#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# Final Report: Idaho Child and Family Services Review October 2008

#### INTRODUCTION

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

The Idaho CFSR was conducted the week of April 7, 2008. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from April 1, 2007, to April 7, 2008. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Child and Family Services (CFS) Division.
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB, which provides Idaho's child welfare data for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2005 and FY 2006, and for the 12-month CFSR target period that ended on March 31, 2007.
- Reviews of 64 cases (39 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites throughout the State: 31 cases in Ada County, 16 cases in Jerome County, and 17 cases in Kootenai County.
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys.

All 64 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review.

# **Background Information**

The CFSR assesses State performance on 23 items relevant to 7 outcomes and 22 items pertaining to 7 systemic factors. In the Systemic Factors Section B of the report, each item incorporated in each systemic factor is rated as either a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI) based on whether State performance on the item meets Federal policy requirements. Information relevant to each item comes from the Statewide Assessment and the stakeholder interviews conducted during the week of the onsite CFSR. The overall rating for the systemic factors is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Originally, there were 40 foster care cases. However, one case was found to be ineligible for the CFSR review because the child was in a trial home visit with parents during the entire period under review.

For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either in substantial conformity with that factor (i.e., a score of 3 or 4) or not in substantial conformity with that factor (a score of 1 or 2).

Items relevant to the seven outcomes are discussed in the Outcomes section of the report. An overall rating of Strength or ANI is assigned to each of the 23 items, depending on the percentage of cases that receive a Strength rating in the case reviews. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed are rated as a Strength. Performance ratings for each of the seven outcomes are based on item ratings for each case. A State may be rated as having Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, or Not Achieved the outcome. The determination of whether a State is in substantial conformity with a particular outcome is based on the percentage of cases that were determined to have substantially achieved the outcome. Specifically, for a State to be in substantial conformity with an outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome.

A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome or systemic factor must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of concern associated with that outcome or systemic factor.

CB has set very high standards of performance for the CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our country's most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be acceptable. The focus of the CFSR process is on continuous quality improvement; high standards are set to ensure ongoing attention to the goal of achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being.

It should be noted, however, that States are not required to attain the 95-percent standard established for the CFSR Onsite Review at the end of their PIP implementation. CB recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often are time-consuming to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with CB to establish a specified amount of improvement or implement specified activities for their PIP. That is, for each outcome or item that is an ANI, each State (working in conjunction with CB) specifies how much improvement the State will demonstrate and/or the activities that it will implement to address the ANIs and then determines the procedures for demonstrating the achievement of these goals. Both the improvements specified and the procedures for demonstrating improvement vary across States. Therefore, a State can meet the requirements of its PIP and still not perform at the 95-percent (for outcomes) or 90-percent (for items) level as required by the CFSR.

The second round of the CFSR assesses a State's current level of functioning with regard to achieving desired child and family outcomes by once more applying high standards and a consistent, comprehensive case-review methodology. This is intended to serve as a basis for continued planning in areas in which the State still needs to improve. The goal is to ensure that program improvement is an ongoing process and does not end with the closing of the PIP.

Because many changes have been made in the onsite CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State's performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its

performance in the first round, particularly with regard to comparisons of percentages. Key changes in the CFSR process that make it difficult to compare performance across reviews are the following:

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

# **Key CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes**

The 2008 CFSR identified several areas of strength in Idaho with regard to achieving desired outcomes for children. These were the following:

- The State was determined to be in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive services to meet their educational needs.
- Items pertaining to timeliness of investigations (item 1), placement of children in close proximity to their parents (item 11), placement of children with their siblings (item 12), and meeting children's physical health needs were rated as a Strength for the State.
- The State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to the absence of recurrence of maltreatment and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.
- The State met the national standards for the data composites pertaining to the timeliness and permanency of reunification (Permanency Composite 1) and the timeliness of adoptions (Permanency Composite 2).

Although the State's performance on Safety Outcome 1 (Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect) and Well-Being Outcome 3 (Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs) did not meet the required level for substantial conformity, performance on these outcomes was fairly high: 90 percent of cases substantially achieved Safety Outcome 1, and 88.1 percent of cases substantially achieved Well-Being Outcome 3.

The CFSR also identified the following key areas of concern with regard to outcomes for children and families:

- The State did not meet the national standards for the data composites pertaining to achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended periods of time (Permanency Composite 3) and placement stability (Permanency Composite 4).
- Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) was substantially achieved in only 46.1 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs) was substantially achieved in only 57.8 percent of the cases.

The State's low performance with regard to these CFSR outcomes may be attributed in part to the following key factors:

- Although the State has developed multiple new practice standards designed to improve the attainment of positive outcomes for
  children and has provided training to child welfare staff on the standards, it did not appear that all of the standards were being fully
  implemented statewide and in a consistent manner at the time of the onsite CFSR. This appeared to be particularly relevant to the
  standards pertaining to concurrent planning and seeking and engaging fathers in case planning and in other aspects of their
  children's lives.
- Although the State has established a family-centered focus for child welfare practice that involves practices such as family group
  decision-making or other family-centered meetings to ensure the participation and engagement of families, at the time of the onsite
  CFSR these practices were not fully implemented in all regions of the State. In addition, in those regions where family meetings
  were fully implemented, such as Ada County, the full implementation occurred shortly before the onsite CFSR and thus was not
  reflected in most of the cases reviewed.
- Some current processes in the State may make it difficult for the child welfare agency to fully implement key practice standards. For example, the authorization of law enforcement to remove children from the home during a child maltreatment investigation without consultation with the agency often makes it difficult for the agency to provide services to prevent a child's entry into foster care. Also, the fact that the agency is not a party to the case during court hearings may result at times in the agency being excluded from critical decisions regarding the case plan. This may restrict the agency's ability to engage parents in case planning and to achieve important case plan goals that are consistent with the caseworker's perceptions of the needs of the children and families.
- There is a lack of consistency in some regions regarding who is responsible for legal representation for the State child welfare agency—i.e., whether it is the county prosecutor or the Deputy Attorney General. Stakeholders suggest that this may delay attainment of permanency in some cases.
- Despite concerted efforts on the part of the State court administrators and the child welfare agency to ensure that review hearings and permanency hearings are held in a timely manner, there are a few judicial regions where there continue to be delays in holding these hearings.

# **Key CFSR Findings Regarding Systemic Factors**

With regard to systemic factors, Idaho is in substantial conformity with the factors of Statewide Information System, Quality Assurance (QA) System, Training, Service Array, Agency Responsiveness to the Community, and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. All five items assessed for that systemic factor were determined to be ANIs. Idaho's performance on this systemic factor reflects the legal and court-related issues identified above as possibly affecting Idaho's performance on the CFSR outcomes.

The specific 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

with regard to the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. In the following sections, key findings are summarized for each outcome and systemic factor. Information also is provided about the State's performance on each outcome and systemic factor during the Federal FY 2003 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 (item 2). Safety Outcome 1 also incorporates two national data indicators for which national standards have been established—the absence of maltreatment recurrence and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

#### **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1 during its first CFSR conducted in Federal FY 2003 and was required to address this outcome in its PIP. The key concerns at that time were the following:

- The case reviews identified inconsistent practice with respect to the timeliness of initiating a response to child maltreatment reports and establishing face-to-face contact with children and families.
- The State did not meet the national standard for the measure pertaining to maltreatment recurrence.

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The 2008 CFSR found that Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 90.0 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance did not vary substantively across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 87.5 percent of Ada County cases, 91 percent of Jerome County cases, and 100 percent of Kootenai County cases. In the 2008 CFSR, the timeliness of investigations (item 1) was rated as a Strength, and the State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to the absence of maltreatment recurrence and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff. However, repeat maltreatment (item 2) was rated as an ANI. In 87.5 percent of the cases, there was no repeat maltreatment, which is slightly less than the 90 percent required for a rating of a Strength.

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

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two indicators. One indicator (item 3) addresses the issue of child welfare agency efforts to prevent children's removal from their homes by providing services to the families that ensure children's safety while

they remain in their homes. The other indicator (item 4) pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children.

#### **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its PIP. Both items assessed for this outcome were rated as ANIs in the 2003 review based on the following key concerns:

- There was a lack of consistency with regard to conducting adequate safety and risk assessment. In several cases, there was either no assessment or the assessment conducted was insufficient.
- In some cases, assessments focused on the immediate crisis rather than on the underlying causes, such as domestic violence or substance abuse, which often resulted in children being left at risk in their homes.

Idaho achieved its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

#### **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The 2008 CFSR found that Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 68.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome did not vary substantively across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 71 percent of Ada and Kootenai County cases and 62.5 percent of Jerome County cases. In the 2008 CFSR, items 3 and 4 continued to be rated as ANIs, and the following key concerns were identified:

- Although there were numerous cases in which effective safety and risk assessments were conducted and services were provided, there also were a substantial number of cases in which the safety and risk assessments and/or the services provided were insufficient to ensure the safety of the children in their homes.
- In several of these cases, when the "target child" in the case was removed from the home and placed in foster care, the agency neglected to conduct sufficient assessments to ensure the safety of the children remaining in the home.
- In other cases, the child was placed with a relative, but no safety and risk assessments were conducted to ensure the safety of the child in the relative's home.

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

There are six indicators incorporated in the assessment of Permanency Outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all children. The indicators pertain to the child welfare agency's efforts to prevent foster care re-entry (item 5), ensure placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establish appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining indicators focus on the child welfare agency's efforts to achieve permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8

and 9) or to ensure that children who have "other planned permanent living arrangements" (OPPLA) as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

## **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its PIP. At that time, all items assessed for this outcome were rated as ANIs, and the following key concerns were identified:

- The goal of reunification was maintained for too long before changing the goal to adoption, even when it was clear that reunification was not likely to occur.
- Cases were put in a "holding pattern" while a parent was incarcerated without engaging in concurrent planning.
- There were delays in filing for termination of parental rights (TPR).
- There were delays in completing the paperwork necessary to expedite the adoption process.
- Some judges were reluctant to seek TPR if they did not think that the child was adoptable (this was particularly relevant for older children).
- Foster care placements often were not made to ensure an appropriate match between the child's needs and the capacity of the foster care placement to meet those needs.

Idaho met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The 2008 CFSR found that Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 46.1 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods (Composite 3) and placement stability (Composite 4).

The State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification (Composite 1) and timeliness of adoptions (Composite 2). However, item 9 (Adoption) was assigned an overall rating of ANI as case reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner in 31 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength.

The case review findings for this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 78 percent of Jerome County cases, compared to 45 percent of Ada County cases and 20 percent of Kootenai County cases. The following key concerns were identified in the 2008 CFSR case reviews:

- Each of the six items assessed under the outcome was rated as an ANI.
- Many children experienced multiple placement changes that were not planned to further attainment of their case goals.
- There were inconsistencies in practice with regard to establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- There was a lack of effort with regard to achieving permanency goals, particularly when there were concurrent goals.
- There were delays in achieving adoptions in a timely manner due to delays in TPR and in completing home studies.
- There was a lack of consistency with regard to concerted efforts to find an adoptive home for children.

#### The Statewide Assessment raised the following concerns:

- Inconsistency of legal representation is one of the major factors that impacts permanency outcomes for children, and permanency outcomes for children are better in regions where the agency has adequate legal representation.
- Despite the "Concurrent Planning" standard requirements, some CFS staff and members of the judicial system struggle with implementing concurrent planning practices due, in part, to fundamentally different ideas of what is in the best interests of the child.
- State-level stakeholders and stakeholders from Ada and Kootenai Counties reported many delays in the adoption process.

Kootenai County stakeholders identified the length of time to achieve TPR as the key barrier to timely adoptions. Other stakeholders also indicated that there is a lengthy appeals process for TPR, which can take more than a year to resolve. They also noted that there are crowded court dockets in many regions, which contribute to extensive delays in holding the TPR hearings.

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

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

### **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the outcome in its PIP.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The 2008 CFSR found that Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 79.5 percent of the foster care cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of Kootenai County cases, compared to 80 percent of Ada County cases and 67 percent of Jerome County cases.

Case review findings during the 2008 CFSR indicate that the agency was highly consistent in ensuring that children were placed in close proximity to their parents and close relatives and in placing siblings together when appropriate. However, the 2008 case reviews also identified the following concerns:

- Children's visitation with their siblings and their mothers occurred more frequently than visitation with their fathers.
- Children's connections to community, school, and extended family were not consistently maintained.

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

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

#### **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR, with all items assessed rated as ANIs. The key concerns identified in the 2003 CFSR were the following:

- CFS was not consistent in assessing and addressing the service needs of children and their parents.
- CFS was not consistent in involving parents and children in the case planning process.
- CFS was not consistent in establishing sufficient face-to-face contact between caseworkers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

A general finding of the 2003 CFSR was that the State was more effective in achieving this outcome for foster care cases than it was for in-home services cases.

Idaho met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 57.8 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. Performance on the outcome varied across counties. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 68 percent of Ada County cases and 62.5 percent of Jerome County cases, compared to 35 percent of Kootenai County cases. Performance also varied as a function of type of case. The outcome was substantially achieved in 64 percent of the foster care cases, compared to 48 percent of the in-home services cases.

The case reviews in the 2008 CFSR indicate that the agency was not consistent with regard to the following:

- Assessing and addressing the service needs of fathers
- Involving children, mothers, and particularly fathers in case planning
- Establishing sufficient caseworker contacts with children
- Establishing sufficient caseworker contacts with fathers, particularly in the in-home services cases

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

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

#### **Key Findings of the 2003 and 2008 CFSRs**

Idaho was in substantial conformity with this outcome in both the 2003 and the 2008 CFSRs. No key concerns were identified.

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

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

#### **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 in its 2003 CFSR, with both relevant items rated as ANIs. 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. Idaho met its target goals for this outcome by the end of the PIP implementation period.

#### **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 88.1 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 94 percent of Kootenai County cases and 90 percent of Ada County cases, compared to 79 percent of Jerome County cases. Also, the outcome was substantially achieved in 85 percent of foster care cases and 95 percent of in-home services cases.

The key finding of the 2008 CFSR case reviews is that although the agency was generally effective in meeting children's physical health needs, it was less consistent with regard to assessing and meeting children's mental health needs.

#### 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 the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The State's automated system, which is the Family Oriented Community User System (referred to as FOCUS), identifies the legal status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care, including those under the purview of the Behavioral Health Department. The State also was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR.

#### **Case Review System**

Five indicators are used to assess the State's performance with regard to the systemic factor of Case Review System. The indicators examine the development of case plans and parent involvement in that process (item 25), the consistency of 6-month case reviews (item 26) and 12-month permanency hearings (item 27), the implementation of procedures to seek 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 preadoptive parents and relative caregivers in case reviews and hearings (item 29).

# **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR. The following concerns relevant to the systemic factor of Case Review System were identified in the 2003 CFSR:

- Parents and children were not actively involved in the development of case plans on a consistent basis.
- Petitions to file for TPR were not filed consistently in accordance with the timeframes established by ASFA.
- Foster parents were not consistently given the opportunity to be heard in reviews or hearings involving their foster children.

The State met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of its PIP implementation period.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The 2008 CFSR found that Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The concerns identified in the 2003 CFSR also were found in the 2008 CFSR. In addition, the 2008 CFSR found that periodic reviews and permanency hearings were not being held in a timely manner consistently across all areas of the State. The following key areas of concern were identified with regard to the systemic factor of Case Review System:

• Children and parents were not consistently involved in the development of case plans. In some areas of the State, court processes made parent involvement in case planning more challenging.

- Stakeholders identified the lack of consistent legal representation for the Department as a barrier for timely 6-month review hearings and permanency hearings.
- The agency was not consistent with regard to filing for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA.
- Although most caregivers were provided notice of reviews and hearings by the State agency, in some judicial districts they were not routinely and consistently given an opportunity to be heard.

#### **QA System**

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of a QA 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 QA system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program strengths and ANIs (item 31).

#### **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of a QA System in its 2003 CFSR. Although the State was in the beginning stages of implementing a statewide quality improvement system, the system was not yet a comprehensive QA system at the time of the 2003 Onsite Review. The State met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of its PIP implementation period.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The 2008 CFSR found that Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of a QA System. Both items assessed for this systemic factor were rated as Strengths.

# **Training**

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

#### **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR. At that time, the following key concerns were identified:

- The State's training for new caseworkers did not adequately prepare them for their jobs.
- Some caseworkers did not complete the training prior to being assigned a caseload.
- Many foster parents did not participate in the required foster parent training.
- The training offered to foster parents was inadequate to prepare them for fostering children.

The State met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of its PIP implementation period.

#### **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The 2008 CFSR found Idaho to be in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. All items assessed for this systemic factor were rated as Strengths.

#### **Service Array**

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

#### **Key Findings of the 2003 CFSR**

The State was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and, therefore, was required to address this factor in its PIP. The key concerns identified in the 2003 CFSR were the following:

- Key services for children and families were not accessible or available to families and children in all Idaho counties.
- Services were not individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families.

Idaho met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of its PIP implementation period.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

In the 2008 CFSR, Idaho was found to be in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. However, some concerns were identified with regard to the accessibility and availability of particular services to families and children in all areas of Idaho. The Idaho Statewide Assessment notes that such services as parenting classes, anger/domestic violence services, mental health, respite care, crisis intervention, substance abuse treatment, and transportation assistance were rated by stakeholders as the most problematic in terms of widespread availability.

# **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

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

#### Key Findings of the 2003 and 2008 CFSRs

Idaho was in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community in both the 2003 and 2008 CFSRs. In the 2008 CFSR, all items assessed for this factor were rated as Strengths.

# 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 who 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 (item 45).

# Key Findings of the 2003 and 2008 CFSRs

Idaho was determined to be in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention in both the 2003 and 2008 CFSRs. For the 2008 CFSR, all items assessed for this factor were rated as Strengths.

Table 1. Idaho CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators		Outcome Rat	ings	Item	Rating
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved*	Met National Standards?	Rating**	Percent Strength
<b>Safety Outcome 1:</b> Children are first and foremost, protected	NO	00.0	VEC		
from abuse and neglect	NO	90.0	YES	C4	0.2
Item 1: Timeliness of investigations				Strength	93
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment				ANI	87.5
<b>Safety Outcome 2:</b> Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	NO	68.7			
Item 3: Services to prevent removal				ANI	73
Item 4: Risk of harm				ANI	73
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and			Met 2		
stability in their living situations	NO	46.1	Did not meet 2		
Item 5: Foster care re-entry				ANI	83
Item 6: Stability of foster care placements				ANI	79
Item 7: Permanency goal for child				ANI	77
Item 8: Re-unification, guardianship, and placement with relatives				ANI	77
Item 9: Adoption				ANI	31
Item 10: OPPLA				ANI	80
<b>Permanency Outcome 2:</b> The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	NO	79.5			
Item 11: Proximity of placement				Strength	97
Item 12: Placement with siblings				Strength	96
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	84
Item 14: Preserving connections				ANI	79
Item 15: Relative placement				ANI	85
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	72

<sup>\*95</sup> 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.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Items may be rated as a Strength or an ANI. For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases must be rated as a Strength.

Table 2. Idaho CFSR Ratings for Child and Family Well-Being Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators		ne Ratings		
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved	Rating**	Percent Strength
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide				
for children's needs	NO	57.8		
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents			ANI	66
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning			ANI	68
Item 19: Worker visits with child			ANI	84
Item 20: Worker visits with parents			ANI	56
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive services to meet their				
educational needs	YES	95.5		
Item 21: Educational needs of child			Strength	95
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive services to meet their				
physical and mental health needs	NO	88.1		
Item 22: Physical health of child			Strength	98
Item 23: Mental health of child			ANI	87

<sup>\*95</sup> 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.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Items may be rated as a Strength or an ANI. For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases reviewed for the item (with the exception of item 21) must be rated as a Strength. Because item 21 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95 percent Strength rating applies.

Table 3: Idaho CFSR Ratings for Systemic Factors and Items

Systemic Factors and Items	In Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
Statewide Information System	YES	4	
Item 24: The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care			Strength
Case Review System	NO	1	
Item 25: Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parents that includes the required provisions			ANI
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			ANI
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			ANI
Item 28: Provides a process for TPR proceedings in accordance with the provisions of ASFA			ANI
Item 29: Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child			ANI
QA System	YES	4	
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 children			Strength
Item 31: The State is operating an identifiable QA 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
Training	YES	3	
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

<sup>\*</sup>Scores range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 means that the factor is not in substantial conformity. A score of 3 or 4 means that the factor is in substantial conformity.

