

In Focus



Quarterly Newsletter for Continuous Quality Improvement

JULY 2010 Issue



From the Director's Desk: This quarter's newsletter focuses on timely achievement of permanency for foster children. It's easy to get caught up in day to day activities and lose sight of how long a child has been in care, especially those that have been in care for a long time. Keeping your eye on the ball (of where a child is at in terms of achieving permanency) is critical for the child's well-being. Our policy includes a lot of procedures which help this happen, but staff are encouraged to be creative and resourceful as well. Specific ideas for how to speed up permanency are discussed including information about family engagement in case planning and searching for non-resident parents and extended families. A CFSR update of preliminary findings is included, as well as kudos, CQI successes and an update on the Supervision Advisory Committee. Be sure to review memo PN10-10 regarding upcoming CQI meetings to be used to discuss CFSR preliminary findings. Keep up the good work! – Paula Neese

CQI Activities Calendar

July 2010

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

August 2010

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

September 2010

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

1st Level CQI

2nd Level CQI

3rd Level CQI

State Level CQI

Peer Record Reviews



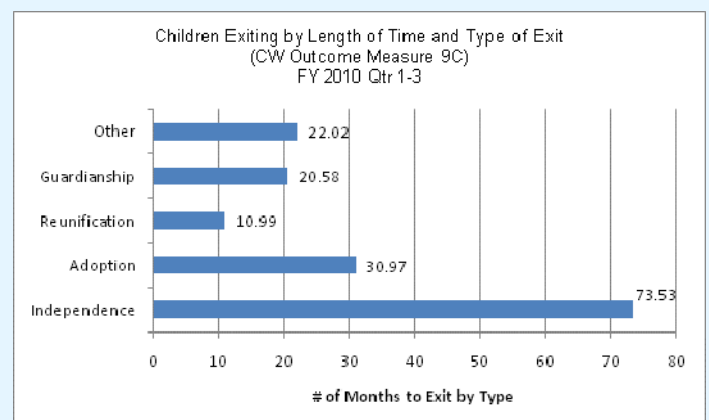
Click on this link, [State Level CQI Minutes](#) to see what was discussed during the 2nd Qtr State Level CQI Team Meeting on June 17th.

Keeping Your Eye on the Ball (Permanency for Children - Part 1)

A critical outcome needing improvement in Missouri is related to CFSR Permanency Composite Measure # 3: Permanency for Children and Youth in Foster Care for Long Periods of Time. This measure pertains to the length of time children are in foster care before achieving permanency and the percent of children who are emancipated who were in foster care longer than three years. The term "growing up in foster care" is what this is all about. A short time in stay is the home run we are striving for.

Interestingly, while we successfully do good work on the front end to prevent children from coming into care and to return children quickly after initial entry through the use of 24 hour, 72 hour and 30 day Family Support Team (FST) meetings, we struggle with the timely achievement of permanency for children who do not return home quickly. Permanency is defined as reunification, adoption, guardianship or living with a relative.

Moving things along (towards permanency) can be challenging with limited resources and heavy workloads. However, adherence to policy to guide case activities and creative case management will help reduce the time children linger in care. A lot can be learned from other states which use creative strategies to achieve permanency. For example, [Permanency Planning Today \(Winter 2005/2006 edition\)](#), a semi-annual newsletter of the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning ([NRCFCPP](#)) features an article titled *Lighting the Fire of Urgency* and discusses workers enlisting the help of CASA volunteers in family finding searches for older youth. The [Spring 2009 issue](#) features New Mexico's structured "Ice Breaker" meetings for foster and birth parents at which a trained foster parent liaison facilitates a child centered discussion with the foster and birth parents at a meeting two days after a child enters care, to provide an early opportunity for family engagement. The same issue features an article about posters created and used by the Children's Home Society of Washington State titled "You Can Get Your Kids Back" with advice from parents who did to aid with family engagement in case planning.



This chart shows how long children were in foster care until exit

An area of strength for Missouri is our strong effort to place children in their own communities and in close proximity to their family (found to be a strength in our practice during the CFSR) which positively impacts this outcome. We now need to focus on additional strategies which will help to further reduce the time children remain in care.

