of caseworkers showed that 56 percent of caseworkers conduct face-to-face visits with children less frequently than monthly; 24.3 percent visit monthly, and 20 percent visit weekly or bi-weekly.
- In a survey of foster parents, 70 percent of foster parents surveyed in rural counties said that caseworkers conduct monthly face-to-face meetings with their families, compared to 36 percent of foster parents surveyed in Clark County and 38 percent surveyed in Washoe County.

## **Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 20 was applicable for 48 cases. A case was not applicable for assessment because the parents were no longer involved in the child’s life despite agency efforts to involve them. Reviewers were to assess whether the worker’s face-to-face contact with the children’s mothers and fathers (including pre-adoptive mothers and fathers) was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and/or ensure the children's safety and well being. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 22 (46 percent) of the 48 applicable cases (12 of the 22 cases were foster care cases).

- Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 26 (54 percent) of the 48 applicable cases (11 of the 26 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item differed slightly by type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 52 percent of the foster care cases compared to 40 percent of the in-home services cases. Although ratings for this item were low in all CFSR sites, there was some cross-site variation. The item was rated as a Strength in 58 percent of Washoe County cases and 55 percent of Carson City cases, compared to 36 percent of Clark County cases.

Typical patterns of social worker visits with mothers (including pre-adoptive mothers) were the following (44 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits – 6 cases (4 of which were foster care cases).
- Twice a month visits - 4 cases (3 of which were foster care cases).
- Monthly visits – 14 cases (3 of which were foster care cases).
- Less than monthly visits – 18 cases (9 of which were foster care cases).
- No visits – 2 cases (both of which were foster care cases).

Typical patterns of social worker visits with fathers (including pre-adoptive fathers) were the following (32 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits – 1 case (which was a foster care case).
- Twice a month visits – 2 cases (1 of which was a foster care case).
- Monthly visits – 8 cases (4 of which were foster care cases).
- Less than monthly visits – 12 cases (5 of which were foster care cases).
- No visits – 9 cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

Item 20 was rated as a Strength 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. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Caseworker visits with parents were not occurring with sufficient frequency, and even when they did occur, they did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (14 cases).
- Caseworker visits with parents occurred with sufficient frequency, but did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (3 cases).
- Caseworker visits with parents were not occurring with sufficient frequency, but when they did occur they focused on substantive issues pertaining to the case (8 cases).
- There were no visits between the caseworker and the parents (1 case).

Some Carson City stakeholders reported that caseworkers try to make weekly visits to parents. Clark County stakeholders said that caseworkers try to make weekly visits, if it is a high risk family. However, they noted that workers in Clark County tend to use the telephone to maintain contact with parents because of high caseloads.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 54 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with both mothers and fathers were not sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a Quality Services Review showed that caseworkers were visiting with families at least once per month in 33 percent of foster care cases and 37 percent of in-home cases.

**Well-Being Outcome 2**

<b>Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	7	7	5	19	70.4
Partially Achieved:	0	2	1	3	11.1
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	4	0	5	18.5
Not Applicable:	3	13	6		

**STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2**

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that the outcome was achieved in 70.4 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 87.5 percent of Carson City cases and 83 percent of Washoe County cases, compared to 54 percent of Clark County cases.

The primary case review finding was that the child welfare agency is not consistently addressing education-related needs even when there is evidence indicating that some type of intervention is warranted.

The findings for the item assessed for Well Being Outcome 2 are presented below.

### **Item 21. Educational needs of the child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 21 was applicable for 27 of the 49 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for assessment were those in which the children were not of school age or were in their own homes and educational needs were not an issue. 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 this assessment were the following:

- Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 19 (70 percent) of the 27 applicable cases (13 of the 19 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (30 percent) of the 27 applicable cases (4 of the 8 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for item 21 differed somewhat by type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 76 percent of foster care cases compared to 60 percent of in-home services cases.

Item 21 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all potential educational needs were assessed and addressed as appropriate. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency was not addressing education-related needs, even when there was evidence to indicate that this action was warranted. For example, in two of the in-home services cases, a key reason for the child's contact with the agency was "acting out behavior" in school. However, this issue was not addressed by the caseworker. Two other children in the in-home services cases were not attending school and this issue was not addressed by the caseworker. For the 4 foster care cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, reviewers found that children were performing very poorly in school but no services had been provided to address this problem.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to meet children's educational needs. The primary concern identified pertained to children changing schools as a result of placement instability. Clark County stakeholders also expressed concern that youth are leaving foster care without diplomas.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 30 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to meet children's educational needs.



According to the Statewide Assessment, caseworkers are required to assess the child’s educational needs when the child enters foster care. The Statewide Assessment reported the following data findings:

- A Quality Services Review showed that of the 89 case records involving children in pre-school through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, the children’s educational needs were considered and appropriate services were provided in 42 percent of the cases. Educational needs were met in 6 percent of the in-home services cases.
- A foster parent survey showed that 62 percent of foster parents surveyed said that they are “very” adequately prepared to manage a child’s educational needs. Rural foster parents tended to be involved in their foster child’s education more frequently than foster parents in more populated counties.
- 45.3 percent of caseworkers surveyed indicate they participate in a child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Only 27.6 percent of caseworkers surveyed report that they “always” provide educational records to foster parents within 30 days of placement.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that there is a Truancy Diversion Program in Clark County (Eighth Judicial District Family County) that uses mentors to help parents identify and deal with the root causes of truancy.

### Well-Being Outcome 3

<b>Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	5	19	5	29	64.4
Partially Achieved:	2	2	4	8	17.8
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	4	1	8	17.8
Not Applicable:	1	1	2		

### STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

Nevada did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 64.4 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 76 percent of Clark County cases, compared to 50 percent of Carson City and Washoe County cases.

The CFSR case reviews found that the child welfare agency was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical and mental health needs. A key concern identified was the lack of providers who will accept Medicaid for both physical and mental health services. Stakeholders noted that the State is in a "crisis" due to the fact that the Medicaid system is not reimbursing doctors for services (due to an ongoing problem with Medicaid's automated system) and consequently doctors are refusing to see Medicaid patients.

