

**Final Report
Rhode Island Child and Family Services Review
September 2010**

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

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Rhode Island. 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 Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promulgate regulations for reviews of State child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families within HHS.

The Rhode Island CFSR was conducted the week of April 26, 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from April 1, 2009, through April 30, 2010. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR target period ending March 31, 2009
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 17 cases in Bristol (Region 2), 17 cases in North Kingstown (Region 3), and 31 cases in Providence (Region 1)
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, Tribal representatives, and attorneys

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

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

Key Characteristics of Cases Reviewed

Case Characteristics	Foster Care	In-Home Services
Total Number of Cases	40	25
Date case was opened		
Opened prior to the period under review	32 (80%)	15 (60%)
Opened during the period under review	8 (20%)	10 (40%)
Child entered foster care during the period under review	18 (45%)	N/A
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than 10	19 (47.5%)	*
At least 10 but younger than 13	8 (20%)	*
At least 13 but younger than 16	7 (17.5%)	*
16 and older	6 (15%)	*
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-Hispanic	0	*
Asian Non-Hispanic	2 (5%)	*
Black Non-Hispanic	4 (10%)	*
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic	0	*
Hispanic (of any race)	12 (30%)	*
White Non-Hispanic	19 (47.5%)	*
Unknown/Unable to Determine	0	*
Two or More Races Non-Hispanic	3 (7.5)	*
Primary reason for opening case		
Physical abuse	5 (12.5%)	2 (8%)
Sexual abuse	3 (7.5 %)	0
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	15 (37.5%)	10 (40%)
Medical neglect	1 (2.5%)	0
Abandonment	0	0
Mental/physical health of parent	0	2 (8%)
Mental/physical health of child	3 (7.5)	1 (4%)
Substance abuse by parent	5 (12.5%)	1 (4%)
Child's behavior	3 (7.5%)	2 (8%)
Substance abuse by child	0	1 (4%)
Domestic violence in child's home	1 (2.5%)	2 (8%)
Child in juvenile justice system	4 (10%)	4 (16%)
Other	0	0

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

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For each outcome, there is a table presenting the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of Rhode Island's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State's first CFSR report, which was held in fiscal year (FY) 2004, the State's status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Performance of individual sites included in the Onsite Review is presented in the tables. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate.

1. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	4	5	12	21	91.3
Partially Achieved	0	2	0	2	8.7
Total Applicable Cases	4	7	12	23	
Not Applicable Cases	13	10	19	42	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	100%	71%	100%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (%)	State's Percent	Meets Standards?
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	94.6+	91.5	No
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	99.68+	98.78	No

Status of Safety Outcome 1

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 91.3 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. It should be noted that taken individually, the two indicators used to assess this outcome were rated as a Strength in more than 90 percent of the cases. However, taken together, the percentage of cases that substantially achieved this outcome did not meet the required 95 percent. In addition to the case review findings, the State did not meet the national standards for the national data indicators pertaining to absence of maltreatment recurrence or absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The primary concern identified in the 2004 review was that the State was not effective in preventing maltreatment recurrence.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Revised the safety assessment, investigative summary, and intake summary to improve the identification of safety issues and the development of a specific protective plan, and to ensure that critical safety information is shared at case transfer
- Implemented the Information and Referral (I&R) process that requires follow-up on reports on families already open to DCYF when the reports do not meet the criteria for investigation but may need additional case management. As part of the I&R process, caseworkers must contact the family to assess and discuss the concerns contained in the report.
- Developed and implemented the FCRPCA and a new case/service plan informed by that assessment
- Conducted a case analysis with the assistance of the National Resource Center on Child Protective Services to determine contributing factors to the State's rate of repeat maltreatment and strategies for improvement.
- Created a new child protective services (CPS) investigation finding ("unfounded—referred for case management review") that allows investigators to determine that while no maltreatment is substantiated, the family is in need of and willing to engage with community-based services
- Trained staff how to assess safety and risk, and how to develop viable safety plans
- Participated in a Breakthrough Series on safety and risk, with a goal of enhancing and engaging natural family supports to increase family resilience.
- Implemented the Family Care Community Partnerships (FCCP) to provide immediate access to community-based crisis stabilization and family preservation services

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 23 (35 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable when there were no child maltreatment reports during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with the State child welfare agency policy requirements.

Rhode Island DCYF policy establishes the following report categories and corresponding response requirements:

- Emergency Response reports: A child protective investigator (CPI) must respond to the report within 10 minutes of assignment.

- Immediate Response reports: A CPI must respond to the report within the shift in which the call was received.
- Routine Response reports: A CPI must respond to the report within 24 hours of assignment.

Rhode Island DCYF policy does not specify what constitutes a “response” and does not specify a timeframe for establishing face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim. Policy does indicate that the investigation must be completed within 10 days during which time the alleged child victim must be seen.

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

Item 1 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	4	6	12	22	96
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	0	1	4
Total Applicable Cases	4	7	12	23	
Not Applicable	13	10	19	42	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	100%	86%	100%		

Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 22 cases when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was made within the timeframes required by State policy. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case that was assigned a routine response when the child was not seen within the 10 days allowed for an investigation.

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 96 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in accordance with required timeframes. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 1 also was rated as a Strength in Rhode Island’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, policy requires the CPI to interview the child victim in a report as soon as possible within the timeframes of the response priority. Additionally, face-to-face contact must be made with all of the children named in the report and any other children in the household within the 10-day timeframe allowed for an investigation.

Data reported in the Statewide Assessment indicate that the timeliness of investigations was rated as a Strength in 96 percent of the 42 cases reviewed for this item in the 2008 Rhode Island State Child and Family Service Review (RI-State CFSR), which is modeled after the Federal CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DCYF generally responds to referrals of child abuse and neglect in a timely manner.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 18 (28 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this item if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review. For all applicable cases, reviewers were to determine if there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report involving similar circumstances had occurred within a 6-month period before or after that identified report. The results of the assessment of item 2 are presented in the table below.

Item 2 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	3	5	9	17	94
Area Needing Improvement	0	1	0	1	6
Total Applicable Cases	3	6	9	18	
Not Applicable	14	11	22	47	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	100%	83%	100%		

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 17 cases when there was only one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family within a 6-month period. Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case when there were two substantiated maltreatment reports on the family within a 3-month period.

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

- In five cases, there were no maltreatment reports as the case was opened for reasons other than maltreatment.
- In 20 cases, there were fewer than three reports.
- In 21 cases, there were at least three reports but fewer than six reports.
- In 15 cases, there were between 6 and 11 reports.
- In four cases, there were 12 or more maltreatment reports.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 94 percent of the applicable cases, there was no recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment within a 6-month period. This percentage is greater than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF has an automated system that identifies cases in which there has been a maltreatment recurrence and generates a weekly report listing all pending cases of maltreatment recurrence. All investigations listed in the report must be reviewed by CPS administrators prior to a substantiation of the current investigation to determine if the current report actually is an incident of repeat maltreatment.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, DCYF has reduced the rate of maltreatment recurrence from 13.1 percent in 2007 to 8.5 percent on March 31, 2009.

Stakeholder Interview Information

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

Safety Outcome 2

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	10	7	14	31	47.7
Partially Achieved	2	7	6	15	23.1
Not Achieved	5	3	11	19	29.2
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	59%	41%	45%		

Status of Safety Outcome 2

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 47.7 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State was not consistently effective in addressing underlying and ongoing risk of harm to children, particularly in situations involving parental substance abuse, mental illness, and/or domestic violence.
- In some cases, risk of harm to children had been identified, but services were not provided to either children or parents.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Developed and implemented the FCRPCA and a new case/service plan informed by the assessment
- Worked on the development of an administrative services organization to provide a statewide comprehensive network of prevention services which was the precursor to the FCCP
- Worked on redesigning procuring and managing services for children and families with the most complex needs, which was the preliminary work toward the State's current system of care effort

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 37 (57 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded if the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and there were no other children in the home, or if there were no concerns regarding the safety of any children in the home during the period under review. For applicable cases, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families that would prevent placement of children in foster care and at the same time ensure their safety. The results of the assessment of item 3 are presented in the table that follows.

