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## *Child and Family Services Review*

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**FINAL REPORT**

August 2003



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

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Final Report: Idaho Child and Family Services Review**

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Idaho. The CFSR was conducted the week of May 12, 2003. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Idaho Division of Family and Community Services, Bureau of Children and Family Services (CFS);
- 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 1999 through 2001;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites throughout the State; and
- 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, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

A key finding of the Idaho CFSR is that Idaho achieved substantial conformity on Permanency Outcome 2 and Well Being Outcome 2. The CFSR determined that the State is effectively placing children in close proximity to their families and helping children to retain relationships with their families and to maintain other important connections while in foster care, including using relatives as placement resources appropriately. The State is also effectively addressing the educational needs of children.

The two weakest areas of State performance on the outcomes occurred for Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) and Well Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs). The State also was not in substantial conformity on Safety Outcome 1 and Safety Outcome 2. For Well Being Outcome 1, all of the items assessed for this outcome were identified as needing improvement for the State. One key finding relevant to this outcome pertained to the inconsistency in the quality of assessments conducted to determine families’ service needs as well as potential risk areas. A general finding of the case reviews was that assessments were not sufficiently comprehensive to identify underlying issues and service needs. Another key finding was that in Ada and Bannock Counties, but not in Nez Perce County, parents and children were not consistently involved in the case planning process.

For Permanency Outcome 1, although the State met national standards for reunifying children and finalizing adoptions in a timely manner, the onsite case reviews yielded less favorable findings for these items. In addition, the State did not meet the standards for placement stability or foster care re-entries. However, performance on this outcome varied among the three counties. While almost all of the Bannock County cases were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome (83%), only a few of the cases in Nez Perce (17%) and Ada (38%) Counties were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome. A key finding for this outcome was that permanency goals were not being established in a timely manner and the agency was not filing for termination of parental rights in accordance with the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

With regard to the systemic factors, the State was determined to be in substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Statewide Information System; Agency Responsiveness to the Community; and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The strongest area of performance occurred for the factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community, with all indicators for this systemic factor rated as a Strength. The State did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Case Review System, Training, Service Array, or Quality Assurance System. A key finding was that training of staff and foster care providers was not of sufficient quality or quantity to promote positive job performance. Finally, the CFSR determined that there is a lack of culturally relevant services and Native American foster homes for Native American children and families.

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.

## **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 the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment for the same children (item 2).

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 83.3 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, the State did meet the national standard for the percentage of children maltreated while in foster care.

The data in the table for Safety Outcome 1 demonstrate considerable variation between the counties included in the onsite review. In Bannock and Nez Perce Counties, 100 percent of the cases were determined to have achieved this outcome compared to only 65 percent of the cases in Ada County.

The case reviews in Ada County revealed inconsistent practices with respect to the timeliness of initiating a response to child maltreatment reports and establishing face-to-face contact with children and families. Although in some cases workers did respond in a timely manner, in 50 percent of the applicable Ada County cases, face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim was not established in accordance with the State's required time frames. Responses that did not meet State requirements occurred to both priority II (2 cases) and priority III (6 cases) reports.

Case reviews did not identify extensive repeat maltreatment as it is measured for the CFSR (item 2). However, the maltreatment recurrence data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that Idaho did not meet the national standard for this measure.

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

Performance relevant to Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through 2 indicators. One indicator (item 3) addresses the issue of the DCFS' 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 DCFS' effectiveness in reducing the risk of harm to the child.

Idaho did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that this outcome was substantially achieved in 71.4 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

As with Safety Outcome 1, there was a considerable difference in achievement of Safety Outcome 2 between Ada County and the other two counties included in the CFSR. In Ada County, only 52 percent of the cases were determined to have substantially achieved this outcome, compared to 92 percent in Bannock County and 83 percent in Nez Perce County.

Although there were many cases in which reviewers determined that CFS had made concerted efforts to prevent removal and reduce risk of harm, there were concerns about the needs and risk assessment processes. Reviewers identified a substantial percentage of cases in which the services provided to prevent removal and the efforts to reduce risk of harm were not adequate because there was either no assessment or the assessment conducted was insufficient. In some cases, reviewers noted that the assessment focused on the immediate crisis rather than on underlying causes, such as domestic violence and substance abuse. Because substance abuse, particularly methamphetamine abuse, was identified by stakeholders as a major concern in the State, failure to address substance abuse issues in the risk assessment process was viewed as having the potential for leaving children at home at high risk.

Several stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that in some locations the agency assigns priority to working with families with court-ordered services, and therefore has little time to work with cases that do not involve court-ordered services. Other stakeholders expressed the opinion that when services are not court ordered, social workers do not have the necessary skills to engage families in services on a voluntary basis. Some stakeholders reported that the safety and risk assessment forms in FOCUS (the agency's information and tracking system) are too limited and restrictive to be useful in conducting a comprehensive assessment of a family to determine both risk and service needs.

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

There are 10 indicators incorporated in the assessment of Permanency Outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all children. The indicators pertain to DCFS' 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 DCFS' 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 are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 48.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2001, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the rate of foster care re-entries, and (2) the percentage of children in foster care for 12 months or less who experienced no more than 2 placements.

The State did meet the national standards for the percentage of children in FFY 2001 who were (1) reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care and (2) discharged to finalized adoptions within 24 months of entry into foster care.

The differences among counties with regard to achieving Permanency Outcome 1 are particularly noteworthy. In Bannock County, 100 percent of the 6 applicable cases were determined to have substantially achieved this outcome, compared to 38 percent of the 13 applicable cases in Ada County and 17 percent of the 6 applicable cases in Nez Perce County. This difference is noteworthy in light of the Bannock County stakeholders' descriptions of the system in that county for achieving permanency. Stakeholders in that county indicated that the CFS agency, the Court, and the Deputy Attorney General engage collaboratively to achieve permanency in as timely a manner as possible. Case review results for Bannock County with regard to permanency outcome 1 suggest that this approach is successful for promoting timely permanency.

A key concern identified pertaining to permanency was that the goal of reunification is being maintained for too long a period of time before changing the goal to adoption, even when it is clear that reunification is not likely to occur. Other barriers to timely permanency included: putting cases on a "holding pattern" while the parent is incarcerated without engaging in concurrent planning; delays in filing for termination of parental rights (TPR); delays in completing paperwork necessary to expedite adoption process; and the reluctance of some judges to seek TPR, particularly for older children.

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

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six indicators that assess DCFS' 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).

Idaho achieved substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 92.0 percent of the cases, which is greater than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

The CFSR findings indicate that CFS makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families, to promote and maintain parent-child relationships, to ensure frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, to seek and assess relatives as placement resources, and to preserve children's connections to their families and racial and religious heritage.

A key area of concern with respect to this outcome pertained to efforts to place siblings together in foster care. Case reviewers and stakeholders noted that there was a lack of available foster family resources to accommodate sibling groups of 3 or more children.

### **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 DCFS' 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 assesses DCFS' 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 DCFS caseworker contact with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and the children's parents (item 20).

Idaho 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 for 42.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

Although achievement of Well-Being Outcome 1 was low in all counties, cases were more likely to be rated as having substantially achieved this outcome in Nez Perce County (58%), than in Ada County (32%) or Bannock County (46%). This difference was most apparent with regard to involving parents in case planning and the frequency of social worker contacts with parents and children. It was not found for the item pertaining to meeting the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents.

The case reviews resulted in ratings of Area Needing Improvement for all of the indicators of child and family well-being outcome 1. Reviewers determined that CFS was not consistent in assessing and addressing the service needs of children and their parents, in involving parents and children in the case planning process, and in establishing sufficient face-to-face contact between social workers and the children and parents in their caseloads. In general, CFS was more likely to be rated as a Strength for these indicators when the children were in foster care than when the children remained in their homes.

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

There is only one indicator for well being outcome 2 that pertains to DCFS' effectiveness in addressing children's educational needs (item 21). Idaho achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 93.8 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome, which meets the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

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

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

Idaho 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 66.7 percent of the 42 applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

Differences across counties were again marked with respect to attainment of this outcome. In Nez Perce County 90 percent of the cases were found to have substantially achieved this item compared to 69 percent of the cases in Bannock County and 53 percent of the cases in Ada County. The key concern identified pertained to a lack of consistency in assessing children's physical and mental health needs when there was evidence that an assessment was warranted.

## **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.

Idaho is in substantial conformity with this factor because the State's information system, the Family Oriented Community User System (FOCUS) meets these requirements, although some stakeholders raised concerns about the currency of the data at any given point in time.

### **Case Review System**

Five indicators are used to assess the State's performance with regard to the systemic factor of a 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).

Idaho did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of case review system. One key concern identified with regard to this factor pertained to the lack of involvement of parents in the case planning process. This was revealed in both the case reviews and the stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders noted that the agency's ability to involve parents in the case planning process is compromised when the court dictates the case plan or attorneys discourage their clients from participating. Another concern pertained to inconsistencies with respect to seeking TPR in accordance with ASFA timeframes. Again, this was found in both the case reviews and the stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders reported that while some judges adhered to ASFA timeframes, others postponed TPR for as long as possible in order to give parents more time to bring about needed changes. A third concern identified through the CFSR was that foster parents are not consistently given the opportunity to be heard in reviews or hearings involving their foster children.

Despite these concerns, stakeholders were in agreement that foster care cases are reviewed at least every 6 months, and that 12-month permanency hearings are held in a timely manner.

## **Quality Assurance System**

The State's 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).

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of quality assurance system. Although the State has standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health, it does not have a fully implemented statewide quality improvement system. Stakeholders commenting on the issue of a quality improvement system noted that the State has begun the process of quality improvement by implementing the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system, but that the CQI was not fully functional at the time of the CFSR. Stakeholders noted that thus far, the CQI has not been applied to the full continuum of child welfare cases in all offices. In addition, although it incorporates case reviews, it does not have a mechanism for feedback that ensures that measurable program improvement occurs at the local and State levels.

## **Training**

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

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Stakeholders reported that initial training is not sufficiently comprehensive and that not all new social workers receive the initial training prior to being assigned a caseload. While ongoing training for social workers is adequately provided per State requirements, there is no overall training strategy designed to meet the needs of the agency. Some foster parent orientation training is available, but the requirement to attend is inconsistently applied and the content is limited. Ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents is inadequate.

## **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 that meets 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)? And (3) Can services be individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and family served by the child welfare agency (item 37)?

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. Although the State has an extensive array of services, there are many barriers to accessing them and the State is not effective in individualizing services for children and families.

## **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

The systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community incorporates the extent 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.

Idaho achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The State's Child and Family Services Plan is developed in conjunction with representatives from other agencies, including Tribes. The agency also has strong collaborations with external stakeholders on the State and local levels and is effective in ensuring the coordination of services with other State, local, Tribal and community-based agencies.

## **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.

Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. The State has established standards for licensing and approving foster family homes and child care institutions and those standards are applied to all licensed or approved out of home care facilities. The State also accesses inter-jurisdictional resources to facilitate adoption or permanent placement for waiting children. Idaho does not have a statewide recruitment plan that is providing the resources needed for waiting children and there is also a need for a comprehensive effort to retain foster parents.

**Table 1. 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	83.3	1 of 2			
Item 1: Timeliness of investigations				ANI	74	
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment				ANI	97	No
Safety Outcome 2 - Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	71.4				
Item 3: Services to prevent removal				ANI	78	
Item 4: Risk of harm				ANI	71	
Permanency Outcome 1- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	44.0	2 of 4			
Item 5: Foster care re-entry				ANI	100	No
Item 6: Stability of foster care placements				ANI	76	No
Item 7: Permanency goal for child				ANI	64	
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship and placement with relatives				ANI	55	Yes
Item 9: Adoption				ANI	46	Yes
Item 10: Other planned living arrangement				ANI	67	
Permanency Outcome 2 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	Yes	92.0				
Item 11: Proximity of placement				Strength	95	
Item 12: Placement with siblings				ANI	72	
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				Strength	91	
Item 14: Preserving connections				Strength	96	
Item 15: Relative placement				Strength	88	
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents				Strength	100	

\*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 2. 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	42				
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents				ANI	44	
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning				ANI	60	
Item 19: Worker visits with child				ANI	68	
Item 20: Worker visits with parents				ANI	58	
Well Being Outcome 2 - Children receive services to meet their educational needs	Yes	93.8				
Item 21: Educational needs of child				Strength	94	
Well Being Outcome 3 - Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs are met	No	66.7				
Item 22: Physical health of child				ANI	77	
Item 23: Mental health of child				ANI	70	

\*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: Idaho's Performance on the Six Outcome Measures for Which National Standards Have Been Established**

<b>Outcome Measure</b>	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>Idaho Data</b>
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	9.3%
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?	.57% or less	.40%
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	11.9%
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	88.9%
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	33.6%
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	81.1%

**Table 4: 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>	<b>Yes (3)</b>	
Item 24: System can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals of children in foster care		Strength
<b>V. Case Review System</b>	<b>No (2)</b>	
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>	<b>No (2)</b>	
Item 30: Standards to ensure quality services and ensure children’s safety and health		Strength
Item 31: Identifiable QA system that evaluates the quality of services and improvements		ANI
<b>VII. Training</b>	<b>No (2)</b>	
Item 32: Provision of initial staff training		ANI
Item 33: Provision of ongoing staff training that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge.		Strength
Item 34: Provision of training for caregivers and adoptive parents that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge		ANI
<b>VIII. Service Array</b>	<b>No (2)</b>	
Item 35: Availability of array of critical services		Strength
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>	<b>Yes (4)</b>	
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>	<b>Yes (3)</b>	
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. \*\* Individual items may be rated either as a Strength or as an Area Needing Improvement (ANI)

## Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Idaho. The CFSR was conducted the week of May 12, 2003. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Idaho Division of Family and Community Services, Bureau of Children and Family Services (CFS);
- 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 1999 through 2001;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites throughout the State; and
- 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, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 50 cases reviewed are the following:

- Twenty-five cases were reviewed in Ada County (Boise), 13 in Bannock County (Pocatello), and 12 in Nez Perce County (Lewiston).
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- 25 cases were “foster care cases” (cases in which children were in the care and custody of the State child welfare agency and 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 25 foster care cases, 19 children (76%) were younger than age 10 at the start of the period under review, 3 children (12%) were at least 10 years old, but not yet 13 years old; and 3 children (12%) were 13 years of age and older at the start of the period under review.
- Of the 25 foster care cases, 12 children were male and 13 were female.
- Of all 50 cases, there were 37 cases (74%) in which all children in the family were White, 6 cases (12%) in which all children in the family were Native American, 3 cases (6%) in which all children in the family were Hispanic, 3 cases (6%) in which all children in the family were of two or more races, and one case in which the race of the child could not be identified.
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the **primary** reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case was the following:
  - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 20 cases (40%)
  - Substance abuse of parents – 8 cases (16%)
  - Sexual abuse – 6 cases (12%)

- Physical abuse – 4 cases (8%)
- Mental/physical health of parent – 3 cases (6%)
- Mental/physical health of child – 2 cases (4%)
- Family homelessness – 2 cases (4%)
- Abandonment – 2 cases (4%)
- Child’s behavior (including substance abuse) – 2 cases (4%)
- Medical neglect – 1 case (2%)
- Of the 50 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) – 34 cases (cited in 68% of all cases)
  - Substance abuse by parents – 22 cases (cited in 44% of all cases)
  - Physical abuse – 17 cases (cited in 34% of all cases)
  - Mental/physical health of parent – 11 cases (cited in 22% of all cases)
- In 15 (60%) of the 25 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in care during the entire period under review.