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

## **Item 22. Physical health of the child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 22 was applicable for 38 of the 49 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for this assessment were in-home services cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) children's physical health needs had been appropriately assessed; and (2) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 31 (82 percent) of the 38 applicable cases (20 of the 31 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (18 percent) of the 38 applicable cases (4 of the 7 cases were foster care cases).

Ratings for this item did not differ by type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 83 percent of foster care cases and 79 percent of in-home services cases. Item ratings differed somewhat across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 89 percent of Washoe County cases and 84 percent of Clark County Cases, compared to 70 percent of Carson City cases.

Item 22 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children's health needs were routinely assessed and services were provided as needed. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that there was clear evidence of health-related needs that were not being addressed by the agency.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that meeting children's health needs is a considerable challenge for the agency. They noted that there are an insufficient number of dentists who will agree to take new patients and there is a dental health crisis in some areas. An even more severe problem is that doctors are refusing to serve Medicaid children

because they are not being reimbursed by Medicaid. Apparently the Medicaid computer system has not been working properly for some time, and doctors are not getting paid. Stakeholders noted that foster parents are getting the bills for services to the children. Clark County stakeholders, however, noted that all children who come into foster care receive physical health screenings.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 18 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not adequately addressed the health needs of children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, all children entering foster care are required to receive an EPSDT examination. Children in in-home care are not required to have an assessment of their physical health needs unless they are brought to the agency's attention for health reasons. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the Healthy Kids program (through Children's Advocacy Center of Clark County) compiles a 26-page summary of children entering foster care for caseworkers and foster parents. The summary includes prenatal and family histories, education, social behaviors and child understanding of current situation.

The following data findings were reported in the Statewide Assessment:

- Of foster parents surveyed, over 60 percent view it as their responsibility to coordinate health services for children in their care. Over 60 percent indicated that they were adequately prepared for this role.
- Of caseworkers surveyed, over 70 percent indicated that coordination of medical and dental services is a joint responsibility of foster parents and caseworkers.
- Medical and dental histories of children were noted by foster parents to be their third most frequently unmet need of foster parents.

### **Item 23. Mental health of the child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 23 was applicable for 34 of the 49 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were those in which the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or in-home services cases in which mental health needs were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed, and (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 21 (62 percent) of the 34 applicable cases (12 of the 21 cases were foster care cases).
- Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 (38 percent) of the 34 applicable cases (7 of the 13 cases were foster care cases).

Item ratings did not differ as a function of case type. The item was rated as a Strength in 65 percent of foster care cases and 62.5 percent of in-home services cases. However, item ratings varied across CFSR sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 74 percent of Clark County cases, compared to 50 percent of Carson City cases and 43 percent of Washoe County cases.

Reviewers determined that children's mental health needs were "significantly" assessed in 18 cases, "partially" assessed in 6 cases, and "not at all" assessed in 10 cases. Reviewers determined that identified mental health service needs were "significantly met" in 17 cases, "partially met" in 3 cases, and "not at all met" in 9 cases. For the remainder of the applicable cases, the assessment revealed that no mental health services were needed.

Item 23 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children's mental health needs were "significantly" or "partially" assessed, and mental health needs were significantly addressed when necessary. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Mental health needs were not fully assessed, although a mental health assessment was warranted (9 cases).
- Mental health needs were assessed, but identified services were not provided (4 cases).

In many of the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement, reviewers determined that the children's experiences and/or behaviors warranted a mental health assessment. These experiences included witnessing domestic violence, witnessing a parent's suicide attempt, living on the streets for a long period of time with a substance abusing mother, exhibiting autistic behavior, and living with a mother who has been diagnosed with a bipolar disorder.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that availability and access to mental health assessments and services for children who are in the child welfare system is highly challenging, particularly in the rural region. There are very few providers and long waiting lists (up to 6 months) for both assessments and services. In addition, mental health providers who would normally be reimbursed by Medicaid are not being reimbursed.

Clark County stakeholders noted that although mental health screenings are done for many children in foster care, the services to meet identified needs are not available. In addition, because assessments are so difficult to schedule, stakeholders noted that caseworkers often make decisions about a child's mental health needs without input from mental health professionals.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 38 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to address the mental health

needs of children. The key concern identified pertained to a lack of mental health assessments in situations in which an assessment was warranted.

According to the Statewide Assessment, caseworkers are required to assess the children's mental health well-being when children enter foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that in 2002, the Nevada Rural Mental Health Consortium reported that the mental health needs of children either were not being met or that the services provided did not meet the level of need for the children. Geography and availability of providers were two of the most commonly cited barriers. The Statewide Assessment also notes that accessibility to mental health services may vary depending upon the portal of entry into the system. Coming in to the system in a crisis situation that requires removal of the child from home seems to grant access to services more readily than children living in their own homes without obvious severe emotional disturbances.

The Statewide assessment reports that a Quality Services Review indicates that 56 percent of the cases which warranted consideration of the child's mental health had mental health needs assessed and appropriate services delivered. Children from in-home cases were least likely to have a mental health assessment (10 percent for in-home and 91 percent for foster care cases).

**SECTION 2: SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

**IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM**

<b>Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity</b>				
	<b>Not in Substantial Conformity</b>		<b>Substantial Conformity</b>	
Rating	1	2	<b>3X</b>	4

Nevada achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. Information pertaining to the item addressed for this factor is provided below.

**Item 24. 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 months, has been) in foster care.**

  X   Strength             Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength because Nevada’s Statewide information system, UNITY, can identify the status, demographics, location, and goals for children in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada has a Statewide child welfare information system, called UNITY, that can identify the status, demographics, location, and goals for children in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that UNITY allows caseworkers to record detailed case- and child-specific information from intake through to the conclusion of the investigation process and from the time of case opening for services (whether in-home or out-of-home) to case closure. At present, UNITY is not yet compliant with Federal requirements for a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, use of UNITY on a Statewide basis began in October 2003. However, until early 2004, the State’s Legacy system (Child Welfare Action Form or CWAF) continued to be used for placement data for children placed out of home with caretakers who receive foster care payments. The Statewide Assessment also reports that, prior to the October 2003 rollout

of UNITY statewide, Nevada did not have the capacity to submit a case-level report to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System due to insufficient access to child protective data.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that workers (at least foster care workers) view data entry into UNITY as a duplication of efforts because they need to enter data into two systems. A survey of caseworkers revealed that less than 25 percent of them reported using UNITY on a day-to-day basis for case management purposes for at least 75 percent of their caseload. UNITY appears to be used most frequently as a case management tool for Independent Living Program cases, followed by adoption cases and then foster care cases. Workers tend to use UNITY least often for in-home cases.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that UNITY can provide information on the status, demographics, and location of children in foster care. Other positive aspects of UNITY identified by stakeholders were the following:

- It provides information on caseload size by worker.
- It can readily identify placement information and legal status.
- It permits entry of qualitative information that is helpful for understanding a case.
- There is an 800 number Help Desk available during work hours.