Item 3 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	7	10	11	28	76
Area Needing Improvement	0	2	7	9	24
Total Applicable Cases	7	12	18	37	
Not Applicable	10	5	13	28	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	100%	83%	61%		

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

- Although no services were provided when the child was removed from the home, the removal was necessary to ensure the safety of the child (five cases).
- Services were provided to the family to ensure the safety of the child and prevent removal (17 cases).
- Services were provided after reunification of the child to prevent reentry (three cases).
- Efforts were made to provide services prior to removal and/or reentry (three 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, anger management services, financial assistance services, domestic violence services, parenting education and support services, case management services, transportation services, psychological services (mental health screenings and treatment), behavioral therapy, evidence-based Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), daycare services, crisis intervention, intensive in-home services, in-home counseling, medication management, and after-care services.

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

- Services were not provided to the family, and the children remained at risk in the home (one case).
- Services were provided, but they did not target the key safety concern in the family, leaving the children at risk in the home (four cases).
- Services were not provided to protect the children in the home, and the children were subsequently removed or reentered foster care (four cases).

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 76 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 3 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Rhode Island law requires DCYF to provide services to children and their families to prevent the unnecessary removal of children from their homes. The Statewide Assessment reports the following as DCYF efforts to prevent removal:

- Development of partnerships with community-based agencies to promote interventions with families as early as possible in the case and to formulate viable safety plans for maintaining children in their own homes
- Provision of home-based behavioral and clinical intervention services
- Establishment of the FCCPs to ensure that families are able to access necessary family preservation and family support services and prevent DCYF involvement when it is appropriate to do so

Data reported in the Statewide Assessment indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 89 percent of the applicable cases reviewed during the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

The Statewide Assessment identified a number of barriers to providing services to families to prevent removal from the home, including the following:

- Language barriers: The number of providers able to quickly accommodate families whose primary language is not English has increased slowly, although wait lists have decreased in the last few years.
- Resources: The service capacity levels for some critical services have not significantly improved. Example: parent aide services are practically nonexistent as this service is not covered by insurance, and the funding by DCYF is not sufficient to cover the cost. Parent aide services are often a service put in place to manage safety threats to children who remain at home.
- Changes in intensive home-based mental health treatment services for children: The program included intensive clinical and case management services to children in their homes, schools, and other community settings for a period of 6 months with possible extensions in the duration and intensity of services, but it was reduced in duration to a maximum of 16 weeks per year and was revised to focus on children with the most significant mental health needs in an effort to prevent psychiatric hospitalization or stabilize a child returning to the home and community from said hospitalization.

The Statewide Assessment also reports, however, that when children enter DCYF foster care through the juvenile justice system (particularly through the Truancy Court and Drug Court), it is not always possible for DCYF to implement actions to prevent these removals. This is because youth appear before the Truancy Court and Drug Court usually prior to any DCYF involvement. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, a number of youth who appear in these courts are ordered into out-of-home placement even though most of them do not have safety or risk factors within the family that would require out-of-home placement. The Statewide Assessment also notes that DCYF and community partners have had many informal meetings with truancy magistrates to address this practice and suggest alternatives that do not require the child to be removed from the family.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on FCCP indicated that families are referred to FCCP when the investigation is unfounded or very low risk. These services generally are early intervention services, and FCCP is able to put services for families in place very quickly. Some stakeholders confirmed that FCCP is not available to families with open Family Service Unit (FSU) cases.

Stakeholder comments regarding Truancy Court were consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment, including that children who appear in the court are being ordered into out-of-home placements when there are no risk factors indicating a need for this type of service. A few stakeholders also expressed the opinion that Truancy Courts are using foster care as a form of punishment for youth who appear in that court.

Item 4. Risk assessment and safety management

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 4 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	10	8	15	33	51
Area Needing Improvement	7	9	16	32	49
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	59%	47%	48%		

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: conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children's home or in the children's foster home, and addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment.

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

- There was no initial risk assessment (six cases).
- There was no ongoing risk assessment (27 cases).
- There was no initial safety assessment (five cases).
- There was no ongoing safety assessment (22 cases).
- There were safety concerns in the child's home that were not addressed by the agency (eight cases).

- There were safety concerns regarding parent-child visitation that were not addressed by the agency (four cases).
- There were safety concerns regarding the child's placement that were not addressed by the agency (two cases).
- A safety assessment was not completed when the child was discharged from foster care (seven cases).

Additionally, in eight cases, only the child who was the focus of DCYF involvement was assessed for risk and safety—other children living in the household were not assessed.

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 51 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to assess and address the risk of harm to the child. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 4 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy mandates that risk assessments be conducted throughout the child protection investigation and within 60 days of the case opening in the FSU. Policy also mandates that risk reassessments be conducted at least every 6 months thereafter or when case circumstances require. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, risk and safety assessments are to be conducted using the FCRPCA tool, which was implemented in 2007 and is accessible through the Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST). The FCRPCA service plan (FCRPCASP) not only assesses and monitors risk and safety, but also addresses all other child and family issues related to permanency and well-being for child welfare and juvenile justice populations.

The FCRPCA is used to reassess safety and risk for the child prior to reunification or when significant changes in the family situation occur.

The Statewide Assessment reports data relevant to item 4 from monthly supervisor case reviews that use an instrument modeled after the Federal CFSR instrument. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, in the first quarter of 2009, 93 percent of cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for this item. The Statewide Assessment also notes that this percentage represents an increase from the fourth quarter of 2007, when only 78 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for this item.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed different opinions about the effectiveness of DCYF in assessing risk and managing safety, and on the effectiveness of the assessment tool. Some stakeholders indicated that DCYF is effective in assessing risk and safety, with a few stakeholders reporting that safety and risk are assessed at every contact. Additionally, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the safety plans are now required to contain specific steps to ensure safety. Despite this positive feedback, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that safety and risk are not consistently assessed and, as a result appropriate safety plans are not consistently developed.

Most stakeholders acknowledged that the agency provides a formal tool for conducting risk and safety assessments, the FCRPCA, but they expressed different opinions about the effectiveness of this tool. Although some stakeholders indicated that the FCRPCA helps the caseworker be more efficient by consistently assessing the needs and services of the entire family, a few stakeholders expressed concern that the assessment tool is not effective and is difficult to complete.

A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that some cases referred to FCCP were not appropriate and should have been referred to the FSU.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	2	3	9	14	35.0
Partially Achieved	7	7	11	25	62.5
Not Achieved	1	0	0	1	2.5
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	20%	30%	45%		

Conformity of Statewide Data Indicators With National Standards			
National Data Indicators	National Standard (Scaled Score)	State Score (Scaled Score)	Meets Standards?
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	122.6+	96.1	No
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	106.4+	141.7	Yes
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods	121.7+	123.6	Yes
Composite 4: Placement stability	101.5+	97.4	No

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 35.0 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. In addition to case review findings, Rhode Island did not meet the national standard for the data indicators pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification, and placement stability. However, the State did meet the national standard for the data indicators pertaining to

timeliness of adoptions and permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State was not consistent in its efforts to prevent reentry into foster care.
- Reunification occurred without adequate preparation or planning, and there was a lack of post-reunification supports/resources.
- The State was not consistent with regard to ensuring placement stability for children in foster care.
- There was a lack of sufficient placement resources and a frequent use of emergency shelters, which resulted in multiple, short-term placements for children, including very young children.
- The State was not consistent with regard to establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- The State did not consistently make concerted efforts to achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner.
- In some cases, inappropriate permanency goals remained in place for an extended length of time due to reluctance by DCYF and/or the court to explore other permanency options.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Assigned a DCYF attorney to handle only termination of parental rights (TPR) appeals to decrease the length of time for appeals
- Improved the process for the timely completion of license applications to promote sufficient capacity by leasing fingerprinting equipment to expedite the background check process and by contracting home studies to reduce the completion time
- Created a database within RICHIST that allows the Placement Unit to see the foster homes with openings and the characteristics of the children that these foster homes are willing to accept to better match children entering foster care with an appropriate placements
- Developed and implemented policy on locating and engaging absent parents, including the use of Federal Parent Locator Services
- Trained DCYF staff and community partners on the relevance of fathers and paternal relatives to children's permanency and well-being
- Developed and implemented the FCRPCA and a new service plan informed by that assessment
- Trained staff on the new assessment and service plan process and tool, with an emphasis on engaging the family in the assessment and planning process
- Trained supervisors on the use of guardianship as a permanency option
- Established an Adoption Specialist Certification Program to increase the level of adoption expertise among clinicians in the State

The Children's Bureau has not yet made a determination regarding the achievement of the measure of this outcome for the 2004 CFSR Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

Item 5. Foster care reentries

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 18 (45 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not enter foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of the assessment of item 5 are presented in the table below.