Strategies for reducing length of time in care

1. Intervening at the point child enters care
2. Diligent Searches for birth fathers, non-resident parents and extended families
3. Engaging birth fathers, non-resident parents and extended families in case planning
4. Nurturing the relationship between parent/child to the fullest extent possible (frequent/meaningful visits between parent/child, including special events such as birthday/ holiday celebrations, attending child's Dr. appointments)
5. Assuring parents remain invested in having the child return home or are supportive of an alternate permanency plan option such as guardianship or adoption (parent involvement in case planning)
6. Consistent Family Support Team meetings that gain momentum towards permanency (CW Outcome # 12)
7. Identifying specific needs of children in your circuit who are in foster care through comprehensive assessments (such as medical, psychological, emotional needs)
8. Recruitment of foster, relative and adoption resource parents based on the identified needs of the child population (CW Outcome # 16)
9. Identifying and providing supports for the specific needs of biological parents and extended families to help them prepare for and sustain the placement of a child based on the child's specific needs
10. Pre-planning and locating adoption resources prior to finalized TPR when appropriate
11. Transferring cases to adoption worker timely

Child and Family Services Review – Preliminary Findings Strengths and Needs for Program Improvement Planning

The CFSR round two site visit was conducted June 7-10, 2010 in the 21st, 31st and 35th circuits. On June 11th, the federal team informed state administration regarding preliminary findings of the review which included case reviews, stakeholder interviews, and review of statewide outcomes data. The CFSR final (official) report will be received within the next few months; however, in the meantime, the State is expected to begin identifying improvement strategies based on preliminary findings. Many current areas of strength were identified including systemic and practice improvements since round one. In addition, areas needing improvement were discussed. The next step is the development of an improvement plan to address the areas of need and implementation of action steps in order to achieve a satisfactory level of performance as negotiated between the state and the Children's Bureau. The following includes a general overview of strengths and areas of need as identified during the preliminary report. Additional findings are expected in the final report as well, so this list is not considered to be inclusive of all practice areas which will be addressed in the Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

Strengths

- Responding timely to investigations
- Keeping children in close proximity to parents and preserving children's connections
- Maintaining siblings together whenever possible
- Establishing permanency goals timely and using FSTs to strengthen the process
- Assessing educational needs
- Using placement provider home checklist and family function assessment to assess needs
- Providing preventive and specialized medical care
- Completing quick mental health assessments
- Making frequent contact with children and constantly assessing needs
- Having good working relationships with law enforcement
- Effectively using Intensive In-home Services and Family Reunification Services



Needs

- Connecting children to incarcerated parents (through visits and case planning)
- Focusing on every member of family; considering the entire system; identifying underlying issues
- Identifying and engaging non-custodial/non-resident parents
- Focusing on ways to improve parent/child visitation and relationships
- Preventing delays for children reaching permanency. Situations contributing to delays include:
 - TPR is not being filed if an adoption resource has not been identified (court decision)
 - transfer of case to an adoption worker is not occurring timely
 - cases are stalled because of a sibling adoption
 - adoptive resources are not being explored until TPR is complete
- Improving internal communication between case managers and service workers as well as between public and private entities when transferring cases
- Thoroughly assessing foster homes in order to improve the quality of the foster homes
- Developing resources to meet the individual needs of clients (and to avoid the cookie cutter approach) including for example: dental care services; domestic violence services; child psychiatric services; and transportation services
- Strengthening family involvement in case planning (engagement, teaming)



CREDIBILITY · INTEGRITY · ACHIEVEMENT

Engaging Families in Service Planning

Throughout the accreditation process, we emphasized the importance of engaging families in *service planning (to provide quality services) and of thoroughly documenting family involvement in the case record (to better demonstrate accountability)*. By focusing on these areas, both practice and the quality of documentation were improved. COA peer reviewers recognized the hard work being done in Missouri. Even though marked progress was made, it is not surprising that the results from our recent Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) show that focusing on every member of the family and strengthening their involvement in case planning are areas identified as needing improvement, thus will be addressed on our statewide Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

Indisputably, by all accounts, it is best practice to engage families in service planning. We recognize it can be challenging to locate and garner the full participation of all family members and to clearly and thoroughly document such efforts. There is more work to be done on a state and local level. Our federal partners challenge us to do better in this area because family engagement is at the very heart of good practice. Improved safety, permanency, and well being for children and families are the benefits of adhering to best practice.

COA's 8th Edition standards require that families participate in the development and ongoing review of services plans that are the basis for delivery of appropriate services and support:



PA-FC 3.01

The service plan is developed with the full participation of the child, the family, and the foster parents.

PA-FC 3.02

Extended family members and significant others, as appropriate, and with the consent of the family, are advised of ongoing progress, and participate in the service planning.

PA-FC 3.03

During service planning, the agency and the family explore:

- a. available options;
- b. how the agency can support the achievement of desired outcomes;
- c. benefits, cultural relevance, and alternatives of planned services; and
- d. consequences for non-participation in services.

PA-FC 3.04

The service plan is based on the assessment and includes:

- a. service goals, desired outcomes, and timeframes for achieving them;
- b. services and supports to be provided, and by whom; and
- c. the signature of the parents and, when appropriate, the child or youth.

PA-FC 3.05

The service plan addresses, as appropriate:

- a. unmet service and support needs that impact safety, permanency, and well-being;
- b. maintaining and strengthening relationships; and
- c. the need for culturally responsive services and the support of the family's informal social network.