Stakeholders also noted, however, that UNITY is a new system and that there are many problems to be addressed. They reported that UNITY Staff have been working hard to ensure that data are clean. For example, stakeholders noted that in October 2003, there were 1700 children with no placement location in the system, now there are less than 100 children who do not have a placement location. Stakeholders also noted that UNITY staff conducts quality assurance checks to ensure the accuracy of data reported to NCANDS and to the Federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). Problems identified by stakeholders were the following:

- Navigation is difficult, so data input is time consuming.
- It is difficult to get many management reports from the system.
- It is difficult to correct information once it is entered into the system, which makes data accuracy problematic.
- The system does not permit identification of children living with relatives on a voluntary basis (these children are not in foster care).

State level stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State needs to develop Statewide Management reports from UNITY. At present each county determines and generates its own report.

## V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

The State of Nevada is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Information on the items assessed for this systemic factor is presented below.

**Item 25. 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       Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because case plans are not routinely developed jointly with the child’s parents, are too generic, do not address the needs of the child, and are not completed in a timely manner. In addition, results from the onsite CFSR shows that parents and children were involved in case planning in only 47 percent of the cases reviewed.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Nevada Administrative Code requires that a case plan be developed within 45 days of a child being placed in State custody, and that the case plan be developed with input from parents or guardians, children (if appropriate), and foster parents. The Statewide Assessment notes that there is no regulatory requirement for a case plan for in-home cases, but that agency policy is for case plans to be completed on in-home cases within 45 days of a case opening. In addition to State regulations, Clark County, Washoe County, and DCFS all have a policy that stipulates that case plans should be jointly formulated with parents.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that compliance with the requirements for a case plan and for parent involvement in the case planning process varies across the State. With regard to the timeliness of case plans, the Statewide Assessment notes that timeliness is problematic in many counties due to the legal process requiring the filing of a petition, pleas, and an evidentiary hearing before a case plan can be developed. Furthermore, a statewide supervisor survey regarding case plans resulted in the finding that although 65 percent of supervisors said that they have a system to conduct case plan review, only 35 percent reported that their system was somewhat effective in ensuring that all children had written case plans with all required elements.



With regard to the quality of case plans, the Statewide Assessment reports that the participants of a judicial officer and legal professional focus group expressed concern about case plans being too generic or “cookie cutter.” They also noted that case plans often are incomplete and tend to focus on the needs of parents only, rather than addressing the needs of the children as well. Another concern identified in the Statewide Assessment was that the case plan format in UNITY is not being used on a consistent basis, and that this format is not conducive to concurrent case planning. Judicial officers and legal professionals participating in a focus group voice concern that concurrent planning is applied inconsistently and often incorrectly.

Finally, as indicated in the Statewide Assessment, compliance reviews during 2002 and 2003 regarding parent involvement in case plan development found inconsistency across the State. Washoe County and the rural counties were reported to have higher compliance with this requirement than Clark County. The Statewide Assessment notes that Washoe County implemented a collaborative case planning process on February 1, 2003, that requires caseworkers to invite all pertinent parties (parents, extended family, attorneys, CASA, etc.) to the case plan meeting. The results of a caseworker survey regarding parent involvement in case planning were that 83 percent of caseworkers indicated that birth parents frequently are involved in case planning. However, only 42 percent of court and legal professionals surveyed reported that biological parents and their attorneys were participating in case plan process.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR provided mixed perceptions regarding the timeliness and quality of case plans and parent involvement in case planning. Washoe County stakeholders reported that case plans are being developed in a timely manner and address the family’s problems, such as mental health, housing, and employment. These stakeholders also reported that parents (and their attorneys) are routinely invited to the collaborative case planning meeting. These statements are not consistent with the findings of the case reviews for Washoe County. The case reviews found that parents were not involved in case planning in 4 of the 12 applicable cases. However, for three of these cases, the mother was involved in case planning, but the father was not. One Washoe County stakeholder noted that “it is not required that the father be advised about case planning”.

In comparison to Washoe County stakeholders, State-level stakeholders and Clark and Carson City stakeholders expressed concern about both the quality of the case plans and the involvement of parents in the case planning process. Stakeholders noted that case plans tend to be “cookie cutter” rather than individualized and, although most plans were reported to address the needs of the parents, very few were written to address the child’s needs, even when the child was in foster care. The lack of case plans for children is consistent with finding of the case reviewers that very few cases had case plans for the children. Finally, stakeholders suggested that caseworkers are not sufficiently trained in the process of collaborative case planning; that is, they do not know how to do it.

**Item 26. 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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as a Strength because State statute requires 6-month periodic reviews of the status of each child and the CFSR determined that those reviews are routinely held in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada statute requires that case review hearings for children in foster care be held by the court every 6 months. The Statewide Assessment notes that when periodic reviews are not occurring in accordance with this time frame, it is due primarily to the large volume of cases. The Statewide Assessment reports that most Judicial Districts attempt to address this issue by scheduling the review hearings at the time of the dispositional hearing and at each subsequent hearing. The Statewide Assessment also reports that Clark County has addressed this problem by assigning one judge and one master for child welfare cases. This increases the time available for review and permanency hearings. In addition, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, Washoe County (Second Judicial District Court) augmented the court's Automated Court System (ACS) Justice Information System so court clerks may schedule events within timeframes for the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and in accordance with State statutes.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review were in agreement that case reviews are being held by the courts in a timely manner, and often every 3 months instead of every 6 months. This opinion was expressed by multiple stakeholders in all of the CFSR sites. Also, stakeholders in Washoe County indicated that the District Attorney's office supplies a legal secretary to the court room during dependency hearings so participants leave the court with a signed order in hand.