Item 5 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	2	6	7	15	83
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	3	3	17
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	6	10	18	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	8	4	10	22	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	70%		

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 15 cases when the child's entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. Item 5 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in three cases when the child's entry into foster care occurred within 12 months of the date of discharge from a prior foster care placement episode. In one case, the child reentered foster care within 4 months; in another case the child reentered foster care within 10.5 months; and in the third case, the child reentered foster care within 2 months.

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 83 percent of the cases, reviewers found that the children reentered foster care within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 5 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

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

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

Rhode Island's performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was the following: In the 12 months prior to the CFSR 12-month target period for the data indicators, 23.6 percent of children exiting foster care to reunification reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. This percentage is greater than the national median of 15.0 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF and the Yale Consultation Center conducted a data analysis during FY 2007 to identify the populations experiencing the highest reentry rates. The findings were that the following populations had the highest reentry rates into foster care:

- Children ages 11 years and older
- Children removed from their homes for behavioral reasons rather than for reasons related to abuse or neglect
- Children placed in group homes or non-relative foster homes

The Statewide Assessment reports that DCYF is making efforts to reduce the reentry rate by targeting services to these populations.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the Truancy Court has had an impact on the rate of children who reenter foster care within 12 months of a prior episode. Some of the youth who go through Truancy Court experience short-term placements and later come into care based on their assessed need for service. This practice often circumvents DCYF and frequently prevents the implementation of in-home services to prevent removal. During the 2008-2009 school year, 39 youth presented to DCYF's intake unit for opening due to a Truancy Court order for immediate placement. Most of these cases were not open to DCYF prior to the order for placement.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive stakeholder comments on the issue of foster care reentry during the onsite CFSR.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 6 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	9	8	15	32	80
Area Needing Improvement	1	2	5	8	20
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	90%	80%	75%		

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's current placement was stable and that the child either did not experience a placement change during the period under review (25 cases) or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interests (i.e., they were intended to further achievement of the child's permanency goal or to provide specialized services for the child) (7 cases).

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

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

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 28 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in 10 cases experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Children in two cases experienced three placements during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 80 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

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

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

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

- C4.1: 85.8 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the national median of 83.3 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 86.0 percent.
- C4.2: 61.5 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 greater than the national median of 59.9 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 65.4 percent.
- C4.3: 36.6 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings. This percentage is greater than the national median of 33.9 percent but less than the national 75th percentile of 41.8 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires caseworkers to meet regularly with foster parents and children to assess needs, monitor progress, and ensure that all necessary supports are in place to maintain the child's placement. The Statewide Assessment notes that there is a report in RICHIST that allows the Placement Unit to see all of the foster homes with openings and the characteristics of the children that these foster homes are willing to accept. Placement Unit staff review available information about the homes and begin calling prospective foster parents to determine which home is the best fit and is available to accept placement of the child. Additionally, the Statewide Assessment reports that the reasons for change in child placement are tracked during administrative reviews.

The Statewide Assessment reports that DCYF and the Yale Consultation Center conducted a study of youth in foster care placement from August 2005 to May 2008 to determine the factors associated with placement stability. The results identified the following five populations as having high placement instability rates:

- Children whose primary reason for removal was neglect
- Children who had an emotional or behavioral diagnosis
- Children with disabilities
- Children placed in non-relative foster care
- Children placed in an emergency shelters
- Children between the ages of 2 and 5

According to the Statewide Assessment, there is a lack of support for DCYF non-relative general licensed foster families. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, these foster families need support in navigating and understanding legal and court proceedings and in preparing children in their care for permanency. Additionally, foster parents need support as they begin to develop relationships with biological parents. Although the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association (RIFPA) has a mentoring program for newly licensed foster parents and a telephone help line for foster families, it is not equipped to provide this level of support.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that another finding of the study was that placement moves for 33 percent of the children with three or more moves in the 12-month period were to promote achievement of the child's the permanency goal.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the State attempts to ensure stable placements for children in foster care. Some stakeholders suggested that children in relative foster family placements have higher stability than children in non-relative foster homes. Some stakeholders also suggested that services are offered to foster families to support placements and prevent disruptions.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

 Strength **X** Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 7 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	3	4	11	18	45
Area Needing Improvement	7	6	9	22	55
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	30%	40%	55%		

Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 18 cases when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate, had been established in a timely manner, and, if relevant, that the agency had filed for TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA.

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

- The child's permanency goal at the time of the onsite CFSR was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (eight cases).
- The child's permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (19 cases).
- The agency had not sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA, particularly with regard to documenting compelling reasons in the case file for not seeking TPR (eight cases).

ASFA requirements with regard to filing for TPR were met in 43 percent of 14 applicable cases.

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

- Adoption (10 cases)
- Reunification with parents (27 cases)
- Other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA) (three cases)

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 45 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and had met ASFA requirements when relevant. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 7 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

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

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

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

- C3.1: 23.7 percent of the children in foster care for 24 months or longer at the start of the 12-month CFSR target period were discharged from foster care to a permanent home (adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage is less than the national median of 25.0 percent.
- C3.2: 95.9 percent of the children exiting foster care during the target period who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home. This percentage is less than the national median of 96.8 percent.
- C3.3: 36.2 percent of the children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month target period with a discharge reason of emancipation had been in foster care for 3 years or longer at the time of discharge. This percentage is less than the national 25th percentile of 37.5 percent. (For this measure, a lower percentage reflects a higher level of performance.)

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, a permanency goal for each child in foster care must be determined by the caseworker in consultation with the supervisor. State statute allows for one of the following six permanency planning goals:

- Maintenance in the home
- Reunification
- Adoption
- Guardianship

- Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative
- Planned living arrangement/independent living

The Statewide Assessment reports that the initial permanency planning goal is almost always reunification unless there is a prior involuntary TPR or the case involves cruel and extreme abuse. Progress toward permanency is monitored through reviews by the Administrative Review Unit (ARU), and the ARU officer makes recommendations, when necessary, to modify the goal. The Statewide Assessment also reports that Dashboard reports from RICHIST are available to track the timeliness and appropriateness of permanency planning goals.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, although State legislation and DCYF policy allow for concurrent planning, DCYF practice does not reflect the policy and/or procedure of concurrent planning. This was attributed in the Statewide Assessment to the legal perspective in the State, which is that concurrent planning is an inherent contradiction that undermines the reasonable efforts requirements of most TPR allegations excluding cruel/abusive torture and abandonment.

The Statewide Assessment notes that a key barrier to filing for TPR in a timely manner is the Family Court's preference to have an adoptive resource in place prior to the filing of the TPR petition. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, when a petition is filed and no pre-adoptive home has been identified, the court will make it clear either from the bench or in mediation that it will not address the petition until an adoptive resource has been identified. The Statewide Assessment reports that because agency policy requires that TPR be filed before the permanency goal of adoption can be formally established, DCYF often must continue to work on permanency goals that may not be appropriate. Additionally, according to the Statewide Assessment, there is sometimes a long period of time, up to 12 months, between arraignment of dependency, abuse, and neglect (DNA) petitions and actual findings of abuse or neglect (commitment of the child to DCYF). As reported in the Statewide Assessment, this sometimes results in DCYF filing a TPR petition before there has been a finding of abuse or neglect on the underlying petition. Additional information pertaining to TPR is provided under item 9 below and item 28 in the Systemic Factors section of this report.

According to the Statewide Assessment, in October 2007, DCYF established Permanency Support Teams (PSTs) within each of the DCYF Regional Offices to improve the timeliness of establishing permanency goals with particular emphasis placed on children who have been in foster care for long periods of time. These teams are comprised of DCYF staff and staff from collaborating community-based agencies. The Statewide Assessment notes that the objective of the PST is to ensure that every child in DCYF custody who is not reunified with parents will have an appropriate permanency goal and will maintain valuable connections with other members of their family and other significant, caring adults. The PSTs can assist the caseworker with any of the following tasks:

- Preparing necessary case documentation
- Completing Internet searches for paternal and maternal relatives who may be a placement resource or connection for the child
- Assisting with the negotiation of adoption and guardianship subsidies
- Explaining to prospective guardians their rights and responsibilities
- Reviewing the appropriateness of permanency planning goals

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, when the permanency goal of planned living arrangement/independent living is considered or is the permanency goal, the case is referred to the PST for consultation on whether this is the best permanency goal for the child. Additionally, prior to choosing guardianship as the permanency goal, DCYF must document why reunification is not an option and why adoption is not in the child's best interest. At least one parent must come to court and enter agreement to the guardianship.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The key issues addressed by stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR were whether permanency goals were established in a timely manner and were appropriate to the needs of the child, whether concurrent planning was being used in the State, and whether petitions for TPR were filed in a timely manner.