\*\*Items may be rated as a Strength or as an ANI.

Systemic Factors and Items	In Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
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			Strength
the CFSP			
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			Saternggth
needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children			
Service Array	YES	3	
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			Strength
remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive			C
placements achieve permanency			
Item 36: The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political			
jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP			ANI
Item 37: The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children			
and families served by the agency			Strength
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	YES	4	
Item 38: In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing			
consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, services providers, foster care providers,			
the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and			Strength
includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP			
Item 39: The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of			
progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP			Strength
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
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	YES	4	
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
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

<sup>\*</sup>Scores range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 means that the factor is not in substantial conformity. A score of 3 or 4 means that the factor is in substantial conformity.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Items may be rated as a Strength or as an ANI.

Systemic Factors and Items	In Substantial Conformity?	Score*	Item Rating**
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
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 adoptive homes are needed			Strength
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

<sup>\*</sup>Scores range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 means that the factor is not in substantial conformity. A score of 3 or 4 means that the factor is in substantial conformity.

\*\*Items may be rated as a Strength or as an ANI.

# Final Report Idaho Child and Family Services Review October 2008

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

#### INTRODUCTION

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

The Idaho CFSR was conducted the week of April 7, 2008. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from April 1, 2007, to April 7, 2008. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW), Child and Family Services (CFS) Division
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB, which provides State child welfare data for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2005, FY 2006, and for the 12-month CFSR target period that ended on March 31, 2007
- Reviews of 64 cases (39 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites throughout the State, including 31 cases in Ada County, 16 cases in Jerome County, and 17 cases in Kootenai County<sup>1</sup>
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys

All 64 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review. The key characteristics of the 64 cases reviewed are presented in the table at the end of this section.

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to Idaho's performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of Idaho's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State's first CFSR review, which was held in FY 2003, the State's status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Differences in findings across the sites included in the Onsite Review are described when noteworthy. Variations in outcome and item

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Originally there were 40 foster care cases. However, one case was found to be ineligible for the CFSR review because the child was in a trial home visit with parents during the entire period under review.

ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate. The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

#### Table of Case Characteristics for Idaho

Case Characteristics	<b>Foster Care Cases</b>	<b>In-Home Cases</b>
Total cases	39*	25
When case was opened/child entered foster care		
Case was opened prior to the period under review	28 (72%)	8
Case was opened during the period under review	11 (28%)	17
Child entered foster care during the period under review	13 (33%)	NA
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than age 10	17 (44%)	**
At least 10, but younger than 13	7 (18%)	**
At least 13, but younger than 16	8 (20%)	**
16 and older	7 (18%)	**
Race/ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	33 (85%)	**
Hispanic (of all races)	4 (10%)	**
Native American/White (Non-Hispanic)	2 (5%)	**
Primary reason for opening case		
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	22 (56%)	15 (60%)
Physical abuse	4 (10%)	6 (24%)
Sexual abuse	2 (5%)	0
Medical neglect	1 (3%)	1 (4%)
Mental/physical health of parent	1 (3%)	0
Mental/physical health of child	1 (3%)	0
Substance abuse by parent	7 (18%)	2 (8%)
Child's behavior (substance abuse)	1 (3%)	1 (4%)

<sup>\*</sup>There are 39 foster care cases instead of 40. In one case that was originally a foster care case, the child was in an extended trial home visit during the entire period under review.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Information on these characteristics for in-home services cases is not provided because all children in the family are considered in these cases.

#### **SECTION A: OUTCOMES**

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

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

It should be noted, however, that States are not required to attain either the 95-percent standard established for the CFSR Onsite Review or the national standards for the six data indicators by the end of their PIP implementation. CB recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often take time to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with CB to establish a specified amount of improvement or to determine specified activities for their PIP. That is, for each outcome or item that is an ANI, each State (working in conjunction with CB) specifies how much improvement the State will demonstrate and/or the activities that it will implement to address the areas needing improvement and determines the procedures for demonstrating the achievement of these goals. Both the improvements specified and the procedures for demonstrating improvement vary across States. Therefore, a State can meet the requirements of its PIP and still not perform at the 95 or 90 percent compliance level requirements established for the CFSR.

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

In the following sections, information is provided pertaining to how the State performed on each outcome in the first round of the CFSR. If the outcome was not substantially achieved during the first round, the key concerns observed at that time are identified as well as the strategies implemented in the PIP to address those concerns. This discussion also focuses on whether the key concerns that emerged in the first CFSR continued to be present in the second review, or whether those concerns were addressed, but other concerns emerged.

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

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

#### I. SAFETY

# **Safety Outcome 1**

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect									
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement									
Ada Jerome Kootenai Total Total Percent County County									
Substantially Achieved	14	10	3	27	90.0				
Partially Achieved	1	0	0	1	3.3				
Not Achieved or Addressed	1	1	0	2	6.7				
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	16	11	3	30					
Not Applicable Cases 15 5 14 34									
Total Cases	31	16	17	64					

Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:						
National Standard (%) State's Percentage Meets Standard						
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6 or higher	94.8	YES			
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster						
care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68 or higher	99.79	YES			

## **Status of Safety Outcome 1**

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 90.0 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance did not vary substantively across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 87.5 percent of Ada County cases, 91 percent of Jerome County cases, and 100 percent of Kootenai County cases. However, the outcome was applicable for assessment in only three of the Kootenai County cases. As shown in the table, Idaho meets the national standards for the two data indicators relevant for Safety Outcome 1.

#### **Key Concerns Identified in the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1 during its first CFSR conducted in FY 2003 and was required to address this outcome in its PIP. Key concerns identified for this outcome in the 2003 CFSR were the following:

- The case reviews identified inconsistent practice with respect to the timeliness of initiating a response to child maltreatment reports and establishing face-to-face contact with children and families.
- The State did not meet the national standard for the measure pertaining to maltreatment recurrence.

To address these concerns, Idaho included the following key strategies in its PIP:

- Developed priority response guidelines and standards and trained caseworkers and supervisors on the new standards
- Developed and implemented risk and safety assessment standards and tools and trained caseworkers and supervisors on the new tools and standards
- Developed reports from the State's data system, the Family Oriented Community User System (FOCUS), to support ongoing monitoring of the timeliness of initiating investigations and maltreatment recurrence at both the State and regional levels
- Met target goals by the end of the PIP implementation period

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

Although the findings of the 2008 CFSR indicate that Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1, in the 2008 review, the State exceeds the national standards pertaining to the absence of maltreatment recurrence and the absence of maltreatment

of children in foster care by caregivers. In addition, in the 2008 CFSR, the timeliness of initiating investigations is rated as a Strength. However, there were two cases reviewed in which the child experienced maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period, and, therefore, repeat maltreatment is an ANI.

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

<u>X</u>	_ Strength	Area Needing Improvement
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# **Case Review Findings**

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 30 (47 percent) of the 64 cases. Cases were not applicable when there were no child maltreatment reports during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with the State child welfare agency policy requirements.

According to the Idaho policy statement, a "response" to a maltreatment report is considered to be initiated when there is any effort on the part of the CFS caseworker to initiate action on the report of child maltreatment. It may include faxing the report to law enforcement, reading the previous file, or calling a collateral contact for additional information. Idaho policy also specifies the following timeframes and criteria for responding and seeing the child face-to-face:

- Priority 1: Immediate response and see the child face-to-face. Priority 1 is established when a child is in immediate danger involving a life-threatening or emergency situation. Law enforcement must be notified and requested to respond or accompany the caseworker. The child must be seen immediately. All allegations involving a child through the age of 6 or with a severe disability are considered priority 1.
- Priority 2: Response within 24 hours and see the child face-to-face within 48 hours. Priority 2 is established when a child is not in immediate danger, but allegations of abuse, including physical or sexual abuse, or serious physical or medical neglect are clearly defined in the referral. Law enforcement must be notified within 24 hours, and the child must be seen within 48 hours.
- Priority 3: Response within 3 days and see the child face-to-face within 5 days. Priority 3 is established when a child may be in a vulnerable situation because of services needs which, if left unmet, may result in harm, or a child is without parental care for safety, health, and well-being. A family services caseworker must respond within 3 calendar days, and the child must be seen by the caseworker within 5 calendar days of the department's receipt of the referral.

According to Idaho policy, a child may not be seen within designated response times when a variance is granted. The rationale for the delay must be thoroughly documented and reviewed by the supervisor. Circumstances that might warrant a variance include:

- Geographical constraints
- Weather hazards
- Good practice decisions or professional judgment
- Child already sheltered by law enforcement
- Concerns about caseworker safety
- Child has left the area and cannot be located

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

Item 1	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	Total Percent
	County	County	County		
Strength	15	10	3	28	93
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	0	2	7
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	16	11	3	30	
Not applicable	15	5	14	34	
Total Cases	31	16	17	64	

Performance on this item was high across all sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Kootenai County cases, 94 percent of Ada County Cases, and 91 percent of Jerome County cases. However, of the 30 applicable cases for this item, only three (10 percent) were in Kootenai County.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was made within the timeframes required by State policy or law. It was rated as an ANI in two cases when the investigation was not initiated within the required timeframes. In both of these cases, the report had been assigned as a priority 3.

#### **Rating Determination**

Idaho's performance on item 1 is rated as a Strength. In 93 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percentage exceeds the 90 percent required for an overall item rating of Strength. This item was rated as an ANI in Idaho's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, to improve timeliness of initiating investigations, CFS developed an intake/screening practice standard, implemented consistent methods of monitoring, and provided training to caseworkers and supervisors. Timeliness of response was monitored on a monthly basis, and when regional performance fell below the PIP goal of 90 percent, the region developed a regional improvement plan (RIP). The Statewide Assessment attributes improved performance on this item to the frequent and ongoing monitoring of the item by supervisors, quarterly statewide continuous quality improvement (CQI) case reviews, and FOCUS timeliness reports. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, during quarters 2–14 (2004–2007), CFS met or exceeded the 90 percent criterion.

The Statewide Assessment reports that a promising practice with regard to this item was implemented in the Boise CFS office in Ada County. In that office, CFS contracted with the Ada County Sheriff's Department to have a designated law enforcement officer to respond to allegations of abuse and neglect who is colocated in the CFS office. The Statewide Assessment notes that, "This specialization and proximity have provided an experienced and immediate resource for department caseworkers and greatly improved collaboration with law enforcement."

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

All stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency initiates a response to reports of child maltreatment in a timely manner. Kootenai County stakeholders noted that a contractor agency responds to reports that come in after regular business hours or on weekends. Several stakeholders suggested that the State agency's practice of providing monthly information regarding timeliness to local offices has been helpful in improving practice in this area.

# Item 2: Repeat maltreatment \_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_\_ X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

# **Case Review Findings**

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 16 (25 percent) of the 64 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review. For all applicable cases, reviewers were to determine if there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report involving similar circumstances had occurred within a 6-month period before or after that identified report. Information regarding the ratings is provided below.

Item 2	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	Total
	County	County	County		Percent
Strength	9	5	0	14	87.5
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	0	2	12.5
Total Applicable Cases	10	6	0	16	
Not applicable	21	10	17	48	
Total Cases	31	16	17	64	

Item 2 was rated as a Strength when there was no indication of two or more substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports on the family within a 6-month period. Item 2 was rated as an ANI in two cases because at least two substantiated maltreatment reports occurred within a 6-month period.

Despite the absence of recurrence of substantiated maltreatment reports in the cases that were reviewed, reviewers expressed concerns about the number of cases in which there were multiple reports on the family during the life of the case before a report was substantiated. The "life of the case" refers to the time span from the first time that an allegation of abuse or neglect was reported on any child in the family to the time of the Onsite Review. The following are key findings with regard to this concern:

- In 11 cases, there were at least 5 reports, but fewer than 10 reports.
- In 10 cases, there were between 10 and 14 reports during the life of the case.
- In 11 cases, there were 15 or more maltreatment reports during the life of the case, with 3 cases having more than 20 reports.

# **Rating Determination**

Idaho's performance on item 2 is rated as an ANI. In 87.5 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that there was no recurrence of maltreatment. This percentage is slightly less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. However, in the 2008 CFSR, the State meets and exceeds the national standard for the data indicator pertaining to maltreatment recurrence. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR because, at that time, the State did not meet the national standard for the maltreatment recurrence data indicator.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, as part of Idaho's PIP, CFS developed the "Immediate Safety, Comprehensive, and Ongoing Assessment" standard. Elements of the standard included decision points to minimize repeat maltreatment, such as safety factors and planning, determining whether a case should be opened, when to discontinue the safety plan, and when to close the case. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the State monitors performance on the data indicator pertaining to maltreatment recurrence through both the statewide CQI case reviews and the FOCUS Child Welfare Outcomes Report. As noted in the Statewide Assessment,

CQI results, which are based on reviews of 192 cases per year, demonstrate continuous improvement in performance on this item. In addition, the FOCUS Child Welfare Outcomes Report shows the absence of maltreatment percentages ranging between 95.5 and 97.1 for FY 2003 through FY 2007.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR generally expressed the opinion that repeat maltreatment occurs when children go home too soon before the family problems are fixed or when the agency responds to a report but does not remove the child. Some stakeholders noted that there will be a lot of reports on the same family, but it may be a while before a report is substantiated.

Most stakeholders suggested that the key reasons for recurrence of maltreatment reports were substance abuse/relapse, mental illness, dirty homes, and homelessness. Stakeholders noted that sometimes a dirty home case will not be substantiated until there are multiple reports. Kootenai County stakeholders said that if a report comes in on an open case, often it will go to the existing case manager rather than be treated as a new intake incident. Kootenai County stakeholders also indicated, however, that before closing a case, they try to make sure that other agencies are involved with the family to prevent a recurrence of maltreatment.

### **Safety Outcome 2**

Outcome S2: Children are safely m	naintained in their h	omes whenever p	ossible and appro	opriate		
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement						
	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>	
Substantially Achieved	22	10	12	44	68.7	
Partially Achieved	4	2	3	9	14.1	
Not Achieved or Addressed	5	4	2	11	17.2	
Total Cases	31	16	17	64		

# **Status of Safety Outcome 2**

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 68.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome did not vary substantively across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 71 percent of Ada County and Kootenai County cases and 62.5 percent of Jerome County cases.

#### **Key Concerns Identified in the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho also did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its PIP. Both items assessed for this outcome were rated as an ANI in the 2003 review. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 CFSR:

- There was a lack of consistency with regard to conducting adequate safety and risk assessments. In several cases, there was either no assessment or the assessment conducted was insufficient.
- In some cases, assessments focused on the immediate crisis rather than on the underlying causes, such as domestic violence or substance abuse, which often resulted in children being left at risk in their homes.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following key strategies as part of its PIP:

- Developed and implemented a standard pertaining to use of protective supervision when the risk to the child is moderate to high, but the maltreatment level does not meet the standard of imminent danger
- Developed and implemented a new standard for opening an in-home case for services, including the development of individualized case plans and family monitoring
- Developed tools using data from FOCUS and from the CQI process to provide feedback to regions on the practices and outcomes relevant to in-home services cases
- Developed and implemented a new standard for immediate safety assessment, comprehensive assessment, and reassessment
- Developed standardized procedures for responding to child abuse and neglect allegations against members of foster families and employees of residential facilities
- Trained caseworkers on how to effectively engage families, including training on using Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)
- Trained caseworkers and other relevant staff on all new standards and assessment tools

Idaho met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

#### **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

In the 2008 CFSR, items 3 and 4 continued to be rated as ANIs. Although there were numerous cases in which effective safety and risk assessments were conducted and services were provided, there also were a substantial number of cases in which the safety and risk assessments and/or the services provided were insufficient to ensure the safety of the children in their homes. In several of these cases, when the "target child" in the case was removed from the home and placed in foster care, the agency neglected to conduct sufficient assessments to ensure the safety of the children remaining in the home. In other cases, the child was placed with a relative, but no safety and risk assessments were conducted to ensure the safety of the child in the relative's home.

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

# Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal

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

# **Case Review Findings**

An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 45 (70 percent) of the 64 cases. Cases were excluded from this assessment if (1) the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and there were no other children in the home or (2) there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or identified risk of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For 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 placement of children in foster care while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 3	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total Number	Total Percent
	County	County	County		
Strength	16	7	10	33	73
Area Needing Improvement	7	5	0	12	27
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	23	12	10	45	
Not applicable	8	4	7	19	
<b>Total Cases</b>	31	16	17	64	

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Kootenai County cases, 70 percent of Ada County cases, and 58 percent of Jerome County cases.

Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 33 cases when reviewers determined the following:

- Services were provided to the parents and children to prevent removal (20 cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home without service provision because the removal was necessary to ensure the child's safety (six cases).
- Services were provided after the reunification of the child to support the reunification and prevent reentry (seven cases).

Case review information indicates that a range of services was offered or provided to families. This included, but was not limited to, the following:

- Assessments for substance abuse
- Substance abuse treatment
- Drug court
- Weekly visitation in the home
- Anger management services
- Financial assistance services (including payment of utility bills and vouchers for food)
- Housing services
- Concrete services, such as vouchers for cleaning supplies and a vacuum cleaner
- Domestic violence services
- In-home parenting education services
- Case management services
- In-home counseling services
- Transportation services
- Respite care services
- Psychological services (mental health screenings and treatment)
- Rehabilitation services
- Legal services
- Behavioral therapy
- Shelter services for mothers and children
- Intensive in-home family preservation services
- Assistance to parents to meet children's medical needs
- Services for parents of children with developmental disabilities

Item 3 was rated as an ANI in 12 of the 45 applicable cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

• No assessment was conducted to determine whether services were needed to ensure the safety of the children remaining in their homes, and/or these services were not provided (six cases). In two of these cases, the target child was removed from the home, but no assessment was conducted to determine whether services were needed to ensure the safety of the siblings remaining in the home. In two other cases, no assessment was conducted to determine whether services were needed to ensure the safety of children placed by their parent with other family members. In one case, the agency identified and offered services, but it did not make concerted efforts to engage the family in those services.

- Needed in-home services to ensure safety and prevent removal were not provided initially and only began several months after the case was opened on the family (two cases).
- The child was removed without efforts to provide appropriate services to prevent entry, and the removal was not necessary to ensure the safety of the child (three cases). In one case, some services were provided, but not the key service that would have prevented the child's placement (substance abuse treatment for the mother), and, therefore, the child was eventually removed. In one case, the child was removed by law enforcement without consultation with the child welfare agency.
- The child was reunified without ensuring that services were provided to prevent reentry (two cases).

#### **Rating Determination**

Idaho's performance on item 3 is rated as an ANI. In 73 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, in April 2004, CFS developed the "Family Preservation/In-Home Family Services" standard. The standard sets forth the expectation that if the immediate safety/risk assessment determines the risk level of a case to be moderate to high, and the children would be "conditionally safe" if services were put in place, the caseworker is to make every effort to engage the family and offer services. The Statewide Assessment reports that to meet this standard in regions with high caseworker caseloads, contracts with private providers were developed to provide the services and case management to the family to prevent entry into foster care and also to stabilize the family after reunification to prevent reentry.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, statewide CQI reviews conducted from 2004 to 2006 found that in around 97 percent of the cases reviewed, the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children's entry into foster care or reentry after a reunification. However, the Statewide Assessment reports that the Idaho child welfare system is understaffed and, as a result, often responds to maltreatment reports by placing children in out-of-home care. The Statewide Assessment also reports that decisions to remove a child are ultimately made by law enforcement and, in some cases, may be made without input from CFS and without the opportunity to provide in-home services to prevent removal.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to prevent children's removal from their homes while ensuring their safety in the home. They noted that most regions are using contracts with community services agencies to provide intensive in-home services to children and families that allow the children to remain safely in their homes.

However, many of these stakeholders also noted that the agency does not have the opportunity to prevent children's removal from their homes when children are removed from their families by law enforcement without consultation with the agency. Stakeholders indicated that law enforcement will remove children if they believe the children are in imminent danger. They noted that this decision often is made when there is an arrest for drug abuse, but also can be made for other reasons, such as when there is a report that involves a dirty home. Several stakeholders suggested that removals by law enforcement without agency consultation may result in the child returning home shortly after the removal when the agency becomes involved and can provide services.