**Item 27. 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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 27 is rated as a Strength because Nevada statute requires permanency hearings every 12 months and the CFSR found that these hearing are routinely held in accordance with statutory timeframes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada statute requires permanency hearings 12 months after removal and every 12 months thereafter. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the findings of the surveys and focus groups indicate that in most cases, the 12-month permanency hearings are held within statutory timeframes and that in a number of jurisdictions, particularly in rural counties, permanency hearings or status checks are held on a more frequent basis to address plan barriers and promote more timely permanency. Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that the two main barriers to timely permanency hearings identified by legal professionals are (1) coordination of court and legal professional calendars, and (2) inadequate information in case plans and/or court reports.

The Statewide Assessment reports that permanency hearings are effective and that 72 percent of the legal professionals surveyed reported that the time set aside to conduct effective permanency hearings was “adequate.” Legal professional and judicial officials participating in a focus group reported that efforts are being made to conduct a more qualitative case review at the permanency hearing.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in agreement that 12-month permanency hearings are being held in a timely manner throughout the State and that judges rarely grant continuances. One facilitator of this timeliness is the practice of scheduling each subsequent court hearing at the time of the current court hearing. A few stakeholders suggested that the volume of cases in Clark County may impact the quality of permanency hearings in that county because of a lack of adequate time devoted to the hearing. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that Washoe County is exemplary with regard to addressing key issues in the permanency hearing. They noted that Washoe County has a model court operating under the practice guidance provided by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

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

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although Nevada has a statutory requirement for termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings, the CFSR found that there are excessive delays that preclude meeting the ASFA provisions pertaining to the timeliness of these proceedings.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there are barriers to seeking TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA. Focus groups

with legal and court personnel indicated a barrier to timely TPR hearings is the reluctance on the part of the courts to seek TPR unless an adoptive home has been identified. In addition, a January 2003 survey of Washoe County cases found the reasons for delayed TPR hearings were (1) difficulties in coordination of legal professional and court calendars, and (2) agency delays in completing required TPR forms. The Statewide Assessment notes that there is no Statewide uniform court recording system designed to track the timeliness of court actions consistent with meeting ASFA-related requirements. The State’s Court Improvement Program has encouraged all judicial districts to develop a common system, but since each district must provide its own funding for the system, there have been disagreements among jurisdictions over what characteristics/capabilities must be included. There is no effort at the State level to providing funding to develop a common system.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR provided different opinions. Clark County stakeholders noted that even though the agency has a TPR specialist and is able to identify all cases in which the child has been in foster care for 12 months, there are still significant delays in achieving TPR. These delays were attributed to (1) a shortage of attorneys to file for TPR and (2) a lack of timeliness of agency staff in preparing paperwork needed to file TPR. Clark County stakeholders also noted that the judge often denies the TPR petition because of “lack of reasonable efforts” on the part of the agency to reunify the family.

In comparison, most State-level stakeholders and stakeholders in Washoe and Carson City expressed the opinion that TPR is being filed in a timely manner, although Washoe County stakeholders reported that the court frequently makes findings of compelling reasons why not to file for termination. State-level stakeholders also noted that the Supreme Court expedites TPR appeals and resolves these appeals in a timely manner. However, stakeholders also noted that achieving TPR is hampered by the lack of consistent legal representation for the parties involved. They noted that the District Attorney’s Office is insufficiently staffed, and that frequently, parents are not appointed counsel and children do not always have Guardians ad litem. Clark County stakeholders noted that they are using some Court Improvement Program dollars to increase legal representation for parents.

**Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive 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       Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because there is no Statewide, consistent process to notify foster or pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of hearing dates or to afford them an opportunity to be heard at such hearings.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada statute requires that a notice of hearing be provided by registered or certified mail to all parties of any prior proceedings and any person planning to adopt, relatives of the child, or providers of foster care who are currently providing care to the child. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that the responsibility for notification is not specified in the statute and varies throughout the State. In most jurisdictions, the District Attorney’s Office personally serves the notice or uses certified or registered mail. Courts announce the next hearing date in court and provide a copy of the order at the end of court or through the mail. Workers often follow-up with verbal or written notification or reminder of the hearing.

Despite these efforts, information provided in the Statewide Assessment indicates that foster parent focus group participants reported that notification was not occurring on a regular basis. In addition, only 41 percent of foster parents surveyed indicated that are provided notice of hearings “frequently;” 10 percent of foster parents surveyed indicated that they receive notice of court hearings “infrequently” or “never.” The Statewide Assessment also notes that although judges in Clark and Washoe Counties allow foster parents to appear in the court and to have input into the court hearing, survey and focus group findings suggest that this practice does not occur on a consistent basis across the State.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions regarding the notification of foster parents of court hearings and reviews and the opportunity for foster parents to have input into the hearing or review. State-level stakeholders and stakeholders in Clark and Washoe Counties reported that foster parents are routinely notified of court hearings but that the opportunity for foster parents to have input into the process varies by courtroom. Washoe County stakeholders suggested that foster parents usually have the opportunity to be heard, although they do not always attend the court hearings for a variety of reasons including (1) lack of child care, (2) being intimidated by the court process, and (3) lack of preparedness or education regarding the process and their role. Stakeholders in this county noted that a telephone line has been established for foster parents (and others who cannot be physically present) to participate in the hearing. Carson City stakeholders reported that foster parents are not consistently informed of case reviews or court hearings but often can participate if they do attend.

## VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Nevada is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided 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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR found that there is a lack of Statewide standards to ensure consistency in practice to protect the safety and health of children. Additionally, stakeholders expressed concerns that the standards established for foster family homes and child care institutions are not applied to the primary shelter facility in Clark County.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS is at a crossroads in its quality assurance functions due to the changes in organizational structure resulting from integration. DCFS's new role will be setting standards and assuring quality rather than directly providing services in the two largest counties (Clark and Washoe). Because integration will not be completed until October 2004, there are discrepancies in policy between DCFS and Clark County. The Statewide Assessment notes that the new role is still under development.