Most stakeholders commenting on the appropriateness and timeliness of goals expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in establishing an appropriate permanency goal in a timely manner. Some stakeholders indicated that the initial permanency goal generally is reunification.

Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that concurrent planning is done informally in some cases; other stakeholders reported that concurrent planning is not practiced at all. Some stakeholders indicated that they would prefer the consistent use of concurrent planning for children as it would increase the likelihood of timely permanency. Additionally, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that concurrent planning suggests that the agency will not make reasonable efforts to reunify children with their parents.

Some stakeholders reported that the State is effective in filing for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA and that when DCYF does not file for TPR, compelling reasons usually are documented. A few stakeholders indicated that DCYF will file a TPR petition even when there is no identified adoptive resource for the child; however, other stakeholders reported that some courts will not accept a TPR petition if there is no identified adoptive resource for the child. Some stakeholders reported that in some cases, the court discourages the filing of a TPR petition in order to give parents more time to continue with their reunification efforts.

A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that establishing permanency in a timely manner is difficult for some children because there often are situations in which the parent's attorney will delay the adjudication hearing with the goal of having the case heard as a dependency charge rather than an abuse/neglect petition. A dependency charge indicates that the child is in foster care due to "no fault" of the parents. Stakeholders suggested that if a case is heard as a dependency charge, that often makes it difficult to terminate parental rights later. Stakeholders also noted that parent attorneys have been successful in delaying adjudication for as long as 9 months to 1 year after the child is removed from the home, which makes it difficult to establish permanency goals in a timely manner.

Many stakeholders expressed the opinion that PSTs were initially met with a lot of resistance by DCYF caseworkers. However, the PSTs, according to these stakeholders, have proved to be effective and have been beneficial in finding connections and in establishing appropriate plans for children and youth.

Additional stakeholder information pertaining to TPR is provided under item 9 below and item 28 in the Systemic Factors section of this report.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 27 (67.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the permanency goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of the assessment of item 8 are presented in the table below.

Item 8 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	4	4	8	16	59
Area Needing Improvement	1	3	7	11	41
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	7	15	27	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	3	5	13	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	80%	57%	53%		

Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 16 cases when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 11 cases 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 the agency not providing appropriate services to promote reunification and not engaging parents, and a general lack of concerted efforts to achieve reunifications.

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 59 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 8 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island’s 2004 CFSR.

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

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

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

- C1.1: 66.8 percent of the reunifications occurred in at least 8 days but less than 12 months of the child's entry into foster care. This percentage is less than the national median of 69.9 percent.
- C1.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children discharged to reunification was 7.8 months. This length of stay is greater than the national median of 6.5 months. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)
- C1.3: 51.2 percent of children entering foster care in the 6 months prior to the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in more than 7 days but less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 48.4 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, reunification usually is the initial permanency goal and the ARU evaluates the child's progress toward reunification. The Statewide Assessment reports that barriers to timely reunification include the lack of post reunification support services in the State and waiting lists for some services, particularly parent aide services and substance abuse services.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that when guardianship is the permanency planning goal, DCYF provides a 1-day training to relatives and kin who will be the legal guardian of the child. Additionally, these relatives or kin are eligible for a guardianship subsidy once they have been granted legal guardianship of the child. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, a parent can terminate the guardianship by filing a request with the Family Court and showing proof that circumstances have changed and that the parent is now a fit and willing parent. DCYF is notified of any filing that requests reconsideration of the guardianship and conducts an assessment to determine whether circumstances have changed for the parent and whether termination of the guardianship is in the best interest of the child.

Stakeholder Interview Information

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

Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the permanency goal of guardianship is being used more frequently now than it has in the past and currently is viewed by the agency and the court as a viable option for children of all ages.

Item 9. Adoption

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 9 was applicable for 10 (25 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. The results of the assessment of item 9 are presented in the table below.

Item 9 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	2	0	1	3	30
Area Needing Improvement	1	2	4	7	70
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	3	2	5	10	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	8	15	30	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	67%	0	20%		

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

- Delays in filing for TPR (six cases)
- Delays in the TPR process after filing (one case)
- Delays in finalizing adoptive placement (one case)
- Delays in the identification of an adoptive home (two cases)
- Delays in searching for absent parents (two cases)

Additional findings relevant to this item were the following:

- Of the 10 children with a goal of adoption, 3 achieved the goal during the period under review.
- Of the three children who had a finalized adoption during the period under review, two had been in foster care for less than 24 months.
- Of the seven children with a goal of adoption who were not adopted during the period under review, six had been in foster care for longer than 24 months.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 30 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 9 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

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

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

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

- C2.1: 42.3 percent of the children exiting to adoption were discharged in less than 24 months from the time of entry into foster care. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 36.6 percent.
- C2.2: The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 26.1 months. This median length of stay is less than the national 25th percentile of 27.3 months. (For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.)
- C2.3: 23.0 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the year. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 22.7 percent.
- C2.4: 18.4 percent of children who were in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the year became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within the first 6 months of the year. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 10.9 percent.
- C2.5: 76.5 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percentage is greater than the national 75th percentile of 53.7 percent.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy states that when a child has been in foster care for 12 months, a permanency hearing must be held in the Family Court to address whether DCFY has made reasonable efforts toward permanency and to make a determination as to whether a TPR petition should be filed. If a TPR petition is filed, Rhode Island law requires that all TPR petitions be adjudicated within 180 days of filing. Additionally, Rhode Island law and DCYF policy require the Family Court to review the status of the child if the child is not placed in a permanent resource within 30 days from the date of the final TPR decree. The Statewide Assessment notes that DCYF must inform the court of its efforts to recruit an adoptive resource for the child.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State law requires that all TPR petitions must be adjudicated within 180 days of the filing of the petition. However, the Statewide Assessment reports that in some cases, the court wants DCYF to withdraw the petition without prejudice (a dismissal that allows for refileing the case in the future) and refile (to start the 180-day cycle anew, thus preserving the evidence).

The Statewide Assessment notes that mediation usually is ordered by the court in TPR cases because mediators often are successful in helping the parties reach agreement about the terms of an open or direct-consent adoption in which the biological parent maintains some form of contact with the child. Additionally, the Statewide Assessment indicates that mediation seems to reduce the number of TPR trials. However, the Statewide Assessment also reports that DCYF caseworkers and foster/adoptive parents indicate that the mediation process is not a positive experience for them because frequently they feel pressured to accept “deals” with which they do not fully agree in order to avoid the possibility of an unfavorable outcome at trial.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that there has been an increase in adoptions and that this increase can be attributed to the focus on mediation and open adoptions. Some stakeholders, however, confirmed the information reported in the Statewide Assessment that foster/pre-adoptive parents often feel pressured by court mediators into signing off on the visitation terms of the open adoption even when they do not agree with them.

Item 10. Other planned permanent living arrangement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 3 (7.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to OPPLA. The results of the assessment of item 10 are presented in the table below.

Item 10 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	1	0	0	1	33
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	0	2	67
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	1	0	3	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	8	9	20	37	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	50%	0	N/A		

Item 10 was rated as a Strength in one case when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure a long-term placement appropriate for the child’s special needs. Item 10 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in two cases when reviewers determined that the youth received no services to prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living.