A few stakeholders in Kootenai County indicated that the agency may use FGDM to prevent removals, but this is not done on a consistent basis.

#### Item 4: Risk of harm to child

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

#### **Case Review Findings**

An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 64 cases. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 4	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	Total Percent
	County	County	County		
Strength	24	11	12	47	73
Area Needing Improvement	7	5	5	17	27
<b>Total Cases</b>	31	16	17	64	

Performance on this item did not differ substantively across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 77 percent of Ada County cases, 71 percent of Kootenai County cases, and 69 percent of Jerome County cases.

Item 4 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by the agency through the following: (1) conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children's home or in the children's foster home and (2) addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment.

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

- There was a lack of adequate safety and risk assessments in the foster home during the period under review (four cases). In one case, the child was placed in a foster home with 10 foster children in the home and no assessment of safety concerns was conducted. This resulted in the target child being molested by another child in the home.
- There was a lack of adequate safety and risk assessments in the children's home during the period under review (11 cases). In 4 of these 11 cases, reviewers identified a lack of safety and risk assessment of the sibling remaining in the home. In 3 of the 11 cases, the child had been placed with a relative after the maltreatment report but the agency did not conduct a safety or risk assessment of the relative's home.
- The case was closed without an adequate assessment of risk even when there were serious risk issues for the child (two cases).
- The agency had concerns about the child's unsupervised visits with the maternal grandmother because of a family history of substance abuse, but did not monitor the visits or conduct an assessment to determine whether unsupervised visits were appropriate (one case).

#### **Rating Determination**

Performance on item 4 is rated as an ANI. In 73 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had appropriately addressed the risk of harm to the children. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for an overall rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, five new standards were developed to clarify practice regarding reducing the risk of harm to children in foster care and those receiving in-home services. The Statewide Assessment also reports that in 2004, CFS revised its risk reassessment tool to make it more relevant and user- friendly for caseworkers, and during every in-home and out-of-home contact, caseworkers are conducting informal ongoing assessments related to the child's needs and any safety concerns that may be present.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the 2006 CQI found that in 94.1 percent of the cases, the agency had made concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes and while in foster care. However, the Statewide Assessment also indicates that the area of formal reassessment prior to case closure remains a challenge for the State. The Statewide Assessment notes that because the reassessment instrument has not yet been integrated into FOCUS, CFS staff cannot accurately gauge how frequently a formal reassessment is being conducted to inform case decision-making.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the agency is effective in conducting risk assessments in both in-home and foster care cases. Stakeholders reported that caseworkers receive training on conducting risk assessments, and the agency provides them with formal tools to do the assessments.

#### II. PERMANENCY

## **Permanency Outcome 1**

Outcome P1: Children have permanency	and stability in	their living situ	ations			
Number of cases reviewed by site accord	ing to degree of	outcome achieve	ement			
	Ada	Jerome	Koote	nai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	Coun	ty		
Substantially Achieved	9	7	2		18	46.1
Partially Achieved	11	2	7		20	51.3
Not Achieved or Addressed	0	0	1		1	2.6
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	20	9	10		39	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0		0	
Conformity of Statewide data indicators	with national st	andards:	_			
		National S	tandard		+State's	Meets Standard
		(Scaled S	Score)	Co	mposite Score	(Yes/No)
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency	of reunification	122.6	+		146.1	YES
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions		106.4	106.4 +		109.9	YES
Composite 3: Permanency for children in for	oster care for					
extended time periods		121.7	' +		117.0	NO
Composite 4: Placement stability		101.5	í +		93.0	NO

# **Status of Permanency Outcome 1**

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

• The outcome is substantially achieved in 46.1 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.

• The State did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods (Composite 3) and placement stability (Composite 4).

The State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification (Composite 1) and timeliness of adoptions (Composite 2). Idaho's performance on the individual measures included in each composite data indicator is presented in the discussion of the items related to the measure.

The case review findings for this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 78 percent of Jerome County cases, 45 percent of Ada County cases, and 20 percent of Kootenai County cases.

## **Key Concerns from the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 in its 2003 CFSR. At that time, all items assessed for this outcome were rated as ANIs, and the following key concerns were identified:

- The goal of reunification was maintained for too long a period of time before changing the goal to adoption, even when it was clear that reunification was not likely to occur.
- Cases were put on a "holding pattern" while a parent was incarcerated without engaging in concurrent planning.
- There were delays in filing for termination of parental rights (TPR).
- There were delays in completing the paperwork necessary to expedite the adoption process.
- Some judges were reluctant to seek TPR if they did not think that the child was adoptable (this was particularly relevant for older children).
- Foster care placements often were not made to ensure an appropriate match between the child's needs and the capacity of the foster care placement to meet those needs.

To address these concerns, Idaho implemented the following strategies as part of its PIP:

- Developed and implemented new practice standards pertaining to the following:
  - o Conducting risk assessment prior to case closure
  - o Increasing placements with relatives to promote increased placement stability
  - o Responding to inquires by those interested in applying to become foster or adoptive parents
  - o Including foster parents as a member of the professional team
  - o Using concurrent planning in all cases
  - o Developing appropriate case plans for older youth to ensure they have an independent living (IL) plan
  - o Identifying, searching for, and engaging absent parents and notifying absent parents regarding TPR hearings

- Trained staff on all new practice standards and developed a monitoring system (using data from FOCUS and the CQI process) to ensure that new practice standards are being implemented as intended
- Improved access to substance abuse services for families directly involved in the child welfare system through the use of a Substance Abuse Liaison located in each region and through ensuring that families involved in the child welfare system are given priority for access to treatment services
- Developed and implemented FOCUS reports to monitor foster care re-entry, the stability of foster care placements, and the length of time to reunification
- Implemented Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) foster and adoptive family pre-service training on a statewide basis
- Provided Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) training for current caseworkers and enhanced the existing ICWA training for new caseworkers

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

## **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The key concerns identified in the 2008 CFSR case reviews were the following:

- Each of the items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 were rated as an ANI.
- Many children experienced multiple placement changes that were not planned to further attainment of their case goals.
- There were inconsistencies in practice with regard to establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- There was a lack of effort with regard to achieving one of the identified concurrent goals.

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

# Item 5: Foster care re-entries \_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

# **Case Review Findings**

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 12 (31 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for assessment if the child did not enter foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 5	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	Total Percent
Strength	5	4	2	11	85
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	0	2	15
<b>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</b>	6	5	2	13	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	4	8	26	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

The following is the State's performance for the CFSR 12-month target period (ending March 31, 2007) on the individual measure of foster care re-entry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification: 11.2 percent of the children exiting foster care to reunification in the 12-month period prior to the CFSR target period re-entered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage is lower than the national median of 15.0 percent, but not as low as the 25th percentile of 9.9 percent. For this measure, lower percentages are associated with higher levels of performance.

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 10 cases in which the child's entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. The item was rated as an ANI in two cases in which the child re-entered foster care within 2 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode.

## **Rating Determination**

Performance on item 5 is rated as an ANI. Reviewers determined that the child had not re-entered foster care in less than 12 months in 83 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR. At that time, the State did not meet the national standard for the measure of foster care re-entry.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho has made some progress in reducing re-entry into foster care. This was attributed to the following factors:

- Judicially ordered extended home visitation was implemented rather than sending the child home under the status of protective supervision. This change was reported to allow CFS caseworkers to be more involved and assist families in planned transitions while addressing any concerns that may arise.
- A full risk assessment is required prior to closing a case or sending a child home.
- All Idaho substance abuse treatment providers must incorporate relapse planning into their client's treatment plans.

The Statewide Assessment reports that a recent review of 35 of 58 current re-entry cases in Region 5 resulted in the following findings:

- In more than half of the 35 cases reviewed, the child was in foster care for less than 4 months prior to reunification.
- In 25 (43 percent) of the total 58 re-entry cases, the re-entry occurred within 12 months of a previous discharge from foster care.
- There was no completed risk reassessment documented in any of the cases reviewed.
- In approximately half of the 35 cases reviewed, re-entries were due to parental substance abuse.
- In approximately half of the 35 cases, the children were home under protective supervision by the court.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, when a child is returned home under protective supervision, a subsequent removal from home and placement into alternative care is considered a re-entry into foster care. In comparison, when a child is returned home under an extended home visit, a subsequent removal from the home and placement into alternative care is not considered a re-entry into foster care.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item noted that the State now is able to send children home on extended home visits. If a child goes back into out-of-home care from an extended home visit, it is not counted as re-entry. Prior to establishing extended home visits, many children who were reunified were placed under protective custody of the court in order to ensure that the family continued to receive services. However, because protective custody requires a discharge from foster care, if a child returns to out-of-home care, it is considered a re-entry. Stakeholders noted that the courts still order protective custody in some cases, but that the agency also is able to send children home on extended home visits. Stakeholders reported that the extended home visit process has reduced the re-entry rate because if a child goes back into out-of-home care while on an extended home visit, it is not counted as a re-entry.

# Item 6: Stability of foster care placement \_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_\_ X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

## **Case Review Findings**

All 39 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs. Reviewers also assessed the stability of the child's current placement setting. The findings of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 6	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	15	8	8	31	79
Area Needing Improvement	5	1	2	8	21
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

Performance on this item did not vary substantively across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 89 percent of Jerome County cases, 80 percent of Kootenai County cases, and 75 percent of Ada County cases.

Idaho's performance for the CFSR 12-month target period on the individual measures included in Composite 4: Placement stability is as follows:

- 84.6 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage exceeds the national median of 83.3 percent, but is less than the 75th percentile of 86.0 percent.
- 58.9 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is less than the national median of 59.9 percent.
- 32.9 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is less than the national median of 33.9 percent.

These data indicate that achieving placement stability for children in foster care is a challenge for the State.

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's current placement was stable and that either the child did not experience a placement change during the period under review or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest and were intended to further achievement of the child's permanency goal or to provide specialized services to the child.

Item 6 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

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

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Twenty-nine children had one placement during the period under review.
- Five children had no more than two placements during the period under review.
- Five children had three to four placements during the period under review.

## **Rating Determination**

Performance on item 6 is rated as an ANI. In 79 percent of the foster care cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability or that changes in placements were in the best interests of the child. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, to address concerns regarding placement stability, CFS developed the "Managing the Behavior of Children in Foster Care with Positive and Effective Discipline" standard, which describes principles of effective discipline and provides behavioral guidelines for resource families. The Statewide Assessment reports that techniques for managing behavior also are presented in the PRIDE prelicensing training, and resource families receive ongoing training and can receive training specific to a child's needs if additional information is needed. In addition, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, caseworkers are expected to assist resource families in connecting children to community-based services, such as psychosocial rehabilitation, medication management, counseling, and intensive behavioral intervention. Services also are provided in school settings under the direction of an Individual Educational Program (IEP).

The Statewide Assessment reports that Idaho's CQI in 2006 resulted in the finding that in "close to 90 percent" of the cases reviewed, the child was perceived as having experienced placement stability. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that the FOCUS Child Welfare Outcomes Report demonstrated positive results with placement stability for children in foster care for less than 12 months, ranging from 85.3 percent to 88.5 percent between 2003 and 2007.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that placement stability for children in foster care is a challenge. However, stakeholders identified the following factors as contributing to placement stability:

- The recent increase in access to the rapeutic foster care homes for children with behavioral or emotional problems
- The recently developed peer recruiter mentor program for foster parents, which provides foster parents with access to people to assist them when they experience difficulties in the placement
- A focus on placements with relatives
- The use of family meetings with foster parents when a crisis occurs and the provision of family preservation services to foster families, particularly the Services Alternative Program in Ada County
- The implementation of the PRIDE training for foster parents on a statewide basis
- The support of the licensing caseworkers for the foster families
- Efforts to develop a pool of foster parents who will provide respite care for free (Kootenai County only)

Despite these efforts, most stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of placement stability, and various stakeholders identified the following barriers to stability:

- There are an insufficient number of therapeutic foster homes to meet the needs of children in foster care who often have considerable emotional and behavioral problems and who may have had a history of unaddressed mental health needs. The typical foster parents are not prepared to meet the needs of these children.
- There are not enough services for foster families, particularly "wraparound" services that would help them throughout the fostering process or when there is a crisis.
- There are insufficient numbers of foster homes in general resulting in many foster homes being overcrowded and exceeding the required limit of six children. Several stakeholders reported that they knew of many foster families with eight or more children in their homes.
- Foster parents are not as skilled as they need to be to effectively parent the children. Some foster homes do not have enough knowledge about adolescent development and what is the "norm" for adolescent behaviors. Treatment homes are asking for children to be removed because of behaviors, but these are the behaviors that they were supposed to be trained to handle.
- The scarcity of foster parents leads to placements based on the availability of a bed rather than the appropriateness of the match.

## Item 7: Permanency goal for child

Strength	X	Area Needing	Improvement
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# **Case Review Findings**

All 39 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established a permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and whether the most current permanency goal was appropriate. The results of this assessment are shown below.

Item 7	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	Total Percent
Strength	16	9	5	29	77
Area Needing Improvement	4	0	5	10	23
<b>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0	

Performance on this item varied across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Jerome County cases, 80 percent of Ada County cases, and 50 percent of Kootenai County cases.

Idaho's performance for the CFSR target 12-month period on the individual measures included in Permanency Composite 3 (Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods) is as follows:

- 31.3 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (i.e., adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period (measure C3-1). This percentage exceeds the 75th percentile for this measure of 29.1 percent.
- 87.3 percent of the children exiting foster care during the target period who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home (measure C3-2). This percentage is less than the national median for this measure of 96.8 percent.
- 40.0 percent of the children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month target period with a discharge reason of emancipation (or who turned age 18 while still in foster care) had been in foster care for 3 years or longer (measure C3.3). This percentage is lower than the national median of 47.8 percent, but higher than the 25th percentile of 37.5 percent. For this measure, lower percentages indicate higher performance levels.

Idaho's performance on these measures suggests that, although the State performs in the top 25 percent of all States with regard to achieving permanency for children in foster care for 24 months or longer, there are clear challenges for the State with regard to achieving permanency for children who are legally free for adoption. In addition, many of the children who age out of the system were in foster care for 3 years or longer before they were emancipated.

Item 7 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. The case was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined the following:

- The child's current permanency goal was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (two cases).
- The child's permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (six cases).
- Permanency options were not thoroughly considered before establishing a goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA) (one case).

Case review findings pertaining to the case goals were as follows:

- Seventeen children had a goal of reunification with parents or relatives only.
- Nine children had a goal of adoption only.
- Four children had a goal of OPPLA only. OPPLA is a living arrangement other than adoption, reunification, living with other relatives, or guardianship that involves the child remaining in State custody until reaching the age of majority.
- Two children had a goal of guardianship only.

- Four children had concurrent goals of adoption and reunification with parents.
- Two children had concurrent goals of guardianship and reunification with parents.
- One child had concurrent goals of reunification with parents and OPPLA.

Case review findings pertaining to TPR were as follows:

- At the time of the onsite CFSR, 18 (46 percent) of the 39 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.
- TPR had been filed in a timely manner in 13 (72 percent) of the 18 cases.
- In all five cases in which TPR was not filed in a timely manner, there was an exception or compelling reason noted in the case file.

#### **Rating Determination**

Performance on item 7 is rated as an ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner in 74 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, to increase the number of children with timely and appropriate permanency goals, a "Concurrent Planning" standard (current revision 1/07) was developed and implemented. The standard states that the primary permanency goal is the option identified as being the most appropriate and preferred permanency option for a specific child, given the individual circumstances of the case. It receives the strongest effort by the family and case manager as they work toward the permanency goal. At any time in the case, the secondary permanency goal may become the primary goal, and the primary permanency goal may shift to become the secondary goal. The Statewide Assessment reports that in accordance with the "Concurrent Planning" standard, concurrent planning begins at the time of the child's removal from their home.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the CQI case review found that an appropriate permanency goal was established in a timely manner in 84 percent of the cases reviewed in 2004 and 78 percent of the cases reviewed in 2005 and 2006. A special adoption-related CQI that was held in July 2007, and included 84 cases statewide in which the child had adoption as the primary goal, found that an appropriate permanency goal was established in a timely manner in 79.8 percent of the cases. One of the issues identified by the CQI case reviews is an inconsistency between the goal that appears in the case file/case plan/FOCUS and the goal identified by the caseworker and the family. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, sometimes it is clear that this discrepancy is due to the caseworker not changing the goal in FOCUS, but at other times it appears that the participants have not reached consensus on the permanency goal.

The Statewide Assessment reports that caseworkers often are reluctant to change the primary goal of reunification to the second permanency goal without court approval, and some judges are reluctant to change the goal from reunification to another permanency goal until TPR has occurred. The Statewide Assessment also notes that practice regarding how quickly a child's primary permanency goal is changed from reunification to adoption varies from county to county.

Another challenge facing caseworkers, families, and the court is concurrent planning. Case reviews and stakeholder input suggest that caseworkers are struggling with developing and implementing behaviorally specific and time-limited concurrent plans. Also, caseworkers may not be fully informing families of the consequences of failure to implement their case plan.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner is a challenge in many regions of the State, particularly with regard to changing a goal from reunification to adoption and filing for TPR in a timely manner. Various stakeholders identified the following barriers to establishing the goal of adoption in a timely manner:

- There are variations in opinions among key players regarding what is the right permanency decision for a child. The agency may have one opinion, the judge another opinion, and the prosecutor still another opinion. Stakeholders noted that some judges will not terminate parental rights when they have determined that a child is not adoptable or when the child has said that he or she does not want to be adopted.
- Concurrent planning is a difficult process that requires caseworkers to be comfortable with conflict. It also is necessary for caseworkers to have the skills to communicate with families about timeframes and about the possibility of losing their children if they do not meet the required expectations of their case plans in a timely manner.
- There are problems scheduling permanency hearings and TPR hearings in several regions due to crowded court dockets or to requests for continuances from prosecutors.
- There is a lack of effective communication and collaboration between the child welfare agencies and the prosecutors regarding timeframes, goals for children, and the appropriateness of particular permanency decisions.
- There is resistance from the Tribes to TPR because the child may lose connections to the Tribe as well as to the parents.

Stakeholders also expressed concern that, although the State has a subsidized guardianship program, the subsidies are only available if there has been a TPR. As a result, the State cannot support guardianship as an alternative for children who do not want their linkages to parents to be severed or for relatives who may be willing to provide permanent care for children, but do not want to adopt because of the affect that TPR may have on family relationships.

Stakeholders noted, however, that caseworkers are engaging in concurrent planning on a fairly routine basis, and that the 90-day concurrent planning reviews are helpful to caseworkers in addressing the issues of potential conflict with families.

# Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives

Strength	X	Area	Needing	<b>Improv</b>	ement
 $\mathcal{C}$			$\mathcal{C}$	1	

# **Case Review Findings**

Item 8 was applicable for 26 (67 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the permanency goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment are shown in the table below.

Item 8	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	11	6	3	20	77
Area Needing Improvement	2	1	3	6	23
<b>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</b>	13	7	6	26	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	2	4	13	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

Performance varied across counties. The item is rated as a Strength in 86 percent of Jerome County cases, 85 percent of Ada County cases, and 50 percent of Kootenai County cases.

Idaho's performance for the 12-month CFSR target period on the three "timeliness" measures included in Permanency Composite 1 (Timeliness and permanency of reunification) is presented below:

- 83.0 percent of the reunifications that occurred in the target period took place in at least 8 days but less than 12 months of the child's entry into foster care. This percentage exceeds the 75th percentile of 75.2 percent.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children discharged to reunification was 3.6 months. This median length of stay is less than the 25th percentile of 5.4 months. For this measure, lower percentages indicate higher performance levels.
- 54.0 percent of children entering foster care in the last 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage exceeds the 75th percentile for this measure of 48.4 percent.

These data indicate that, in comparison to other States, Idaho performed at a high level on all measures pertaining to timeliness of reunification.

Item 8 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency was making concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. Item 8 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to achieve reunification or guardianship in a timely manner. Some of the concerns identified pertained to a lack of effort to engage parents in the reunification process, a lack of consistency in case planning due to caseworker turnover, a lack of concurrent effort with regard to the goals of guardianship and reunification, and a lack of concurrent effort with regard to the goals of adoption and reunification. With regard to the latter concern, in this case, the agency did not pursue the concurrent goal of reunification until the judge denied the petition for TPR.