The first section of the report presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State’s performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. The presentation for each outcome includes a table providing the key findings with regard to achievement of the outcome, a discussion of these findings, and a discussion of the findings relevant to each item (indicator) assessed. Findings are presented for all three counties taken together, with differences among counties described when they are particularly noteworthy. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the 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>Ada (Boise)</b>	<b>Bannock (Pocatello)</b>	<b>Nez Perce (Lewiston)</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	15	13	12	40	83.3
Partially Achieved:	1	0	0	1	2.1
Not Achieved or Addressed:	7	0	0	7	14.6
Not Applicable:	2	0	0	2	
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard (%)</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Repeat maltreatment	6.1 or less	9.3		X	
Maltreatment of children in foster care	.57 or less	.40	X		

#### STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 83.3 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, the State did meet the national standard for the percentage of children maltreated while in foster care.

The data in the table for Safety Outcome 1 demonstrate considerable variation among the counties included in the onsite review. In Bannock and Nez Perce Counties, 100 percent of the cases reviewed were determined to have substantially achieved this outcome compared to only 65 percent of the cases in Ada County.

The case reviews in Ada County revealed inconsistent practices with respect to the timeliness of initiating a response to child maltreatment reports and establishing face-to-face contact with children and families. Although in some cases workers did respond in a timely manner, in 50 percent of the applicable Ada County cases, face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim was not established in accordance with the State's required time frames. Responses that did not meet State requirements occurred to both priority II (2 cases) and priority III (6 cases) reports.

Case reviews did not identify extensive repeat maltreatment as it is measured for the CFSR (item 2). However, the maltreatment recurrence data for FY 2001 reported in the State Data Profile indicate that Idaho did not meet the national standard for this measure.

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 31 of the 50 cases. Nineteen cases were not applicable because they did not involve 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 Idaho CFS requires that workers establish face-to-face contact with the children who are the subject of a maltreatment report in accordance with the following timeframes:

- Priority I – Child must be seen by CFS worker immediately
- Priority II – Child must be seen by CFS worker within 48 hours
- Priority III – Child must be seen by CFS worker within 5 days

The results of the case review assessments were the following:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 23 (74%) of the 31 applicable cases (7 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (26%) of the 31 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

One hundred percent of the applicable cases in Bannock and Nez Perce Counties were rated as a Strength for this item compared to 50 percent of the applicable cases in Ada County.

Cases were rated as a Strength when face-to-face contact was established with the child within the required State time frames. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when face-to-face contact was not established within the required time frames. Of the eight cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, two involved priority II reports and six involved priority III reports.

Stakeholders in all three counties expressed the opinion that the agency responds to child maltreatment reports in a timely manner. However, a few stakeholders suggested that CFS sometimes delays responding to priority II and III reports if there are higher priority reports needing attention. In all counties, stakeholders reported that the police and the child welfare agency collaborate in responding to reports and that this collaboration is highly effective.

***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 established face-to-face contact with children who were the subject of a maltreatment report in accordance with the required time frames.

Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that, in addition to priority assignments, maltreatment reports may be assigned for information and referral. A report that is assigned to this category is not investigated and no risk assessment is conducted or disposition made. During the CFSR, case reviewers reported that there appears to be some lack of clarity regarding which reports should be designated as information and referral. They noted that information and referral reports often occurred in the context of a long list of multiple child maltreatment reports on the same family for the same problem, many of which were assigned a priority and investigated.

## Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 34 of the 50 cases. Sixteen cases were not applicable because there was never a substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report on any of the children in the family. In these cases, CFS opened a case on the family to provide services to children or parents even though the maltreatment report was not substantiated. 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 33 (97%) of the 34 applicable cases (24 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (3%) of the 34 applicable cases (which was a foster care case).

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

- There was a substantiated maltreatment report involving the family prior to the period under review but no substantiated report during the period under review (28 cases).
- There was a substantiated maltreatment report involving the family during the period under review, but there was no substantiated report within 6 months of that report (5 cases).

Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the one case in which 2 substantiated reports occurred within 2 months of one another and involved the same perpetrator. One child was placed in foster care after a substantiated maltreatment report. Two months later a second child was born with drugs in his system, a second report was substantiated and the second child also was placed into foster care.

Additional findings with respect to the frequency of maltreatment reports on the family prior to and during the period under review for all 50 cases were the following:

- In 1 case, there was no maltreatment report ever in the family.
- In 11 cases, there was only 1 maltreatment report.
- In 21 cases, there were between 2 and 5 maltreatment reports.
- In 8 cases, there were between 6 and 10 maltreatment reports.
- In 5 cases, there were between 10 and 19 maltreatment reports.
- In 4 cases, there were more than maltreatment 20 reports.

A key finding of the case reviews was that the majority of maltreatment reports are not substantiated, although some of these cases may be opened for services. In some cases, there were as many as 10 unsubstantiated reports on a family.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue identified several potential causes for maltreatment recurrence. One was a lack of thorough initial and ongoing risk assessments and follow up with families in the in-home services cases and when children are reunified. Stakeholders noted that often in-home cases are closed or children are reunified without the agency conducting an appropriate risk assessment on the family and/or ensuring that the family is connected to services. Another potential cause of maltreatment recurrence pertained to a lack of services available for families and the difficulty of accessing services for families with multiple problems, particularly drug and alcohol problems. Several stakeholders suggested that drug and alcohol abuse accounts for much of the maltreatment recurrence because substance abuse issues are not adequately assessed, parents have difficulty accessing substance abuse treatment, and some parents experience a relapse after completing treatment.

Many stakeholders also expressed concern about the inconsistencies in the application of the criteria for substantiating cases and for designating reports as “information and referral” reports. It was noted that there is a lack of clear standards for substantiation and a lack of follow up on information and referral cases. Reviewers and stakeholders observed that there appears to be no clear protocol guiding the determination of whether a case should be opened for services.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although in 97 percent of the applicable cases, this item was rated as a Strength, the State's rate of maltreatment recurrence for the year 2001 reported in the State data profile (9.3%) did not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent or less. The criteria and standards for both indicators must be met for this item to be rated as a Strength. In addition, in one of the five cases (20%) in which there was at least one substantiated report during the period under review, there was another substantiated report within a 6-month period.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho's rate of maltreatment recurrence may be due in part to families not being provided with services, or being provided with services that are not effective in reducing the risk of future abuse or neglect. The Statewide Assessment also notes that a review of Idaho's maltreatment recurrence cases revealed that they involved the same general circumstances and the same perpetrator. In this review, it was found that services were provided to families in 73 percent of the reports. For 27 percent of the reports, no services were provided. However, in half of those reports, services were offered, but refused. In the other half, services were never offered.

## Safety Outcome 2

<b>Safety 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>Ada (Boise)</b>	<b>Bannock (Pocatello)</b>	<b>Nez Perce (Lewiston)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	13	12	10	35	71.4
Partially Achieved:	4	0	1	5	10.2
Not Achieved or Addressed:	7	1	1	9	18.4
Not Applicable:	1	0	0	1	

### STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2

Idaho did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 71.4 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

As with Safety Outcome 1, there was a considerable difference in achievement of Safety Outcome 2 between Ada County and the other two counties included in the CFSR. In Ada County, only 52 percent of the cases were determined to have substantially achieved this outcome, compared to 92 percent in Bannock County and 83 percent in Nez Perce County.

The variation in county performance on this outcome may be impacted to some extent by the variation in types of cases open for in-home services. In Bannock County, six (86%) of the seven in-home services cases involved at least one substantiated maltreatment report. In contrast, only 1 (17%) of the 6 in-home services cases in Nez Perce County and 1 (8%) of the 12 in-home services cases in Ada County involved a substantiated maltreatment report. In Ada County, most of the in-home services cases were opened in order to meet the family's need for economic assistance or concrete services. The in-homes services cases in Bannock County usually involved court-ordered services and case plans rather than voluntary services.

Although there were many cases in which reviewers determined that CFS had made concerted efforts to prevent removal and reduce risk of harm, there were concerns about the needs and risk assessment processes. Reviewers identified a substantial percentage of cases in which the services provided to prevent removal and the efforts to reduce risk of harm were not adequate because there was

either no assessment or the assessment conducted was insufficient. In some cases, it was observed that the assessment focused on the immediate crisis rather than on underlying causes, such as domestic violence and substance abuse. Because substance abuse, particularly methamphetamine abuse, was identified by stakeholders as a major concern in the State, it was suggested that failure to address substance abuse issues in the risk assessment process may result in children being left at home at high risk.

Some stakeholders reported that the safety and risk assessment forms in FOCUS (the agency’s information and tracking system) are too limited and restrictive to be useful in conducting a comprehensive assessment of a family to determine both risk and service needs. Several stakeholders reported that in some locations the agency assigns priority to working with families for whom services have been court-ordered, and therefore has little time to work with cases that do not involve court-ordered services. Other stakeholders expressed the opinion that when services are not court ordered, social workers often experience difficulties engaging families in services on a voluntary basis.

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 32 cases for which an assessment of item 3 was applicable. Eighteen cases were excluded from this assessment because the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and/or there were no substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to the 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 25 (78%) of the 32 applicable cases (5 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (22%) of the 32 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

Item 3 was more likely to be rated as a Strength in Bannock County cases (89%) and Nez Perce County cases (87.5%) than in Ada County Cases (67%).

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item based on the following determinations:

- Appropriate services were provided to the parents and child to prevent removal (19 cases).
- Appropriate services were provided to the parents while the child was in a voluntary placement with a relative (1 case).
- The family received appropriate post-reunification services to prevent re-removal (1 case).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home to ensure their safety (4 cases).

Services provided to the families included, but were not limited to, mental health treatment for children and parents, assistance in finding housing, domestic violence services, food stamps, economic assistance (for rent payments, car repairs, dental care for child, etc.), daycare referrals, substance abuse treatment, assistance in finding employment, educational services for parents, parenting classes, counseling, random drug testing, mediation (for divorce issues), medical services, developmental services, anger management services, stress management, budgeting, mentoring, tutoring, and intensive in-home family preservation services.

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

- Services were provided but they did not match the family's needs because the assessment was not sufficiently comprehensive (2 cases).
- Services were provided, but they did not match the child's or family's needs because no assessment was conducted although circumstances in the family's history warranted an assessment (3 cases).
- Services to prevent removal or re-removal were not provided, but should have been (2 cases).

A key finding of most of the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Ada County was that the agency provided the family with economic assistance but did not conduct any risk or safety assessments to determine if other services were needed to ensure the child's safety. Although these cases were opened to provide economic assistance, reviewers determined that the history of the family, which usually involved multiple maltreatment reports and chronic problems (such as substance abuse or homelessness), was of sufficient concern to warrant assessment of service needs other than economic assistance. In one case, for example, the agency provided funds for a rent payment, but did not address the father's substance abuse and domestic violence history.

Most stakeholders commenting on the issue of placement prevention were in general agreement that there are few inappropriate removals. However, stakeholders in Ada and Nez Perce County reported that there are challenges in working with in-home services cases because they usually are offered on a voluntary basis, and workers are not sufficiently trained to engage families in voluntary preventive services. Stakeholders in Bannock County noted that the judge in that county uses protective supervision to ensure that the family engages in services while children are kept at home or when children have been reunified.

There was general agreement among stakeholders that the services available to prevent placement are not always readily available. Mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse treatment services for adults were identified as being particularly difficult to access. Stakeholders said that the Regions are establishing contracts for intensive home-based services, but most of these are time-limited (90 days) and are not yet fully implemented. Several stakeholders reported that at one time, there was a highly effective school-based prevention program in 10 regions. However, recently, the funds for this program were included in the budget for the schools and were not earmarked for this program. As a result, the program has been discontinued in 6 of the 10 regions. Stakeholders agreed that the loss of this program has had a negative impact on prevention efforts in those 6 regions.

Many stakeholders noted, however, that if a family needs temporary financial assistance, there are funds available to meet those needs and that child welfare workers can open a case to provide economic assistance. This observation was confirmed by the cases reviewed in Ada County.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 22 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CFS had not made diligent efforts to provide the necessary services to maintain children safely in their own homes. A key concern identified was the failure to assess additional service needs when the primary reason for opening a case was economic assistance.

According to the Statewide Assessment, in many CFS field offices, the agency has implemented family group decision making procedures as part of efforts to prevent placement of children and the State has requested that the Regions contract for this service if they cannot provide it in-house. However, it was noted that this has not been completed in all Regions. This is consistent with the findings in the onsite review in which no cases reviewed used family decision meetings in case planning. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the accessibility to home-based services varies across regions.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 4 was applicable for 49 cases. One case was not assessed for this item because the reason for agency involvement was to provide economic assistance and there was no risk of harm to the child. 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. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 35 (71%) of the 49 applicable cases (20 of which were foster care cases).
  - Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 14 (29%) of the 49 applicable cases (5 of which were foster care cases).
- Differences between Ada County and the other two counties were particularly noteworthy for this item. In Ada County, 54 percent of the cases were rated as a Strength for this item compared to 92 percent of the cases in Bannock County and 83 percent of the cases in Nez Perce County.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from home either prior to or during the period under review and providing services to the parents to reduce risk of harm (10 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by removing the children from the home either prior to or during the period under review and seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) (10 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remain in the home (12 cases).
- The risk of harm was appropriately managed by informal temporary placement with relatives and services provided both in the relative and parental homes (3 cases).

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

- There was risk of harm to the child in the home and the services necessary to reduce that risk were not provided because an appropriate assessment was never conducted (10 cases).
- The agency did not monitor the family to ensure that parents were participating in services, leaving children at home still at risk (1 case).
- The child was exposed to risk due to unsupervised visitation with a parent (1 case).
- The child was at risk of harm from a foster parent (2 cases).

State-level stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that CFS is effective in addressing risk issues and stakeholder in Bannock County praised the agency practice of taking jurisdiction over all children in the family if there is one child who is a victim of abuse/neglect. Despite these positive perceptions, the general opinion expressed by stakeholders is that the agency is not adequately addressing risk of harm because the social workers do not conduct comprehensive risk assessments and do not use ongoing risk assessment as a basis for decision-making. A major concern identified is that the risk assessment protocol tends to drive the assessment process rather than workers actively engaging in risk assessment. Some stakeholders suggested that the protocol may inhibit rather than promote comprehensive risk assessment. Other stakeholders, however, indicated that some social workers do not have the skills to use the risk assessment tools properly, and that this is a training issue.

Several stakeholders also expressed concern about the practice of closing in-home services cases or reunifying children after the parents have participated in services without conducting a risk assessment. Stakeholders in one county also noted the court makes decisions to reunify based on parents' compliance with a service plan rather than on a reduction in risk. In addition, in one county, stakeholders expressed concern about the fact that the agency does not respond to after-hours crises in foster homes or respond to foster parents' concerns regarding risk of maltreatment to children during home visits.