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

Age of Child When OPPLA Was Established	Number of Children
13 years of age	1
16 years of age or older	2
Total	3

Rating Determination

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 33 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the goal of OPPLA was being addressed in an appropriate way. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 10 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy allows for the permanency goal of OPPLA (or APPLA, as it is called in Rhode Island) when guardianship or adoption is not possible. At the time of the Statewide Assessment, youth 16 years and older constituted 79 percent of cases with the service plan goal of OPPLA (which in Rhode Island includes permanent placement with relatives but not discharged from DCYF custody, planned living arrangement-other, or planned living arrangement-independent living) and 19.3 percent of those with a service plan goal of OPPLA were youth in juvenile corrections. Supplemental information amending the Statewide Assessment indicates that 100 percent of the two applicable cases were rated as a Strength for this item during the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that DCYF policy mandates that Independent Living (IL) services must begin for children in out-of-home placement at the age of 16. The services available to these youth are discussed in item 35 of this Final Report. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, Real Connections, which is a partner in the PST, has been successful in developing and fostering personal connections for youth who were in danger of aging out of foster care without significant adult connections. Real Connections staff use case-mining, eco-mapping, and relationship mapping to locate relatives of these youth to establish permanent connections for them.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few stakeholders commenting on the permanency goal of OPPLA during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the goal is appropriately used for youth who have no other permanency options. However, stakeholders commenting on the agency's effectiveness in preparing youth for making the transition from foster care to independent living indicated that many youth leaving foster care are not adequately prepared for independent living. Stakeholders noted that as a part of the State FY 2008 budget, the State lowered the age of foster care eligibility from 21 years of age to 18 years of age. This, according to some stakeholders, decreased the State's ability to prepare youth for successful independent living.

Permanency Outcome 2

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	6	5	10	21	52.5
Partially Achieved	4	5	9	18	45.0
Not Achieved	0	0	1	1	2.5
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Substantially Achieved by Site	60%	50%	50%		

Status of Permanency Outcome 2

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 52.5 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State did not consistently place siblings together in foster care due to insufficient foster home capacity.
- The State was not consistently effective in promoting visitation between children in foster care with their parents, particularly with fathers, or with their siblings in foster care.
- The State did not consistently seek relatives as placement resources.
- The State was not consistent with regard to concerted efforts to preserve connections of children in foster care to extended families.
- The State was not consistent in promoting the relationship between children and their parents.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Developed and implemented policy on locating and engaging absent parents, including the use of Federal Parent Locator Services
- Trained DCYF staff and community partners on the relevance of fathers and paternal relatives to children's permanency and well-being
- Developed and implemented the FCRPCA and a new service plan informed by that assessment

- Trained staff on the new assessment and service plan process and tool, with an emphasis on engaging the family in the assessment and planning process

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 11 was applicable for 37 (92.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if TPR was attained prior to the period under review, contact with parents was not considered to be in the child’s best interests, and/or parents were deceased or their whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child’s most current foster care setting was near the child’s parents or close relatives. The results of the assessment of item 11 are presented in the table below.

Item 11 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	7	10	19	36	97
Area Needing Improvement	1	0	0	1	3
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	8	10	19	37	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	0	1	3	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	87.5%	100%	100%		

Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 20 cases when reviewers determined that the child was placed either in the same community as the parents or near the parents’ community. The item also was rated as a Strength in 16 cases when reviewers determined that even though the child was placed out of his or her community, the placement was necessary to meet the needs of the child and/or support attainment of the permanency goal. Item 11 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in one case when reviewers determined that the child’s placement was not sufficiently close to the parents’ location, and there was no justification for the distance.

Rating Determination

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 97 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed children in locations close to their parents or relatives when appropriate. This percentage is more than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 11 also was rated as a Strength in Rhode Island’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF makes concerted efforts to keep children within their birth family communities, unless it is not in the best interests of the child or the child is placed with a relative in a neighboring community. Efforts to maintain proximity between children and their birth families also occurs when placing children in residential treatment facilities. Rhode Island law mandates that DCYF must petition the Rhode Island Family Court for a placement hearing prior to authorizing placement of a child in an out-of-State child care facility.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, this item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of the applicable cases in the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

The few Bristol stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families when the requisite placement type is available. There were insufficient substantive stakeholder comments from North Kingstown and from Providence.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 12 was applicable for 18 (45 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if the child did not have a sibling in foster care at any time during the period under review. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were currently, or had been, placed together, and if separated, whether the separation was necessary to meet the service or safety needs of one or more of the children. The results of the assessment of item 12 are presented in the table below.

Item 12 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	6	3	7	16	89
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	2	2	11
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	3	9	18	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	7	11	22	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	100%	100%	78%		

Item 12 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child was placed with siblings (seven cases), or that the separation of siblings was necessary because one of the siblings had special placement needs or because placement with siblings was not in the child's best interests (nine cases). Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in two cases when reviewers determined that

the agency had not made concerted efforts to place siblings together. In one case rated as an Area Needing Improvement, there were four siblings placed in two separate foster homes. In the other case rated as an Area Needing Improvement, there was no justification for why three siblings were placed in two separate placements.

Rating Determination

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency placed siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 12 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF must make reasonable efforts to place siblings in the same foster care, adoption, or guardianship placement unless it is contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings. If all siblings cannot be placed together, multiple placements are sought to place the siblings in groups. The Statewide Assessment reports the following factors as those most frequently associated with placing siblings separately:

- One of the siblings sexually abused another.
- Children are removed from the family home at different times.
- The sibling group is larger than three children.
- Children with different birth fathers are placed with paternal family members.
- Placement resources to accommodate the sibling group are not available.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that if a new sibling is born and enters placement when the older siblings are already in foster care, DCYF first explores the possibility of placement of the new sibling with the current foster and/or adoptive home before considering other options. The Statewide Assessment also notes that DCYF usually attempts to locate kinship placements that can accommodate a sibling group.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, this item was rated as a Strength in 77 percent of the applicable cases in the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Bristol and Providence stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that DCYF attempts to place siblings together, although sometimes it is difficult to place large sibling groups together. Additionally, stakeholders expressed the opinion that DCYF uses relatives to keep siblings together. There were insufficient substantive stakeholder comments from North Kingstown.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 13 was applicable for 39 (97.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item if the child had no siblings in foster care and if one of the following conditions was met with regard to the parents: TPR was established prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the child’s life or were deceased; or visitation with a parent was not considered in the best interests of the child. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate sufficient visitation between children in foster care and their parents and between children in foster care and their siblings also in foster care and whether the visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The results of the assessment of item 13 are presented in the table below.

Item 13 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	7	6	11	24	62
Area Needing Improvement	3	4	8	15	38
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	10	19	39	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	1	1	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	70%	60%	58%		

Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 24 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visitation with parents and siblings met the needs of the children. Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 15 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the mother (five cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with the father (12 cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to promote visitation with siblings in foster care (three cases).

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

Typical Frequency of Child's Visits During the Period Under Review	With Mother	With Father	With Siblings in Foster Care
Visits occurred at least once a week	16 (44%)	6 (22%)	3 (30%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	12 (33%)	2 (7%)	2 (20%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	5 (14%)	4 (15%)	1 (10%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	2 (6%)	6 (22%)	4 (40%)
There were no visits during the period under review	1 (3%)	9 (33%)	0
Total Applicable Cases	36	27	10

The data indicate that children visited at least once per month with their mothers in 92 percent of the 36 applicable cases, with their fathers in 44 percent of the 27 applicable cases, and with their siblings in 60 percent of the 10 applicable cases.

Rating Determination

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 62 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the family. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 13 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires that an initial visitation between parent and child be conducted within 10 days of the child being placed in an out-of-home placement. DCYF's policy provides for regular visitation to occur at a minimum of once every 2 weeks thereafter, and for the visitation plan to be incorporated into the case plan agreement. Additionally, if siblings cannot be placed together, DCYF is required to make reasonable efforts to facilitate visitation or ongoing contacts with siblings, when appropriate. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, in the 2008 RI-State CFSR, this item was rated as a Strength in 74 percent of the applicable cases.

The Statewide Assessment notes that the Families Together Therapeutic Visitation Program (FTTVP), a collaboration between DCYF and the Providence Children's Museum, has been in operation for 16 years and operates in all four DCYF regions. The Families Together program consultants work with supervisors and caseworkers to develop stronger capacity for supervising visitations. The program consultants also provide parents with education on child development and behavior management, and give constructive feedback following visitations. In 2009, FTTVP served 169 families including 200 adults and 326 children. This program has been recognized nationally by Harvard University's Innovations in Government Program.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, in an effort to increase the ability to provide more meaningful visitation to families, DCYF created the child support technician (CST) position. CSTs are trained in family dynamics, safety and risk assessment, and documentation. They are assigned nonstandard work hours, which allows for visits to occur outside business and school hours without the expense of overtime for DCYF. However, in 2008, the State began to experience severe budget cuts that resulted in the net loss of CSTs and caseworkers as vacancies went unfilled. The vacancies had an impact on the capacity to complete parent/child and sibling visits. In addition, overtime was drastically reduced, which affected DCYF's ability to provide visitation outside standard work hours. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, a positive outcome of the fiscal crisis is that greater collaboration is occurring between the caseworker, foster parents, and birth parents to ensure that meaningful visitations occur.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that when there is an absent parent, DCYF is required to identify, locate, and engage the absent parent in the earliest stages of the case. Searches for absent parents are conducted at case opening, repeated at various intervals, and when there is a reassessment for service planning or a consideration of filing a TPR petition.