However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that Nevada assures quality services with a policy framework through laws and regulations, conducting on-site and case reviews, conducting licensing reviews, producing electronic management reports, and conducting special studies. Regulations have been established for child protective services, foster care, healthy and special needs adoptions, infant adoptions, licensed child placing adoption agencies, and a State-funded program that supports youth who have aged out of care. The Statewide Assessment also notes that Nevada has made changes in regulations to be in compliance with ASFA by ensuring that all foster families and relative care homes meet the same licensing standards.

The comments of stakeholders regarding this item suggest that there is a lack of Statewide standards to ensure consistency of practice for children in foster care. With regard to CPS practices, Clark County stakeholders noted that they have developed a uniform risk assessment and safety assessment tool, but it is used only at the initial assessment. Clark County stakeholders also noted that worker caseloads are too high (50-55 cases) and staff turnover is too high to ensure consistency of services and practice. With regard to foster care practices, stakeholders reported that a key problem in Clark County is that the primary shelter facility used by the county is not licensed as a child care facility. The facility has more than 16 beds and therefore the State cannot license it as a foster home. The County does not have jurisdiction because the shelter is located in the city limits of Las Vegas. Las Vegas conducts health and fire

inspections, but there is no monitoring or oversight process. Case reviews indicate that many children are placed in this facility, some for extended periods of time and many who are infants and very young children.

**Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the 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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 31 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR found that the State has not established a formal Statewide quality assurance system, although various, limited-focus reviews and evaluations conducted at either the State or county level were identified during the review.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS, Clark County, and Washoe County have each taken steps to evaluate program effectiveness and quality within their areas. DCFS uses internal and external (contract) case reviews to obtain quality and regulatory compliance information on fieldwork. Child protective services and ICWA services have case review teams that perform biennial Statewide quality assurance reviews. The Statewide Assessment notes that in the fall of 2002, an external contractor conducted a MEPA/IEPA compliance review of Clark County case files for those caseworkers who completed the MEPA/IEPA training. In addition, DCFS has experimented with a quality review process similar to the CFSR process.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that the State also has implemented other evaluation efforts. The Program Evaluation and Data (PED) Unit is a private-public partnership to generate information for monitoring and analysis (such as quarterly Performance Reports and Child Outcome on Line [COOL] reports). In addition, the partnership with both campuses of the University of Nevada's School of Social Work, provides the research arm for investigating topics relevant to child welfare practice and the integration of the research and other quality assurance findings into the training curriculum. The IV-B Steering Committee contracts with the University of Nevada Reno (UNR), Center for Applied Research to evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of IV-B sub-grantees.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that the State has not implemented a formal comprehensive Statewide quality assurance (QA) system at this time, although it began a process similar to the Federal CFSR and plans to expand that process. They noted that DCFS has received funded positions from the legislature to hire QA staff. Stakeholders at the county

level also noted that the counties do not have a formalized QA system, although in Washoe County there is a QA staff person who conducts post-service case audits and developed one study that focused on permanency.

## VII. TRAINING

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

Nevada is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided 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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as a Strength because the CFSR found that Nevada has a formal initial training program for all new child welfare workers that includes a shadowing and mentoring component.

According to the Statewide Assessment, all new child welfare workers are required to attend the Nevada Training Academy (NTA), a 6-week experience with 4 weeks of classes interspersed with a week in the field after weeks 2 and 4. The Statewide Assessment notes that although NTA recommends that participants have no cases or a minimal caseload until completion of formal academy classes, this recommendation is not consistently followed because of the large number of “uncovered” cases.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that NTA is offered four times a year, alternating between Reno and Las Vegas. New workers wait no more than 4-6 weeks for the next academy, and while waiting, they engage in pre-academy shadowing experiences, complete reading assignments and computer-based training, and watch videos. Post-academy courses on ICWA, MEPA, and cultural competence are to be completed within one year. These courses are available in Reno and Las Vegas.



The Statewide Assessment also notes that the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) emphasizes child welfare for social work students in both the Bachelors and Masters programs. There is a IV-E stipend program at UNR and UNLV that is provided to students who are willing to work in rural areas where there are high vacancy rates.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were generally positive about the initial training program for child welfare agency caseworkers. They noted that the training includes “shadowing” and “mentoring” as well as classes. However, a few stakeholders suggested that the mentoring component could be strengthened, and that training on concurrent planning, risk and safety assessments, and on working with the courts is needed. Some stakeholders also noted that training is not offered frequently enough to ensure that new workers do not carry cases before training, so some workers do. Stakeholders also expressed concern that while the academy training is available to new workers, there are many workers with the agency who have not gone through the training because the academy was established after the start of their employment.

**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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because there are no child welfare program specific supervisory training requirements and there is no administrative support for either case workers or supervisors to attend ongoing training. It is noted that Nevada Administrative Code requires all social workers and CPS staff, including supervisors, to be licensed, which requires ongoing training of 30 hours every two years to maintain licensure. Clark County does not require the county’s child welfare staff to be licensed; however, 24 hours of ongoing training is required every year.

According to the Statewide Assessment, as of July 1, 2003, all investigative case workers and licensed social workers are required to complete 30 hours of continuing education credit biennially. Ongoing training is provided by the Nevada Training Partnership, DCFS, and through attendance at local seminars and conferences. Rural offices can access training through the use of interactive video and on-line courses. Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that the primary training needs are in the area of substance abuse, sexual abuse, and ASFA. The Statewide Assessment reports that surveys of case workers and supervisors identified several barriers to worker participation in ongoing training including the cost of the training, limited course variety, infrequent course offering, the unavailability of administrative leave, or the lack of training opportunities in their community.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that it is a challenge for the State to provide supervisory training because of the small number (2 or 3) of new supervisors Statewide at any time, a lack of policy to support supervisor's time away for training opportunities, and a lack of coordinated State effort to conduct or sponsor supervisory training.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR reported that social workers must have 30 hours of training every 2 years to maintain a license. Nevada Administrative Code requires all social workers and CPS workers to be licensed. DCFS and Washoe County workers are licensed and workers must have 30 hours of training every two years to maintain their licenses. Clark County considers their workers to be officers of the court and does not require workers to be licensed. However, they are required to have 24 hours of ongoing training annually. Although Clark County stakeholders reported that supervisors have the same number of required ongoing training hours as workers do, they noted that supervisor training is not child-welfare specific and that there is no formal new-supervisor training.