#### **Rating Determination**

Performance on item 8 is rated as an ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship in a timely manner in 74 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, to address timely reunification, CFS focused on strengthening family-centered practice and implementing FGDM. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, through these processes, parents are encouraged to identify their family's needs, participate in the development of their case plan, and access services and resources so that their children can remain safely in their home or be reunited as soon as it is safely possible.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that, in many cases when reunification is not possible, a legal guardianship may be pursued. The majority of Idaho's legal guardianships for children in foster care occur with relatives who are eligible for a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grant of \$309 per family per month to assist with the cost of the child's care. The Statewide Assessment notes that, although Idaho does have a State guardianship assistance program, eligibility requirements limit participation. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, State guardianship assistance benefits are provided to legal guardians for the support of a child for whom TPR has been completed, efforts to place for adoption have been unsuccessful, and who would otherwise remain in the guardianship of IDHW.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

The timeliness of reunification and guardianship was not discussed with most stakeholders during the onsite CFSR.

## **Item 9: Adoption**

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

## **Case Review Findings**

Item 9 was applicable for 13 (33 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to finalize adoptions in a timely manner. The results are shown in the table below.

Item 9	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	Total Percent
	County	County	County		
Strength	1	2	1	4	31
Area Needing Improvement	5	0	4	9	69
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	2	5	13	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	14	7	5	26	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

Differences in performance across sites cannot be meaningfully assessed because of small sample sizes. Idaho's performance during the CFSR 12-month target period on the individual measures included in Permanency Composite 2 (Timeliness of adoptions) is as follows:

- 33.1 percent of adoptions occurred in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care (measure C2-1). This percentage exceeds the national median of 26.8 percent, but is less than the 75th percentile of 36.6 percent.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 29.9 months (measure C2-2). This length of stay is less than the national median of 32.4 months, but is higher than the 25th percentile of 27.3 months. For this measure, lower numbers of months mean higher levels of performance.
- 21.0 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the 12-month CFSR target period were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the target period (measure C2-3). This percentage is higher than the national median of 20.2 percent, but is lower than the 75th percentile of 22.7 percent.
- 22.5 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within 6 months (measure C2-4). This percentage exceeds the national 75th percentile of 10.9 percent.
- 45.7 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free (C2-5). This percentage is about equal to the national median of 45.8 percent.

These data suggest that although Idaho's score for Permanency Composite 2 (109.9) exceeds the national standard of 106.4, there are some areas pertaining to achieving adoptions in a timely manner where improvements may be needed. For example, on the national level, Idaho performed in the top 25 percent of States only on the measure pertaining to achieving legal freedom for children who have been in foster care for 17 months or longer.

For the case reviews, item 9 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the State had made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. Item 9 was rated as an ANI in nine cases due to one or more of the following concerns:

- There were delays in TPR (two cases).
- There were delays in completing home studies (four cases).
- There was a lack of concerted efforts to find an adoptive home for the children (three cases).
- There were delays in finalizing the adoption (two cases). One of these cases was an Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) case in which the child had been in the home of the pre-adoptive parents since July 2005 (TPR also was granted in July 2005), and the adoption had not yet been finalized by the time of the onsite CFSR review in April 2008.

In five of the nine cases rated as an ANI for this item, the child had been in foster care for longer than 3 years at the time of the onsite CFSR or at the time of adoption finalization.

Additional case review findings relevant to this item were the following:

- Of the 13 cases with a case goal of adoption, the adoption was finalized in 3 cases at the time of the onsite CFSR. However, there was no case in which the adoption was finalized within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care.
- Only 1 of the 10 children who did not have a finalized adoption was in a pre-adoptive home at the time of the onsite CFSR.

## **Rating Determination**

Item 9 is assigned an overall rating of ANI. Case reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner in 31 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, to improve timeliness to adoption, IDHW implemented 90-day concurrent planning reviews for children with a primary or secondary goal of adoption. During these reviews, the following issues related to adoption are addressed:

• Full disclosure (to biological parents) regarding the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)

- Family engagement
- Relative search
- Establishment of paternity
- ICWA notification
- Visitation/contact arrangements
- Establishment of appropriate permanency goals
- Preparation for the permanency hearing
- Preparation of the report for TPR
- Development of the child's life story book
- Work with the child on termination and adoption plans if the child is at an age appropriate level
- Completion of the child's social history
- Adoption recruitment if the child is not in a permanent placement

The Statewide Assessment also reports that to expedite the adoption process, a dual home study format was developed and implemented in 2005 to serve as both a resource (foster) family licensing and an adoption home study. In addition, the Statewide Assessment notes that in March 2007, Idaho shortened the adoptive supervisory period for some children.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, in July 2007, a specialized statewide adoption CQI was conducted in which 12 randomly selected cases with a primary goal of adoption were reviewed from each region (N=84). The findings of this review were that the agency had made diligent efforts to achieve adoption finalization in a timely manner in only a little over half of the cases.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the department and the Supreme Court Child Protection Court Improvement Committee believe that inconsistency of legal representation is one of the major factors that impacts permanency outcomes for children. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the permanency outcomes for children are better in regions where the agency has adequate legal representation.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that despite the "Concurrent Planning" standard requirements and the 90-day concurrent planning reviews, some CFS staff and members of the judicial system struggle with implementing concurrent planning practices in part due to fundamentally different ideas of what is in the best interests of the child.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

State-level stakeholders and stakeholders from Ada County and Kootenai County expressed the opinion that there are many delays in the adoption process. Kootenai County stakeholders identified the length of time to achieve TPR as the key barrier to timely

adoptions. Other stakeholders also indicated that there is a lengthy appeals process for TPR, which can take more than a year to resolve. Stakeholders also noted that there are crowded court dockets in many regions, which contributes to extensive delays in holding the TPR hearings.

Some stakeholders identified the ICPC process and the home study process as creating lengthy delays. State-level stakeholders noted that paperwork creates delays, particularly the adoption report that must go to the court before finalization can take place, and that requires eight or nine reviews before it can be sent to the agency director for signature prior to the court receiving it.

Although only a few stakeholders from Jerome County commented on this item, they expressed the opinion that adoptions in that county occur in a timely manner, and they attributed the timeliness in large part to the willingness of the court in that county to move toward TPR. However, these stakeholders also noted that many finalized adoptions occur in a timely manner after TPR only because of the agency practice of not petitioning for TPR unless an adoptive placement has been identified.

## Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Strength	X	Area	Needing	Improvement
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### **Case Review Findings**

Item 10 was applicable for 5 (13 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to OPPLA. The results are presented in the table below.

Item 10	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	4	0	0	4	80
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	1	1	20
<b>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</b>	4	0	1	5	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	16	9	9	34	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in four cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a long-term placement for the child and to provide the necessary services to prepare the child for living independently. Item 10 was rated as

an ANI in one case when reviewers determined that the child did not have a plan for IL services until 3 months before the child was emancipated, and the child received no services prior to emancipation.

Additional key findings of the case reviews were the following:

- In two cases, the child was 12 years old or younger when the goal of OPPLA was established.
- In two cases, the child was older than 12 but younger than 16 when the goal of OPPLA was established.
- In one case, the child was 16 or older when the goal of OPPLA was established.

## **Rating Determination**

Item 10 is assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 80 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. Item 10 also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, a "Working with Older Youth" standard was developed in collaboration with Casey Family Programs. The standard provides guidance to field staff on the specific needs and permanency issues of older youth and includes detailed information on creating permanency for and with an older youth who is likely to remain in foster care until his or her 18th birthday.

The Statewide Assessment reports that CFS conducted a specialized CQI assessment in both 2006 and 2007. In April 2007, using the CFSR case review instrument, the CQI review found that CFS made or was making diligent efforts to assist youth in attaining their goals related to OPPLA in 82.5 percent of 63 applicable cases. The Statewide Assessment also reports that, although the sample was selected because OPPLA was the permanency goal of record, the CQI found that caseworkers continued to work toward achieving a more permanent living arrangement for many of the youth, including reunification and adoption, but had not updated the goal in FOCUS or on the case plan.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that Juvenile Corrections expansions have had an impact on child welfare in recent years. Under the Juvenile Corrections court rules, a court may expand a Juvenile Corrections Act proceedings to a Child Protective Act (CPA) proceeding. The court also has the authority to order youth to be sheltered under the CPA. The youth is then dually committed and receives case management services from both programs simultaneously. These expansions are typically done when the court has exhausted the resources of the Department of Juvenile Corrections, the system does not know what to do with the youth, and their parents are unresponsive or unable to assist their child. There were 42 youth brought into CFS under a CPA expansion in State FY

2007. That number is 2.5 percent of the total children/youth removed during the year. It is currently unknown how many of these youth have a permanency plan of OPPLA.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that although most youth tend to have an IL plan, the quality of the plan and the experience of the youth varies depending on the skills and comfort level of the caseworkers in working the plan. Other stakeholders noted, however, that although there is a standard of practice that at age 17 there should be a transition team to develop a plan for a youth who will be aging out of foster care, adherence to this standard is not consistent across the State.

There also was variation among stakeholders with regard to the quality and accessibility of IL services. A key concern expressed by stakeholders at the State-level and in two of the three sites pertained to a lack of adequate IL services to meet the needs of older children in foster care. State-level stakeholders noted that in some regions, the IL skills training program for older youth in foster care is not sufficient, while in other regions, the IL services are available and effective. Ada County stakeholders indicated that although IL services are available to youth through Casey Family Programs, many of the youth in the county are not served by that program and receive very little in the way of IL services. In Ada County, stakeholders expressed the opinion that youth are not well-prepared to live independently. Kootenai County stakeholders reported a lack of sufficient transitional housing services for youth who will be emancipating from foster care. In contrast to these sites, Jerome County stakeholders reported that Jerome County has a high quality IL program in which IL staff work one-on-one with the youth, take youth to visit colleges, use incentives and goals for meeting IL plans, bring in guest speakers for certain topics, and help youth with housing and transportation to group sessions.

# **Permanency Outcome 2**

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children									
Number of cases reviewed by site accord	Number of cases reviewed by site according to degree of outcome achievement								
	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>				
Substantially Achieved	16	6	9	31	79.5				
Partially Achieved	3	3	1	7	17.9				
Not Achieved	1	0	0	1	2.6				
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	20	9	10	39					
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0					

## **Status of Permanency Outcome 2**

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 79.5 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of Kootenai County cases, 80 percent of Ada County cases, and 67 percent of Jerome County cases.

Idaho was in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and, therefore, was not required to address the outcome in its PIP.

## **Key Findings from the 2008 CFSR**

Case reviews during the 2008 CFSR found that the agency was highly consistent in ensuring that children were placed in close proximity to their parents and close relatives and in placing siblings together when appropriate. However, the 2008 case reviews also identified the following concerns:

- Children's connections to community, school, and extended family were not being consistently maintained.
- The agency was not making concerted efforts to maintain the bond between children and their parents, particularly their fathers.

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

# Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement

X	Strength	Area Needing	<b>Improvement</b>

## **Case Review Findings**

Item 11 was applicable for 31 (79 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest, and/or the parents were deceased or their whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's most current foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 11	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
Strength	15	7	8	30	97
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	0	1	3
<b>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</b>	15	8	8	31	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	1	2	8	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

Item 11 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child was placed in the same community or county as the parents or that the child's placement was not in the same community or county, but was in close proximity to the parents. The item also was rated as a Strength if the child was placed out of his or her community or county, but the placement was determined to be necessary to meet the needs of the child and/or support attainment of the child's permanency goal. Item 11 was rated as an ANI in one case when reviewers determined that the child's placement was not in proximity to his parents or siblings.

## **Rating Determination**

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 97 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to ensure that children were placed in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives or that were necessary to meet special needs. This percentage exceeds the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CQI case reviews found that item 11 was rated as a Strength in 98.3 percent of 96 cases reviewed in 2004, 97.8 percent of 96 cases in 2005, and 98.8 percent of 96 cases in 2006.

#### **Stakeholder interview information**

Stakeholders did not comment on this item during the onsite CFSR.

# **Item 12: Placement with siblings**

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

## **Case Review Findings**

Item 12 was applicable for 24 (62 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not have a sibling in foster care at any time during the period under review. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, 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. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below.

Item 12	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	10	5	8	23	96
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	0	1	4
<b>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</b>	10	6	8	24	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	3	2	15	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

As noted above, there was only one case in which item 12 was rated as an ANI. In this case, which was in Jerome County, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to place siblings together.

#### **Rating Determination**

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. Reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care (when appropriate) in 96 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage exceeds the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, placement of siblings in the same home is monitored through quarterly CQI case reviews. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the percentage of cases rated as a Strength for this item in the State CQI case reviews increased from 83.7 percent in 2004 to 95.5 percent in 2008. The Statewide Assessment notes that cases were rated as a Strength if the siblings were placed together, unless such a placement was not in the children's best interests due to safety issues.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to place siblings together unless there is a good reason for the siblings to be separated.

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

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

## **Case Review Findings**

Item 13 was applicable for 32 (82 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item if the child had no siblings in foster care and if one of the following conditions was met with regard to the parents: (1) TPR was established prior to the period under review and the parents were no longer involved in the child's life (or parents were deceased) or (2) visitation with a parent was considered to not be in the best interests of the child. 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 are presented in the table below.

Item 13	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	13	5	9	27	84
Area Needing Improvement	2	2	1	5	16
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	15	7	10	32	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	2	0	7	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

Performance on this item differed across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of Kootenai County cases, 81 percent of Ada County cases, and 71 percent of Jerome County cases.

Item 13 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visitation with parents and siblings met the needs of the children or the agency made concerted efforts to promote frequent visitation even when the current visitation frequency did not meet the child's needs.

Item 13 was rated as an ANI in five cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the mother (three cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the father (three cases).

Specific information about visitation frequency is provided in the table below. The data in the table indicate that children's visitation with their siblings and their mothers occurs more frequently than visitation with their fathers. As shown in the table, for the applicable cases, children visited with their fathers at least once a month in 51 percent of the cases, with their mothers at least once a month in 83 percent of the cases, and with their siblings at least once a month in 90 percent of the cases.

Visitation Frequency (During the period under review)	Mother and Child	Father and Child	Siblings in Foster Care
At least once a week	16 (55%)	9 (41%)	6 (60%)
Less than once a week, but at least twice a month	4 (14%)	1(4.5%)	3 (30%)
Less than twice a month, but at least once a month	4 (14%)	1 (4.5%)	0
Less than once a month	3 (10%)	5 (23%)	1 (10%)
Never	2 (7%)	6 (27%)	0
Total applicable cases	29	22	10

## **Rating Determination**

Performance on item 13 is rated as an ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the child and family in 84 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the "Visitation between Parents, Siblings, Relatives, and Children in Out-of-Home Care" standard sets forth expectations for weekly visits with parents and monthly visits with siblings. The Statewide Assessment notes that the standard not only addresses the frequency of visitation, but also the quality of visitation. The Statewide Assessment also notes that caseworkers are directed to use alternative methods of contact, such as letters and phone calls, to augment face-to-face contacts and in cases in which parents are unavailable due to distance or incarceration.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the CQI reviews show that item 13 was rated as a Strength in slightly less than 90 percent of the cases. The Statewide Assessment reports that in the majority of cases that were not rated as a Strength for this item, the key concern pertained to lack of father contact.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that visits between children and their parents are happening, but that in at least one jurisdiction the court often will only allow visits if the parent has a clean urine screen at least 2 days before the visit. Some stakeholders indicated that some judges require two clean urine screens before they will permit visits between the parent and child.

Some stakeholders said that children are visiting with their siblings on a routine basis. However, other stakeholders noted that some children do not have frequent visits with their siblings, and some youth have not seen their siblings in a long time.

## **Item 14: Preserving connections**

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

## **Case Review Findings**

Item 14 was applicable for all 39 foster care cases. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care. The results of the assessment are provided in the table below.

Item 14	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	Total Percent
Strength	17	6	8	31	79
Area Needing Improvement	3	3	2	8	21
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

There was variation in performance on this item across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 85 percent of Ada County cases, and 80 percent of Kootenai County cases, compared to 67 percent of Jerome County cases.

Item 14 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child's connections with extended family members, religious or cultural heritage, schools, neighborhoods, and friends. Item 14 was rated as an ANI in eight cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections to community, school, and friends (five cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections to extended family (two cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections to his or her cultural heritage (two cases). In both cases, the children were of Native American heritage.

## **Rating Determination**

Performance on item 14 is rated as an ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections with extended family, culture, religion, community, and school in 79 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, this item is monitored through the CQI process and CQI data for 2006 indicate that the item was rated as a Strength in 87.5 percent of the cases. The Statewide Assessment also reports that a special CQI review was done in 2007 for ICWA-eligible cases. A key finding of this review was that in 2007, notice to the Tribe was made in only 60 percent of the cases, although this was an improvement over 50 percent in 2006. The findings of the ICWA CQI also indicate that the child was placed with extended family, a Tribal member, or another Indian home in only 33 percent of the applicable cases.

#### Stakeholder interview information

Jerome County and Kootenai County stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to keep children in their home schools. However, other stakeholders noted that youth who experience multiple placement changes also tend to experience multiple school changes.

Many stakeholders suggested that concerted efforts are made in a number of regions in the State to keep children connected to their Native American cultural identity. It was noted that there is a State specialist who works with the Native American Coalition in Boise to help find resources to keep the child connected to Native American culture. However, stakeholders suggested that the ability to maintain children's connections to their Native American heritage varies across caseworkers, particularly if the Tribe is in another State.

# Item 15: Relative placement \_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

## **Case Review Findings**

Item 15 was applicable for 34 (87 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because (1) the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period or (2) the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement. In assessing this item, reviewers

were to determine whether the agency 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 are presented in the table below.

Item 15	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	13	7	9	29	85
Area Needing Improvement	3	1	1	5	15
<b>Total Applicable Foster Care Cases</b>	16	8	10	34	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	4	1	0	5	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

Performance on this measure did not differ substantively across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of Kootenai County cases, 87.5 percent of Jerome County cases, and 81 percent of Ada County cases.

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

- The child was placed with relatives (eight cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives (21 cases).

Item 15 was rated as an ANI in five cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The agency had not made efforts to search for maternal relatives (three cases).
- The agency had not made efforts to search for paternal relatives (five cases).

## **Rating Determination**

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 85 percent of cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the "Resource Family Licensing for Relatives and Non-Relatives" standard describes processes for relatives to become foster placements for their relative children. The Statewide Assessment also notes that there are expedited processes for relative placements in cases where immediate placement is in the best interests of the child.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, implementation of FGDM forms the foundation for assisting families in identifying potential relative resources for their children. Parents are encouraged to identify both maternal and paternal family members, as well as fictive kin and individuals close to the family who could be a potential resource. CFS caseworkers now have access to Federal Locater Services that assist workers in locating relatives so that CFS staff can determine if they are potential resource placements for children.

The Statewide Assessment reports that data from Idaho's CQI case reviews show that item 15 was rated as a Strength in 86.8 percent of the cases reviewed in 2005 and in 92.2 percent of the cases reviewed in 2006.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to seek and evaluate relatives as placements for children.

## Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents

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

# **Case Review Findings**

Item 16 was applicable for 29 (74 percent) of the 39 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if (1) parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child or (2) a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child's best interests throughout the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers through efforts other than arranging visitation. The results of this assessment are provided in the table below:

Item 16	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	Total Percent
	County	County	County		
Strength	11	2	8	21	72
Area Needing Improvement	4	3	1	8	28
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	15	5	9	29	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	4	1	10	
<b>Total Foster Care Cases</b>	20	9	10	39	

Performance on this item differed across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 89 percent of Kootenai County cases, compared to 73 percent of Ada County cases and 40 percent of Jerome County cases.