Although the State data for FY 2001 meet the national standard for maltreatment in foster care, many stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed serious concerns regarding this problem. Stakeholders reported that CFS is so desperate for homes that it overlooks a lot of issues. The problems identified by stakeholders regarding this issue included the following:

- There are no clear guidelines for differentiating what is a licensing concern and what is a child maltreatment concern when the maltreatment report involves a foster care family.
- When there is a serious problem in the home, the agency is too often hesitant to revoke the license and remove the child.
- A report of maltreatment in foster care usually is investigated by the child's social worker rather than a CPS investigator.
- There are no standard procedures for investigating maltreatment reports involving foster families.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 29 percent of the applicable cases reviewers determined that CFS had not adequately addressed the risk of harm to the children. The key concern identified pertained to a lack of assessment of families and children to determine the level of risk and the services needed to address the risk. Another concern pertained to the risk of harm in foster care in 2 of the 49 applicable cases.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, CFS is required to use a standardized "immediate risk" safety assessment on every referral that meets the definition of child abuse and neglect. The Statewide Assessment reports that workers appear to be "doing good initial risk assessments." However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that there is a need for improved procedures for determining the services that are needed and ensuring that those services are effective.

The Statewide Assessment attributed compliance with the national standard for foster care maltreatment to Idaho's new licensing standards and noted that foster parents and experienced workers identified training, respite, support, and monitoring as effective tools to prevent abuse in foster care.

## 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>Ada (Boise)</b>	<b>Bannock (Pocatello)</b>	<b>Nez Perce (Lewiston)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	5	5	1	11	44.0
Partially Achieved:	7	1	5	13	52.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	0	0	1	4.0
Not Applicable:	12	7	6	25	
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard (%)</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Foster care re-entries	8.6 or less	11.9		X	
Length of time to achieve reunification	76.2 or more	88.9	X		
Length of time to achieve adoption	32.0 or more	33.6	X		
Stability of foster care placements	86.7 or more	81.1		X	

### STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME P1

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

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 48.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2001, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the rate of foster care re-entries and (2) the percentage of children in foster care for 12 months or less who experienced no more than 2 placements.

The State did meet the national standards for the percentage of children in FFY 2001 who were (1) reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care and (2) discharged to finalized adoptions within 24 months of entry into foster care.

The differences among counties with regard to achieving permanency outcome 1 are particularly noteworthy. In Bannock County, 100 percent of the 6 applicable cases were determined to have substantially achieved this outcome, compared to 38 percent of the 13 applicable cases in Ada County and 17 percent of the 6 applicable cases in Nez Perce County. This difference is noteworthy in light of the Bannock County stakeholders' descriptions of the system in that county for achieving permanency. Stakeholders in that county indicated that the CFS agency, the Court, and the Deputy Attorney General collaborate to achieve permanency in as timely a manner as possible. Case review results for Bannock County with regard to permanency outcome 1 suggest that this approach may be considered effective for promoting timely permanency.

A key concern identified was that the goal of reunification is being maintained for too long a period of time before changing the goal to adoption, even when it is clear that reunification is not likely to occur. Other barriers to timely permanency included putting cases on a "holding pattern" while a parent was incarcerated without engaging in concurrent planning; delays in filing for termination of parental rights (TPR); delays in completing paperwork necessary to expedite the adoption process; and the reluctance of some judges to seek TPR, particularly for older children.

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

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Seven of the 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of foster care re-entries because they involved children who entered foster care at some time 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 that all 7 cases (100%) were rated as a Strength.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when it was determined that the entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode.

Despite the case review findings, many stakeholders expressed the opinion that re-entry into foster care is a problem for the State. The identified reasons for re-entry included the following:

- Reunifications that are “too early” and are based on the parent’s compliance with services rather than on a comprehensive ongoing risk assessment.
- Lack of post-reunification supports, particularly in substance abuse cases where relapse may be an issue.
- Parents relapsing on drug and alcohol use, particularly methamphetamine abuse.

Stakeholders identified some current and planned CFS efforts to address the issue of foster care re-entry. This included implementing a practice of extended trial home visits to keep CFS involved before transferring custody to the parent; expanding the use of Drug Courts throughout the State; and establishing a “return-home” procedure that involves gradually increasing the length of time that the child participates in a home visit.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although in all 7 of the applicable cases reviewed, there was no foster care re-entry within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode, data from the State Data Profile indicate that Idaho’s re-entry rate for FY 2001 (11.9%) did not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent or less. The criteria and standards for both indicators must be met for this item to be rated as a Strength.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a report obtained from FOCUS (the State’s information and tracking system) identified 220 cases in which individual children were in foster care from April 1 to September 30, 2001, and had at least one prior removal episode within 12 months of the current removal episode. Of the 220 cases involving children with re-entries, 22 cases involved data errors. Further analysis revealed that 54 percent of the children re-entered foster care for the same reason as the initial referral and 52 percent re-entered because of abuse or neglect by the same perpetrator. For 34 percent of the cases, the child’s behavior or the child’s mental health were factors in the removal.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that many of the re-entries into foster care occurred during the 6-month period following reunification. In Idaho, children are generally returned by the court under protective supervision rather than for trial home visits. Therefore, if children are removed while under protective supervision, it is considered a re-entry into foster care. Additional factors contributing to the re-entry rate were (1) inconsistent use of a formal risk assessment tool as a basis for recommending reunification to the court; and (2) the fact that children’s mental health cases seem to result in multiple re-entries.

## Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 25 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. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 19 (76%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (24%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Cases in Bannock and Nez Perce County were more likely to be rated as a Strength for this item (83%) than were cases in Ada County (69%).

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 10 cases experienced only 1 placement during the period under review (no placement changes).
- Children in 7 cases experienced 2 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 6 cases experienced 3 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 2 cases experienced 4 or more placements during the period under review.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (10 cases), or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest (9 cases), such as moving a child from a residential facility to a foster home or moving a child from a foster home to an adoptive placement or relative placement.

A rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item was assigned when reviewers determined that placement changes resulted from one or more of the following:

- No efforts were made to ensure an appropriate match between the child's needs and the foster care placement (2 cases).
- Foster parents were not adequately informed of their responsibilities or sufficiently trained to meet the child's needs (3 cases).
- Child has experienced multiple placements and current placement is not stable (1 case).
- Child was initially placed in an emergency placement with a foster family when a relative family was known to the agency but not yet licensed (1 case).

Most stakeholders commenting on the issue of placement stability expressed the opinion that many children in foster care do not experience stable placements during their time in foster care. The three primary reasons for placement instability identified by stakeholders were lack of available homes, children's behaviors, and lack of training and agency support for foster parents. Stakeholders noted that because of the lack of homes, children often are placed on the basis of what is available rather than what is most appropriate to the child's needs. In addition, stakeholders indicated that many of the children coming into foster care have emotional and behavioral problems that foster parents are not prepared to deal with. Stakeholders noted that when problems occur with these children, there are insufficient agency supports to help foster parents address the problems.

The State Assessment identified the Casey Family Technical Assistance Program (TAP) as a resource for children in foster care. Stakeholders also noted that the TAP program has been helpful in providing support to foster families and is available in all seven regions of the State. Stakeholders in Nez Perce County reported that because the TAP program addresses the concerns of the family and does whatever is necessary to support the placement, foster care placement stability has improved. In Bannock County, stakeholders said that placement stability services for foster parents are provided by an independent contractor and include a counselor who offers in-home individual or group counseling on Saturdays. Ada County stakeholders indicated that a contract was recently approved to provide in-home wrap around services to foster families experiencing a crisis.

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

- In 24 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children experienced multiple placement changes that did not promote attainment of their goals or meet their treatment needs.
- Data from the State Data Profile for FFY 2001 indicate that the percentage of children experiencing no more than 2 placements in their first 12 months in foster care (81.1%) does not meet the national standard of 86.7 percent or more.

A key concern was the lack of effort to match children with appropriate foster care placements due primarily to a scarcity of placement resources.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the limited number of foster homes is a key problem in Idaho. The agency conducted a review of cases that involved more than one placement in foster care from April 1 to September 30, 2001 (964 cases) and found the following:

- Most cases were child welfare cases (98%) and not juvenile justice or mental health cases.
- A placement change from temporary shelter home to a foster home accounted for 27 percent of the cases.
- Reasons for a change of placement were the child's behavior, mental health concerns, and juvenile justice issues.

The Statewide Assessment also describes the results of a survey conducted of 145 foster parents that asked them about the top three reasons they believed children were moved in foster care. The three reasons mentioned most frequently were:

- Child’s behavior;
- Child’s needs exceed foster parent’s ability to meet them; and
- Lack of support and/or communication with the child’s worker.

Finally, the Statewide Assessment notes that when 100 foster youth were asked “Why do you think you had to move from one home to another?” Well over half of the youth responded that they were moved as a result of their behavior. Forty-five percent of the youth reported that they had stayed in 3 or fewer homes. Thirty percent had stayed in two or fewer homes.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 25 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 a Strength in 16 (64%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (36%) of the 25 applicable cases.

In Bannock County all 6 (100%) of the foster care cases were rated as a Strength for this item, compared to Ada County where 7 (54%) of the 13 applicable cases were rated as a Strength and Nez Perce County where 3 (50%) of the 6 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

The case review found that the children in the 25 foster care cases had the following “most recent” permanency goals at the time of the review:

- 11 children had a goal of adoption.
- 3 children had a goal of “long-term foster care”/emancipation.
- 7 children had a goal of reunification.
- 2 children had a goal of guardianship.
- 2 children had a concurrent goal of reunification and adoption.

At the time of the on-site review, 15 of the 25 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. TPR had been filed in 8 of these cases, and attained in all 8. For the 7 cases for which TPR had not been filed, an appropriate compelling reason for not filing was noted in 3 of the cases. In 2 additional cases, TPR was filed and attained prior to the child being in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.

Sixteen cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The goal was appropriate but was not established in a timely manner (e.g., a reunification goal had been maintained for too long without any concurrent planning for adoption) (5 cases).
- The goal is not appropriate because it is not realistic given the information on the case (e.g., reunification with a mother who has not shown evidence of attempting to meet the case plan requirements) (2 cases).
- Child's goal is appropriate (adoption) however, the child has been in care for more than 15 of the most recent 22 months and a TPR petition should have been filed, but had not been at the time of the CFSR (4 cases).

Many stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the strong focus on reunification and on parents' rights in the State is reflected in the actions of some courts, which tends to hinder efforts to change a child's permanency goal to adoption in a timely manner. For example, stakeholders noted that some judges will extend ASFA timelines in order to give parents more time to make the changes necessary for reunification. Other judges were reported to require workers to continue making reasonable efforts to reunify until TPR is obtained, even in those cases in which there is no indication that the parent had made efforts to change despite agency efforts.

Stakeholders in Ada and Nez Perce County expressed concern that concurrent planning is not being implemented in cases in which it is clear that the prognosis for reunification was poor. Stakeholders also noted that even when both reunification and adoption are concurrent goals, often no real efforts are made toward achieving adoption until TPR is finalized. In contrast, stakeholders in Bannock County expressed the opinion that CFS uses concurrent planning to ensure timely permanency, and cases reviewed in Bannock County showed this to be the case.

Some stakeholders in Ada County indicated that permanency is not being achieved in a timely manner for children in that county, and that requests for TPRs are not getting filed. Ada County stakeholders also expressed concern about the breakdown in communication and support between the social workers in the permanency unit and the foster/preadoptive parents. Stakeholders reported that foster

parents are concerned that if they ask questions about the child’s permanency status or try to push the social worker to take action regarding permanency, the social worker will remove the children.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 36 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner. The key concern pertained to a practice of maintaining a permanency goal of reunification even when there was a low prognosis that reunification would ever occur.

According to the Statewide Assessment, permanency has been a focus of the Idaho State Legislature in establishing changes to the Child Protective Act that are consistent with requirements and guidelines of the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The courts have trained various groups, including judges, on the importance of permanency and concurrent planning. In addition, it was noted in the Statewide Assessment that Idaho uses concurrent planning for cases with poor prognosis indicators. In concurrent planning the permanency goals are reunification and an alternative goal such as adoption, guardianship and in some cases, long term foster care.

The Statewide Assessment also indicates, however, that Idaho’s percentage of children with a permanency goal of long-term foster care is above the national average. The reasons for this were: (1) hesitancy on the part of judges and attorneys to pursue TPR, (2) the length of the TPR appeals process, and (3) the desire of some adolescents not to be adopted. With regard to this last issue, stakeholders interviewed as part of the CFSR suggested that adolescents may be more willing to be adopted if the adoption was an open one and they could still have contact with their families. In addition, some stakeholders reported that social workers do not really talk to the youth about adoption and what is involved and what it might mean for them.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Item 8 was applicable for 11 of the 25 foster care cases (including 2 cases with a concurrent goal of adoption). 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 6 (55%) of the 11 applicable cases.

- Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (45%) of the 11 applicable cases.

For the 9 cases with a goal of reunification (including 2 with a concurrent goal of adoption), the goal had been achieved in 4 cases, and in 3 of those cases, the goal was achieved within 12 months. For the 5 children for whom the goal had not been achieved, 2 children had been in foster care for 12 months or more.

In the 2 cases with a goal of guardianship, the identified guardian was a relative. Guardianship had been achieved in both cases, but in neither case was it achieved within 12 months.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency had not made adequate efforts to achieve the goal of reunification (3 cases) or guardianship (2 cases) in a timely manner. A key finding was that in three of the four cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, the agency and the courts tended to put the cases in a “holding pattern” while the mother was incarcerated. Reviewers noted that in these cases, judges appeared reluctant to seek TPR.

The case findings are consistent with comments from some stakeholders that some children have a goal of reunification for too long. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that reunifications are occurring quickly, but that in many cases, the decision to reunify may be premature. Stakeholders noted that when reunifications are delayed, the delay is generally due to serious substance abuse problems, families not accessing services, or a lack of services resulting in wait lists. Stakeholders also noted that the timeliness of reunification often depends on individual social workers and their skills in engaging families and helping families make the necessary changes in their lives.

With regard to guardianship, stakeholders noted that although the State has a subsidized guardianship program, it has little appeal to family members because it requires that parental rights be terminated. Some families, however, are seeking guardianship without subsidies.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although data from the State Data Profile indicate that for FFY 2001, the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (88.9%) meets the national standard of 76.2 percent or more, case reviewers determined that for children with a goal of reunification or guardianship, the agency had not made diligent efforts to achieve or had not achieved the goals of reunification or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner in 45 percent of the 12 applicable cases. It is necessary for the criteria for both measures to be met for this item to be rated as a Strength.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS workers do an excellent job of reunifying families in less than 12 months. However, the Statewide Assessment also suggests that this may not always be a positive thing since there is a possible correlation between children exiting foster care prematurely and then re-entering foster care. The Statewide Assessment also noted that the high rate of reunifications within 12 months may be due to the fact that children who are removed from the home and placed in foster care by law enforcement prior to contact with CFS social workers, often return home in a few days once CFS becomes involved.

The Statewide Assessment also noted that in FY 2000, Idaho implemented a guardianship assistance program. Eligibility is limited to children with a TPR for whom an adoptive family could not be found.

### **Item 9: Adoption**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Thirteen of the 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 9 (including 2 cases in which the child had a concurrent goal of reunification). 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 6 (46%) of the 13 applicable cases.
- Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (54%) of the 13 applicable cases.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength for 100 percent of the 4 applicable cases in Bannock County, compared to 14 percent of the 7 applicable cases in Ada County and 50 percent of the 2 applicable cases in Nez Perce County.

Of the 13 cases with a goal of adoption, adoption was finalized in 2 cases, and in one of these cases, the finalization occurred within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care. Of the 11 remaining children, 8 were in adoptive placements. In five cases, the child will be adopted by their foster parents and in 3 cases the child will be adopted by a relative.