Stakeholders noted that there is no systematic or formal way to assess or individualize training needs. Stakeholders suggested that it is difficult for staff to attend training because of their caseload demands and that staff view most of the available ongoing training opportunities as not meeting their needs.

State-level stakeholders reported that UNLV conducts an annual conference on child welfare and that UNR conducts an annual conference for Northern Nevada. Stakeholders also reported that there is an annual ICWA conference that caseworkers attend.

**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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 is rated as a Strength. Nevada requires a minimum of 8 hours of basic foster parent training prior to licensure for all family homes. Additionally, each Region offers between 18 and 27 hours of pre-service training. Foster families are required to complete 4 hours of continuing education annually to maintain the license.

According to the Statewide Assessment, potential resource families are required to complete orientation and a regulatory required minimum of 8 hours of foster parent basic training prior to licensure. The Statewide Assessment notes that all regions use the Institute for Human Services Foster Parent training (both in English and Spanish). All training sessions are co-taught by current and former

foster/adoptive parents with State or county agency staff. In addition to the 8 State-required hours, the Southern Region requires an additional 10 hours of basic foster parent training plus 18 hours of pre-service training for foster parents, while the Northern and the Rural Regions require 27 hours of pre-service training. In the Southern Region, after families receive their first placement, the families attend an age-appropriate parenting training provided through Clark County. In the Northern Region, families interested in adoption are given additional assignments and meet with a clinician throughout the process.

The Statewide Assessment reports that once licensed, foster families are required to complete 4 hours of continuing education on an annual basis which may be achieved through books, videos, web-based training, web site (fosterparents.com), special topics, seminars, or conferences. In addition, resource families may attend Nevada Training Partnership classes. Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that a Social Worker/Foster Parent Design Team has been developed in Washoe County and provides a workshop to improve teamwork between foster parents and social workers. The workshop is co-taught by a social worker and a foster parent and is offered on a regular basis.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR provided differing perspectives on foster parent training. Clark County stakeholders reported the following training requirements:

- 18 hours before placement
- 18 hours within 3 months after first placement
- 4 hours annually for regular foster parents
- 20 hours annually for therapeutic foster families

Although most Clark County stakeholders viewed the initial and ongoing training for foster parents as a strength, some stakeholders suggested that the training is too basic and does not provide foster parent with the skills they need to parent the kinds of children who are placed in their homes. Stakeholders noted that the County is responding to this concern by developing more advanced training for foster parents. Stakeholders also noted that many ongoing training opportunities are difficult to access because no child care services are offered.

Washoe County Stakeholders reported the following training requirements in their county.

- Contracted therapeutic foster parents have to meet 30 hours minimum.
- Initial training is 27 hours.
- Ongoing training requirement is 4 hours per year.

Washoe County stakeholders indicated that the county currently is reassessing the training curriculum to be more focused, although it was noted that the initial training is very child and family focused. Stakeholders also reported that they are reviewing kinship care

training to see if it is sufficient to meet the needs of the children and families. Washoe County stakeholders noted that the foster parent association in that region provides monthly training to foster parents. Additionally, the Washoe County Foster Parent Advocate provides monthly trainings for foster parents.

Carson City stakeholders reported the following training requirements:

- 27 hours of initial training
- 4 hours annually of ongoing training

Stakeholders in Carson City reported that the local Foster Parents Association has requested more advanced training for foster parents and the agency is attempting to meet that request.

### VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

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

Nevada is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. Information on the items assessed for this factor during the CFSR is presented 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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has an array of services that are provided either by the agency or by a contracted provider, the CFSR identified significant gaps in services, particularly mental health and substance abuse services. In addition, stakeholders reported that there is a general scarcity of physical and dental health services because of a lack of providers who will accept Medicaid payments.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that there are an array of services for children and families in the State. These were identified as the following:

- Family reunification services, which include primary therapy services for individuals and families, mental health counseling and therapy, substance abuse treatment, parenting education, mentoring youth programs, homemaker, child care services, housing and housing counseling, crisis intervention, job development, and life skills workshops.
- Family support services, which include counseling and crisis management, parenting classes, transitional housing, and case management.
- Flexible funds, contracted services, and collaborative agreements that are used to provide an array of services to support reunification, preservation, crisis intervention, and family support throughout the State.
- Adoptive services, which include pre/post placement counseling, case management, legal services to free children for adoption, recruitment, training, home study preparation for prospective adoptive families, adoption subsidy, and post-legal support.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the IV-B Steering Committee serves as a mechanism for identifying services needs both by geographic areas and emerging family problems, and it influences decisions about service planning and delivery.

Information in the Statewide Assessment also indicates, however, that caseworkers, supervisors, and foster parents surveyed as part of the State's self-assessment process, expressed concerns about accessibility of services to aid reunification. According to the survey findings, the three greatest unmet service needs which are barriers to reunification are mental health services, substance abuse services, and housing services. Focus groups Statewide reported that there are long waiting lists for mental health service providers and that only children with the most serious emotional disorders are able to access treatment. In addition, an assessment survey conducted in the Spring of 2002 by the Mental Health Consortia found that all three jurisdictions identified the following service needs:

- A growing need for bi-cultural and bilingual staff to meet the needs of Asian, Hispanic, and Native American families;
- A need for mental health services that meet children's needs (the survey noted that of the children screened, only 56.1 percent were receiving mental health services at the level of their need); and
- A need for Medicaid providers.

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that there is a wide array of services available to families, although their comments indicate that each site has different strengths and challenges. Service gaps that were encountered across sites pertain to mental health assessments and treatment services, sexual abuse victim treatment services, dental services for children with Medicaid, and therapeutic foster homes. In addition, the lack of transportation services was identified by several stakeholders as a key concern because it impacts (1) the ability of parents to access services so that children can remain in their homes,

(2) the frequency of visitation between siblings in foster care, and (3) the frequency of visitation between children and their parents. Stakeholders also reported that there is no institutionalized program for post-adoption services.