Item 16 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children. Item 16 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

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

Specific findings pertaining to this item were as follows:

Efforts Made	With Mother	With Father
	<b>Number of Cases</b>	<b>Number of Cases</b>
Encouraging the parent's participation in school or afterschool activities and		
attendance at medical appointments and special events	14	5
Providing transportation so that parents can participate in these events, activities,		
or appointments	13	3
Providing opportunities for family therapeutic situations	15	6
Encouraging foster parents to mentor biological parents and serve as parenting role		
models for them	12	5
Encouraging and facilitating contact with incarcerated parents (when appropriate) or		
with parents living far away from the child	4	7

## **Rating Determination**

Item 16 is assigned an overall rating of ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care in 72 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS workers arrange for transportation and/or provide transportation funds so that parents are able to participate in their child's special activities, including medical appointments, school activities, school conferences, and afterschool activities. The Statewide Assessment reports that resource parents are encouraged to partner with parents to model positive parenting practices and share the behavioral strategies that they have found to be successful. In addition, the Statewide Assessment

notes that, over the past 3 years, IDHW has undergone a practice shift in how fathers are engaged by CFS caseworkers in response to an agency imperative to identify and involve fathers.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the CQI reviews found that item 16 was rated as a Strength in 77.8 percent of cases in 2004, 89.8 percent of cases in 2005, and 89.2 percent of cases in 2006. The Statewide Assessment attributes the 11.4 percent increase from 2004 to 2006 to an increased focus of the agency on working with and involving fathers.

## **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders did not comment on this item during the onsite CFSR.

#### III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

#### **Well-Being Outcome 1**

Outcome WB1: Families have enha	anced capacity to pro	ovide for their ch	ildren's needs		
Number of cases reviewed by the site according to degree of outcome achievement					
	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
Substantially Achieved	21	10	6	37	57.8
Partially Achieved	9	4	9	22	34.4
Not Achieved or Addressed	1	2	2	5	7.8
Total Applicable Cases	31	16	17	64	
Not Applicable Cases	0	0	0	0	

## **Status of Well-Being Outcome 1**

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 57.8 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. There was variation in performance across counties. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 68 percent of Ada County cases and 62.5 percent of Jerome County cases, compared to 35 percent of Kootenai County cases. Performance also varied as a function of type of case. The outcome was substantially achieved in 64 percent of the foster care cases, compared to 48 percent of the in-home services cases.

## **Key Concerns Identified in the 2003 CFSR**

Idaho was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR, with all items assessed rated as ANI. The key concerns identified in the 2003 CFSR were the following:

- CFS was not consistent in assessing and addressing the service needs of children and their parents.
- CFS was not consistent in involving parents and children in the case planning process.
- CFS was not consistent in establishing sufficient face-to-face contact between caseworkers and the children and parents in their caseloads.

A general finding of the 2003 CFSR was that the State was more effective in achieving this outcome for foster care cases than it was for in-home services cases.

To address the concerns identified in the 2003 CFSR, the State developed and implemented new practice standards in the following areas:

- Conducting assessments to identify service needs
- Developing service plans that address the service needs of all family members
- Engaging family members (and age-appropriate children) in the development of the case plan
- Face-to-face contacts between caseworkers and the children and parents in their caseloads in both foster care and in-home services cases

The State also trained staff in these standards and implemented a process for monitoring compliance with the standards.

The State met its PIP target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

#### **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The case reviews in the 2008 CFSR indicate that the agency was not consistent with regard to the following:

- Assessing and addressing the service needs of fathers
- Involving children, mothers, and particularly fathers in case planning
- Establishing sufficient caseworker contacts with children
- Establishing sufficient caseworker contacts with fathers, particularly in the in-home services cases

The 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, and foster parents

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

# **Case Review Findings**

Item 17 was applicable for all 64 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. This item excludes the assessment of children's (but not parents') needs pertaining to educational, physical health, and mental health needs. These are addressed in later items. The case review results are the following:

Item 17	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
Strength	23	10	9	42	66
Area Needing Improvement	8	6	8	22	34
Not applicable	0	0	0	0	
Total Cases	31	16	17	64	

Performance on this item varied across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 74 percent of Ada County cases, compared to 62.5 percent of Jerome County cases and 53 percent of Kootenai County cases. Performance did not differ as a function of type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of the foster care cases, compared to 64 percent of the in-home services cases.

Item 17 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. Item 17 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined that there was either inadequate assessment of needs or inadequate services to meet identified needs.

Specific case review findings for item 17 are shown in the table below. The data in the table suggest that the agency was considerably less effective in assessing and meeting the service needs of fathers than it was in assessing and meeting the needs of children, mothers, and foster parents. The data also indicate that the agency was more effective in assessing and meeting the needs of the mothers and fathers in the foster care cases than they were in assessing and meeting the needs of the mothers and fathers in the in-home services cases.

Item 17: Needs Assessment and Services Provided	Number and Percent of Applicable Cases in Which Needs Were Assessed and Met		
	Foster Care Cases	In-Home Services Cases	
Child's needs were assessed and met	35 out of 39 (90%)	24 out of 25 (96%)	
Mother's needs were assessed and met	27 out of 29 (93%)	19 out of 24 (79%)	
Father's needs were assessed and met	19 out of 25 (76%)	14 out of 22 (64%)	
Foster parents' needs were assessed and met	32 out of 37 (86%)	NA	

## **Rating Determination**

Idaho's performance on item 17 is rated as an ANI. Reviewers determined that the State had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents (when applicable) in 66 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. A key concern identified pertained to assessing and meeting the service needs of fathers. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho developed the "Immediate Safety/Comprehensive Risk Assessment," the "Service Planning," and the "Effective Service Delivery" standards to provide guidance and improve caseworkers' assessments of the needs of children and families. All three of these standards set practice expectations for: (1) identifying family strength and capabilities, (2) evaluating underlying conditions and contributing factors that lead to maltreatment, (3) assessing parental capacity to protect, and (4) identifying service needs to be included in the service plan. The Statewide Assessment also notes that each foster youth over the age of 15 years completes the Ansell-Casey assessment instrument. Based on those results, the youth, caseworker, foster family, and other interested parties develop an IL plan.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, in the State CQI, item 17 was rated as a Strength in 67.7 percent of the cases reviewed in 2004, 86.4 percent of the cases reviewed in 2005, and 78.6 percent of the cases reviewed in 2006. The Statewide Assessment reports that an indepth analysis revealed that in many cases, ratings of ANI were attributed to a lack of engagement of the child's father.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review focused on the issue of agency efforts to meet the needs of foster parents. Stakeholders suggested that meeting the needs of foster parents varies depending on the skills of the caseworkers. A few stakeholders indicated that when foster parents need respite care, they often have to work it out themselves by finding another licensed foster parent with whom they can "trade."

Stakeholders also indicated that agency effectiveness in meeting the needs of youth in foster care varies across caseworkers and that youth are not being asked what they need frequently enough.

Item 18: Child and	family	involveme	nt in case	planning

Strength \_\_X\_ Area Needing Improvement

## **Case Review Findings**

Item 18 was applicable for 62 (97 percent) of the 64 cases. A case was not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were not involved with the child in any way and the child was too young or had cognitive delays or other conditions that were barriers to participation in case planning. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents and children (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	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	24	10	8	42	68
Area Needing Improvement	6	6	8	20	32
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	30	16	16	62	
Not Applicable Cases	1	0	1	2	
Total Cases	31	16	17	64	

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 80 percent of Ada County cases, compared to 62.5 percent of Jerome County cases and 50 percent of Kootenai County cases. However, performance did not differ as a function of type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of foster care cases and 68 percent of in-home services cases.

Item 18 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process or that the agency had made concerted efforts to involve them in the case planning process. The item was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process.

Key findings with regard to this item are presented in the table below. The data indicate that for the cases reviewed, fathers were less likely to be involved in case planning (69 percent) than were mothers (80 percent) or age-appropriate children (80 percent). However, about one-fifth of the children and mothers in the cases reviewed were not involved in case planning.

Item 18: Involvement in Case Planning	Evaluation Results		Applicable Cases
	Yes	No	Number
Mother involved in case planning?	44 (81%)	10 (19%)	54
Father involved in case planning?	33 (70%)	14 (30%)	47
Child (if age-appropriate) involved in case planning?	33 (83%)	7 (18%)	40

#### **Rating Determination**

Item 18 is assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 68 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the "Service Planning" standard clarifies the service planning process and expectation of involving families in developing their plans. The standard specifies that service plans are to be individualized to address the specific needs of the children and the family and requires that a meeting be held with the family within 30 days of the completion of the Comprehensive Assessment "so that the family has the opportunity to participate in family group decision-making."

The Statewide Assessment also reports, however, that in some circumstances, court processes make parent involvement in case planning more challenging. For example, there are cases where specific services are identified in a court stipulation, which preempts the opportunity for any collaborative assessment and case planning between the agency and the family. Additionally, in some instances, the parents' attorney may instruct the family not to talk with IDHW. In those cases, the caseworker attempts to develop the case plan with the family, through the attorney.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the State CQI reviews resulted in the finding that item 18 was rated as a Strength in 61.3 percent of the cases reviewed in 2004, 81.3 percent of the cases reviewed in 2005, and 77.6 percent of the cases reviewed in 2006. The Statewide Assessment reports that the item percentages reflect the percent of cases in which concerted efforts were made (or are being made) to involve parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Comments from stakeholders with regard to engaging parents and youth in case planning are presented under item 25 in the Systemic Factors section of the report.

# Item 19: Worker visits with child

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

# **Case Review Findings**

Item 19 was applicable for all 64 foster care cases. In conducting the assessment of this item, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the caseworkers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. The results of the assessment are presented in the table below:

Item 19	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	Total Percent
Strength	28	14	12	54	84
Area Needing Improvement	3	2	5	10	16
Total Cases	31	16	17	64	

Performance on this item varied across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of Ada County cases and 87.5 percent of Jerome County cases, compared to 71 percent of Kootenai County cases. Performance on the item did not differ as a function of the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 87 percent of foster care cases and 80 percent of in-home services cases.

Item 19 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals. Item 19 was rated as an ANI in 10 cases when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker 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 (five cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits with children was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, although when visits did occur, they were substantive (two cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (three cases).

Specific caseworker visit information from the case reviews is presented in the table below.

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Child During the Period Under Review	<b>Number and Percent of Cases</b>
Visits occurred on at least a weekly basis	10 (16%)
Visits occurred less than weekly, but at least twice a month	10 (16%)
Visits occurred less than twice a month, but at least once a month	37 (58%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	7 (11%)
There were no visits during the period under review	0
Total Cases	64

# **Rating Determination**

Performance on item 19 is rated as an ANI. In 84 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and/or quality. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, caseworkers are required to maintain regular contact with children in order to effectively assess their ongoing safety and needs. The Statewide Assessment reports that CFS developed the "Contact Between the Social Worker/Clinician, the Child, the Family and Resource Parent(s) or Other Alternate Care Providers" standard (also known as the "worker contact standard") to provide additional clarification related to Idaho's practice for the frequency and purpose of caseworker contacts with children. The standard includes the following specifications:

- Monthly contact with each child must include a brief interview, conducted out of the presence of parents/caregivers, in a non-threatening environment, to allow the child to openly discuss his or her safety and any concerns.
- Children living in the home of their parent or guardian must be seen monthly in their own home.
- Children placed in a resource family home or alternate care setting may be seen in settings other than the alternate care setting as long as contact between the caseworker and the child occurs in the child's alternate care setting a minimum of once every 60 days. All contacts must be documented.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the State's CQI reviews indicate that item 19 was rated as a Strength in 64.6 percent of the cases reviewed in 2004, 74.7 percent of the cases reviewed in 2005, and 84.4 percent of the cases reviewed in 2006. The Statewide Assessment attributes the improvement in performance on this item in part to the fact that the visitation requirement has been brought to the attention of the caseworkers through both the standard and through training.

# **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Some stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that caseworkers are visiting children at least once a month. However, other stakeholders suggested that monthly visits do not occur on a consistent basis.

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

Strength	X	Area	Needing	Improve	ment
 Suchgui	/\	Aica I	recumg	mprove	mom

# **Case Review Findings**

Item 20 was applicable for 54 (84 percent) of the 64 cases. Cases were not applicable for this assessment if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of the children. All cases that were not applicable were foster care cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker's face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and/or ensure the children's safety and well-being. The results of this assessment are presented in the table below:

Item 20	Ada County	Jerome County	Kootenai County	Total	Total Percent
Strength	16	8	6	30	56
Area Needing Improvement	10	6	8	24	44
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	26	14	14	54	
Not Applicable Cases	5	2	3	10	
<b>Total Cases</b>	31	16	17	64	

Performance on this item varied across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 62 percent of Ada County cases and 57 percent of Jerome County cases, compared to 43 percent of Kootenai County cases. Performance on this item also varied as a function of type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 62 percent of the applicable foster care cases, compared to 48 percent of the in-home services cases.

Item 20 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. Item 20 was rated as an ANI when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency and quality (nine cases).
- Visits with the mother were of sufficient quality but not frequency (two cases).

- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency and quality (seven cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency, but when they occurred they were of sufficient quality (two cases)
- Visits with the father were of sufficient frequency but not quality (two cases).
- There were no visits with the father during the period under review (six cases).

Additional information from the case reviews is provided in the table below. The data in the table indicate that caseworkers were more likely to visit mothers at least once a month (76 percent of applicable cases) than they were to visit fathers at least once a month (50 percent of applicable cases). Two cases were rated as a Strength although there were no visits with the mother in one case and with the father in the other case. The ratings for these cases were based on reviewers' determination that the caseworker had made concerted efforts to visit the parent.

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Parents	Mother	Father
Visits occurred at least weekly	7 (14%)	3 (7%)
Visits occurred less than weekly, but at least twice a month	12 (24%)	3 (7%)
Visits occurred less than twice a month, but at least once a month	20 (39%)	16 (36%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	11 (22%)	15 (34%)
There were no visits during the period under review	1 (2%)	7 (16%)
Total Applicable Cases	51	44

# **Rating Determination**

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. In 56 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with parents were sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho developed the "Contact between the Social Worker/Clinician, the Child, the Family and Resource Parent(s) or Other Alternate Care Provider(s)" standard as part of its PIP to specify requirements with regard to contact between the caseworker and the parents. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, State CQI reviews found that item 20 was rated as a Strength in 59.7 percent of the cases reviewed in 2004, 64.9 percent of the cases reviewed in 2005, and 70.7 percent of the cases reviewed in 2006. The Statewide Assessment notes that although contact with both parents is measured for this item, there is a significant difference in the rate of compliance for mothers and fathers. Of the cases reviewed in 2005 and 2006, frequency of visits with mothers is approximately 25 percent more likely to be found sufficient than frequency of visits with fathers. However, the

Statewide Assessment also notes that there is no difference in caseworker visits with parents as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care case or in-home services case).

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders did not comment on this item during the onsite CFSR.

# **Well-Being Outcome 2**

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs								
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement								
Ada Jerome Kootenai Total Total Percent								
	County	County	County					
Substantially Achieved	24	7	11	42	95.5			
Not Achieved	0	2	0	2	4.5			
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	24	9	11	44				
Not Applicable Cases	7	7	6	20				
Total Cases	31	16	17	64				

# **Status of Well-Being Outcome 2**

Idaho is in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2, which includes only one item—Item 21: Educational needs of the child. Reviewers determined that the outcome was substantially achieved in 95.5 percent of the cases, which exceeds the 95 percent or higher required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 100 percent of Kootenai and Ada County cases and 78 percent of Jerome County cases. The two cases that did not substantially achieve this outcome were foster care cases. Only 10 of the 25 in-home services cases were determined to be applicable for a rating of this outcome.

Idaho also was in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and, therefore, was not required to address the outcome in its PIP.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

A key finding of the 2008 CFSR is that in two cases, educational needs were not adequately assessed during the period under review.

# Item 21: Educational needs of the child

X	Strength	Area Needing Improvement

# **Case Review Findings**

Item 21 was applicable for 44 (69 percent) of the 64 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if any of the following applied: (1) children were not of school age or (2) children in in-home cases did not have service needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether concerted efforts were made to meet those needs. The results of this assessment are provided below.

Item 21	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	24	7	11	42	95
Area Needing Improvement	0	2	0	2	5
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	24	9	11	44	
Not applicable	7	7	6	20	
Total Cases	31	16	17	65	

Item 21 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's educational needs were appropriately assessed and concerted efforts were made to provide services, if necessary. Item 21 was rated as an ANI in two foster care cases when reviewers determined that there was a lack of assessment of educational needs despite information that an educational assessment was warranted.

# **Rating Determination**

Item 21 is assigned an overall rating of Strength. Reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children in 95.5 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage exceeds the 95 percent required for this item to be rated as a Strength. A 95-percent standard is set for this item because it is the only item assessed for the outcome.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS developed the "Child Well-Being" standard, which contains several requirements related to education. The first is that children 3 years of age or older with suspected developmental delays are referred to their local school district for screening. Second, caseworkers are to obtain identified educational services, which may include arranging for testing for special education and participation in special classes or meeting with school personnel to address the child's academic performance.

Third, children in the custody of IDHW must attend public or private school; if children have previously dropped out of school with parental permission, they must participate in an IL plan to address education, including a GED, and/or vocational training.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CQI case reviews found that item 21 was rated as a Strength in 80.3 percent of the cases reviewed in 2004, 95 percent of the cases reviewed in 2005, and 93.5 percent of the cases reviewed in 2006.

# **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency makes concerted efforts to meet children's educational needs, although their comments focused on children in foster care rather than children in the in-home services cases.

# **Well-Being Outcome 3**

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs								
Number of cases reviewed by the team	Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement							
Ada Jerome Kootenai Total Total Percent County County								
Substantially Achieved	26	11	15	52	88.1			
Partially Achieved	3	3	1	7	11.9			
Not Achieved or Addressed	0	0	0	0				
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	29	14	16	59				
Not Applicable	2	2	1	5				
Total Cases	31	16	17	65				

# **Status of Well-Being Outcome 3**

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 88.1 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome varied across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 94 percent of Kootenai County cases and 90 percent of Ada County cases, compared to 79 percent of Jerome County cases. The outcome was substantially achieved in 85 percent of foster care cases and 95 percent of in-home services cases.

# **Key Concerns from the 2003 CFSR**

In the 2003 CFSR, Idaho did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3, with both items assessed being rated as an ANI. 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.

To address these concerns, Idaho implemented the following strategies as part of its PIP:

- Developed and implemented new practice standards for all open cases that address assessing and meeting the physical and mental health needs of children
- Mandated developmental screening of all 0–3 year olds with an open case or substantiated disposition
- Trained caseworkers on the new standards and requirements
- Monitored (using data from FOCUS and the CQI process) the implementation of the standards

The State met its target goals for this outcome by the end of its PIP implementation period.

# **Key Findings of the 2008 CFSR**

The key finding of the 2008 CFSR case reviews is that although the agency was determined to be effective in meeting children's physical health needs, it was less consistent with regard to assessing and meeting children's mental health needs.

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

# Item 22: Physical health of the child

X Strength	Area Needing Improvement
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# **Case Review Findings**

Item 22 was applicable for 51 (80 percent) of the 64 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were in-home services cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) children's physical health needs (including dental 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 are presented in the table below:

Item 22	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	<b>Total Percent</b>
	County	County	County		
Strength	25	11	14	50	98
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	0	1	2
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	25	12	14	51	
Not Applicable Cases	6	4	3	13	
Total Cases	31	16	17	65	

Item 22 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children's health needs (medical and dental) were routinely assessed and services provided as needed. Item 22 was rated as an ANI in one case when reviewers determined that the child had health related needs that were not met. Although the child was in foster care for only 6 days, the agency verified that the child was past due on her immunizations and they did not address this concern when the child was returned home under a protective services order.

# **Rating Determination**

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 98 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was adequately addressing the health needs of children in both the foster care and in-home services cases. This percentage exceeds the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the "Child Well-Being" standard establishes IDHW's responsibilities for assuring that each child's physical health needs are assessed and met throughout the life of a case, including medical examination, immunization, dental, and vision and hearing screenings. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, from 2004 through 2007 performance on this item "has hovered at around 90 percent strength ratings."

#### Stakeholder Interview Information

State-level stakeholders and stakeholders in Jerome and Ada Counties generally expressed the opinion that the agency is effective in meeting children's physical health needs. However, Kootenai County stakeholders indicated that foster parents are rarely given health information about the children in their care, often have to pay out-of-pocket for medical services because they are not getting Medicaid cards in a timely manner, do not receive information about Individual Educational Plans, and find it difficult to access dental care because there are very few dentists in the area who accept Medicaid.