PA-FC 3.06

The service plan is developed in a timely manner and expedited service planning is available when crisis or urgent need is identified.

PA-FC 3.07

The foster care worker and a supervisor review the case quarterly to assess:

- a. service plan implementation;
- b. progress toward achieving service goals and desired outcomes; and
- c. the continuing appropriateness of the agreed upon service goals.

PA-FC 3.08

The foster care worker and the family regularly review progress toward achievement of agreed upon goals and sign revisions to service goals and plans.

KUDOS!



To the following Circuits having the shortest average time to exit for all foster children for FY10* (note: state average = 21.79 months)

- 35th: 10.35 months!
- 40th: 12.44 months!
- 34th: 12.46 months!
- 4th: 12.83 months!
- 32nd: 14.92 months!
- 36th: 15.14 months!
- 44th: 15.57 months!
- Metro: Jackson County: 17.44 months!

*Child Welfare Outcomes Report Measure 9C: Children Exiting from CD Custody by Type of Exit and Length of Time to Exit. (How is your circuit performing?)

CQI Successes

St Louis County

- Outcome Data - According to In Focus newsletter, data target area is Repeat Maltreatment. On outcome measure #3 which measures % w/prior substantiated report within 6 months, St. Louis County has been very successful in exceeding the goal every fiscal year since 2003.
- (7 Hills 2nd Level) CSW's would like the side parking lot at Seven Hills to be gated or labeled with signs for employee parking only. Staff requesting this due to the recent concerns of theft in the parking lot. Update - Issue sent to Phoelica McKenzie for her input. May Update – An additional guard has been assigned. No signs will be installed as not effective or needed.
- (Kinship/Licensing Unit Level 1) On the CW-215, the box indicating the date of the last comprehensive medical exam is confusing. Update – Change made. See state office log, New Issues item #10.

State Level

- Memorandum CD10-27 explained the skills needed for the five core STARS competencies.
- Memorandum CD10-48 CS-RC-1 and CS-RC-2 were corrected adding spaces for address and phone number.
- Memorandum CD10-61 explained the ability to use the personal reference questionnaire for adult children of prospective resource parents, however, is not required and clarified number of references required.

Searching for Non-Resident Parents and Extended Family Members

RSMo 210.127 defines “diligent search” as “the efforts of the division or an entity under contract with the division to locate a biological parent whose identity or location is unknown, initiated as soon as the division is made aware of the existence of such parent, with the search progress reported at each court hearing until the parent is either identified and located or the court excuses further search.” This criterion also applies when searching for grandparents or other relatives.

[CW Manual Section 4, Chapter 4, Attachment A: Locating the Non-custodial Parent or Relative](#) discusses procedures for locating the non-custodial parent or relative. It is expected that diligent searches occur initially when a child is placed, **and then on an on-going basis** in conjunction with permanency planning reviews at a minimum.



All Division of Motor Vehicles records (autos, boats) can be searched by designated regional or central office staff.

[Memorandum CD06-75](#) first introduced this process. (The current [list of regional designees](#) is posted on the CD Intranet under each Region's link for easy reference). [Form CD-88, Request for Location Services](#), is used for this purpose, and should be completed by the worker, signed by a supervisor and forwarded to the regional representative. This search can be completed by SSN, Drivers License Number or License plate tag number, name or any known aliases. Contracted staff can send in a request to the designees as well, and CD will forward information to the contracted case manager if an address is found. The Social Security Number cannot be released unless the SSN is included on the original request, but the address can be provided. Many parents and family members have been successfully found using this method!

In addition to the DMV search, the Department of Corrections Web Search and other agencies, leads or avenues are expected to be searched, as discussed in policy section noted above.

Printing the [CW Manual Attachment](#) and keeping it handy may help remind staff about the need to complete periodic searches.

Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee (SAC)

The SAC met on May 12^h in Jefferson City. Successes of the SAC during the last year include implementation of learning labs, utilization of a new supervision distribution list in outlook for receiving SCRT and PRR listings and email notices; Regional links added to the CD intranet for improved access by field staff to regional information including contact lists for transferring cases and requesting courtesies; links to [media releases](#) and [state workgroups](#); posting a [training presentation](#) on MS Excel on the self-instructional training link; adding questions to the Survey of Employee Engagement pertaining to worker retention.

The SAC has a designated spot on the homepage of the CD Intranet. The committee's Charter, Member Listing, Strategic Plan, meeting minutes and historical information are available for review.

Thank You!

A special note of appreciation to all who helped during the CFSR on-site Review.

You made a difference!

Survey of Employee Engagement (SEE) results are forthcoming! Thank you for your input and your participation in identifying work conditions impacting employee satisfaction. Stay tuned...

CHILDREN'S DIVISION MISSION STATEMENT

To partner with families, communities and government to protect children from abuse and neglect and assure safety, permanency and well being for Missouri's children.