Clark County stakeholders suggested that the agency staff is innovative in finding or developing resources needed by families and that the community has “stepped up” to try to make services available. Stakeholders noted in particular that there are special Independent Living classes that are held on a monthly basis. Washoe County stakeholders reported that the strengths in their community include access to family therapy, family preservation services, a broad range of services and interventions provided by up to 20 contracted providers, and the Drug Court, which can support 24 families at a time. However, these stakeholders also noted a lack of drug treatment resources, a lack of medical and mental health services due to the current Medicaid reimbursement problem (discussed in item 22) and the fact that there is only one child psychiatrist available for child welfare children, and the need for a homeless shelter for families so children do not have to enter foster care because their parents are homeless. State and county-level stakeholders indicated that the Family Resource Centers located throughout the State provide prevention services through information, referral, and family case management.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR found that not all services are readily available in all areas of the State. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, services are particularly limited in the rural region.

According to the Statewide Assessment, resources vary a great deal between rural and urban areas. In rural counties, for example, the need for qualified mental health providers is so great that children often have to travel outside of their county to access services. The Statewide Assessment notes that DCFS operates Family Preservation Services in six sites (Las Vegas, Elko, Fallon, Carson City, Ely, and Reno) to provide brief, intensive home-based and family-centered services.

State-level stakeholders reported that the primary challenge in rural areas is staffing and developing a network of providers. A key concern identified by State-level stakeholders pertained to the fact that the Nevada Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities has not been able to establish an office in every community where it is needed. Despite the concern regarding service gaps in rural areas, the same service gaps were noted by stakeholders in the urban areas.

The comments of stakeholders interviewed regarding this item during the onsite CFSR indicate that key services are lacking in all three sites. Carson City stakeholders reported that mental health services are lacking, medical providers are in short supply, drug and alcohol assessment and treatment services are not sufficient, and services are not effectively coordinated across providers and agencies. One Carson City stakeholder reported that the county uses an alternative sentencing program that operates like a Family Drug Court to assist in providing substance abuse assessment and treatment services to youth and parents. Clark County stakeholders identified similar problems including a lack of providers who will accept Medicaid resulting in waiting lists for medical services, waiting lists for family preservation services, waiting lists for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Exposure diagnoses (up to a 6-month wait), waiting lists for home-based family services (currently 100 families are on the waiting list). Washoe County stakeholders reported that early childhood services have a 3- to 6-month waiting list and that there is a lack of services for adolescents.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State is not effective in meeting the unique needs of children and families due to a lack of providers who will accept Medicaid, and to insufficient mental health, substance abuse, and services for Spanish-speaking families.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS Intensive Family Services staff provides both clinical assessments and home-based family preservation services in the rural regions. Project Wrap in Nevada (WIN) offers a statewide, intensive care-management program for severely emotionally disturbed children in the child welfare system.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite review noted that family preservation services are effective in meeting the individualized needs of children and families. Carson City stakeholders reported that every child in custody is assessed and recommendations are made for individualized services. These stakeholders also reported that many of the resources are co-located in the same office, which helps families receive the individualized services they need. However, Carson City stakeholders acknowledged that individualizing services is difficult because of the lack of Medicaid providers.

Clark County stakeholders noted that they have access to flexible funds to use to assist families and youth with utilities, food vouchers, bus tokens, etc. They also noted that they use WIN wrap around services for foster children. However, stakeholders in this county noted that there are insufficient Spanish language services to meet the need and the lack of medical providers who would accept Medicaid. State-level stakeholders reported that Clark County has a Nevada PEP (Parents Encouraging Parents) project and

funding for Neighborhood Care Centers for a strength-based, multi-disciplinary team approach to identify and meet the individualized needs of children and their families.

**IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY**

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

Nevada is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided 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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as a Strength because information provided in the Statewide Assessment and obtained through the onsite stakeholder interviews indicates that the State is responsive to input from the community in developing the goals and objectives of the CFSP.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the IV-B Steering Committee provides recommendations to address the needs of children and families, has ongoing input into the development of the CFSP, and reviews accomplishments and outcomes for the annual APSR. Steering Committee members include representatives from Family Resource Centers, Clark and Washoe Counties, BIA, Nevada Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, Nevada Maternal and Child Health, Family Voices, Nevada Parents Educating Parents, foster and adoptive parents, parents of children with disabilities, community advocates, and an expert in program evaluation. The IV-B Coordinator (a contractor) facilitates CFSP discussion groups with a foster parent organization, community councils, foster and adoptive parent groups, and service providers. The Statewide Assessment also notes that DCFS and Nevada



Tribes have held a series of Tribal Symposiums beginning in 1999, which have included the Tribal Chairmen, tribal social work supervisors, Intertribal Council, Indian Commission, Urban Indian Association, and Nevada ICWA Association.

State-level stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that the IV-B Steering Committee reviews the State plan at the end of every year and provides feedback to the State. They noted that the State is very responsive to input from the Committee and that the Committee has been very active in collecting information and focusing the State plan on outcomes and measures. Stakeholders also noted that DCFS has been very supportive of the Citizens Review Panel and a process has been established for DCFS to work on recommendations made by the Citizens Review Panel. Stakeholders also noted that the IV-B committee is conducting a series of focus groups around the State to gather information on service needs.

Stakeholders reported that although there are no Tribal/State agreements pertaining to child welfare, good teamwork has developed at the local level, particularly between the Carson City office and the Washoe Tribe. However, stakeholders suggested that there is a general need for a closer working relationship between the State and the Tribes. They noted that there is no Tribal representation on State committees and policy-making boards and that a BIA representative provides the only Native American input into CFSP.

**Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because the Statewide Assessment and information obtained through onsite stakeholder interviews indicates that the IV-B Steering Committee provides comments and recommendations for the CFSP and annual report.

As indicated under item 38, according to the Statewide Assessment, the IV-B Steering Committee provides recommendations to address the needs of children and families, has ongoing input into the development of the CFSP, and reviews accomplishments and outcomes for the annual 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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because the CFSR found numerous examples of collaborative efforts at both the State and county level, relative to coordination of services with other child serving agencies.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Nevada DCFS collaborates with regional mental health consortiums, independent living advisory councils, a Behavioral Health Care Reform initiative with Medicaid, and various regional respite care initiatives and coalitions. The Statewide Assessment notes that both Clark and Washoe Counties have citizen advisory committees to provide input on coordination of services with other community child serving agencies.