# Item 23: Mental health of the child

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

# **Case Review Findings**

Item 23 was applicable for 45 (70 percent) of the 64 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs, or if there were no mental health concerns. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (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 are presented in the table below:

Item 23	Ada	Jerome	Kootenai	Total	Total Percent
	County	County	County		
Strength	20	8	11	39	87
Area Needing Improvement	3	2	1	6	13
<b>Total Applicable Cases</b>	23	10	12	45	
Not Applicable Cases	8	6	5	19	
Total Cases	31	16	17	64	

This item was rated as a Strength in 92 percent of Kootenai County cases, 87 percent of Ada County cases, and 80 percent of Jerome County cases. Five of the six cases rated as an ANI were foster care cases.

Item 23 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children's mental health needs were appropriately assessed and the identified mental health needs were addressed. Item 23 was rated as an ANI in six cases when reviewers determined the following:

- Mental health needs were not assessed, nor addressed (two cases).
- Mental health needs were assessed but services were not provided to address identified needs (four cases).

# **Ratings Determination**

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of ANI. Reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children in 87 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS developed the "Child Well-Being" standard to provide guidance to CFS staff in meeting the mental health needs of children. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, when addressing mental health issues for an in-home case, a caseworker should consider whether the mental health needs are relevant to the reason the agency is involved with the family and whether the need to address mental health issues is a reasonable expectation given the circumstances of the family and the agency's involvement. In out-of-home cases, the standard states that children placed in alternate care should receive a mental health screening and assessment, when indicated. Children are referred for mental health treatment as recommended by the assessment and all children requiring a specialized level of care due to a serious emotional disturbance or severe developmental or physical disability must receive a mental health assessment.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, CQI case reviews found that item 23 was rated as a Strength in 86.1 percent of cases reviewed in 2004, 95.2 percent of cases reviewed in 2005, and 94.3 percent of cases reviewed in 2006.

# **Stakeholder Interview Information**

According to stakeholders commenting on this item, the agency conducts mental health assessments for children in foster care within 30 days of placement. Stakeholders also noted that the children's mental health system in the State provides 10 core services, but that these services are available in varying degrees across the State, so families often have to travel long distances to access services.

# **SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

This section of the CFSR Final Report provides information regarding Idaho's substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors examined during the CFSR. Information on the items included under each systemic factor comes from the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders conducted during the onsite CFSR. It should be noted that ratings for the systemic factors are not based on single comments from an individual stakeholder; however, these comments are included in the report when they provide important insight or clarification regarding the State's performance on a particular systemic factor.

A score for substantial conformity is established for each systemic factor. Scores of 3 and 4 represent substantial conformity. Scores of 1 or 2 mean that a State is not in substantial conformity with the requirements of the systemic factor. Specifically, a score of 1 is given when none of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) or program requirements is in place. A score of 2 indicates that some or all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place but more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirements. A systemic factor is rated a 3 when all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and no more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirement. A rating of 4 is given when all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

Information also is provided regarding the State's performance on each systemic factor for the State's first CFSR. If the systemic factor was part of the State's PIP, the key concerns addressed in the PIP and the strategies for assessing those concerns are noted.

## I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

# STATUS OF STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The State was in substantial conformity with this systemic factor during its first CFSR, conducted in FY 2003, and, therefore, was not required to address the factor in its PIP. Findings for the item assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

X	Strength	Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength because Idaho is operating a statewide information system (called FOCUS) from which staff can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for each child in foster care. In addition, information in the system is perceived by stakeholders as current and accurate. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, FOCUS is able to identify the status, location, demographic characteristics, and goals of all children in foster care. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that CB conducted an AFCARS review of FOCUS and has determined that Idaho's information system meets all of the Federal requirements for an automated statistical reporting system except

for automated interfaces with the titles IV-A, IV-D, and XIX information systems. The Statewide Assessment also reports that although this item was rated as a Strength during the 2003 CFSR, Idaho made numerous enhancements to FOCUS during its 2-year PIP, including creating additional reports to monitor children's safety, permanency, and well-being and establishing a Data Warehouse. The Data Warehouse is a repository of data from various systems, including FOCUS, which is organized for quick retrieval of data for reporting purposes.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, there is an Information System Coordinator (ISC) in each region of the State who assists caseworkers in using FOCUS appropriately and accurately. However, the Statewide Assessment also indicates that due to workload constraints, it can be a challenge for caseworkers to enter all data in a timely manner, although it was noted that this does not apply to key data on children's demographics, location, status, and case goals.

# **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that FOCUS can identify the demographic characteristics, legal status, case goal, and location of all children in foster care, including children who are under the purview of the Behavioral Health agency. Behavioral Health employees serve as case managers for children placed in foster care because of behavioral health concerns and enter information about these children in the automated system. Stakeholders said that children whose case managers are employed by Casey Family Programs also are included in the automated system, but information on these children is entered by a CFS staff person rather than the Casey case manager. Stakeholders also noted that one improvement to FOCUS has been that, for those children placed by a child-placing agency, FOCUS now shows the actual address of the child's placement rather than the address of the child placing agency.

Stakeholders expressed the opinion that the data in the system are accurate and that the system incorporates quality checks that alert caseworkers when something has not been entered correctly or when something needs to be entered before the caseworker can move forward. Stakeholders note that FOCUS captures both the primary and secondary permanency goals in the system. However, some stakeholders suggested that timely entry of updated permanency planning goals sometimes is challenging and that the agency has met with staff to improve the timeliness of these data.

Many stakeholders praised the management information system for the multiple reports that are produced, some of which provide information at the case and caseworker level. Stakeholders reported that standard reports, which they can tailor to meet their needs, are available through FOCUS. Specialized reports can be generated (upon request) from the Data Warehouse. Stakeholders also expressed approval for the alerts that are provided in the system at key points in a case such as the 6-month review, permanency hearing, ICPC review, quarterly reports, and others. Several stakeholders, however, suggested that it also would be useful if FOCUS was able to identify substance abuse as a key area and generate reports on the numbers of children and families with substance abuse-related

concerns. They noted that substance abuse-related information is included in the narrative pieces, but not collected in a way that can be used to generate informational reports.

Stakeholders also expressed concern that entering a case plan in FOCUS is complicated when there are multiple siblings with different fathers.

#### II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

### STATUS OF CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Idaho is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Idaho was not in substantial conformity with this factor during its 2003 CFSR, and, therefore, was required to address the factor in its PIP.

# Key Concerns Identified in the 2003 CFSR

The following concerns relevant to the systemic factor of Case Review System were identified in the 2003 CFSR:

- Parents and children were not actively involved in the development of case plans on a consistent basis.
- Petitions to file for TPR were not filed consistently in accordance with the timeframes established by ASFA.
- Foster parents were not consistently given the opportunity to be heard in reviews or hearings involving their foster children.

To address these concerns, Idaho implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- Established a "Service Planning" standard to require that a service plan be developed with the family within 30 days of the Comprehensive Risk Assessment for in-home cases and within 60 days of placement for children in out-of-home care
- Revised the case planning document to be more "user friendly" for both the family and the caseworker
- Adopted the practice approach of FGDM and other family-based planning techniques, such as family unity meetings, to enhance involvement of parents and children (when age-appropriate) in developing the case plan.

Idaho met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of the PIP implementation period.

Specific findings of the 2008 review for each item included in this systemic factor and the reasons for item ratings are presented below.

# Item 25: Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions

Strength	X	Area Needing	Improvement
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Item 25 is rated as an ANI because the State is not consistently involving children and parents in the development of the case plan. This is reflected in the Statewide Assessment's report that in State FY 2006, the State's CQI results indicated that only 77.6 percent of the cases reviewed were determined to be a Strength with regard to involving parents and children in case planning. In addition, item 18 in the case review instrument, which addresses involvement of parents and children in case planning, was rated as a Strength in only 68 percent of the cases reviewed.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho has established a practice standard that requires that a service plan be developed with the family within 30 days of the Comprehensive Risk Assessment for in-home cases and within 60 days of placement for children in out-of-home care. The Statewide Assessment notes that compliance with case plan requirements is monitored by regional supervisors to ensure that every child has a case plan and that the case plan is current. Supervisors also monitor quality of work and whether caseworkers are including family members in plan development. Regional practice in case plan development also is monitored through the quarterly CQI process.

The Statewide Assessment reports that developing a case planning standard, providing training, and implementing FGDM meetings have improved child and family involvement in case planning. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that in State FY 2006, the State's CQI results indicated that only 77.6 percent of the cases reviewed were determined to be a Strength with regard to involving the parents and children in the case planning process. The Statewide Assessment also reports, however, that in some circumstances, court processes make parent involvement in case planning more challenging. For example, there are cases where specific services are identified in a court stipulation, which preempts the opportunity for any collaborative assessment and case planning between the agency and the family. Additionally, in some instances, the parents' attorney may instruct the family not to talk with IDHW. In those cases, the caseworker attempts to develop the case plan with the family, through the attorney.

# **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that case plans are developed in a timely manner for all cases. Most stakeholders also indicated that parents and children (when age appropriate) are involved in the case planning process through a family meeting (either FGDM or some other type of meeting) that is held early on in the case. However, a few stakeholders noted that the actual case plan that the parents receive is not the document that is developed in the family meeting, but instead is comprised of the tasks identified in the meeting but translated into the FOCUS format, which looks quite different. Ada County stakeholders noted that during the 4 months prior to the onsite CFSR, family meetings have been held for every case. However, prior to that time, family meetings were not routinely convened. Ada County stakeholders also noted that caseworkers have monthly contact with parents to review case plan goals and tasks.

Some Kootenai County stakeholders questioned whether substantive parent involvement is happening in that county on a consistent basis. These stakeholders expressed the opinion that the usual case planning procedure involves the caseworker developing the plan and then taking it to the family meeting to present to the family. However, these stakeholders also said that the caseworker will work with the family if there are differences in opinion about what needs to be in the case plan. Some Kootenai County stakeholders noted that often it was a challenge to get all key parties together to develop the case plan before the court hearing, and as a result, the plan was developed during the court hearing in some cases. Stakeholders also noted that the agency is not considered a legal party to child welfare cases, and, as a result of this determination, CFS workers have been excluded from court meetings in some instances. Stakeholders noted that sometimes decisions on case plans are made without the CFS position being represented and contrary to the caseworkers' recommendations or contrary to the critical and important case plan goals that CFS has developed with the family.

# 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	X_	_Area Needing	Improvement
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Item 26 is rated as an ANI because both the Statewide Assessment and comments from stakeholders indicate that periodic reviews are not being held at least once every 6 months in some judicial districts of the State. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, since 2001, Idaho Code requires that "A hearing for review of the child's case and permanency plan shall be held no later than six (6) months after entry of the court's order taking jurisdiction under the act, and every six (6) months thereafter, so long as the child is in the custody of the department or authorized agency." Recommendations from the

review hearing that are supported by the court are added to the case plan. The Statewide Assessment also notes that, since Idaho's first CFSR in 2003, the Supreme Court Child Protection Court Improvement Committee developed "Idaho Judge's Bench Cards for Child Protection Cases." The bench cards address numerous aspects of child protection cases, including review hearings.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, at the time of preparation of the Statewide Assessment, CFS and the courts did not have data related to the number of review hearings that are held in compliance with the required 6-month review timeframes. It was noted in the Statewide Assessment that these data are expected to be available in the near future, as the courts have recently implemented an information system called the Idaho Statewide Trial Court Automated Records System (ISTARS). The Statewide Assessment indicates that ISTARS has the reporting capacity to assist judges in monitoring their assigned cases. The Statewide Assessment reports that FOCUS does not yet have data on the timeliness of 6-month review hearings.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that, in spite of clear statutory language, direction provided by the bench cards, and ongoing dialogue between the agency and the courts, a minority of judges in a few judicial districts do not regularly conduct review hearings. IDHW and the Supreme Court Child Protection Court Improvement Committee are currently working with those districts to resolve the issue. In most judicial districts, a subsequent date for the review or permanency hearing is set at the end of the last review. However, in a small minority of districts when that does not occur, it is up to the prosecutor or Deputy Attorney General (DAG) to petition the court to hold the hearing.

The Statewide Assessment Advisory Group as well as caseworkers and supervisors identified a lack of consistent legal representation for IDHW and crowded court calendars as the two main barriers to holding 6-month review hearings when these hearings are not held. Recently, through the work of the Supreme Court Child Protection Committee, delinquency notices have been going to judges from the Court Improvement Program. This strategy has been successful with some of the courts.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, stakeholders report that the quality and meaningfulness of the 6-month court reviews are dependent on the frequency with which a judge hears child protection cases, how a judge addresses the family, and whether a judge follows the required guidelines in making judicial determinations

# **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Although most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that, in the majority of cases, the status of each child in foster care is reviewed at least every 6 months if not sooner, it was noted that in two of the seven regions in the State, reviews are not being held at least once every 6 months. For example, several Kootenai County stakeholders reported that periodic case reviews in that county had not been held in a timely manner for several years. However, stakeholders in this county also noted that the county's court system recently has undergone considerable change and that there is a new presiding judge and a new DAG.

Stakeholders reported that at the time of the onsite CFSR efforts were being made to hold reviews in a timely manner in Kootenai County, but that there continues to be a backlog of cases because of crowded dockets.

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	X	_Area Needing	<b>Improvement</b>
		0	

Item 27 is rated as an ANI because both the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicate that permanency hearings are not held being held in a timely manner in some of the State's judicial districts. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

## **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho Code states that a hearing shall be held to review the permanency plan of IDHW prior to 12 months from the date the child is removed from the home or the date of the court's order taking jurisdiction under this chapter, whichever occurs first. Idaho law further requires a Permanency Hearing to be held every year after the initial Permanency Hearing. The Statewide Assessment reports that, similar to the periodic review hearings, CFS and the courts do not yet have data reflecting the number of permanency hearings that are held in compliance with the required 12-month timeframes. It was noted, however, that in the future, ISTARS, the court's newly implemented information system, will provide these data and will generate reports that will allow a judge to monitor timeliness of all judicial hearings.

The Statewide Assessment reports that permanency hearings are currently being held every 12 months in most jurisdictions, but not all. The Statewide Assessment also reports that the lack of legal representation for DHW that exists for the 6-month review hearings also exists for the permanency hearings. It was noted that a number of participants in the Statewide Assessment Committee suggested that improved legal representation for IDHW might assist in scheduling more timely permanency hearings, as well as providing timely and accurate judicial determinations. Additionally, committee members commented that in some jurisdictions, hearings were set without enough notice to adequately prepare for the hearing and to meet the timely notification requirements.

#### Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions about the timeliness of the 12-month permanency hearings. All Ada County stakeholders and most Jerome County stakeholders suggested that permanency hearings are held at least every 12 months. However, other stakeholders said that in some areas of the State, there are problems with timeliness of permanency hearings.

Kootenai County stakeholders reported that, similar to the 6-month review hearings, permanency hearings in that county had been subject to extensive delays in the past. However, it was noted that the new judge in the county was making concerted efforts to ensure that permanency hearings are held in a timely manner, although there is a backlog of cases to review before the county will be up to date with the hearings.

Some stakeholders attributed delays in holding permanency hearings to the complicated relationships among IDHW, the Attorney General's Office, and the prosecutors. A particular concern is the lack of consistent legal representation across the State.

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

Strength	X	Area Needing	Improvement
 			1

Item 28 was rated as an ANI. Both the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicate that the agency is not consistent with regard to filing for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho's Child Protective Act describes the ASFA requirements for TPR as applicable when a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, except in cases where there are compelling reasons not to terminate parental rights. The Statewide Assessment also reports that in July 2005, the definition of neglect was modified in the Termination of Parent and Child Relationship statute. With that change, parental failure to comply with the court's orders or the case plan in a Child Protection case became one of the criteria for TPR. The Statewide Assessment reports that Idaho's Court Improvement Project (CIP) has taken a number of steps to increase the timeliness of petitions for TPR including amending rules, training, and development of an ISTARS judicial database.

Despite these efforts, the Statewide Assessment reports that CQI findings for State FY 2006 indicate that the agency met the ASFA requirements with regard to filing of a petition to TPR and/or documenting a compelling reason for not seeking TPR in only 67 percent of the cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment notes that when working with Tribes, TPR often is not culturally relevant. Tribes have practiced some form of customary adoption (adoption by custom or ceremony) for centuries and have recently begun to include it in their Tribal legal codes. Customary adoption is adoption by another person in a child's Tribe without TPR.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, Statewide Assessment Committee members identified the following challenges to timely TPR:

- Lack of timely filing of TPR petitions
- Too many continuances
- Difficulties with agreement on definition of compelling reasons
- Balancing ASFA requirements with cultural philosophies (particularly of the Tribes) that do not accept TPR
- Lack of timely paternity establishment
- Delays in adjudication of cases

# **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Many State-level stakeholders, Ada County stakeholders, and Jerome County stakeholder commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that when the agency does file for TPR, it is done in a timely manner. They noted, however, that the agency frequently cites compelling reasons not to file for TPR, and that training has been provided to agency staff and the courts on appropriate compelling reasons and on the importance of documenting them in the case file. Several stakeholders reported that it is particularly common for an agency not to file for TPR if a child is 12 years old or older and specifies that he or she does not want to be adopted.

Ada County stakeholders reported that both the agency and the court in that county are reluctant to file for TPR if children do not have an identified adoptive placement for fear of creating legal orphans. Although many Jerome County stakeholders said that the courts were willing to terminate parental rights even if the child did not have an identified adoptive placement, a few agency-level stakeholders in Jerome County said that the agency would not file for TPR unless the child had an identified adoptive home. Stakeholders in this county noted that an agency request for TPR must be approved by the Child Review Placement Team (CRPT) and that often the CRPT will not consent to TPR if the child is either an older child, a child who may be difficult to place in an adoptive home, or a child who is age 12 or older and says he or she does not want to be adopted.

Kootenai County stakeholders reported that TPR petitions are not being filed consistent with the ASFA timeframes in that county. These stakeholders noted that there was a large backlog of TPR cases that has only recently been addressed. In addition, it was noted that some youth who want to be adopted encounter problems moving forward due to resistance from the Court around TPR because the court believes that they are "not adoptable."

Many stakeholders at the State level and in Ada and Kootenai Counties also noted that even when a decision is made to file TPR there are multiple challenges that affect the timeliness of filing. One challenge concerns the confusion around the legal representation for the agency in the TPR process. Stakeholders noted that sometimes the prosecutor will file for TPR and sometimes the prosecutor

refuses to do it and the DAG is responsible for the filing. However, a few stakeholders said that when the agency staff is able to work with the DAG throughout the life of the case, the process of petitioning for TPR is usually timely.

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

Strength	X	Area Needing	Improvement
Suchgui		, I II ca I tocaiii 5	inipio i cincii

This item was rated as an ANI because both the Statewide Assessment and stakeholders indicate that although most caregivers are provided notice of reviews and hearings by the State agency, in some courts, they are not routinely and consistently being given an opportunity to be heard. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, in Idaho it is the role of the courts to give caregivers the opportunity to be heard by addressing them in hearings and it is the role of DHW to provide the notification to resource parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers about the review or hearing. The Statewide Assessment reports that DHW developed and implemented a "Notification of Caregivers" standard in June 2004, and all CFS staff were trained on the standard. The "Notification of Caregivers" standard was revised in January 2007 to incorporate the new requirements that foster caregivers have the right to be heard in any court proceeding.

The Statewide Assessment reports the following CQI findings with regard to notification of caregivers and opportunities for caregivers to be heard:

- During State FY 2004, FY 2005, and FY 2006, the percentage of resource parents participating in the CQI case review who indicated that they recalled having received notification of hearings for children in their home was 88 percent, 93 percent, and 78 percent respectively.
- In spring 2007, 73 resource parents were surveyed as a part of a special CQI case review focused on a random sample of 73 youth with a permanency goal of OPPLA. Seventy-six percent of the resource parents indicated they had received hearing notices. Of the 60 percent who attended hearings, 53 percent indicated that they were given an opportunity to be heard.
- In summer 2007, 79 foster and pre-adoptive parents were surveyed as part of a special CQI case review focused on a random sample of 84 children with a permanent goal of adoption. Of the 72 foster and pre-adoptive parents who responded, 86 percent reported that they had received notices of hearings and reviews. Of those who received notices, 68 percent attended a hearing and 65 percent were heard at the request of the judge or were called as a witness.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that attendance of resource parents at hearings can be problematic because of lack of transportation, the fact that they often must take time off from work to attend the hearings, and the fact that not all resource parents are sufficiently educated about participating in the court process.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that resource parents (foster parents, relative caregivers, and preadoptive parents) are notified by the agency of all court hearings pertaining to the children in their care. Stakeholders expressed
different opinions regarding the opportunity for resource parents to be heard in the court, with several indicating that it depends on the
judge. Ada County stakeholders said that the courts in that county welcome resource parents and that the judges frequently ask them
questions during the hearing. Although a few Jerome County stakeholders expressed a similar viewpoint, most stakeholders from this
county said that resource parents are not usually asked at the hearing if they want to provide input to the court proceedings. Kootenai
County stakeholders indicated that the issue of participation in court hearings is not covered in foster parent training. However, other
stakeholders at the State level noted that the CIP has been providing training to foster parents on their role in court and on effective
ways to have input into the court process.