This item was assigned a rating of Strength when reviewers determined that the State had made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. This included filing for TPR in a timely manner, working closely with Tribes to ensure that the plan was amenable to them, seeking adoptive placements early on in the case, and implementing concurrent planning.

Six of the seven cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were in Ada County. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the child had been in foster care for more than 24 months due to one or more of the following reasons:

- Potential adoptive families were not sought early enough in the case (2 cases).
- There were agency-related delays pertaining to delays in paternity testing, filing for TPR, processing paperwork and conducting home studies (in one case, the worker went on maternity leave and no one covered the child's case for 4 months) (5 cases).
- There were court-related delays due to the court's reluctance to grant TPR (2 cases).

Stakeholders in Bannock County reported that the agency is very effective in achieving timely adoptions, due primarily to the initiation of concurrent planning very early on in the case and to the fact that the Deputy Attorney General's Office works closely with CFS to expedite adoptions. In addition, adoption workers become involved in the case as soon as TPR is discussed and, as a result, are prepared to receive the case and take action when TPR is attained. Stakeholders in this county, however, noted that it is still challenging to achieve adoptions of special needs children, siblings groups, and older children in a timely manner.

State-level stakeholders and stakeholders in Ada and Nez Perce Counties were more likely than Bannock County stakeholders to identify agency and court-related barriers to adoption. State-level stakeholders noted that in some regions neither the agency nor the court wants to pursue adoption until after TPR, even if it has been a concurrent goal. In Ada County stakeholders reported that for part of the review period the prosecutor's office failed to file in a timely manner.. However, stakeholders noted that currently significant delays in filing are due to the failure of the agency to complete the paperwork required to send to the prosecutor's office in preparation for the filing. Finally, a State-level stakeholder expressed the opinion that workers do not receive sufficient training on adoption. The State is planning on addressing this issue with a specialized adoption training academy to be given this summer.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's percentage of finalized adoptions in FY 2001 occurring within 24 months of removal from home (33.6%) exceeds the national standard of 32.0 percent or more, in 54 percent of the applicable case, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to achieve an adoption in a timely manner. The criteria and standards for both measures must be met for the item to be rated as a Strength. A key concern identified through the case reviews pertained to agency-related delays in processing the necessary paperwork to request TPR. During interviews, social workers in three separate cases told case reviewers that they did not have time to process paperwork on the cases because of their high caseloads.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho is successful in achieving adoptions within 24 months of placement due in part to the agency's partnerships with the Idaho Supreme Court, the use of media, use of individualized recruitment, and decentralization of

adoption services. However, the Statewide Assessment indicates that the percentage of adoptions finalized in 24 months in Region 4 (primarily Ada County) is significantly lower than the statewide percentages. This is consistent with the onsite review finding that 6 of the 7 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item were Ada County cases. The factors identified in the Statewide Assessment as barriers to timely adoptions were: (1) the fact that some courts discourage a search for a specific adoptive family prior to TPR; (2) the lack of families willing to adopt older children; and (3) waiting lists for home studies.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Three 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 2 (67%) of the 3 applicable cases.
- Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (33%) of the 3 applicable cases.

Item 10 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children were receiving appropriate services and that the foster care placement was stable. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case in which the agency had been searching for a Native American foster home for the child for over a year.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the Casey Family Program provides extensive and exemplary services to youth who are in long term foster care, particularly services to prepare them for independent living. Stakeholders in Nez Perce indicated that long-term foster care is consistent with Tribal culture and is preferred by the Tribe over adoption.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 100 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure that the child's placement was long-term and stable and that the child was receiving appropriate services.

## 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>Ada (Boise)</b>	<b>Bannock (Pocatello)</b>	<b>Nez Perce (Lewiston)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	11	6	6	23	92.0
Partially Achieved:	2	0	0	2	8.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	0	0	
Not Applicable:	12	7	6		

### STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2

Idaho achieved substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 92.0 percent of the cases, which is greater than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

The CFSR findings indicate that Idaho CFS makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families, to promote and maintain parent-child relationships, to ensure frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, to seek and assess relatives as placement resources, and to preserve children’s connections to their families and racial and religious heritage. The one area of concern with respect to this outcome pertained to efforts to place siblings together in foster care. Reviewers noted that there was a lack of available foster family resources to accommodate sibling groups of 3 or more children.

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

#### Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Of the 25 foster care cases, 21 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 current foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. This assessment resulted in the following:

- Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 20 (95%) of the 21 applicable cases.
- Item 11 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (5%) of the 21 applicable cases.

The cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- Child was placed in the same community as parents or relatives (18 cases).
- Child's out-of-county placement was necessary to meet the child's needs (2 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case when reviewers determined that the out-of-county placement was a barrier to reunification efforts.

Stakeholders commenting on this item were in general agreement that the agency makes concerted efforts to place children near their parents and relatives. However, it was noted that the lack of available foster family homes often has a negative impact on the agency's ability to place children near their parents, as does the scarcity of residential programs in many areas of the State.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 95 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CFS had made diligent efforts to ensure that children were placed in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives, or were necessary to meet special needs.

This is consistent with information in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS has a strong family-centered practice philosophy that encourages placement of children in their own community if it is safe to do so.

## **Item 12. Placement with siblings**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** Eighteen of the 25 foster care cases involved a child with siblings who were 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 (72%) of the 18 applicable cases.
- Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (28%) of the 18 applicable cases.

Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable Nez Perce County cases and 80 percent of the applicable Bannock County cases, but only 50 percent of the applicable Ada County cases.

In 15 of the 18 applicable cases, the child was in a placement with at least one other sibling, and in 11 of those cases, the child was in a placement with all siblings.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item if the child was in placement with all of his or her siblings (11 cases), or if the separation of the siblings was necessary to meet at least one child's special needs (2 cases).

Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that the separation of siblings in foster care was not due to the child's best interest. It was noted that in four cases, children were not placed together because of a lack of placement resources that could accommodate the sibling groups. In two of those cases, there were 3 siblings requiring placement and in the other two cases, there were four siblings. In one other case, siblings were not placed together and reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to place them together.

Although most stakeholders suggested that CFS makes diligent efforts to place children with their siblings, some stakeholders suggested that this is not always the case. Several stakeholders indicated that placement with siblings is very important to the children and that efforts should be made to develop the necessary resources to keep siblings together.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 22 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CFS had not made diligent efforts to place siblings together in foster care in situations in which separation was not necessary to meet the needs of at least one of the siblings. The key concern was that there are an insufficient number of placement resources that can accommodate larger sibling groups.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 13 was applicable for 22 of the 25 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 parents were no longer involved in the children's lives and the child had no siblings in foster care. 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 20 (91%) of the 22 applicable cases.
- Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (9%) of the 22 applicable cases.

Typical visitation between children and their mothers for the 19 cases for which this assessment was applicable was the following:

- Weekly visits – 10 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 3 cases.
- Monthly visits – 2 cases.
- Less than monthly visits – 2 cases.
- No visits – 2 cases.

In the four 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 three of those cases, but not in the other one.

Typical visitation between children and their fathers for the 17 cases for which this assessment was applicable was the following:

- Weekly visits – 7 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 3 cases.
- Monthly visits – 0 cases.
- Less than monthly visits – 3 cases.
- No visits – 4 cases.

In six of the seven cases in which visits with father occurred less frequently than once a month, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Visitation between siblings was applicable in 8 cases in which siblings were not placed together in foster care. Typical visitation between siblings was the following:

- Weekly – 4 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 0 cases.
- Monthly visits – 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits - 2 cases.
- No visits – 1 case.

In one of the three cases in which sibling visits occurred less frequently than once a month, reviewers determined that the agency had made efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency of visitation met the needs of the child and parent, or that, when visitation was less frequent than needed, the agency had made diligent efforts to promote more frequent visitation and provided alternative forms of contact, such as telephone and e-mail.

Two cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers identified the following:

- Visits with siblings were not frequent enough to meet children’s needs.
- The agency did not arrange for regular visitation with mother, father, and siblings.

Stakeholders commenting on this item noted that sibling visitation does occur, but that it may take longer than necessary to make the arrangements.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 91 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the child. As noted in the Idaho policy statement, Idaho policy requires that the agency arrange visitation between parents and children at least weekly (unless visitation is contrary to the child’s safety), and that siblings are to visit at least monthly. Although most cases were rated as a Strength for this item based on CFSR criteria, only 10 (53%) of the 19 applicable cases met the State requirements for visitation with mother, only 7 (41%) of the 17 applicable cases met the State requirement for visitation with father, and 5 (62.5%) of the 8 applicable cases met the State requirement for visitation with siblings in foster care.

#### Item 14. Preserving connections

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Item 14 was applicable for assessment in all 25 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 24 (96%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (4%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Reviewers indicated that in 22 of the 25 cases, children's primary connections had been “significantly” preserved while they were in foster care and in 3 of the 25 cases, children’s primary connections had been “partially” preserved.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item 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 (22 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with school and community (2 cases).
- Preservation of child’s primary connections with religion and ethnic/racial heritage (9 cases).

One case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that the agency did not provide timely notification to a tribe of the child’s placement.

With regard to preserving a child’s connections to his or her racial or ethnic heritage, stakeholders expressed the opinion that the agency is not entirely successful in this regard. A key concern identified was a lack of a sufficient number of Native American, Latino, and African American foster families to meet the needs of children in foster care. In addition, although foster parents receive training on preserving cultural connections, especially for Native American and Hispanic children, they do not always do this. A few stakeholders noted that culturally relevant services are available for Native American children, but they are more difficult to find for Latino children and most difficult for African American children. While some stakeholders said that social workers routinely notify tribes when a Native American child is taken into custody, other stakeholders expressed concern that this varies by Region, and sometimes by social workers within a Region.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 96 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the State had made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections.

**Item 15. Relative placement.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All of the 25 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 15. 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 22 (88%) of the 25 applicable cases.
- Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (12%) of the 25 applicable cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that children were placed with relatives (9 cases) or the agency had made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives (13 cases). In these latter cases, children were not placed with relatives for a variety of reasons including the relative's inability to care for the children, their lack of interest in becoming care providers, their physical distance from the family, and/or their criminal records or history of substantiated child maltreatment.

Two cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to search for either maternal or paternal relatives. One case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the agency attempted to locate maternal relatives but not paternal relatives.

Stakeholders commenting on this item were in agreement that CFS makes concerted efforts to seek relatives as potential placement resources.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 88 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CFS had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources.

This determination is consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, the State requires placement priority with immediate family and extended family members, and that immediate family members must be informed about how to become a placement resource within 72 hours of a decision to place a child in foster care. In cases involving

Native American children, placement preference is given to a member of the child’s extended family in the absence of good cause to the contrary.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 16 was applicable for 21 of the 25 foster care cases. A case was considered not applicable for an assessment of this item 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 fathers. The results of this assessment were that all 21 (100%) of the applicable cases were rated as a Strength for this item.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency promoted the parent-child relationship by facilitating and encouraging frequent visitation and providing transportation for visitation when necessary (20 cases).
- The agency promoted the parent-child relationship by involving parents in the child’s medical appointments (3 cases).
- The agency promoted the parent-child relationship by involving parents with the child in recreational and school activities (2 cases).
- The agency promoted the parent-child relationship by providing family counseling (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this item were in agreement that CFS engages in practices intended to promote or maintain the relationship between children in foster care and their parents. Several stakeholders noted that the agency makes these efforts even when the parent is incarcerated.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because reviewers determined that in 100 percent of the applicable cases, the agency had made concerted 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>Ada (Boise)</b>	<b>Bannock (Pocatello)</b>	<b>Nez Perce (Lewiston)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	8	6	7	21	42.0
Partially Achieved:	6	6	4	16	32.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	11	1	1	13	26.0
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	0	

#### STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1

Idaho 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 for 42.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

Although achievement of Well-Being Outcome 1 was low in all counties, cases were more likely to be rated as having substantially achieved this outcome in Nez Perce County (58%), than in Ada County (32%) or Bannock County (46%). This difference may be due to the small caseload size in Nez Perce County, which gives social workers the time to engage families in case planning and allows for more frequent face-to-face contact.

The case reviews resulted in ratings of Area Needing Improvement for all of the indicators of child and family well-being outcome 1. Reviewers determined that CFS was not consistent in assessing and addressing the service needs of children and their parents, in involving parents and children in the case planning process, and/or in establishing sufficiently frequent face-to-face contact between social workers and the children and parents in their caseloads. In general, CFS was viewed as more effective with regard to these indicators in the foster care cases than in the in-home services cases.

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      X Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 50 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 22 (44%) of the 50 applicable cases (14 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 28 (56%) of the 50 applicable cases (11 of which were foster care cases).

Although none of the counties performed particularly well with regard to this item, only 32 percent (8) of the 25 cases in Ada County were rated as a Strength for this item, compared to 54 percent of the 13 cases in Bannock County and 58 percent of the 12 cases in Nez Perce County.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met. Fourteen (56%) of the 25 foster care cases were rated as a Strength for this item compared to 8 (32%) of the 25 in-home services cases. While this suggests a better performance on this item for foster care cases, the percentages are low for both types of cases.

A rating of Area Needing Improvement was assigned to 11 foster care cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Failure to assess services needs and provide services to foster or adoptive parents (7 cases).
- Incomplete assessment or no assessment of the needs of the children and parents so that many needs were not addressed (7 cases).
- Assessments were conducted but needed services were not provided (2 cases).

A rating of Area Needing Improvement was assigned to 17 in-home services cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Mother's needs were not assessed either initially or on an ongoing basis (6 cases).
- Father's needs were not assessed either initially or on an ongoing basis (5 cases).
- Assessment was conducted but was inadequate to ensure the safety of the child (6 cases).
- Children's needs were not assessed either initially or on an ongoing basis (6 cases).
- Identified services needs were not addressed by services (3 cases).

A key finding of the case reviews was that there were many cases in which reviewers identified assessment as a primary concern. Either no assessments were conducted on the relevant parties, assessments were not conducted on an ongoing basis, and/or assessments were inadequate to identify underlying issues.

Stakeholders commenting on this item were in general agreement that CFS is not consistently effective in assessing and meeting the service needs of children, parents, and foster and adoptive parents. A key concern identified by stakeholders in all three counties pertained to the lack of needs assessments and services to foster parents. State-level stakeholders and stakeholders in all three counties provided numerous examples of the lack of responsiveness of CFS to foster parents. Stakeholders in Nez Perce County noted that foster parents often are required to make repeated requests for services for themselves and their foster children and that the agency does not respond to foster parents when they call the after-hours hotline. Stakeholders in Ada County expressed concern that the agency may respond negatively if the foster parents request services or complain about lack of services for their foster children. Stakeholders in Bannock County also noted that foster parents are not getting their service needs met.

Other identified concerns pertained to the absence of assessments for children and parents and to the poor quality of the assessments that are being conducted. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that many social workers are not conducting comprehensive assessments and need training in this area. In Ada County, stakeholders noted that social workers are effective in assessing economic or concrete needs in in-home cases, but that this is not always sufficient to identify underlying problems. Stakeholders also noted that sometimes when services are provided, they do not match the needs. In some instances, this may be due to the court stipulation of the services that are to be provided, which results in the agency focusing only on those services without attempting to assess for other possible needs. Stakeholders suggested that in working with families, the social workers become dependent on the court orders for services rather than conducting ongoing assessments periodically to address other concerns that may arise.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 56 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the State had not adequately assessed and/or addressed the service needs of children and parents. A key concern identified for both foster care and in-home services cases pertained to a lack of assessment or an inadequate assessment of the family with respect to service needs and risk to child. In many of the in-home cases, economic assistance needs were assessed and services provided, but other aspects of family functioning were not examined even when the family history warranted a more comprehensive assessment.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS social workers are expected to conduct comprehensive family assessments. However, the Statewide Assessment also noted that some stakeholders surveyed in preparation of the Statewide Assessment said that assessments and services often focus on the parent's needs and not the children's.