State-level stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DCFS needs to develop a better working relationship with Medicaid to communicate the needs and gaps in services for child welfare families. They also noted that the State and the BIA are talking about developing a “cultural plan” for Native children when the Tribe cannot care for the child because of the child’s special needs. State-level stakeholders also noted that the IV-B committee is working on a collaboration in Clark County with WIC to expedite services for women with toddlers who need WIC services. Clark County stakeholders noted that the county has created a mental health consortium that includes DCFS, the courts, the school district, Medicaid, families, and mental health providers. The consortium was developed to make recommendations regarding improvement in service delivery to the legislature. Additionally, DCFS has plans to create an integrated child welfare and juvenile justice plan to improve coordination of services and benefits.

**X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION**

<b>Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity</b>			
	<b>Not in Substantial Conformity</b>		<b>Substantial Conformity</b>
Rating	1	2	3X 4

Nevada is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided below.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the State has established standards for foster family homes and child care institutions.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there are two sets of regulations that govern licensing of foster and adoptive homes—one for Foster Homes for Children and one for Services and Facilities for the Care of Children. Only agencies that provide Child Welfare services may license foster homes for children. Prior to April 1, 2004, only DCFS and Washoe County could license foster homes. Clark County began foster home licensing on April 1, 2004. The licensing authority for institutions extends to Washoe and Clark County as well as DCFS. The Statewide Assessment notes that licenses are renewed on an annual basis and that there must be a minimum of one visit to the home and a minimum of two visits to an institution during the licensing period. Inspection forms are available to ensure all health and safety requirements are covered in annual and renewal inspections.

Stakeholders commenting on this item were in general agreement that DCFS and the local counties have implemented appropriate standards for foster family homes and child care institutions. Foster families must complete training before a child is placed with them. They also must complete ongoing training to be re-licensed. Stakeholders reported that re-licensing occurs annually and is done in a timely manner. Some stakeholders expressed concern, however, about the number of foster children that are permitted to be placed with a foster family (8 children not including biological children). In addition, Clark County stakeholders voiced concern that the primary shelter facility in the County is not licensed because it falls under the jurisdiction of Las Vegas City, which will conduct only health and fire inspections. Consequently, a large number of children entering foster care in Clark County are placed in an unlicensed facility.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength because licensing standards are applied consistently to foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds. However, it should be noted that once Clark County is fully integrated, Child Haven would need to be licensed to be eligible for IV-E funding.

According to the Statewide Assessment, no distinction is made between relative and non-relative applicants. All foster homes must

meet the same licensure requirements.

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that licensure requirements are the same for relatives and non-relatives. However, stakeholders reported that the agency often expedites the licensing process for relatives. In addition, stakeholders noted that relative foster care providers do not have the same training requirements as non-relative foster families. Relatives must complete the State-required 8 hour orientation, but may not need to complete the follow-up training.

Clark County stakeholders noted that waivers to licensing regulations are available for relatives and non-relatives. They noted that reference or child abuse/neglect reports maybe be waived. Clark County stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of oversight or licensing when children are placed with relatives on an “in-home” basis. This type of placement is a frequent occurrence in the county.

**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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 is rated as a Strength because Nevada completes criminal records checks in foster and adoptive homes before placing children in the home.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS regulations include requirements for local law enforcement criminal background checks, annual child abuse and neglect checks, home safety inspections, home studies, reference checks, and complaint investigations. Fingerprints are forwarded to State’s Central Registry for Statewide and FBI background checks and AB 378 allows name check for emergency relative placements.

Stakeholders commenting on this item for the onsite CFSR reported that criminal background checks are routine for all members of foster families and for anyone 18 years of age or older who is staying with the family or moving in. However, Clark County stakeholders noted that because it may take 6 months to get the FBI check back, licenses often are granted prior to receiving the FBI information (but only after local clearance has been done). However, the key licensing requirement is to have the local law

enforcement check completed. The FBI check is done as an “extra” check. Stakeholders noted that some homes that are currently caring for children are actually out of compliance because the FBI check came back noting issues and the license is not valid.

**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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the CFSR found that there is a need to recruit more Hispanic and Spanish-speaking families, more therapeutic homes, and more foster and adoptive families for older youth.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the recruitment and training of potential resource families (both foster care and adoption) is accomplished by a small team of professionals in each region. Recruitment activities are based on regional recruitment plans. The Statewide Assessment notes that resource families have partnered with the State in the recruitment, training and retention process and the foster parent association has done fund raising and been involved with recruitment activities.

The Statewide Assessment also notes the following:

- Southern Region’s Neighborhood Site has a local resource family monthly networking meeting, run by and supported by resource families. Similar support groups are being developed at other sites.
- The Sierra Association of Foster and Adoptive Families (Washoe County) has begun a monthly foster parent support group and administers a respite program for foster parents.
- Recruitment/training materials have been translated into Spanish and Spanish-speaking trainers were recruited.
- DCFS has an Adoption Buddy System to recruit families, help families through the process, and provide support after the adoption.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that there is an adequate pool of foster family homes. However, they noted that there is a need for more Hispanic and Spanish speaking foster families despite ongoing recruitment for minority foster homes. Stakeholders noted that Washoe County conducts recruitment efforts in the Hispanic Community. Stakeholders also noted that there is a shortage of foster families for older children and a shortage of therapeutic foster homes for children with special needs.

**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.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because there are processes in place for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCFS uses national adoption websites, as well as the DCFS website, for recruitment. DCFS also works with the North American Adoptable Children to support their efforts to recruit families from other jurisdictions. The Statewide Assessment notes that purchase of service agreements with agencies in Utah, California, Arizona, Texas, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota have facilitated placement of 17 children during FY 2002. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that there are complex ICPC issues that are barriers to placements and time consuming, and there are problems that arise when other States are unwilling or unprepared to provide services for children adopted from Nevada.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the agency uses photolisting on websites, AdoptUSKids, and Wednesday’s Child to promote cross-jurisdictional adoptions. State-level stakeholders noted that a major barrier to cross-jurisdictional adoptions is that many States will not provide “free” case management. They noted that DCFS has to develop a “purchase of service” agreement with a private agency in the other State.