# III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

# STATUS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. During its 2003 CFSR, Idaho was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor and was required to address this factor in its PIP.

# **Key Concerns Identified in the 2003 CFSR**

In the 2003 CFSR, it was noted that although the State was in the beginning stages of implementing a statewide quality improvement system, the system was not yet a comprehensive quality assurance system at the time of the Onsite Review. At that time, the Idaho CQI system had not been applied to the full continuum of child welfare cases in all offices, did not include stakeholder input, lacked sufficient feedback to staff, and lacked a mechanism to ensure that measurable program improvement occurs at the local and State

levels. To address these concerns, the State developed a comprehensive CQI process modeled after the CFSR process and implemented procedures as part of its statewide CQI system to ensure stakeholder input, feedback to staff and management, and mechanisms to ensure measurable program improvement.

The State met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of its PIP implementation period.

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

X_ Strength	Area Needing Improvement
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Item 30 was rated as a Strength because Idaho has developed and implemented an extensive array of practice standards to protect the safety and health of children in foster care. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

## **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, as part of Idaho's PIP, 25 new standards were developed between 2003 and 2006 to give clear practice direction to supervisors and caseworkers and to promote statewide consistency in all areas, including services to protect the health and safety of children in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that the Self Assessment Advisory Committee reported that the new standards are especially helpful to new staff who may be uncertain of how to proceed on a case. They noted that supervisors routinely reference the practice standards in problem solving and decision-making. In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that the standards are posted on IDHW's website to ensure their accessibility to staff.

### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed a great deal of praise for the new standards and noted that the standards set very clear expectations for practice in critical areas. They identified the following requirements of the new standards as particularly relevant to ensuring quality services and the health and safety of children in foster care:

- A review of the child's case every 90 days
- A focus on family-centered practice
- The requirement that caseworkers must see children in foster care at least monthly and must talk to children separately from foster parents

Several stakeholders, however, noted that the State has set a high standard for practice and that it can be difficult for caseworkers to meet the standards given workload requirements. A few stakeholders also said that many foster parents are not aware of the standards that apply to children's health and safety.

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

$\mathbf{X}$	Strength	Area Needing I	mprovement
		1 11 0 0 1 10 0 0 11 5 1	inpro , circii

Item 31 is rated as Strength because Idaho has developed and implemented a statewide CQI case review process that is modeled after the CFSR process and identifies the strengths and needs of the service delivery system. It provides relevant information and reports that are used to inform training curricula and practice change, and it evaluates progress toward program improvement. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State's CQI efforts include a case review process in which each region has 12 cases (6 inhome services cases and 6 foster care cases) reviewed at least once every 6 months. The Statewide Assessment notes that the reviews are patterned after the Federal CFSR process including interviews with key stakeholders, and that the 2007 version of the Federal CFSR instrument has been used in case reviews since January 2007.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, upon completion of each individual case review, a meeting is held with the case reviewer, the caseworker, and his/her supervisor to discuss the case ratings. An exit meeting also is held with all regional staff following the completion of the review. Strengths are identified and available data are shared and compared with the region's most recent case review results. This meeting often provides an opportunity for technical assistance in response to staff questions and comments.

The Statewide Assessment also indicates that data from quarterly case reviews are compiled by Central Office staff and shared with Central Office and regional management teams. The regional Chief of Social Work then meets with regional staff to develop a RIP in areas that need strengthening, particularly those with results below Idaho's targeted goal. The Statewide Assessment reports that during the period of the PIP, regions were required to submit their RIPs to the central office, but since the completion of the PIP, regions have not been required to submit RIPs to the central office.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that another component of the CQI effort is the use of the FOCUS Child Welfare Outcomes Report. This report tracks the six data indicators used in the first Federal CFSR. Information from this report and the regional reviews is combined to provide an overall picture of Idaho's status and progress with regard to key child and family outcomes.

#### Stakeholder Interview Information

The opinions expressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicate that they perceive the State's CQI system as effective in evaluating the quality of services, identifying the strengths and needs of the service delivery system, providing reports that are relevant to improving program operations, and evaluating whether improvements have occurred. In general, the information provided by stakeholders was consistent with the information presented in the Statewide Assessment.

Stakeholders expressed the important role that CQI has played as a training tool. One stakeholder noted, "institutionalizing the CQI case review has done more for our practice than anything except maybe establishing practice standards. The institutionalization of CQI was revolutionary."

A few stakeholders reported that special CQI reviews were done in the areas of adoption and children with a case goal of OPPLA, because too few of these cases were turning up in the general reviews. Stakeholders also noted that Idaho held a special ICWA CQI to examine the State's compliance with ICWA requirements and that the results of this review were presented at the State ICWA meeting. Stakeholders also noted that each region receives the review findings for all of the other regions and for the State as a whole, so they can compare how they are doing with the other regions. Several stakeholders indicated that caseworkers and supervisors often serve as reviewers for the CQI process and consider the entire review process to be an effective teaching tool.

Stakeholders noted, however, that since the end of the State's PIP, regions have not been required to submit improvement plans to the central office and the improvement planning process has become informal. A few State-level stakeholders questioned whether RIPs are being developed at this time. Jerome County stakeholders noted that no written improvement plan was done for that region during the current year, but the areas identified as needing improvement have been the subject of agency discussions.

#### IV. TRAINING

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

#### STATUS OF TRAINING

Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. The State was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and, therefore, was required to address the factor in its PIP.

# **Key Concerns Identified in the 2003 CFSR**

The following key concerns relevant to this systemic factor were identified in the 2003 CFSR:

- The State's training for new caseworkers did not adequately prepare them for their jobs.
- Some caseworkers did not complete the training prior to being assigned a caseload.
- Many foster parents did not participate in the required foster parent training.
- The training offered to foster parents was inadequate to prepare them for fostering children.

To address these concerns the agency implemented the following key strategies as part of its PIP:

- Expanded the New Worker Academy
- Developed a "New Worker Caseload/Supervision Continuum" standard that describes the levels of intensity, duration, and types of training a new CFS employee receives
- Implemented the PRIDE curriculum statewide as Idaho's model of resource parent preparation and training
- Developed standards for training, mutual assessment, home environment checks, and documentation
- Provided multiple opportunities for licensed resource parents to complete a mandatory 10 hours of continuing education each year
- Used licensing caseworkers to monitor compliance with on-going training requirements on a regional basis

The State met its target goals for this systemic factor by the end of its PIP implementation period.

Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

X_Strength	Area :	Needing	g Improvement
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Item 32 is rated as a Strength because the State has an extensive competency-based pre-service training program that is completed by new caseworkers prior to carrying a full caseload. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, as part of Idaho's PIP, CFS expanded the New Worker Academy and developed a "New Workers Caseload/Supervision Continuum" standard that describes the levels of intensity, duration, and types of training a new CFS employee receives. Beginning in 2003, CFS established new Academy training competencies, developed additional curriculum, and expanded Academy from 4.5 days to a sequence of more than 6 weeks of instruction. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, Idaho requires CFS caseworkers to possess a degree in social work or a very closely related field and to have a current Idaho social work license. All new CFS caseworkers are registering and attending Core Academy classroom training within the first 6 months of hire.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the New Worker Academy is based on a mentoring/coaching model that relies heavily on supervisors to coach staff and on experienced staff to provide mentoring. This approach has been formalized through a structure that defines specific transfer of learning activities. The Statewide Assessment notes that the redirection of child welfare staff toward staff development was augmented by redeploying seven clinical supervisory staff (regional Chiefs of Social Work) who assumed full-time training and CQI functions.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, as new employees complete Academy modules, they are expected to apply what they have learned during their related field assignments. The Statewide Assessment notes that cases are assigned on a gradual basis as the new caseworker progresses through the modules.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the training provided to new caseworkers is comprehensive and sufficient to ensure that they can carry out their job responsibilities. Stakeholders reported all new workers are participating in training. Stakeholders praised the mentoring component of the training, the fact that it is competency based, and the fact that new caseworkers can practice new skills as they are learned and can evaluate their own progress. Stakeholders also praised the practice of having supervisors report to the Academy on the progress of the caseworkers involved in training. Some stakeholders reported that the new caseworker's probationary period has been extended from 6 months to 9 months to provide further time to evaluate performance because they do not carry full caseloads for 7 or 8 months.

Evaluation data, provided by stakeholders, on the effectiveness of training on 15 basic child welfare competencies shows trainees reported increased skill and competency at the end of a sample training week. On a scale of 1 to 5, trainees reported an average skill of 3.4 before the training and 4.3 after the training. Additionally, in an evaluation on the effectiveness of training on 13 competencies that are the foundation of social work in Idaho, on a scale of 1 to 5, trainees reported an average skill of 2.7 before the training and 3.8 after the training.

Stakeholders reported that caseworkers from Behavioral Health are strongly encouraged but not mandated to attend the New Worker training academy. It was noted that their attendance varies across regions but that in general, Behavioral Health caseworkers attend the trainings that are relevant to their work. One stakeholder noted that contracted case managers have the same requirements regarding participating in the Academy training program as the caseworkers for the department.

Some stakeholders indicated that in addition to the Academy training program, new caseworkers receive training on FOCUS from a regional information systems coordinator. They said that this training usually is done on a one-to-one basis, although in some regions if there are enough new caseworkers, the coordinator may hold a class. Stakeholders also said that ICWA and ethics training are available online, as well as being part of the classroom course and being part of the core training.

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

X Strength	Area Needing Improvement
	i nea i teeams improvement

Item 33 is rated as a Strength because caseworkers complete a minimum annual requirement of 20 hours of advanced training to further develop their knowledge and skills. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

#### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, all caseworkers and supervisors in CFS are required to be licensed as social workers and must complete 20 hours of continuing education per year to maintain their license. The Statewide Assessment notes that most of the ongoing training that CFS provides to caseworkers and supervisors can be submitted to the Board of Occupational Licenses as proof of ongoing training.

The Statewide Assessment reports that since 2003, most of the topics for in-service training have been identified through training recommendations generated from the results of the CQI process. Individual staff development and training needs also are identified from annual staff performance reviews.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, there is an ongoing evaluation process that measures training effectiveness and identifies additional training needs through a variety of evaluative instruments. Evaluation methods include feedback survey forms as well as verbal feedback from managers, chiefs, supervisors, staff, and various boards and subcommittees addressing effectiveness of training efforts. This system of feedback allows training to be focused where it is most needed in practice.

The Statewide Assessment notes, however, that the large caseloads carried by many caseworkers make it difficult for them to find the time to participate in in-service training. The Statewide Assessment also notes that there is a need to improve the basic supervisory training, but there are insufficient resources to develop a Supervisor Academy.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR confirmed the ongoing training requirement of 20 hours annually specified in the Statewide Assessment. They also noted that the agency has a stipend program for social work programs at the bachelor's and master's levels. Stakeholders indicated that regionally-based ongoing training needs often are identified through the CQI process, while individualized needs are identified through the performance assessment process. Kootenai County and Jerome County stakeholders noted that there are a number of trainings that are offered through teleconferences or online. Stakeholders said that staff participation in training is tracked by their supervisor, who usually approves the training.

Ada County stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of training for caseworkers around their personal safety, particularly when they must go into dangerous or secluded areas.

One stakeholder noted that while Idaho does not have an evaluation project that gathers data from the broad spectrum of ongoing training and compiles it into a single report that indicates the effectiveness of ongoing/in-service training, a gradual increase in outcomes can be attributed, in part, to the effectiveness of this training.

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

X	Strength	Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 is rated as a Strength because all foster parents including relative caregivers receive initial training (PRIDE) and complete ongoing training requirements (10 hours annually) to develop their knowledge and skills to appropriately care for children. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, since February 2004, Idaho has established the PRIDE curriculum as the required pre-service training for resource families in Idaho. The Statewide Assessment notes that for the most part, resource families must complete PRIDE in order to be licensed. Foster parents are required to complete 27 hours of initial pre-service training, and completion of the

training is a standard requirement for resource family licensure. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that because Idaho experiences difficulties in maintaining an adequate number of resource families for children coming into IDHW's custody, it sometimes is necessary to make placements with resource families who have started but not yet completed the PRIDE pre-service training. For example, some resource families are given placements during their PRIDE training and relatives may be given placements prior to PRIDE training on an emergency basis.

The Statewide Assessment notes that to expedite relative placements, a variance to relative licenses can be made, allowing them 6 months to complete training. The Statewide Assessment also notes that although this is not ideal, it increases the number of relative placements and has become necessary, in some instances, to ensure that there are placements for the growing number of children coming into foster care. Currently there are no waiting lists for PRIDE training.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, in addition to the PRIDE pre-service training, all licensed resource parents are required to complete a minimum of 10 hours of continuing education each year as a condition of relicensure. The Statewide Assessment notes that compliance with ongoing training is monitored by regional licensing caseworkers. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the ongoing training requirements can be met through a variety of trainings including those available through the PRIDE in-service training program, the Annual Resource Family Conference (which is held in multiple locations to ensure accessibility for foster parents), and two websites established for the purpose of providing training for foster parents.

The Statewide Assessment notes that a Family Development Plan (FDP) document was created to aid resource families in choosing, tracking, and recording their professional development. Details of the FDP are included in the Resource Family Licensing for Relatives and Non-Relatives standard, with directions to staff on how to assist resource families in recognizing the areas in which more training/learning might be beneficial. The Foster Care Curriculum Committee also has incorporated the FDP into the New Worker Pre-Service Academy curriculum so that new caseworkers can become familiar with the process for assisting resource families to evaluate and monitor their learning needs.

### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the following opinions:

- Most foster parents complete the PRIDE curriculum prior to having a child placed in their homes.
- All licensed foster parents are required to complete 10 hours of ongoing training each year as a condition of renewal of their license.
- There are ample training opportunities for licensed foster parents to meet the 10-hour requirement.
- Pre-adoptive parents receive the same training as foster parents.

Stakeholders also said that foster parents generally like the PRIDE training and believe that it provides the basics of what they need to know about fostering. Some stakeholders indicated that foster parents who have therapeutic level kids receive 30 extra hours of training that is overseen by Behavioral Health. Ada County stakeholders noted that the Junior League in that county provides day care to foster parents with children residing in the home so that they can attend PRIDE.

Stakeholders reported that some regions of the State are beginning to develop both PRIDE trainings and additional training resources for parents who do not speak or read English. These stakeholders said that, at present, there is only one region with a full PRIDE program for Spanish-speaking parents, but that translators are available in some regions to help parents who do not speak English through the PRIDE program. A few stakeholders indicated that one focus of the agency is to incorporate more information about cultural differences in the training. They noted that the Nez Perce Tribe is working with the State to incorporate issues relevant to members of that Tribe into the training.

Several stakeholders reported that resource homes can receive a variance to be licensed even though they have not completed PRIDE. They noted that this happens most frequently when the resource family is a relative. One stakeholder noted that when this happens, the family is given a license with a variance and usually must sign a document that says they will complete the PRIDE program within 6 months. Other stakeholders indicated that the majority of foster parents complete PRIDE prior to licensing and the agency is examining situations in which licenses are issued prior to a family's completion of PRIDE to identify the key variables associated with this practice.

Stakeholders reported that staff of State-licensed residential facilities are required to have training in CPR and first aid within 90 days of employment, to have an orientation that covers topics such as child safety, and then to have 25 hours of specific training to cover topics such as reporting maltreatment. Stakeholders said that staff members in these facilities are required to have 20 hours of inservice training annually.

Some stakeholders suggested that the State needs more ICWA/Indian cultural training for foster parents.

# V. SERVICE ARRAY

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

#### STATUS OF SERVICE ARRAY

Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. The State was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and, therefore, was required to address this factor in its PIP.

# **Key Concerns Identified in the 2003 CFSR**

The key concerns identified in the 2003 CFSR were the following:

- Key services for children and families were not accessible or available to families and children in all Idaho counties.
- Services were not individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its PIP:

- Required each Regional Director to conduct resource inventories by facilitating focus groups with DHW staff and community stakeholders to identify resource gaps
- Held community meetings in each region to propose methods or strategies for filling the resource gaps
- Developed standards for service delivery to assist caseworkers in focusing on the unique needs of the child and family
- Implemented FGDM to ensure that the unique needs of children and families could be identified early on in the case

Idaho met its target improvement goals for this item by the end of its PIP implementation period.

Findings for the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

X	Strength	Area Needing In	nprovement

Item 35 is rated as a Strength because Idaho has an array of services that assess and address the needs of children and families throughout the State. In addition, item 22 in the case review instrument, which addresses assessing the physical health needs of children, was rated a Strength in 98 percent of the cases reviewed, and item 23, which addresses assessing the mental health needs of children, was rated a Strength in 87 percent of the cases reviewed. Item 35 also was rated as a Strength in Idaho's 2003 CFSR.

## **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho has increased services in the areas of assessment and service provision since the first CFSR. Idaho has adopted the use of FGDM in some regions to assess family strengths, needs, and concerns, increased the number of contracted case managers providing in-home services based on families' identified needs, and implemented "Navigation Services" to work with participants to determine a strength-based plan to regain family health and stability through linkages to resources and services. Idaho also allocates Federal and State funds to each of the seven regions of the State to allow them to develop services according to their local needs. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the services that are provided statewide include the following: substance abuse testing, assessment, and treatment; risk assessment; case management of both in-home and out-of-home cases; family preservation; parenting classes; FGDM; mental health services; respite services; a variety of counseling services; intensive family services; transportation assistance; supervised visitation; crisis intervention; purchases to ensure a safe family environment; after hours on-call services; and IL services for youth.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has an adequate array of services to meet the needs of children and families in the foster care and in-home services cases, and that workers find most services are available. However, a few stakeholders identified service gaps in the area of therapeutic foster homes, residential treatment services for children and youth, out-of-home placements for youth, and post-adoption services.

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

Strength _X_	Area Needing	Improvement
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Item 36 is rated as an ANI because some services are not consistently available or accessible throughout the State. This item was rated as an ANI in Idaho's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, most services that are available in the State are concentrated in the seven population centers—Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Nampa/Caldwell, Boise, Twin Falls, Pocatello, and Idaho Falls. However, service gaps were identified in every region. While not all services are equally available throughout the State, feedback from the Statewide Self-Assessment Committee is that parenting classes, anger/domestic violence services, mental health, respite care, crisis intervention, substance abuse treatment, and transportation assistance are rated as the most problematic in terms of widespread availability.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that although direct and contracted services are available to all families within the State, limitations on access exist for some of the following reasons: travel distance between the family and the service provider, regional budget allocations, availability of qualified and interested service providers, and percentage of service providers who accept Medicaid.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, there is a limited array of formal services available in many rural areas of Idaho. These limited services include family support services, health care, dental care, and mental health treatment. The Statewide Assessment reports that caseworkers and clinicians in these areas experience many challenges in locating, developing, or providing needed services. However, the Statewide Assessment also reports that many CFS caseworkers are extremely resourceful at finding and initiating services for individuals on their caseloads

### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item noted that high quality and effective services exist within the State, but that most of these services are not available in all areas of the State. These services include drug courts, Bridges (specialized foster care families), family preservation services, in-home services programs, and dental services that will accept children on Medicaid. Stakeholders at the State level and in each of the CFSR sites identified other services that were either not available or not accessible in their locations. These included the following:

- Foster homes for children with developmental disabilities
- Adequate transportation services
- Affordable substance abuse treatment services for families that are not eligible for Medicaid
- Affordable mental health treatment services for families that are not eligible for Medicaid

A key concern expressed by stakeholders at the State-level and in two of the three sites pertained to a lack of adequate IL services to meet the needs of older children in foster care. State-level stakeholders noted that in some regions, the IL skills training program for older youth in foster care is not sufficient, while in other regions, the IL services are available and effective. Ada County stakeholders indicated that there are some good IL services in that county that are offered through Casey Family Programs, but not all of the youth are receiving those services. Ada County stakeholders reported that youth who are not being served by Casey Family Programs do not have access to a formal IL program and are unlikely to get formal IL services, although they may be prepared for IL by their foster parents. Kootenai County stakeholders reported a lack of sufficient transitional housing services for youth who will be emancipating from foster care. In contrast to these sites, Jerome County stakeholders reported that Jerome County has a high quality IL program in which IL staff work one-on-one with the youth, take youth to visit colleges, use incentives and goals for meeting IL plans, bring in guest speakers for certain topics, and help youth with housing and transportation to group sessions.