The Statewide Assessment notes that DCYF has provided a recurring training called "Where's Daddy: How to Engage Hard to Reach Dads" in an attempt to increase the level of caseworker engagement with absent fathers.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the State is effective in promoting visitation with parents and siblings in foster care. Some stakeholders reported that visitation with parents generally occurs biweekly and visitation increases as the family progresses toward reunification. A few stakeholders, however, suggested that the frequency is not sufficient to meet the needs of the children and families.

Stakeholders expressed different opinions regarding the State's effectiveness in searching for absent parents. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that DCYF is diligent in searching for absent parents; others said while improvements have been made in searching for absent parents, DCYF needs to be more diligent. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the Parent Locator has been beneficial in locating absent parents.

Item 14. Preserving connections

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 40 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 14. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child's connections to neighborhood, community, heritage, extended family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. This item is not rated on the basis of visits or contacts with parents or siblings in foster care. The results of the assessment of item 14 are presented in the table that follows.

Item 14 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	7	9	17	33	82.5
Area Needing Improvement	3	1	3	7	17.5
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	70%	90%	85%		

Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 33 cases when reviewers determined that the agency made concerted efforts to preserve the child's connections with extended family members, religious or cultural heritage, schools, community, and friends. Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in seven cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

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

Rating Determination

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 82.5 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain the child's connections with extended family, culture, religion, community, and school. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 14 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, this item was rated as a Strength in 85 percent of the applicable cases in the 2008 RI-State CFSR. The Statewide Assessment reports that when cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, this rating usually was due to a failure to preserve connections with the fathers' relatives, and to children not being able to participate in family or community events because of DCYF's limitation with extending nontraditional caseworker hours to weekends and evenings when a large proportion of family-community events occur.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the following issues relevant to maintaining connections for children are covered in the training for foster and pre-adoptive families:

- Assisting the child to attend church services in his/her own faith
- Allowing the child to visit with siblings, grandparents, other relatives and friends
- Maintaining the child in a team sport or other activities in which they were engaged prior to foster care entry

The Statewide Assessment also reports that the connections that must be maintained after a child is adopted or discharged to a legal guardian are detailed in the full disclosure document that is provided to the adoptive resource family. These connections also are an important subject of TPR mediation.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, DCYF provides services to Native American families and children that are culturally relevant and consistent with the mandates of the Indian Child Welfare Act. When DCYF receives notification that a child/family may be of Native American descent, contact is made with the Tribe. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that the department utilizes Tribal resources for foster, adoptive, and kinship care.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PSTs have been significant in locating relatives, family friends, and other adults who could be viable and positive connections for a child in foster care.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that DCYF makes concerted efforts to maintain children’s connections to their communities and their schools.

Item 15. Relative placement

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 15 was applicable for 31 (77.5 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if relative placement was not an option during the period under review because the child was in an adoptive placement at the start of the time period, or the child entered foster care needing specialized services that could not be provided in a relative placement. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency made diligent efforts to locate and assess both maternal and paternal relatives as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of the assessment of item 15 are presented in the table below.

Item 15 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	4	4	8	16	52
Area Needing Improvement	3	3	9	15	48
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	7	7	17	31	
Not Applicable Foster Care Case	3	3	3	9	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	57%	57%	47%		

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

- The child was placed with relatives (11 cases).
- The child was not placed with relatives, but the agency made diligent efforts to search for both maternal and paternal relatives when applicable (five cases).

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

- The agency had not made efforts to search for maternal relatives (11 cases).
- The agency had not made efforts to search for paternal relatives (13 cases).

Rating Determination

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 52 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 required for a rating of Strength. Item 15 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, when a child enters foster care, DCYF seeks a relative or kinship placement prior to seeking a non-relative placement. The Statewide Assessment also reports that DCYF policy requires that identification of relative resources be pursued during the initial family assessment. Additionally, Rhode Island law requires that DCYF assess the appropriateness of the relative placement within 30 days of the child's placement in the temporary custody of DCYF. The law further requires that, if a child's placement is disrupted for any reason, the parents should again be consulted regarding potential relative/kinship caregivers. Data provided in the Statewide Assessment indicate that 67 percent of all DCYF foster homes are child-specific foster homes. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, PSTs have been significant in locating relatives, family friends, and other adults who could be viable placement resources for a child in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the death of a child at the hands of relative caregivers has caused a general level of distrust on the part of DCYF staff toward relative caregivers. Additionally, DCYF guidelines and practices regarding criminal and child welfare history became more restrictive directly following the child's death but have since moved toward a more reasonable level of caution.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally makes concerted efforts to search for relatives when children enter foster care and to place children with relatives whenever possible. Some stakeholders indicated that the State has made improvements in this area since the 2004 CFSR. Additionally, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers continue to search for potential relative caregivers on an ongoing basis. Some stakeholders reported the use of services such as Federal Parent Locator Services and U.S. Search in locating absent parents.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 16 was applicable for 36 (90 percent) of the 40 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable if parental rights had been terminated before the period under review and parents were no longer involved with the child; a relationship with the parents was not considered in the child’s best interests throughout the period under review; or both parents were deceased. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers through efforts other than arranging visitation. Results of the assessment of item 16 are in the table below.

Item 16 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	2	4	10	16	44
Area Needing Improvement	6	6	8	20	56
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	8	10	18	36	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	2	0	2	4	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	20	40	
Strength by Site	25%	40%	56%		

Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 16 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support and/or strengthen the bond between parents and children through various activities. Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 20 cases when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the mother (nine cases).
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to support the relationship with the father (17 cases).

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

Efforts Made	With Mother (Number of Cases)	With Father (Number of Cases)
Encouraging the parent’s participation in school or after-school activities and attendance at medical appointments and special events	18	9
Providing transportation so that parents can participate in these events, activities, or appointments	9	2
Providing opportunities for family therapeutic situations	19	7
Encouraging foster parents to mentor biological parents and serve as parenting role models for them	9	4
Encouraging and facilitating contact with incarcerated parents (when appropriate) or with parents living far away from the child	2	0
Total Applicable Cases	26	11

Rating Determination

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 44 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 16 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, parents are encouraged, and sometimes required as part of the case plan, to participate in a variety of services and activities with the child who is in foster care, including family counseling, medical appointments or events, religious activities, and school activities. The Statewide Assessment reports that the item pertaining to "relationship with child in care with parents" was rated as a Strength in 59 percent of the applicable cases in the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, a barrier for DCYF to support participation of parents in various life events with their child occurs when there is a need for supervision by DCYF staff. The current budget situation within the State has resulted in less overtime available for DCYF staff to complete visits or supervise other activities outside standard work hours resulting in the prioritization of visitation to parents and siblings.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that DCYF is attempting to create a more open partnership between foster parents and biological parents and has found that foster parents who have completed training in the last 2 to 3 years are more likely to embrace partnership with biological parents. Many foster parents continue to be uncomfortable with the practice of inviting biological parents to medical appointments and school and sporting events. Although, when a child is placed in kinship care there is often animosity between the adult relatives, due to funding and staffing shortages, DCYF strongly encourages the kinship provider to support as much contact as possible between the child and their parents and siblings.