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

\_\_\_ Strength      X Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 18 was applicable for all 50 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 process, 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 30 (60%) of the 50 applicable cases (19 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 20 (40%) of the 50 applicable cases (6 of which were foster care cases).

In Nez Perce County, 92 percent of the cases were rated as a Strength for this item, compared to 44 percent of the cases in Ada County and 61 percent of the cases in Bannock County. Also, this item was rated as a Strength in 19 (76%) of the foster care cases, compared to 11 (44%) of the in-home services cases.

The item 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 for the 6 foster care cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Fathers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (6 cases).
- Mothers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (6 cases).
- Children who were old enough to have been involved in case planning were not involved (2 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement for the 14 in-home services cases when reviewers determined the following:

- Fathers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (7 cases).
- Mothers who should have been involved in case planning were not involved (9 cases).
- Children who were old enough to have been involved in case planning were not involved (9 cases).

State-level stakeholders reported that State law requires family involvement in case planning and that the State is in the process of implementing some form of family group decision making in all Regions, although at present only about half of the Regions are using this approach. The State has asked the Regions to contract with private providers to implement family group decision making if they

cannot do it in-house. There were no cases reviewed during the onsite CFSR that incorporated a family group decision making approach to case planning.

The opinions of other stakeholders varied across counties. Stakeholders in Nez Perce County were more likely than stakeholders in the other two counties to report family involvement in developing the case plan. This was attributed in part to the use of the Multidisciplinary Teams and to the small caseloads carried by workers in this county. Stakeholders in Ada and Bannock Counties noted that a key barrier to involvement of families in case planning is the fact that in many cases the services are identified in a court stipulation, which pre-empts the opportunity for any collaborative assessment and case planning between the agency and the family. Several stakeholders suggested that the case plan form in FOCUS is not conducive to developing quality case plans with families.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 40 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that CFS had not made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process.

This determination is consistent with information in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, a written case plan is required to be developed for each case by the social worker, the family, and other interested parties including the Guardian ad Litem, extended family, family’s attorney, and service providers. However, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, the advisory group noted that some families are not actually involved in choosing case plan objectives because the social workers anticipate what the court and GAL/CASA want in a case plan at the planning hearing, rather than working with the family’s issues and what the family and the agency agree to put in the plan. Consequently, a family often has a case plan that includes too many objectives and tasks, which results in the family feeling overwhelmed. The Statewide Assessment also notes that there have been numerous complaints about the case plan format that is generated by FOCUS. A key complaint is that it is too difficult to read and review.

**Item 19. Worker visits with child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** All 50 cases were applicable for an assessment of item 19. In conducting this assessment, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the social workers 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 34 (68%) of the 50 applicable cases (21 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 16 (32%) of the 50 applicable cases (4 of which were foster care cases).

Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 92 percent of the 12 cases in Nez Perce County and 85 percent of the 13 cases in Bannock County, compared to only 48 percent of the 25 cases in Ada County. Of the 25 foster care cases, 21 (84%) were rated as a Strength for this item compared to 13 (52%) of the 25 in-home services cases.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 25 foster care cases:

- In 5 cases, visits typically occurred once a week.
- In 4 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 13 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 3 cases, visits typically occurred less than monthly.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 25 in-home services cases:

- In 2 cases, visits occurred once a week.
- In 3 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 8 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 10 case, visits typically occurred less frequently than once a month.
- In 2 cases, no visits were made.

Item 19 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between social workers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals.

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

- The worker never visited the child (2 cases).
- The frequency of social worker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child and the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (11 cases).
- The frequency of social worker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (3 cases).

Stakeholders' opinions regarding social worker visits with children differed across counties. Stakeholders in Ada County expressed concerns about the lack of face-to-face contact between social workers and foster children, the quality of these visits, and the fact that the visits did not routinely occur in the foster homes. Stakeholders also expressed concern that there was little monitoring by the agency regarding whether visits were taking place. In contrast, stakeholders in Nez Perce and Bannock Counties reported that social workers visit children in foster care on at least a monthly basis, although the quality of the visits tended to vary across workers. No stakeholder commented on worker contacts with children in the in-home services cases.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 32 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that social worker visits with children were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality. A key concern identified was that visitation with children was very infrequent in the in-home services cases. In several of these cases, social workers told reviewers that they did not believe they were required to visit the children. The key concern relevant to foster care cases was that workers did not visit the child in the foster family home and that the quality of the visit varied across social workers.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there is a policy requiring that social workers establish at least monthly face-to-face contact with children in foster care. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that a recent review of a small number of foster care case files as part of a quality assurance process revealed that only 16 percent of the foster children were visited by their social workers less than monthly. In 44 percent of these cases, it was noted that the frequency, although less than monthly, was consistent with the needs of the children. The Statewide Assessment also identified a number of barriers to monthly contact including high worker caseloads, visits not being convenient for the foster parents, location of foster parents in remote areas, and the social worker's perception that children and foster parents are "doing fine." No mention was made regarding a policy requirement regarding contact with children in in-home services cases.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 20 was applicable for 48 of the 50 cases. There were two foster care cases that were not applicable for this assessment because TPR had been attained for the parents prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of the children and there were no adoptive parents. Reviewers were to assess whether the social worker's face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and/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 28 (58%) of the 48 cases (16 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 20 (42%) of the 48 cases (7 of which were foster care cases).

Although performance on this item was fairly low in all counties, 75 percent of the cases reviewed in Nez Perce County and 67 percent of the cases in Bannock County were rated as a Strength for this item, compared to 44 percent of the cases in Ada County. Also, 64 percent of the foster care cases were rated as a Strength for this item compared to 48 percent of the in-home services cases.

Typical patterns of social worker visits with mothers were the following (46 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits - 6 cases (5 of which were foster care cases).
- Twice a month visits - 8 cases (4 of which were foster care cases).
- Monthly visits – 16 cases (7 of which were foster care cases).
- Less than monthly visits – 14 cases (5 of which were foster care cases).
- No visits- 2 cases (none of which were foster care cases).

Typical patterns of social worker visits with fathers were the following (39 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits – 3 cases (all of which were foster care cases).
- Twice a month visits - 5 cases (2 of which were foster care cases).
- Monthly visits - 10 cases (8 of which were foster care cases).
- Less than monthly visits - 18 cases (5 of which were foster care cases).
- No visits – 3 cases (none of which was a foster care case).

This item 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:

- Visits were not occurring with sufficient frequency (10 cases).
- Visits were not of sufficient frequency and did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (8 cases).
- There were no visits with at least one parent (2 cases).

Stakeholders in Bannock and Nez Perce Counties expressed the opinion that workers generally have face-to-face contact with parents in foster care cases at least once a month. Onsite reviewers noted in the cases reviewed that several parents were seen in the office rather than in their homes.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 42 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of social worker visits with parents were not sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, during the review of a small number of CQI instruments by IDHW, it was found that 32 percent of parents of children in foster care were typically visited by workers on a weekly basis, 24 percent on a bi-weekly basis, 20 percent on a monthly basis, and 24 percent of parents were visited by workers on less than monthly basis. It was noted that when visits occurred less frequently than monthly, the frequency of visits was consistent with the needs of the children 50 percent of the time.

## 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>Ada (Boise)</b>	<b>Bannock (Pocatello)</b>	<b>Nez Perce (Lewiston)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	13	10	7	30	93.8
Partially Achieved:	0	0	0	0	
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	1	0	2	6.2
Not Applicable:	11	2	5	18	

### STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2

Idaho achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 93.8 percent of the cases reviewed were determined to have substantially achieved this outcome, which meets the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

The CFSR found that in most of the cases, CFS was effective in assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs.

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 32 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for assessment included cases in which the children were not of school age or in-home services cases in which 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 30 (94%) of the 32 applicable cases (22 of which were foster care cases).

- Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (6%) of the 32 applicable cases (neither of which were foster care cases).

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that all potential educational needs were assessed and addressed as appropriate. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that some of the children in the family in two in-home services cases had education-related needs that were not addressed.

Stakeholders in all counties agreed that CFS is effective in meeting children's educational needs. Stakeholders also noted that the most challenging aspect of meeting these needs is keeping children in foster care in the same school, and they were in agreement that CFS makes diligent efforts to accomplish this goal.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 94 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CFS had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CQI review of a small number of out-of-home cases resulted in the following findings with regard to education-related issues:

- School changes - Foster children were enrolled in multiple schools as the result of being placed in foster care in 55 percent of the cases;
- Special education needs - Children's special education needs were addressed in 88 percent of the cases;
- Educational services - Services were provided for identified educational needs in 74 percent of the cases;
- Early intervention - Early intervention for preschool children was provided for 60 percent of the cases needing those services;
- School records - School records were included in the case file in 52 percent of the cases;
- Educational advocacy - Advocacy with the educational system was provided when needed in 88 percent of the cases;
- Case plans - Educational needs were included in case planning in 72 percent of the cases; and
- Educational information to foster parents - School records were provided to foster parents in 50 percent of the cases.

### 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>Ada (Boise)</b>	<b>Bannock (Pocatello)</b>	<b>Nez Perce (Lewiston)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	10	9	9	28	66.7
Partially Achieved:	2	3	1	6	14.3
Not Achieved or Addressed:	7	1	0	8	19.0
Not Applicable:	6	0	2	8	

#### STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

Idaho 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 66.7 percent of the 42 applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

Differences across counties were again marked with respect to attainment of this outcome. In Nez Perce County 90 percent of the cases were found to have substantially achieved this item compared to 69 percent of the cases in Bannock County and 53 percent of the cases in Ada County. The key concern identified pertained to a lack of consistency in assessing children’s physical and mental health needs when there was evidence that an assessment was warranted.

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      \_\_X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 22 was applicable for 39 of the 50 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 30 (77%) of the 39 applicable cases (21 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (23%) of the 39 applicable cases (4 of which were foster care cases).

Cases were more likely to be rated as a Strength for this item in Nez Perce County (88%) and in Bannock County (92%), than they were in Ada County (59%). However, ratings for foster care and in-home cases did not differ extensively, with 84 percent of the 25 applicable foster care cases rated as a Strength for this item and 79 percent of the 14 applicable in-home services cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children's health needs were routinely assessed and services provided as needed. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined the following:

- Health related problems were not sufficiently assessed despite evidence that children may have had health-related service needs (3 in-home services cases). (For example, one child was the victim of a substantiated physical abuse report and had bruises and contusions, but no medical exam was requested by the agency.)
- Children had health needs that were not met (1 in-home services case and 2 foster care cases).
- Children did not have health screening at entry into foster care (3 foster care cases).

In 21 of the 25 foster care cases reviewed, foster parents received medical information at the time of placement. Immunization records were in the file in 24 of the 25 foster care cases.

Stakeholders commenting on this item were in general agreement that CFS is effective in meeting children's physical health needs, although it was noted that there are difficulties finding Medicaid providers for dental and vision services. Ada County stakeholders reported that there have been delays in that County in providing children with a comprehensive physical when they enter foster care. Stakeholders attributed this to delays in providing foster parents with the medical cards necessary to access medical services. Stakeholders described a new program at St. Luke's Hospital that obtains children's medical history, provides physical exams, and creates a health passport for foster children.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 23 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not adequately addressed the health needs of children in foster care and in-home services cases. A key concern identified for children in foster care was that health screenings were not being done at entry into foster care. The key concern relevant to in-home services cases was that physical health needs were not being assessed even when the circumstances of the case suggested that there were potential health-related service needs.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) review of a small number of foster care cases found that health care is not being provided at the level required by administrative rule, based on the following findings.

- Initial health screening - An initial health screening was provided for foster care upon a child's most recent entry into foster care in 76 percent of the cases. It was provided in accordance with the timeframe specified in the State's guidelines in 79 percent of the cases.
- Preventive health care - Preventive health care was addressed in 77 percent of the cases, partially addressed in 12 percent of the cases, and not addressed in 12 percent of the cases.
- Preventive dental care - Preventive dental care was addressed in 58 percent of the cases, partially addressed in 19 percent of the cases, and not addressed in 22.6 percent of the cases.
- Immunizations - Immunizations were current in 78 percent of the cases, partially complete in 10 percent of the cases, and not addressed in 12 percent of the cases.
- Treatment of health needs- Treatment for identified health needs was provided in 67 percent of the cases, partially provided in 17 percent of the cases, and not addressed in 16 percent of the cases.
- Treatment of dental needs - Treatment for identified dental needs was provided in 46 percent of the cases, partially provided in 8 percent of the cases, and not addressed in 46 percent of the cases.
- Health records to foster parents - Health records were provided to foster parents in 65 percent of the cases, some, but not all, records were provided in 16 percent of the cases, and records were not provided to foster parents in 19 percent of the cases.

The Statewide Assessment notes that every child who enters foster care is required to have a medial exam within 30 days of placement. Idaho has several contracts to secure medical evaluation through partnerships with hospitals (Region IV) and District Health Departments (Regions I and VI).

### Item 23. Mental health of the child

\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 23 was applicable for 30 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were foster care cases in which the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or in-home cases in which children’s mental health needs were not the reason for agency contact with the child. 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 (70%) of the 30 applicable cases (14 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (30%) of the 30 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the cases reviewed in Nez Perce County, compared to 73 percent of the cases in Bannock County and 54 percent of the cases in Ada County. Also, 82 percent of the applicable foster care cases were rated as a Strength for this item compared to 54 percent of the applicable in-home services cases.

Reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were “significantly” assessed in 17 cases, “partially” assessed in 5 cases, and not at all assessed in 5 cases. Reviewers determined that identified mental health service needs were “significantly met” in 16 cases, partially met in 4 cases, and not at all met in 2 cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers noted that children’s mental health needs were "significantly" or partially assessed, and mental health needs were significantly addressed.

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

- Mental health needs were identified but no services provided (3 in-home services cases).
- No mental health assessment was conducted despite evidence that the child had mental health-related issues (3 in-home services cases and 3 foster care cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this item noted that there is no requirement for a mental health assessment for children in foster care. State-level stakeholders expressed the opinion that the number of reliable providers who are competent at identifying children’s mental health needs is insufficient and that the State needs to do a better job of assessing mental health needs. Several stakeholders indicated that when needs are appropriately assessed, the mental health services generally are available. Some stakeholders, noted

however, that the types of mental health services available are not always a good match to the needs of the children. Nez Perce stakeholders reported that there has been an improvement in the agency's ability to assess mental health needs and providers services because of recent collaboration efforts undertaken by children's mental health and child welfare in the county.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 30 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that CFS had not made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children. A key concern pertained to an inconsistency in assessing mental health needs when there was evidence of potential mental health related issues.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the review of 59 CQI instruments indicated that an initial mental health screening was completed on 64 percent of the cases, mental health needs were fully or partially assessed or screened in 85 percent of the cases, and mental health treatment was fully or partially provided for youth with identified needs in 88 percent of the cases.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the Statewide Assessment Advisory Committee commented that they believe approximately 50 percent of children entering foster care receive an initial mental health screening or assessment. Variables include the child's age and the availability of mental health resources.

#### IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

Idaho did achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System.

**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 12 months, has been) in foster care.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength because Idaho’s statewide information system is able to readily determine status, location, demographic characteristics and goals for children in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho’s statewide information system, the Family Oriented Community User System (FOCUS), meets SACWIS requirements. For children in foster care, FOCUS collects demographic data, referral, assessment, case management, legal status, location, case goals, and payment information. FOCUS has the capability of generating caseload and other statistical reports that can be used by supervisors and managers to monitor workload and task completion.

As part of the Statewide Assessment process, the agency requested that internal and external stakeholders complete surveys pertaining to the systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. Thirty percent of the CFS staff that responded to the survey commented that FOCUS is very helpful. The second most frequent response was that FOCUS is useful. However, many CFS staff members also reported that data entry and navigation in FOCUS require too much time and that when the system is down, access to information is lost. In addition, 10 percent of respondents expressed the opinion that FOCUS is a "useless waste of valuable time." A frustration voiced by numerous respondents is the apparent failure of some workers to consistently enter accurate and complete data into FOCUS. The State Assessment also notes that additional reporting capacity is needed.

Stakeholders commenting on FOCUS during the onsite CFSR provided opinions that were consistent with information reported in the Statewide Assessment. Most stakeholders agreed that FOCUS has the capability to identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals for the placement of every child in foster care. Stakeholders in Ada County noted that location, legal status and demographic information are accurate and current and attributed this to clerical assistance in entering court orders and placement information into the system. However, they noted that permanency goal information is not always as current. Other stakeholders expressed concern about the accuracy of information in FOCUS because some social workers do not enter information in a timely manner; stakeholders noted particular problems with data entry on in-home cases. Stakeholders attributed the lack of timely input to workers' high caseloads, difficulty in using a cumbersome system, and to workers' perceptions that time spent entering information into FOCUS takes away from time they can spend working with families.

Stakeholders interviewed onsite agreed with information in the Statewide Assessment indicating that additional reporting capacity is needed. They expressed the opinion that the FOCUS system is not as useful to managers as it should be. While managers use FOCUS for some reports, some stakeholders indicated that outcome reports are not meaningful; that a lack of current accurate data resulted in unreliable information; and that it is difficult to generate customized reports to meet management needs. Other stakeholders noted that a data warehouse project is in the beginning stage of development to meet the need for more customized reports.

Stakeholders identified the following as strengths of FOCUS:

- Readily retrievable information on a child or a family.
- Alerts (ticklers) for 6-month reviews, face to face contacts, and termination petitions.
- Useful in managing budget issues.
- Useful for supervisors to review case information online and to verify case activity is being completed.

Stakeholders identified the following as additional areas needing improvement:

- The service plan is not user friendly.
- FOCUS does not allow for more than one case plan at a time, which is a problem if there is concurrent planning or the parents are divorced.
- More training is needed.

Stakeholders also noted that police could not access the system and that the FOCUS system was not linked to the court system. However, stakeholders noted that CFS is applying for a grant to link FOCUS and the ISTARS court information system.

## V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

Idaho did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of case review system.

**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 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because parents and children are not actively and consistently involved in the development of case plans.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) administrative rule requires completion of a family case plan within 30 days of the date a case is opened. The case plan format is contained in FOCUS and case plans are linked to safety and risk factors identified during the risk assessment. Based on a family assessment, a written case plan is required to be developed by the worker, the family, and other interested parties, which may include the Guardian ad Litem, extended family, family's attorney and service providers. The case plan must identify a long-term goal with behaviorally specific and measurable objectives to achieve the goal(s), and specific tasks which identify how, when, and by whom tasks will be completed.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that all children in out-of-home placement are required to have an Alternate Care Plan. The purpose of the Alternate Care Plan (Part Two of the Case Plan) is to facilitate the safe return of the child to his or her own home as expeditiously as possible or to make other permanent arrangements for the child if a return is not feasible. It contains numerous federally required provisions/protections and relevant education, medical, social, and other information needed by the alternate care provider.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, in-home services cases that are designed to prevent removal that are open for less than 30 days may not have a case plan in FOCUS. Although in home services cases that are open for more than 30 days should have a case plan entered into FOCUS, the Statewide Assessment reports that this is not always the case.

The Statewide Assessment advisory group identified the following concerns regarding the case plans:

- Some families are not involved in developing case plan objectives because the workers anticipate (and include) what the court and GAL/CASA want in a case plan at the planning hearing, rather than working with the family and what the family and the worker might want to include in the plan.
- The family often has an "over eager" case plan that includes too many objectives and tasks. Consequently, the family may feel overwhelmed and be unable to prioritize completion of the objectives/tasks in the area around child safety.
- The case plan format generated from FOCUS is not well liked, with agency staff and court personnel viewing it as not "user friendly."

Stakeholders commenting on the case plan during the onsite CFSR expressed opinions that were generally consistent with the information in the Statewide Assessment. While all stakeholders acknowledged that case plans for foster children are developed, they expressed concerns about the quality of the case plans and about the involvement of the family in the case planning process. With regard to foster care cases, stakeholders noted that the agency's ability to develop a plan with parents is compromised when the court dictates the case plan or attorneys discourage parental involvement. Stakeholders in Ada County noted that the court stipulations, identify what is to be in the case plan and what is expected of parents. Stakeholders further noted that these stipulations are established 14 days after the child's placement in foster care, before the agency has had the opportunity to work with the family and assess the family's strengths and needs. Stakeholders indicated that once the stipulation is completed, it is difficult to modify the case plan and social workers believe that they must continue with that plan. Furthermore, stakeholders said that although parents may be present in court when the case plan is presented, they are not routinely involved in creating the goals and objectives.

Stakeholders also suggested that the lack of family involvement in case planning may be attributed in part to the case plan format in FOCUS, which was described as "not family friendly" and not useful for in-home services cases. One problem with the case plan format is that it only allows for one plan per family, which sometimes is confusing when parents are divorced. Stakeholders indicated that the FOCUS case plan is not a good tool for workers to use with families, it is hard to fit the case plan information into the FOCUS format, and the resulting case plan document is hard to understand.

Stakeholders noted that workers in Ada County at one time involved families in case planning, but now complete the plan in FOCUS (usually mirroring the court stipulation) and present it to the court. Stakeholders in Nez Perce and Bannock Counties also expressed

concern that parents are not as engaged in developing the case plan as they should be. The onsite review data shows family participation in case planning was particularly lacking in in-home cases. While reviewers determined that parents and children had been involved in case planning in 83 percent of the in-home services cases in Nez Perce County, this determination was made for only 25 percent of the in-home cases reviewed in Ada County, and 43 percent of the cases in Bannock County.

**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 case reviews are being held in a timely manner and focus on progress towards permanency.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Idaho Child Protective Act, modified in 2001, now requires that the court conduct a 6-month review of all children in out of home placement including placements under the Idaho Children’s Mental Health Services Act, placements of children where the IDHW is the child’s guardian, and placements under the Child Protective Act. The Statewide Assessment notes that when 6-month reviews are not conducted by the court in a timely manner or court reviews do not include the criteria set forth in Federal and State law, CFS may conduct an administrative review. In those cases, a review team is chaired by a person from outside IDHW or an IDHW employee who is not in the direct line of supervision in the delivery of services to the child or parent(s) or legal guardian (s) being reviewed. During the review, all parties are given the opportunity for input and discussion including attending in person or by telephone, asking questions verbally or in writing, and making recommendations.

Whether the 6-month review is conducted by the court or by an IDHW review panel, it must address the extent of compliance with the family services plan; the extent of progress made toward alleviating or mitigating the causes necessitating the placement; compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act, when applicable; the safety of the child; and the continuing need for and appropriateness of the child’s placement. The review findings regarding these issues must be identified in a written report along with a likely date by which the child may be returned and safely maintained at home or placed for adoption, legal guardianship or other permanent placement. Following a review by IDHW, written conclusions, recommendations, and appeal rights are provided to all participants, subject to IDHW safeguards for confidentiality.

Stakeholders responding to a statewide survey for the Statewide Assessment had conflicting perceptions of the 6-month reviews. Some stakeholders reported that these hearings are beneficial and allow increased monitoring and tracking of cases and that reviews

help focus the family on progress. Others reported that the 6-month hearings appear to be a formality with little substance. Several stakeholders commented that these reviews do not seem to shorten the time to achieve permanency for children.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the Statewide Assessment advisory group identified several strengths and problems associated with the 6-month review. The strengths were that the 6-month court reviews permitted judicial oversight of the actions of both the family and IDHW; provided an incentive for the parties to meet and prepare for the hearing ahead of time; and provided an opportunity for the court to monitor the case plan. The problem areas were (1) a lack of standardization/consistency in court-conducted 6-month reviews; (2) a lack of understanding among judges of the purpose of the reviews or how to implement them; (3) a decrease in the quality of the 6-month reviews in some jurisdictions (compared to when they were held by the agency and were often less intimidating and allowed for more discussion); (4) the court's competing time demands; and (5) a lack of a statutory mandate for 6-month reviews by the court for voluntary placements of children.

All stakeholders commenting on the 6-month reviews during the onsite CFSR agreed that the reviews are being held in a timely manner by the courts. In Nez Perce County, reviews may be held every 3 months and CFS cases are given priority on the court dockets. In Ada County, the addition of one full-time magistrate as well as one half-time magistrate funded by the State's Court Improvement Project has resulted in improved court capacity to conduct reviews and ensures that the date for the first 6-month review is established at the time of the adjudication. In addition, the additional magistrates permit a family to have one judge throughout their case.

**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 permanency hearings are being held in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, IDHW Rules Governing Family and Children's Services requires that every child in alternate care under State supervision must have a permanency hearing conducted by the court or a court designee every 12 months after the date of the child's removal as long as the child remains under the care and custody of IDHW. The permanency hearing must

determine if IDHW has made reasonable efforts to finalize a permanent plan for the child and issue an order specifying the permanent plan and if compelling reasons exist for not terminating parental rights and/or for placing the child in long-term alternate care.

The Statewide Assessment notes that compliance with the requirement to conduct permanency hearings is automatically monitored through FOCUS. However, the Statewide Assessment also indicates that the 12-month permanency hearings and the 6-month reviews appear to be placing additional demands on the court calendar.

All stakeholders commenting on the issue of 12-month permanency hearings during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the hearings are held in a timely manner and there are very few continuances or delays. Some stakeholders indicated that the hearings facilitate permanency for children. Stakeholders noted that in some cases permanency hearings seem more like 6-month reviews because permanency decisions are not being made. Some stakeholders noted a need for additional judicial training on permanency decision-making while others noted improved effectiveness of hearings as a result of training sponsored by the CIP.

**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 because petitions to file for termination of parental rights are not being filed in accordance with the timeframes established by ASFA.

According to the Statewide Assessment, during the 12-month permanency hearing, the social workers make recommendations to the court regarding permanency options for children. If the judge determines that TPR should be sought, IDHW approaches the prosecuting attorney to request the filing of a petition for TPR within the ASFA 15 out of 22 months timeframe. If the prosecuting attorney is unwilling to file a petition, it can be filed by the region's Deputy Attorney General.

The Statewide Assessment identified the following as key factors that have strengthened Idaho's termination of parental rights process:

- Amendments to Idaho's "Termination of Parental Rights" statute have reduced the waiting time for the filing of a petition for termination from 6 months to 30 days from placement.

- An internal IDHW review of all proposed terminations of parental rights ensures that there is an appropriate plan and that cases are court ready.
- Each Region has established a committee to review permanency planning and outcomes for children.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR described TPR procedures that are consistent with the procedures identified in the Statewide Assessment. That is, if the court agrees at the 12-month hearing that TPR is to be filed, then the agency prepares the necessary paperwork for TPR and submits it to the prosecuting attorney or the Deputy Attorney General. Stakeholders in all three sites noted that the agency has seen an increase in filing for TPR and that FOCUS provides alerts for cases in which children are approaching 15 out of 22 months in foster care.

Several stakeholders also expressed the opinion that some judges are reluctant to proceed with TPR, preferring to allow parents more opportunity to work toward reunification, particularly when parents are in jail or have recently reappeared. However, stakeholders noted that other judges will request that a petition be filed if the family has not made significant progress and require the agency to clearly articulate any compelling reasons for not filing. Stakeholders reported that some courts move quickly to termination once a petition is filed while others delay the termination with continuances and multiple pre-trial conferences intended to give parents additional time, or deny the termination petition.

Stakeholders in Ada County noted TPRs are not filed in a timely manner because of a significant delay in agency completion of the paperwork necessary to file for termination.

**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 foster parents are not consistently given the opportunity to be heard in reviews or hearings involving their foster children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, IDHW administrative rule requires that an Indian child’s tribe, if applicable, and parent(s) or legal guardians(s), foster parents, pre-adoptive parent(s), and relative(s) providing care for the child be provided with notice of and an opportunity to be heard in 6-month reviews and permanency hearings. If the 6-month review is conducted by IDHW, it follows that

IDHW is required to notify all parties of the review. If the 6-month review or permanency hearing is conducted by the court, the court is required to provide all parties with written notice of the hearing and their opportunity to be heard. However, foster parents are not considered parties to the child protective action.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Idaho Code does not specifically require the court to notice foster parents except for the initial planning hearing. However, the recently published Idaho Benchguide and Clerk's Manual, 3.0 Benchbook--Special, 3.1 Child Protective Act, 3.1.5 Idaho Child Protection Manual, dated 2001, indicates that the 6-month review and the permanency hearing are extensions of the planning hearing and therefore notice should be provided to foster and pre-adoptive parents. The Supreme Court Committee to Reduce Delays for Children in Foster Care is currently working to achieve consistency in the notification process.

The Statewide Assessment reports that in most regions, the worker responsible for case management personally notifies parents and foster parents of reviews, hearings, and other important meetings either by mail, phone, or in person. Assistance with transportation can be provided either directly by CFS staff or through the use of gasoline or taxi vouchers. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, approximately two-thirds of the 111 foster parents responding to the statewide survey of stakeholders reported they receive timely notice of 6-month reviews and permanency hearings. Several of those respondents indicated that while they received notices, they did not feel they were given an opportunity to participate in the reviews and hearings. Some comments from foster parents to the survey indicated that they feel that they have been subtly discouraged by workers from participating in case reviews. They perceived the notices as notifications that a hearing will occur rather than as an invitation to participate.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the CFSR expressed opinions that are consistent with the findings of the survey of foster parents reported in the Statewide Assessment. Stakeholders in all counties suggested that foster parents often are notified of hearings or reviews (although this is not always consistent), but that they do not believe that the presence of foster parents is desired or that they will be allowed to be heard. Stakeholders also noted that many foster parents believe that their social workers do not want them to attend the hearings and that the foster parents would not be welcome there.

Stakeholders reported that the ability of foster parents to be heard varies depending on the judge and that in some courtrooms, the judge will directly ask foster parents for their opinions, while in other courtrooms, foster parents are not permitted to speak. A few stakeholders suggested that this is one of the disadvantages of holding the 6-month review in the court. Foster parents were likely to participate in the old administrative reviews that were held by the agency, but only about 10 to 15 percent will attend the court reviews. Stakeholders noted that there is no clear process for foster parents to submit written comments to the court. State-level stakeholders indicated that juvenile court judges are planning to train judges on how to better involve foster parents in the review and hearing process.

## VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of quality assurance system because, although the State of Idaho does have standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services, Idaho does not have a fully implemented statewide quality improvement system.

**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 a Strength because the State of Idaho does have standards for ensuring that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho has complied with the requirements at section 471(a)(22) of the Social Security Act to develop and implement standards to ensure the health and safety of all foster children. Standards are contained in administrative rule and policy. Practice is monitored through supervision and periodic review both by the court and by the regional Continuing Quality Improvement (CQI) Team.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that all contracts are governed by IDHW contract policies and procedures. All service contracts must include performance measures for monitoring. Contractors should have a Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) and be able to describe how they will establish and maintain the level of quality performance as stated in their proposal. Through monitoring, IDHW should be assured contractors are conforming to contract requirements. Quality Assurance Plans are developed individually for each contract. Because they are developed individually, compliance with state plan requirements can be easily incorporated.

Stakeholders commenting on the issue of standards indicated that there are some clear standards regarding social worker contacts with children in foster care (at least once a month) and for physical health screenings (within 30 days of entry into foster care). However, some stakeholders suggested that staff are not adequately monitored with regard to adherence to these standards.

Stakeholders noted that Idaho lacks standards in the following areas: 1) identification of children who need and/or should receive mental health evaluations, and 2) a psychotropic medication policy and procedures to be used for the investigation of abuse allegations in foster care placements.

**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 while the State of Idaho is in the beginning stages of implementing a statewide quality improvement system, the system is not yet a comprehensive quality assurance system. The Idaho CQI system has not been applied to the full continuum of child welfare cases in all offices. It is primarily a case record review which does not include stakeholder input, lacks sufficient feedback to staff, and lacks a mechanism to ensure that measurable program improvement occurs at the local and state levels.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the chiefs of social work in both the child welfare and children's mental health programs consulted with National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, reviewed other states' Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plans, and began development of an Idaho CQI. This CQI process was begun in January 2002, with the following objectives:

- To assure that each client receives the best possible services;
- To obtain necessary information for designing, improving, and delivering services;
- To assure that services meet state and federal standards; and
- To encourage and support staff in improving skills in serving clients and in managing agency resources.

The children's mental health program required the incorporation of additional outcome indicators and external review systems into the continuous quality improvement plan according to Jeff D. vs. Andrus. Children and Family Services will begin including children's

mental health into the existing system for CQI as of June, 2003. The intent is aimed at creating a single system for CQI. Currently, only children in out-of-home placement receiving both children's mental health and child welfare services are included in CQI activities and review.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, nearly half of the 67 Children and Family Services (CFS) staff who participated in a Statewide survey stated that the quality assurance (QA) case review tool has been very helpful in clarifying practice expectations, but about half found it "unhelpful" and "cumbersome." About 25 percent of respondents reported that they have not received any feedback from their supervisor on the tool. Also, several workers commented that, to their knowledge, the tool has not been implemented in their region or they have not yet had a file reviewed.

During the onsite CFSR, State-level stakeholders reported that the CQI process was designed to mirror the CFSR process and randomly selects cases monthly for review. According to State-level stakeholders, the CQI has already lead to shifting practice based on findings with regard to completing case plans and other areas. State-level stakeholders reported that workers are getting instant feedback and clients are being better connected to services. Local stakeholders report that feedback is inconsistent but were positive about the process when feedback did occur.

Stakeholders reported that while a CQI process is being implemented, it is not fully functioning at this time. Feedback to staff is not occurring on a consistent basis and several stakeholders commented that the CQI process (patterned after the Federal Review) is primarily an internal case record review and does not consistently involve the community and outside stakeholders. Furthermore, stakeholders were unable to identify any method for tracking needed changes and holding offices accountable for measurable improved performance.

Stakeholders commenting on the CQI process at the local levels gave it mixed reviews. In Ada County stakeholders noted that the CQI process was used for foster care cases but not for in-home cases and that no reviews have been done since January, 2003. They also noted that they found the CQI tool difficult to use. In Ada County, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that there is no feedback to staff and no process for improvements based on results. However, some stakeholders reported that there is feedback to workers and supervisors, although they acknowledged that there does not appear to be a plan regarding how the information is to be used to engender improvements at the local level. There also appears to be a lack of standardization of the CQI process and a lack of training to ensure that the CQI process is being implemented in a consistent manner.

Stakeholders in Bannock County indicated the required 5 percent of cases is being reviewed and were generally favorable about the CQI process. They noted that it has become more reliable over time and that workers and supervisors now receive written feedback

on their cases. However, they also said that there is no mechanism for holding the local agency accountable for making systemic improvements. Finally, stakeholders in Nez Perce County stated that program management staffed cases with the social worker and supervisor using the CFSR instrument but did not track or monitor practice trends or systemic issues. Stakeholders noted the agency does not use the information to guide local policy, programs, and practice.

## VII. TRAINING

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

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of training. Not all new social workers attend the initial training academy prior to being assigned a caseload, and the training for new staff is not comprehensive. Ongoing training for social workers is offered, but there is no overall training strategy designed to meet the needs of the agency. Some foster parent orientation training is available, but the requirement to attend is inconsistently applied and the content is limited. Ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents is inadequate.

**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 an Area Needing Improvement because the initial new worker training lacks the scope and depth needed to adequately prepare new social workers for their jobs. In addition, some workers do not complete the training prior to being assigned a caseload.

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS workers in Idaho must have either a bachelors or masters degree in social work. Initial training is provided through the 5-day CFS New Worker Academy, which is held 3 to 4 times per year and is mandatory for each new

CFS worker. The Statewide Assessment reports that when the pre-service training has been completed, the new worker is not assigned sole responsibility for cases until they have spent a period of time shadowing another worker or working on a team and being supervised and mentored by their assigned supervisor. Community partners such as tribal social services staff, guardians ad litem, and community service providers may request to participate in the academy and are included as space is available. Certificates of Completion are awarded.

Most stakeholders commenting on the issue during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that the initial training offered by the academy is not adequate to prepare workers for their jobs. Although stakeholders noted that the training provides a good overview of agency practices and procedures, there is insufficient focus on case practice issues. For example, stakeholders indicated that one of the key training gaps concerns how to engage families.

A primary concern voiced by stakeholders is that the 5-day period is not sufficient to cover all of the topics in the depth necessary. In addition, stakeholders reported that some new workers carry caseloads before they attend the initial training because they are hired before the quarterly training is available. Stakeholders noted that in these situations the agency offers a brief training and provides “team” input or a mentor to assist the new worker with case planning.

Some stakeholders noted that there is little training for child welfare supervisors, and that a child welfare supervisory training academy is being planned.

**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 a Strength because CFS staff receive 20 hours annually of ongoing training as required by the State. However, course offerings and topics available are not part of an overall training strategy designed to provide a comprehensive array of training opportunities focused on staff development with respect to child welfare practice.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the agency requires that all case managers must be licensed social workers. Because social work licenses require 20 hours of continuing education annually, this has become the ongoing training requirement for staff. The Statewide Assessment notes that most individuals use their IDHW-sponsored training as their continuing education credits.

The Statewide Assessment reports that ongoing trainings can be initiated in a number of ways. For example, when there are new policies or procedures resulting in a significant change in practice, regional training is provided to workers both by their supervisors and by program specialists from central office. In addition, the Child Welfare Subcommittee comprised of the child welfare chiefs of social work from each Region, completes an annual review of worker and supervisor training needs and makes recommendations for the upcoming year's training.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, much of the available child welfare training is either sponsored or co-sponsored by IDHW and is organized and paid for through Central Office. Regions also sponsor training events. IDHW has taken advantage of video conferencing technology and organized uplinks at several other locations in the State to achieve local simulcast. Workers often request and receive permission to attend non-mandatory trainings through their supervisors. Examination of attendance records and training evaluations verify that social workers throughout the State receive multiple training opportunities to increase their skills. The Statewide Assessment also reported that the majority of the 100 CFS staff members who responded to the statewide survey mentioned that training, both formal and informal (co-workers, mentoring, on-the-job) has been helpful to them in working with children and their families. However, they noted that sometimes the trainings are more procedurally oriented than practice oriented. Suggestions provided by staff included improving the CFS practice manual so that everything is in one place, and providing more frequent trainings on both administrative changes and direct practice.

Stakeholders commenting on the issue of ongoing training during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that ongoing training opportunities exist, although there are gaps. Stakeholders in Nez Perce County noted that workers can request specific training and that the agency will try to meet that need at the local level, although there is a limited budget. However, several stakeholders noted that ongoing training is not “planful.” That is, there does not appear to be any overarching staff development plan that guides the kinds of ongoing training opportunities that the agency makes available to staff. Stakeholders noted that staff do get the required 20 hours of training, but that individual choices are sometimes based on convenience rather than on agency priorities or job-related skills.

Identified training needs included the following:

- Training on permanency planning.
- Training on cultural issues relevant to Tribes and Hispanic community.
- Training on conducting assessments.
- Training on general case management.
- Training for supervisors that is child welfare related rather than focusing on basic supervision.

**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

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because, despite the fact that foster parent training is required for all new foster parents, many do not participate in initial or ongoing training and the training offered is inadequate.

According to the Statewide Assessment, foster parents and prospective adoptive parents must complete an orientation/training prior to licensure, at least 10 hours of training within 12 months of licensure, and at least 10 hours of training annually thereafter. IDHW also may identify specific training to meet the individual needs of a foster parent(s). Currently, all seven Regions require training for all foster families both relative and non-relative. In Region I, if a relative cannot attend a group orientation, it is done in the relative's home shortly following placement.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, there are several methods of addressing training for foster parents across the State. However, in December of 2002, PRIDE was selected as Idaho's official foster/adoptive parent training curriculum. A Native American foster parent training curriculum from North Dakota, modeled after the PRIDE curriculum, also was purchased. This curriculum is being reviewed by the committee's tribal representatives for incorporation into the PRIDE curriculum.

The Statewide Assessment reported that about one-half of the 127 foster parents who participated in the Statewide survey commented that they had benefited from training; however, 25 percent of the foster parents reported that training was inadequate or non-existent. A number of foster parents reported resources outside IDHW as more helpful to them than some of the trainings available. The barriers of time, distance, and lack of day care or day care reimbursement were mentioned by a number of respondents as reasons for not accessing available training. Some suggestions included specialized training for foster parents caring for infants/toddlers and teenagers, developing a manual or welcome packet for new foster parents, and having opportunities to learn from other more experienced foster parents.

The Statewide Assessment advisory group identified the following needs:

- The need for standardized training for foster/adoptive parents;
- The need for ongoing training for foster/adoptive parents and child welfare staff together;
- The need for ongoing training on the role of the foster/adoptive parent.

Stakeholders commenting on the area of foster and adoptive parent training during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that the current training program is inadequate to meet the needs of the families. Stakeholders noted that initial training is insufficient and there is too much latitude with regard to what activities can be used to meet the 10 hours of ongoing training requirements. Stakeholders noted that sometimes this training requirement can be met by reading a parenting magazine or book or going to medical or WIC appointments. In addition, some stakeholders in Bannock County noted that sometimes initial or ongoing training is waived by the licenser when the applicants have some specific child-related experience such as child care or nursing experience.

Some stakeholders noted that the application for a foster care license is not processed until training is received, unless it is a relative foster parent. For relative foster parents, training can be provided after licensing in order to ensure rapid placement of children with relatives. Other stakeholders stated that training is waived and a license is issued to non-relatives as well, when the need for a home for a specific child is urgent.

Several stakeholders, however, reported that some existing training efforts were very effective. Stakeholders in Bannock County praised the PATH training program and the training for foster parents available through the Casey Family Program.

Most stakeholders were aware of and felt generally favorable toward the State's plans to implement the PRIDE curriculum, including the requirement that new and experienced foster parents as well as new and experienced social workers would be expected to participate in the training.

## VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

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

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of service array because, there are many barriers to accessing the State's extensive array of services, and the State is not effective in identifying and meeting the individual needs of children and families.

**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 a Strength as the State of Idaho has in place an extensive array of basic services to address the needs of children and families to prevent removal and to facilitate a safe return to the family. While there are some concerns about availability of mental health and substance abuse treatment and services for both children and families, the array of services available is sufficient to address basic child welfare concerns.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there is an array of services designed to prevent the removal of the child or facilitate the safe return of the child to the family within a reasonable time frame (usually the first 15 months of foster care). While there is an uneven distribution of services and potential providers in Idaho communities, examples of available services provided both in-house and by contract, include:

- In-home and office-based parent education;
- Individual, group and family counseling;
- Mental health services including psychosocial rehabilitation services provided in the child's home during reunification;

- Domestic violence services;
- Parent aides;
- Supervised visitation;
- Family Preservation Services in the form of intensive, in-home therapeutic services;
- Expedited Section 8 certificates for housing so children have a home to return to at reunification;
- Community Resources for Families Program (CRFP), an effective school based program of preventive services; and
- Transportation to services.

The Statewide Assessment advisory group identified the following issues with regard to service array:

- A need to enhance resource development.
- A need to improve service coordination.
- Services should be available in all areas of the State.
- A need to educate communities on services which are available.
- A need for more substance abuse treatment.
- A need for a community resource guide for each community is needed.

Stakeholders' comments on the issue of service array during the onsite CFSR varied across the counties. Stakeholders in Nez Perce County reported that when resources are not readily available, the agency and its community partners work together to develop the needed services. Consequently, many of the service needs in that county are being met. Stakeholders reported that housing is available to facilitate reunification, a substance abuse specialist is available, a master's level clinician is available for mental health assessments, etc. However, service gaps were identified with respect to inpatient substance abuse treatment, foster homes for adolescents with behavioral problems, services for sex-offenders, and dental providers.

The following service gaps were identified by stakeholders in other counties:

- Medication management for in-home children;
- Transportation to access services;
- Post adoption legal services;
- Culturally appropriate services for Native Americans and Latinos;
- Services to support placements;
- Not enough respite care;
- Psychiatric services;

- Services for children who are dual diagnosed with substance abuse and mental health problems;
- Services for developmentally disabled children and their parents;
- Dentists and vision providers who will accept Medicaid;
- Lack of foster homes;
- Substance abuse treatment services for adults and children, specifically inpatient programs;
- Mental health services for adults and parents;
- Mental health services designed to meet the specific needs of foster children were reported difficult to access by children except those with a severely emotionally disturbed (SED);
- Services for sex offenders; and
- Access to affordable housing.

Stakeholders' comments on the issue of service array during the onsite CFSR varied across the counties. Stakeholders in Nez Perce County reported that when resources are not readily available, the agency and its community partners work together to develop the needed services. Consequently, many of the service needs in that county are being met.

**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, based on Stakeholder interviews and the Statewide Assessment, not all services are accessible or available to families and children in all Idaho counties.

According to the Statewide Assessment, not all services are accessible or available to families and children in all Idaho counties. There are more gaps in the service array in rural, less populated areas of the State. A number of very remote areas of Idaho struggle to have services available within the community. To obtain some services, the family may have to drive to another larger community with relevant resources. In rural areas, in addition to provision of direct services to families, staff is challenged with resource development. Regions have been able to use Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds to develop local resources. However, CFS has attempted to get services to all areas of the state through a number of strategies including:

- Conference calls;
- Teleconferencing/telemedicine (newly implemented);

- Negotiations with Medicaid to reimburse provider travel;
- Partnerships with other local agencies needing services provided such as a school, clinic;
- Location of field offices; and
- Partnerships and contracts with local district health departments, psychiatrists.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR noted that accessibility to services in some areas is a significant barrier to being able to help children achieve their permanency plan. Some stakeholders reported lack of transportation was a barrier to accessing services, and some stakeholders reported that Tribes had difficulty accessing State services.