Another area of concern pertained to substance abuse treatment services. Although stakeholders noted that each region has a substance abuse liaison who helps families access drug evaluations and substance abuse treatment, and that families involved with child welfare are given priority with regard to accessing services, the general availability of substance abuse treatment services was noted to be a concern in some areas of the State. Ada County stakeholders reported that there is a waiting list for substance abuse treatment for children. Jerome County stakeholders said that there are not enough long-term substance abuse treatment services to address the methamphetamine abuse problem in the State.

A third key area of concern pertained to mental health services. Although State-level stakeholders reported that accessing mental health services is not a problem in the State, Jerome County stakeholders noted that there is no psychiatrist in that county, and Kootenai County stakeholders said that mental health services in that county were inadequate to meet the need and that many of the children in foster care do not have psychological assessments. While some Ada County stakeholders said that accessing mental health services is not a problem, others noted that it can take months to obtain a psychological evaluation for a parent.

Several stakeholders suggested that it can be difficult for foster parents to access respite care.

# Item 37: The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency \_\_X\_\_ Strength \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as a Strength because the State uses family meetings, flexible funding, culturally appropriate services, wraparound services and individualized case plans to meet the unique needs of children and families. In addition, item 22 in the case review instrument, which addresses assessing the physical health needs of children, was rated a Strength in 98 percent of the cases reviewed, and item 23, which addresses assessing the mental health needs of children, was rated a Strength in 87 percent of the cases reviewed This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, to enhance the agency's ability to individualize services for children and families, CFS developed a standard for service delivery that requires the child welfare caseworker to consider specific criteria when selecting services and/or providers for children and families. These criteria are intended to ensure that the caseworker focuses on how to best individualize services for the child and family.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the agency promotes individualization of services through implementing FGDM meetings. In addition, as indicated in the Statewide Assessment, IDHW has increased the cultural competency of agency staff relative to persons

with Indian heritage through the purchase and distribution of licenses for all CFS caseworkers, allowing them to use certified online ICWA training from the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA). The agency also conducted statewide training in 2005, 2006, and 2007 on identifying culturally relevant services and on what constitutes "active efforts" to prevent placement of Indian children in foster care or "active efforts" to reunify Indian children with their families.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that several practices recently implemented by the child welfare agency are effective in promoting individualization of services to meet the unique needs of children and families. The key practices that stakeholders identified as particularly effective are the individualized case plan for each family, the implementation of family meetings at the onset of each case (such as FGDM or family unity meetings), the 90-day reviews for each case, and the availability of a variety of types of flexible funds that can be accessed depending on the family's needs. With regard to flexible funds, stakeholders reported that performance enhancement funds are provided by Casey Family Programs to assist the agency in individualizing services for youth. These have been used to provide funds for camps, special school trips, ACT college admission test preparatory courses, tutoring, etc.

Stakeholders also noted that Casey Family Programs is effective in individualizing services to youth. Jerome County and Kootenai County stakeholders indicated that the IL services programs in those counties are highly individualized for the youth who participate in the programs. Stakeholders, however, said that it has been very difficult in many areas of the State to access IL services for Native American youth, but one stakeholder commented that it has worked for youth in some Tribes.

Several stakeholders mentioned that mental health services can be individualized for children, that there are wraparound services available for children served by the mental health agency, and that there are no time limits for mental health services—they are continued for as long as needed.

A few stakeholders indicated that the agency has made efforts to provide services that target the needs of Native American and Hispanic children. Some agencies have made connections with native healers, purchased services from Tribes, provide the PRIDE foster parent training in Spanish, and made efforts to hire bilingual staff. However, many stakeholders also expressed the opinion that there is a need for more culturally appropriate services for Native American and Hispanic children and families in order to better meet the unique needs of these populations. A few stakeholders also mentioned that there are other immigrant groups in the State who are difficult to serve because of language and cultural differences, including Bosnian and African families. Ada County stakeholders also noted that there are challenges in finding services for children who are deaf or blind.

## VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

# STATUS OF AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The State was found to be in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2003 CFSR and, therefore, was not required to address the factor in its PIP. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

X	Strength	Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as a Strength because the State engages in ongoing consultation with a wide range of partners in establishing the goals and objectives of the CFSP. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State's CFSP incorporates input from a wide range of agencies and community partners throughout the State. The Statewide Assessment identifies the following groups as part of the agency's ongoing community consultation: Idaho Supreme Court Child Protection Committee (CIP), Idaho State and Tribal Indian Child Welfare Committee, Casey Family Programs, university partners, Kincare Coalition, Children At-Risk Task Force (CJA), Citizen Review Panel members (Keeping Children Safe Panels), resource parents, foster youth, Central Office Deputy Administrators, Program Managers, Program Specialists, and Regional Chiefs of Social Work and supervisors.

The Statewide Assessment reports that collaboration with the Supreme Court Child Protection Court Improvement Committee is included in the goals and objectives of the CFSP and has resulted in the following practices:

- The courts and IDHW work together to monitor and improve title IV-E findings in court orders and timeliness of permanency hearings.
- A CIP grant supports data exchanges between the courts and IDHW.
- The CIP and IDHW participate in their respective assessments by using joint surveys to gather information from the judicial and child protection systems.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the Idaho Child Welfare Partnership (ICWP), a formal partnership between the IDHW, Casey Family Programs, and local universities, and governed by an administrative board, is responsible for the following:

- Developing a highly skilled workforce through the New Workers Academy and ongoing training for experienced workers through the university systems
- Implementing evidence-based best practices to improve service delivery
- Training resource parents on how to work with traumatized children and birth parents

### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency engages in collaboration on an ongoing basis with a number of community groups and has established formal partnerships with several of them (such as the ICWP, Casey Family Programs, and the CIP). As part of this ongoing collaboration, partners are involved in setting goals and developing agency plans. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, input gathered from outside partners is used in developing the goals and objectives of the CFSP, improving compliance with title IV-E, and developing and implementing training. Stakeholders reported that input regarding the agency's child welfare plans is sought from the CIP and from all of the Keeping Children Safe (KCS) advisory panels. They noted that each region has its own KCS panel that functions as a Citizens Advisory Board. The panels establish recommendations for their specific regions, and the regions work together to make recommendations to the State. One stakeholder reported that in the process of setting goals, "anything we bring as a concern is discussed and everybody's opinion is taken under consideration."

Several stakeholders also noted that input is sought from the State's ICWA committee, which is composed of at least one representative from each of six Tribes. Other community partners also are invited to participate in ICWA committee meetings where Tribal concerns are raised and discussed. The ICWA committee developed the ICWA standard for the State and discusses issues such as the need for Native American foster homes. Stakeholders reported that the ICWA committee is active, and that communication between the State and the ICWA committee is generally positive. However, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that it would be beneficial if the agency involved Tribes in particular plans at the onset and developed a stronger collaboration with the Tribes with regard to addressing key issues such as foster care recruitment. Finally, several stakeholders reported that there has been an increase in

recent years in the collaboration between the State and the Tribes in some regions and that, in general, State caseworkers and Tribes communicate well on issues pertaining to individual cases.

Several stakeholders also noted that the agency is exploring ways of obtaining input from youth in foster care and from young adults who are foster care alumni. There is a foster care and alumni youth group called the "Foster Youth/Alumni in Idaho (FYI)" advisory group, and the State is working with this group to identify ways for them to have more input into agency goals and practices. A stakeholder reported that there is an FYI representative on the ICWP "Practice Board" and that FYI youth participate on panels for Academy training sessions.

	9: The agency deve ent to the CFSP	lops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered
X	_Strength	Area Needing Improvement
	•	th because the agency consistently engages a wide range of stakeholders in the process of developing and services delivered. This item was rated as a Strength in Idaho's 2003 CFSR.
Accordidentific IDHW' have in few loc	ing to the Statewided under item 38. To see website for review put into the annual	Assessment, the annual reports of progress and services are developed in consultation with the groups are Statewide Assessment also notes that the annual report is shared with community partners and placed on by the public. Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR noted that the KCF Panels eports and that the State engages stakeholders and community partners at the statewide level. However, a reted that the local level collaboration could be strengthened and should be expanded to include discussions rel.
	0: The State's serv ms serving the sar	ces under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally assisted to population
_X	_ Strength	Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because the State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or

Federally assisted programs that serve the same population. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, CFS staff, on a regional and statewide level, have frequent communication with agencies responsible for implementing other Federal programs and services, including Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) through Medicaid; Child Support Services; work program services; Division of Welfare, Self-Reliance Program for Food Stamps and Temporary Assistance to Families; Social Security Administration; Vocational Rehabilitation; Head Start Programs; local elementary and secondary schools; Idaho universities and State Department of Education; Infant Toddler Program; Division of Behavioral Health for children and adult mental health and substance abuse services; Idaho Health Districts, hospitals, doctors' offices, and clinics; Division of Health; Developmental Disabilities Program; Infant Toddler Program Services; Tribes; Department of Juvenile Corrections and county juvenile probation; Child Advocacy Centers; faith-based community organizations; the Idaho Children's Trust Fund (child abuse and neglect prevention activities); the CIP; and Idaho Tribes.

IDHW has statewide and local memorandums of agreement (MOUs) with many public agencies such as the State Department of Education, local school districts, the Department of Juvenile Corrections, Idaho Supreme Court, local county juvenile probation departments, local child abuse and neglect, and multidisciplinary teams.

## Stakeholder interview information

The comments of stakeholders regarding this item suggest that they perceive the agency as highly effective in coordinating services with other Federal and federally assisted programs that serve the same population. They noted that the child welfare agency works closely with Medicaid, substance abuse, and mental health agencies and providers to ensure that children in the child welfare system are given priority. Stakeholders reported that the substance abuse treatment agency provides liaisons to child welfare offices to help the children and families access services. Several stakeholders indicated that there are formal MOUs between the divisions within IDHW to expedite and foster coordination.

Another program that stakeholders cited as particularly effective in coordinating services is the Navigation program that is funded by TANF. In this program, a "Navigator" staff person connects individuals and families with a broad array of CFS and community services. It was noted as a particularly useful resource for kinship care, IL youth emancipating out of the system, and access to prevention services.

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

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
	Not in Substant	tial Conformity	Substantial Co	onformity
Rating	1	2	3	4X

# STATUS OF FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Idaho is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Idaho was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and, therefore, was not required to address the factors in its PIP. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

X	Strength	Area Needing I	mprovement
	Ducingui	Thea recalling i	improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the State has recently implemented new standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that meet and exceed recommended national standards. This item was rated as a Strength in Idaho's 2003 CFSR.

# **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, a new practice standard in Idaho, entitled "Resource Family Licensing for Relatives and Non-Relatives," was released in 2007. It outlines the steps to becoming either a relative or non-relative licensed resource parent. The Statewide Assessment notes that this standard ensures that practice complies with the Adam Walsh Act of 2006 and other Federal and State requirements. The changes also required numerous administrative rule revisions, which were finalized in May 2007.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that licensed resource homes are visited at least once per year to review home safety and other requirements. Institutions and facilities are required to submit an annual reapplication. At that time, site visits are made to determine whether the level of safety and compliance with requirements are still being met.

In addition, the Statewide Assessment reports that the foster family home study and adoptive family home study were combined for a more fluid process in cases where a family wants to foster and adopt a child or when a current foster home decides to adopt after already being licensed as a foster home. The home study is now partitioned, so the adoption component of the assessment can be added at a later date without rewriting the entire home study.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that on a case-by-case basis, a relative or non-relative may receive a variance for a licensing standard not related to safety concerns, such as completing all 27 hours of PRIDE training prior to licensure. According to the Statewide Assessment, a variance is different than a waiver in that in a variance situation, the intent and purpose of the licensing rule is still complied with. In a waiver situation, the standard is not applied. Waivers may only be granted to relatives for non-safety concerns. When IDHW approves a variance or waiver to the "Resource Family Licensing" standard, the information must be documented both in the licensing file and as a narrative in the FOCUS information system.

The Statewide Assessment reports that variances for non-safety issues can allow children to be placed more quickly and, in some cases, reduce the number of total placements for a child.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the State has standards for foster family homes and child care facilities that are effective and comprehensive. They noted that the standards the agency has established include such things as training and the necessary skill sets to take care of children, as well as general home safety concerns pertaining to carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and to criminal background checks. Stakeholders noted that licenses for resource homes and child care facilities are renewed annually.

Stakeholders noted that rules allow for variances on a case-by-case basis and variances must be approved by the program manager and documented in the file. They noted that one use of variances is to allow children to be placed prior to the completion of the foster parent training, particularly when placement is to be with relatives. Stakeholders reported that a variance also may be given with regard to the number of children in the foster home. The standard requires no more than six children in the home, including birth children. However, a variance can be issued to allow up to eight children. This type of variance often is used to allow siblings to be placed together. Stakeholders also noted that the State recognizes foster homes licensed by the Tribes after ensuring that safety standards are met and criminal background checks are done.

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
X StrengthArea Needing Improvement
Item 42 is rated as a Strength because the State applies one standard equally to all homes before issuing a full license and does not claim title IV-E foster care payments until a full license is in place. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.
<b>Statewide Assessment</b> According to the Statewide Assessment, Idaho's Rules Governing Standards for Child Care Licensing (IDAPA 16.06.02) and the CFS Family Licensing Standard require that all resource families have full licensure prior to the placement of any child in State custody. Standards are equally applied to both relative and non-relative resource families.
<b>Stakeholder Interview Information</b> Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that licensing standards are applied equally to all foster family homes or child care institutions.
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
_ XStrength
Item 43 is rated as a Strength because Idaho obtains criminal background clearances for foster and adoptive families prior to licensure. This item also was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.
Statewide Assessment Information  According to the Statewide Assessment, in Rules Governing Family and Children's Services, IDAPA 16.06.02.009.02, states that applicants for foster care, adoptive parents, children's agency facility staff, residential care facility staff, and day care facility staff must have a completed criminal history and background check and receive a clearance, prior to licensure. Applicants who do not pass the criminal history background check are notified and given a conditional or unconditional denial for more serious designated crimes. An individual who receives a conditional denial may request an exemption review hearing to determine his/her fitness to care for vulnerable children or adults. In May 2007 the resource family licensing standard was revised to clarify the criminal history process,

such as how to apply for criminal history background checks and actions to be taken if the results reveal substantiated complaints or reveal a criminal history. Idaho uses the State process for criminal background checks rather than the Federal process and, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, the State process exceeds ASFA requirements. The Statewide Assessment reports that compliance in conducting criminal background checks prior to placement and licensure has historically been high and that they passed a Federal title IV-E eligibility review in March 2007, which included a review of licensing and criminal background check procedures.

#### Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that Federal requirements for criminal background checks are met prior to licensure for all members of a foster family who are 18 and older and for all staff of residential treatment facilities. In certain circumstances (such as placement with relatives) and in order to expedite placement, children can be placed after foster parents have a name-only criminal background check; however, in order for the home to receive a license, the national background checks must be done. Stakeholders also noted that adoptive parents must complete the national fingerprint based background checks. Stakeholders said that residential facility staff can begin work after completing the local check but must complete the fingerprint check to be fully cleared. Completion of these checks is monitored by the agency during facility reviews.

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

X	Strength	Area	Needing I	mprovement
	~			

Item 44 is rated as a Strength because both the Statewide Assessment and the stakeholder interviews indicate that Idaho has a process in place for recruiting foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State. This item was rated as an ANI in the State's 2003 CFSR.

### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State's self-assessment process identified a need for more specific and targeted recruitment of foster homes as well as additional therapeutic foster homes. The Statewide Assessment notes that recent efforts have been successful in increasing the number of licensed homes by 44 percent between 2002 and 2006. The Statewide Assessment reports that diligent efforts to recruit families are continuing, including families that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in foster care.

A key recruitment effort noted in the Statewide Assessment pertained to the development and implementation of a Recruiter Peer Mentor (RPM) program in May 2007. This program uses experienced foster parents to recruit new potential foster homes. The introduction of this program was met with enthusiasm from both child welfare staff and licensed resource families. However, no data were provided in the Statewide Assessment regarding the effectiveness of this program, which is fairly new.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that regional recruitment includes IDHW staff, university partners, Casey Family Programs staff, private contractors, Tribal members, Hispanic representatives (when appropriate), and peer recruiters. With regionally based recruitment teams, the recruitment of resource families focuses on the specific needs of that region's local communities. All regional recruitment teams are responsible for the development of innovative ideas to recruit resource families, including resource families of color and Native American families.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that during the summer of 2006, a foster/adoptive family recruitment campaign was initiated using ads developed in collaboration between the National Ad Council, Administration for Children and Families, and AdoptUSKids. These materials were accessed and distributed statewide.

### **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has a process in place for the diligent recruitment of foster homes, particularly those that meet the needs and match the ethnicity/race of the children in foster care. Some stakeholders praised the new RPM program that uses experienced foster parents to recruit new families. Other stakeholders noted that in some regions, they are using zip codes to match the children with homes located in the areas where the children lived prior to their entry into foster care. Several stakeholders also praised the efforts of a Region 6 staff recruiter to recruit foster homes for older youth, while other stakeholders praised several regions for having recruitment outreach in Spanish and involving community partners who speak Spanish. In addition, stakeholders said that in some areas, youth in foster care are helping with the recruitment efforts. Stakeholders also indicated that recruiting for adoptive parents is tied in to recruiting for foster parents because they do dual home studies and licensures to make it easier for foster families to become adoptive families.

Despite these positive views, a few stakeholders suggested that improvements are needed in State efforts to recruit Native American and Hispanic homes. Some stakeholders also suggested that although each region has a recruitment team, there is little data on the effectiveness of these teams in recruiting new families or oversight on the State to ensure that recruitment efforts are being implemented and that they are successful.

Stakeholders indicated that the ICWA committee has talked about the need for making recruitment a standing agenda item. They noted that local Native American representatives are supposed to be invited to attend the regional recruitment committee meetings, but that this does not always happen in some regions. Stakeholders said that the State and Tribes are discussing how to increase the

number of Native American homes and exploring possibilities for sharing homes. Stakeholders reported that both States and Tribes struggle with recruitment.

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

X Strength	Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because the State is effective in using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely placement for children. This item was rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 CFSR.

### **Statewide Assessment Information**

According to the Statewide Assessment, IDHW continues to use a number of strategies to increase adoptive or other permanent placements across jurisdictional boundaries. For example, Idaho's Wednesday's Child Program maintains a website that gives national exposure to Idaho's waiting children. The website elicits inquiries from families not only in Idaho but across the nation. IDHW also uses the Northwest Adoption Exchange and the AdoptUSKids national websites to list children who need an identified permanent resource.

The Statewide Assessment reports that, in addition to using adoption exchanges and mining of the files for permanency options, Idaho continues to consider relatives who live in other States as placement resources through the Interstate Compact.

# **Stakeholder Interview Information**

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency has a system in place for using cross-jurisdictional resources. They noted that cross-jurisdictional placements are covered in Idaho's practice standards and there are ICPC specialists in each region to assist caseworkers in that process. Stakeholders also said that the State uses national programs such as Wednesday's Child, AdoptUSKids, and the Northwest Adoption Exchange to search for adoptive families for children.

Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the ICPC process is cumbersome and often involves a lengthy process of paperwork completion. Although stakeholders praised the work of the Idaho ICPC specialists and the ICPC coordinator, the process itself was difficult and often other States did not respond to Idaho requests in a timely manner.