Stakeholder Interview Information

There were insufficient substantive stakeholder comments on agency efforts to support or maintain the bonds between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Well-Being Outcome 1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	4	3	6	13	20.0
Partially Achieved	9	10	18	37	56.9
Not Achieved	4	4	7	15	23.1
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	24%	18%	19%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 20.0 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 25 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 12 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State was not consistently effective in assessing needs and providing services to children, parents (particularly fathers), and foster parents.
- Parents and children were not consistently included in the case planning process.
- The frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with children and parents was not of sufficient quality or quantity to ensure the children's safety or well-being.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Developed and implemented the FCRPCA and a new service plan informed by that assessment
- Revised the job specification of case aides to create CSTs to allow for the assignment of a greater array of responsibilities
- Collaborated with the Family Court to reduce the amount of time caseworkers spend in court (and reduce the workload of DCYF staff and allow more time for caseworker visits with children and parents) by assigning specific court days to caseworkers and arranging the court calendar so that the proceedings requiring the least amount of time are heard first

- Piloted a program in which a social service agency was assigned to assist families involved with the Truancy Court in accessing services, thereby avoiding a referral to DCYF that would increase demands on caseworkers' time
- Revised the information packet given to kinship providers at the time of placement to include details on supports and services available to foster families and contact information for key DCYF staff
- Initiated pilot projects in Regions 3 and 4 to provide foster parents support, training, and assistance in locating appropriate services
- Incorporated training on family-centered practice into the required training for member agencies of the Rhode Island Council of Resource Providers for Children, Youth, and Families

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 17 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	5	6	9	20	31
Area Needing Improvement	12	11	22	45	69
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	29%	35%	29%		

Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 32.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 28 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 20 cases when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met.

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

- There was an inadequate assessment of children’s needs (eight cases: three foster care, five in-home).
- There was an inadequate assessment of mothers’ needs (15 cases: 7 foster care, 8 in-home).
- There was an inadequate assessment of fathers’ needs (28 cases: 15 foster care, 13 in-home).
- There was an inadequate assessment of the needs of foster parents (7 foster care cases).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address the needs of children (10 cases: 5 foster care, 5 in-home).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address the needs of mothers (21 cases: 10 foster care, 11 in-home).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address the needs of fathers (30 cases: 17 foster care, 13 in-home).
- The agency did not provide appropriate services to address the needs of foster parents (7 foster cases).

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

Target Person for Needs Assessment and Services	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable	Yes	Applicable
Mother’s needs assessed and met	26 (72%)	36	14 (56%)	25
Father’s needs assessed and met	12 (41%)	29	7 (35%)	20
Foster parents’ needs assessed and met	20 (74%)	27	N/A	N/A
Child’s needs assessed and met	35 (87.5%)	40	20 (80%)	25

The data indicate that the children, especially the children in foster care, were more likely to have their needs assessed and met than the mothers, fathers, or foster parents. The mothers with children in foster care were more likely to have their needs assessed and met than the mothers in the in-home services cases. The fathers were less likely to have their needs assessed and met than the mothers, children, or foster parents.

Rating Determination

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 31 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had adequately assessed and addressed the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 17 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF uses the FCRPCA to assess the needs of parents and children within the family. The FCRPCA is required for all families receiving services through FSU and Juvenile Probation and Parole (JP&P). However, the Statewide Assessment acknowledges that the needs of parents often are not adequately assessed in JP&P cases, since historically these cases have used a case practice approach that focuses on the child rather than on the family. The Statewide Assessment notes that although efforts have been made to adopt a more family-based approach for JP&P cases, this continues to be a challenge.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires the FCRPCA to be completed within 60 days of case assignment and every 6 months thereafter in order to develop and update the case plan. Additionally, the FCRPCA is used at key decision-making times—when, for example, determining reunification or considering filing TPR petitions.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that although DCYF policy does not address the assessment of foster parents' needs, caseworkers assess the foster parents' needs informally during visits or while assessing the child's needs.

The Statewide Assessment notes that this item was rated as a Strength in 40 percent of the applicable cases during the 2008 RI-State CFSR. A further analysis of the data demonstrated that the primary areas of concern with respect to this item are the lack of assessments of the birth father's needs and the needs of children remaining in the home (non-target children). Additionally, the Statewide Assessment reports that DCYF continues to work on the documentation of formal and informal assessments of all family members, including nonactive children. DCYF staff reports that the assessments are occurring for all children in the home; however, the documentation of these assessments is lacking in the primary record.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed different opinions about the State's effectiveness in assessing and meeting the needs of children and parents. Some stakeholders suggested that DCYF assesses the needs of the family and makes concerted efforts to match the services offered to the needs of the family. However, other stakeholders indicated that the effectiveness of family assessments and appropriate service provision varies by caseworker. A few stakeholders also noted that sometimes the services that are needed by the family are not available or accessible.

A few stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of legal representation for children. These stakeholders noted that although each child is assigned a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) attorney, the CASA attorney generally has a very high caseload and has minimal, if any, interaction or conversation with the child.

In addition, although some stakeholders indicated that caseworkers generally address the needs of foster parents, others expressed the opinion that caseworkers are responsive to the needs of foster parents only when the foster parents ask them for services.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 18 was applicable for 64 (98 percent) of the 65 cases. A case was not applicable if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review, parents were not involved with the child in any way, and/or the child was too young or had cognitive delays or other conditions that were barriers to participation in case planning. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether

parents and children (when appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and, if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interests. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent or child actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. The results of the assessment of item 18 are presented in the table below.

Item 18 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	5	6	10	21	33
Area Needing Improvement	12	11	20	43	67
Total Applicable Cases	17	17	30	64	
Not Applicable Cases	0	0	1	1	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	29%	35%	33%		

Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 33 percent of the 39 applicable foster care cases and 32 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 21 cases 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 Area Needing Improvement in 43 cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to involve the mother, father, and/or child (when age appropriate) in the case planning process.

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

Person Involved in Case Planning	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services Cases	
	Yes	Applicable Cases	Yes	Applicable Cases
Mother involved in case planning?	25 (71%)	35	20 (80%)	25
Father involved in case planning?	9 (32%)	28	6 (30%)	20
Children involved in case planning?	19 (70%)	27	13 (57%)	23

Rating Determination

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 33 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 18 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires that the development of the case plan for children active with FSU and JP&P be completed in conjunction with the family, child/youth, and placement provider, when applicable. Families are asked to identify supports and how those supports will assist them in addressing issues specified in the FCRPCASP. Caseworkers are

encouraged to have conversations with youth, children, and parents on a monthly basis concerning case planning progress and case plan development. However, the Statewide Assessment indicates that caseworkers are not consistent in documenting these conversations. Additionally, the Statewide Assessment indicates that CASA attorneys are required to discuss with each child assigned to them the child's permanency plan prior to the permanency hearing.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, DCYF continues to be challenged with changing the focus of JP&P cases from the specific child to the family. Additionally, according to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF continues to struggle with locating and engaging the absent parent particularly in cases where there is no legal status and the children remain in the home of one parent. The Statewide Assessment reports that the Family Court will often dismiss DNA petitions against the absent parent. As a result, DCYF staff will not engage in any more efforts to locate the absent parent. Through supervisors and administrators, DCYF continues to impress upon caseworkers the continued need to locate and engage the absent parent regardless of their status on petitions.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the item pertaining to involving parents in children in case planning was rated as a Strength in 48 percent of the applicable cases reviewed in the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders expressed different opinions regarding agency efforts to involve parents and children in case planning. Some stakeholders indicated that caseworkers discuss the identified needs and case plan content with the family. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that case plans are developed with minimal or no involvement of parents and children. Additionally, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that timely and family focused case plans seem to be a particular challenge for JP&P cases, especially in-home cases.

Some stakeholders reported that although youth may attend the permanency hearings, they frequently do not. Therefore, they have minimal input into the court's decision regarding permanency.

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

Some stakeholders reported that although youth may attend the permanency hearings, they frequently do not. Therefore, they have minimal input into the court's decision regarding permanency.

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

Item 19. Caseworker visits with child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

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

Item 19 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	11	9	19	39	60
Area Needing Improvement	6	8	12	26	40
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	65%	53%	61%		

Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 77.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 32 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 39 cases when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworkers and children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child’s well-being and promote attainment of case goals. Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child, and if visits did occur, they did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (14 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 (three 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 (eight cases).
- There were no visits with the child during the period under review (one case).