**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 individual needs of children and families, particularly for in-home cases.

According to the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders participating in the Statewide survey were asked: In your experience, how effectively do Department services respond to the specific needs of the family? Although stakeholders responding to the survey rated the State as doing a good job overall in making sure that children and families' needs are being met, they noted the lack of individualization of case plans. Some stakeholders commented on the shortage of social workers, and staff commented on the limited resources in smaller communities. Judges commented on the need to involve fathers earlier in cases. There were also comments regarding the agency's heavy focus on reunification and its ability to address mental health issues.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR provided a variety of opinions. Stakeholders noted that post-legal adoption services, including respite care, are not easily accessible. Stakeholders reported that adoptive families needed to re-enter system through the child welfare or mental health service systems in order to access services. Some stakeholders reported a lack of culturally appropriate services for Native American and Latino clients.

Stakeholders in Ada County generally agreed that the agency in that county has not been effective in individualizing services for children and families in foster care cases. Some stakeholders attributed this to the fact that the court requires the service plan to reflect the court stipulations, but stakeholders also cited staff lacked knowledge of available resources. For the in-home services cases in Ada

County, the agency is able to provide economic assistance to meet a wide range of individualized needs, but stakeholders reported that funds were focused on meeting "concrete needs".

In contrast, stakeholders in Bannock County reported that the agency does a better job individualizing services for foster care children and their families than it does for children and families in in-home services cases. Finally, stakeholders in Nez Perce County had praise for the ability of the agency to individualize services to families. They identified wrap around services, TAP services offered by the Casey Family Program, and the coordination and collaboration among partners as the primary reasons for the agency’s effectiveness in individualizing services. However, some stakeholders in this county did note that the agency is not always able to provide culturally responsive services to Native American children and families.

**IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY**

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

Idaho did achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community.

**Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the Child and Family Services Plan (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 both the Statewide Assessment and Stakeholder interviews indicate the State engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other various community agencies and provides an opportunity to include stakeholder input in the CFSP.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State engages in ongoing consultation with various organizations and agencies in the community and includes their concerns and recommendations in the goals and objectives of the CFSP. IDHW partners and works with the Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk in receiving input on the IV-B plan. The IDHW works closely with the Task Force, providing them with regular updates regarding IDHW activities. IDHW also partners with the Task Force in sponsoring training and joint projects.

Idaho also has a Citizen Review Panel in each of the State's seven geographic regions. These are called Keeping Children Safe Panels. Annually, members of all panels attend a statewide meetings where they discuss their accomplishments over the past year, review Idaho's comprehensive Title IV-B plan, exchange ideas and recommend projects for the coming year, make recommendations to the Department Director related to Child welfare services, and receive a report from IDHW on the status of their recommendations from the previous year.

The Statewide Assessment also identifies Idaho's Court Improvement Project, the Supreme Court Committee to Reduce Delays for Children in foster care, as another valued partner. They give input on the IV-B plan and IDHW's activities. Each region is represented on the committee by a magistrate.

Quarterly, IDHW brings together representatives from Idaho's six tribes to meet as the Indian Child Welfare Committee. During these meetings, they discuss issues pertaining to Indian children, including the independent living plan and the activities connected with the IV-B plan.

The Statewide Assessment reports that as a result of meeting regularly with the citizen review panels, the Governor's Task Force for Children at Risk, the Supreme Court Committee to Reduce Delays for Children in Foster Care, and representatives from Idaho tribes, IDHW is able to consult with external community stakeholders in the development of Idaho's Child and Family Services Plan. In the consultation and reporting process, IDHW is open to input from our partners. Thoughts and ideas are evaluated and in most instances are incorporated into the agency's plan.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that Idaho appears to consult with community partners in developing the CFSP. Stakeholders report that the agency has become more open and willing to involve stakeholders in this process; some in Ada County reported being excluded from consultation until very recently and that this has been greatly improved. Stakeholders noted that other community partners that were involved included: MDT's, FYI, the Migrant Council, Casey Family Program, CASA, and the school system.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because the State develops their CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Reports in consultation with a wide variety of Stakeholders.

According to the Statewide Assessment, initial and final drafts of the State's Child and Family Services plan are posted on the internet so that IDHW can receive comments and suggestions from any person interested in issues involving the welfare of children and families in Idaho.

Stakeholders reported they had an opportunity to provide their input to the State Plan. Some tribes reported consultation in the development of the plan, but indicated they would like more active involvement. They reported that State-Tribal ICWA meetings held at least three times a year, that tribes took turns hosting the meetings, and that all tribes were always invited to attend. However, other tribes expressed they had no involvement in planning.

**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 State coordinates services under the CFSP and has established partnerships with many other State and community organizations, including the Department of Education and school districts, Children's Mental Health, Juvenile Correction, Casey Family Program, five local universities, and Tribes.

The Statewide Assessment reports that IDHW's strategic plan includes a goal of developing partnerships and working with citizens in the community. IDHW, including Children's Mental Health, has a number of State level and local Memoranda of Agreement with other public agencies such as the State Department of Education, local school districts, the Department of Juvenile Corrections, and local county juvenile probation departments.

As mentioned in a number of places in the Statewide Assessment, IDHW collaborates with Casey Family Programs in a variety of ways. In addition to partnerships regarding foster care and foster/adoptive parent training, Casey is providing Community Transition Services to young people in transition to adulthood in Region III and IV. There is one full-time social worker and case assistant assigned.

All counties are required to assess and staff cases of child abuse and neglect using a multidisciplinary team approach. Thirty-seven of the 44 Idaho counties report they have some form of multidisciplinary team that deals with cases of child abuse or neglect. IDHW participates in and encourages the use of multidisciplinary teams to coordinate assessments and services involving children and families in Idaho.

On a regional and statewide level IDHW partners with Idaho's universities, the Foster Parent Association, the statewide Child Mortality Review Team, legislators, Idaho's Kinship Coalition, Idaho Children's Trust Fund, and any others who are involved in preventing child abuse or neglect or serving the same general population of children and families who come to the attention of child welfare.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR generally reported a high level of coordination of services between the agency and education, courts, juvenile justice, mental health, citizen review panels, and the Tribes. A few stakeholders, however, were less positive about the relationship between the local child welfare agencies and the Tribes in that region and suggested that this was an area where improvement was needed. The key concern seemed to relate to the ability of tribal children and families to receive State services and to the notification of the Tribes regarding children taken into State custody. Stakeholders reported coordination with State and local school systems with the Community Resources for Families Program, which is funded through the Federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program.

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

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

Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention because the State has standards for licensing and approving foster family homes and child care institutions. Those standards are applied to all licensed or approved out of home care facilities. Idaho exceeds the National Standards for criminal background checks and uses inter-jurisdictional resources to facilitate adoption or permanent placement for waiting children. Idaho does not have a Statewide recruitment plan that is providing the resources needed for waiting children and there is also a need for a comprehensive effort to retain foster parents.

**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

This item is rated as a Strength because the State of Idaho has implemented a standard for licensing homes and institutions that is in accord with recommended national standards.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a completely new set of Child Care Licensing Standards (administrative rules) were developed by a workgroup with both public and private representation to address issues previously unaddressed by Idaho rules. The rules were negotiated with the public and became effective March 31, 2001. A staff member from the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) acted as a consultant and also participated in the actual rule drafting.

The Statewide Assessment notes that these new Child Care Licensing Standards are comprehensive in scope. The revised standards address safety, health, quality, suitability, home environment, parent skills, and parent abilities. Reviews are done at 6 months and relicensures are done every year.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions. According to many of the stakeholders, home studies are done and re-evaluated annually and semi-annual visits are to be made to all foster homes. Stakeholders also reported that the State includes emotional suitability of applicants in addition to the safety of the home when considering licensing foster homes. It was noted that the foster family home study serves as a basis for an adoption home study, but that the adoption home study is more comprehensive.

Several stakeholders expressed concern about the fact that a complete new licensure process is required when a family moves from one region to another. This was seen as a barrier to families continuing to be foster parents.

**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

This item is rated as a Strength because Idaho's licensing standards are applied to all licensed foster family homes and facilities.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho's Child Care Licensing Standards require that for the placement of any child in state custody, either through a court order or through a voluntary placement agreement, that the standard of practice is full, regular foster care licensure. Standards are equally applied to both relative and non-relative foster families. However, there are a few exceptions.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, a relative may receive a waiver, on a case-by-case basis, for foster care standards not related to safety such as:

- Income and record keeping standards;
- Training requirements;
- Bedroom and sleeping arrangements; and
- Maximum number of children residing in the home.

When the agency approves the waiver of a foster care standard, this information must be documented in the body of the foster care licensing study. Also, the continuing appropriateness of a waiver must be reviewed, approved, and documented in the family's foster care file at regular intervals not to exceed six (6) months. Relative foster families who receive a waiver of a non-safety foster care

standard will be considered to have satisfied the requirements for full, regular foster care licensure. Relatives may be considered for emergency placement upon completion of a self-disclosure form, criminal and CA/N registry clearance and a home visit/assessment by the agency. Relatives must also make application for full licensure.

When the placement of a child in the State's custody is made under the provisions of these emergency procedures, a timely referral is to be made to foster care licensing staff to initiate the process of the full, regular licensure of the relative family. Until the family is issued a regular foster care license, no foster care payments may be made using Title IV-E funds. Non-relatives are excluded from placement consideration and approval of any child in the state's custody under the provisions of these emergency placement procedures.

There is an appeal process through Administrative Procedures for any individual who applies to become a foster parent and is refused a license. Relative and non-relative caregivers both have due process under this appeal provision.

Stakeholders' comments on this issue were consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. It was noted that standards are maintained for all families, although non-safety related waivers may be given for relative foster homes. Stakeholders also reported that there is limited licensing when a child is in a home that does not meet standards but the agency does not want to remove the child. In some counties, however, stakeholders noted the training requirement is sometimes waived. (See item 34).

Stakeholders in Ada County reported that in the past, some foster homes have cared for more than 8 children, exceeding the licensing standard. Subsequently, a memorandum was issued advising staff to limit placements in foster homes to the licensing standards.

**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

This item is rated as a Strength because the State of Idaho has implemented a set of criminal background check policies and procedures that exceed Federal requirements for criminal background clearances.

According to the Statewide Assessment, IDHW has been conducting criminal history background checks on employees, alternate care providers, and contractors since 1988. Over that time, the process has continued to evolve and improve. Currently, Idaho has "opted out" of the ASFA criminal history check requirements. However, Idaho standards appear stricter than those required by ASFA and do require a criminal history check on all foster and adoptive families prior to approving the family for placements.

In Idaho, a State and local criminal history background check must be completed for all adult household members of the foster care home who are 18 years of age or older. The adults complete a self-declaration and are fingerprinted. Child abuse, adult protection and sexual offender registries, as well as the Medicaid sanction lists are checked for any evidence of past history relating to any of the adult household members of the foster or adoptive family home.

If during this process any adult member of the household is found to have a valid disposition involving child abuse or neglect, a history of any valid complaint on the adult protection registry, or any criminal conviction or withheld judgment for a misdemeanor or felony, further action is taken. The licensing agency and IDHW conduct a further review to determine suitability if a license can be issued.

If, at any time after the issuance of a regular foster care license, IDHW receives or discovers information concerning the suitability of a family with whom a child or children are to be placed, or have been placed, which raises a concern for the safety of such children, IDHW retains the authority to immediately suspend or revoke a license where such action is determined by IDHW to be in the best interest of the child.

An applicant found to have a positive child protection history, adult protection history, state or federal criminal record for a crime other than the designated ones listed above, is permitted to request an exemption review that considers factors such as severity or

nature of the crime or other findings; period of time since the incident under review; activities since the incident such as continuous employment; and falsification or omission of information on the self-declaration form and other supplemental forms submitted.

**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

This item is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because, while the State of Idaho has a myriad of recruitment strategies, none seem to be effective in providing the State with the foster and adoptive homes needed for Idaho's children in placement. In addition, strategies are needed to address retention of foster homes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, over the past five years, IDHW has made renewed efforts in the area of foster parent recruitment. However, the families who have been recruited are often not ones who are able to meet the special needs of children entering care. These children are ethnically diverse, children with severe behavior problems, children with significant attachment issues, children with sexual behavior issues, and sibling groups. Thus, since 1998, the agency has embarked on several efforts to diverse foster families.

A recent effort focuses on galvanizing support in Hispanic and Native American communities by identifying key members and approaching them for their input on how to effectively reach community members in a culturally relevant way. In addition, Idaho has a website that focuses on delivering more information about foster care and adoption to a broader audience. Idaho is placing greater emphasis on presenting the personal side of foster care and adoption.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFPSR had varying perceptions regarding recruitment efforts. Stakeholders in Nez Perce County noted that the State-based media ads do not reach that area, although some of the billboards are there. Stakeholders in this county did not seem to be aware that the Nez Perce tribe was a pilot site for recruiting Native American families. They reported that word of mouth has been most successful in recruiting new Tribal homes, and that offering existing families a \$100 bonus for any new foster families they recruit has been successful. However, stakeholders in this county expressed the opinion that a full-time recruiter was needed to develop the necessary relationships with the community.

Stakeholders in Bannock County agree with those in Nez Perce County that existing foster parents are the best recruiters. However stakeholders in this county noted that there are not enough foster homes to meet the different needs of children, especially adolescents, and that more services are needed to ensure that existing foster homes are retained.

State-level and some local stakeholders expressed concern that the number of foster homes is increasing, but many of the applicants are only interested in adoption.

Stakeholders in Ada County reported that the agency uses billboards, Wednesday's Child, and the Idaho Migrant Council to recruit foster families. Stakeholders in all counties noted that the agency pays foster parents \$100 if they bring in another family who completes the licensing process.

The greatest concern expressed by stakeholders regarding foster parents pertained to retention. While some foster parents reported excellent relationships with individual agency staff, in all counties, stakeholders voiced concern about the relationship between foster parents and agency workers, which was often perceived as highly adversarial. Stakeholders indicated that, for the most part, foster parents do not feel that the agency meets their needs but they also are fearful of complaining because they are worried that the agency will retaliate by taking the foster children away from them. According to many stakeholders, foster parents do not have a place to go when they have a problem in the home, so that the problems are rarely addressed until it is too late.

**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

This item is rated as a Strength because Idaho uses a broad array of programs to promote cross-jurisdictional timely adoptive placements for waiting children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, IDHW has developed a number of strategies to increase the number of adoptive families across State and other jurisdictional boundaries including a partnership with Eastern Washington University to promote adoption education and training, use of Wednesday's Child for cross-jurisdictional placements, and featuring Idaho children waiting for adoption on the web sites FACES.

Stakeholders reported that the agency uses the Northwest Adoption Exchange for waiting children and usually register them after TPR. In addition, the Wednesday's Child program in Idaho is a model program that was described favorably by a wide range of Stakeholders. In at least one case that was reviewed this program facilitated the placement of brothers in an adoptive home together. Idaho also works closely with bordering States to recruit possible adoptive resources.