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

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Child During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases (Number and Percent)	In-Home Services Cases (Number and Percent)
Visits occurred at least once a week	5 (12.5%)	1 (4%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	8 (20%)	2 (8%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	21 (52.5%)	10 (40%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	6 (15%)	11 (44%)
There were no visits during the period under review	0	1 (4%)
Total Cases	40	25

Rating Determination

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 60 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were of sufficient frequency and quality. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 19 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires that caseworkers and juvenile probation officers have monthly face-to-face contact with the children on their case loads and that these contacts should, preferably, take place in the residence of the child. The Statewide Assessment reports, however, that contacts with the child made by the CSTs who have been assigned case responsibility are considered equivalent to caseworker contacts with regard to meeting this requirement. The Statewide Assessment also indicates that certain case circumstances may require more frequent or less frequent contact. All contacts with the child must be documented in RICHIST.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, through ongoing contact with the child, DCYF staff are able to determine whether the child is receiving adequate care and supervision in his or her home or in an out-of-home placement and whether the services in place are effectively addressing the needs outlined in the case plan.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, despite the enhancements made to the RICHIST system and Case Activity Notes, documenting the record continues to be a struggle for DCYF staff. Budget constraints and staff reductions, including reduction in the number of clerical staff, require the department to find alternative ways for documenting the record in a timely manner. Additionally, the Statewide Assessment reports that reduction in staff had resulted in higher caseloads, which make it difficult to meet all of the timeframes for face-to-face visits and to document the contacts.

The Statewide Assessment reports that 78 percent of the applicable cases were rated as a Strength for this item in the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed different opinions about whether the frequency of caseworker contacts with children is sufficient to meet the children’s needs. Although some stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers visit regularly with children, others suggested that caseworker visits with children are not occurring with sufficient frequency and regularity. A few stakeholders reported that often caseworker contact occurs only when transporting children for services or when supervising visitation with the child’s parents. Additionally, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that caseworkers visit the children who live in foster homes more frequently than children who live in group homes.

A few stakeholders reported that the frequency of contacts with children receiving services through JP&P depends on the case circumstances, although monthly contacts are required.

Item 20. Caseworker visits with parent(s)

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 20 was applicable for 61 (94 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were not applicable for this assessment if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of their children. All cases that were not applicable are foster care cases. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker’s face-to-face contact with the children’s mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and ensure the children’s safety and well-being. The results of the assessment of item 20 are presented in the table below.

Item 20 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	2	5	7	14	23
Area Needing Improvement	13	12	22	47	77
Total Applicable Cases	15	17	29	61	
Not Applicable Cases	2	0	2	4	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	13%	29%	24%		

Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 19 percent of the 36 applicable foster care cases and 28 percent of the 25 in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 14 cases when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment.

Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 47 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency or quality (20 cases: 13 foster care cases, 7 in-home cases).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency or quality (14 cases: 8 foster care cases, 6 in-home cases).
- Visits with the mother were of sufficient frequency but not of sufficient quality (three cases: two foster care cases, one in-home case).
- Visits with the mother were not of sufficient frequency, although when they did occur they were of sufficient quality (two cases: one foster care case, one in-home case).
- Visits with the father were not of sufficient frequency, although when they did occur they were of sufficient quality (one foster care case).
- Visits with the father were of sufficient frequency but not of sufficient quality (one foster care case).
- There were no visits with the mother (one foster care case).
- There were no visits with the father (20 cases: 12 foster care cases, 8 in-home cases).

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

Typical Frequency of Caseworker Visits With Parents During the Period Under Review	Foster Care Cases		In-Home Services	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Visits occurred at least once a week	4 (11%)	1 (4%)	0	0
Visits occurred less frequently than once a week but at least twice a month	3 (8%)	1 (4%)	0	1 (5%)
Visits occurred less frequently than twice a month but at least once a month	8 (22%)	2 (8%)	17 (68%)	2 (10%)
Visits occurred less frequently than once a month	20 (56%)	9 (36%)	8 (32%)	9 (45%)
There were no visits during the period under review	1 (3%)	12 (48%)	0	8 (40%)
Total Applicable Cases	36	25	25	20

Rating Determination

Item 20 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 23 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 and/or promote attainment of case goals. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 20 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the caseworker is required to have a minimum of one contact per month with a child's family, although it was noted that certain circumstances may require more frequent contact. The Statewide Assessment reports that all

caseworker contacts with parents must be documented in RICHIST. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the barriers to making and documenting face-to-face visits with children also are a barrier in making contacts with parents.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the caseworker is expected to use contacts with the parents to determine the following:

- Whether progress is being made or the barriers that are impeding progress in meeting the objectives of the case plan
- Whether the services in place are effectively addressing the needs outlined in the case plan

The Statewide Assessment notes that this item was rated as a Strength in 69 percent of the applicable cases in the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that caseworkers do not visit with parents consistently on a monthly basis as required by policy. A few stakeholders indicated that with workload constraints, it is more important that caseworkers visit the children than the parents. Stakeholders did not comment on the quality of caseworker/parent contacts.

Well-Being Outcome 2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	14	12	21	47	87.0
Partially Achieved	0	2	0	2	3.7
Not Achieved	0	0	5	5	9.3
Total Applicable Cases	14	14	26	54	
Not Applicable Cases	3	3	5	11	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	100%	86%	81%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 2

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 87.0 percent of the cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 94 percent of the 36 applicable foster care cases and 72 percent of the 18 applicable in-home services cases. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The key concern identified in the 2004 CFSR was that the State did not consistently make concerted efforts to ensure that the educational needs of children were addressed, particularly for in-home cases.

To address the identified concern, the State developed and implemented the FCRPCA to assess educational needs, and a new service plan informed by that assessment.

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

Item 21. Educational needs of the child

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 21 was applicable for 54 (83 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if either of the following applied: Children were not of school age, or children in the in-home services cases did not have service needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of the assessment of item 21 are presented in the table below.

Item 21 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	14	12	21	47	87
Area Needing Improvement	0	2	5	7	13
Total Applicable Cases	14	14	26	54	
Not Applicable	3	3	5	11	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	100%	86%	81%		

Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 47 cases when reviewers determined that the child's educational needs were appropriately assessed and services were provided, if necessary. Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or both of the following:

- The child's educational needs were not assessed or addressed (five cases: four in-home cases, one foster care case).
- The child had educational needs that had been identified but not addressed (two cases: one in-home case, one foster care case).

Rating Determination

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 87 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for this item to be rated as a Strength. A 95-percent standard is established for this item because it is the only item assessed for this outcome. Item 21 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the FCRPCASP has a specific section related to educational matters that must be completed for all children in the family served by DCYF. This section is used to identify any educational concerns and the process for addressing those concerns. The information for this section is gathered by the caseworker through interviews with the parents of children receiving in-home services and from the school system for children in foster care. The Statewide Assessment indicates that obtaining educational records from local school departments is a challenge for DCYF, particularly for children receiving services in the home as parents are frequently resistant to allowing DCYF to obtain this information.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, this item was rated as a Strength in 67 percent of the applicable cases in the 2008 RI-State CFSR. However, data collected from monthly supervisory reviews indicate that this item was a Strength in 90 percent of the cases reviewed from October 2007 through September 2009.

The Statewide Assessment reports that when it appears that a parent of a child with a disability is unable or unwilling to ensure that the child's educational needs are met, DCYF is responsible for referring these children to the Department of Education for the appointment of an Educational Surrogate Parent. The Educational Surrogate Parent then represents the child in all educational matters and advocates for the child's educational needs. The Educational Surrogate Parent for children in foster care is frequently the foster parent.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that generally DCYF is effective in ensuring that children's educational needs are assessed and met. A few stakeholders reported that caseworkers attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings for children receiving in-home services and children in foster care, while other stakeholders indicated that when the child is in foster care, only foster parents attend the IEP meetings.

Well-Being Outcome 3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs					
Number of Cases Reviewed by the Team According to Degree of Outcome Achievement					
Degree of Outcome Achievement	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	13	11	22	46	71.9
Partially Achieved	3	4	3	10	15.6
Not Achieved	1	1	6	8	12.5
Total Applicable Cases	17	16	31	64	
Not Applicable Cases	0	1	0	1	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Substantially Achieved by Site	76%	69%	71%		

Status of Well-Being Outcome 3

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 71.9 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 82.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 54 percent of the 24 applicable in-home services cases. The State also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical and mental health needs.
- The State did not respond appropriately in some in-home cases when presenting or underlying issues warranted a mental health assessment and/or mental health services.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Developed and implemented a FCRPCA that included medical, mental health, and behavioral needs, and a new service plan informed by that assessment
- Developed an interface to match children in RICHIST and in the Department of Health's KidsNet system, which tracks immunizations for all children in the State
- Developed an interface for DCYF staff to view, via claims data, physical and behavioral health visits children have had
- Developed policy and procedural guidelines to ensure appropriate referrals of children to early intervention services

- Established rules and regulations for a children’s mental health emergency service system: a toll-free hotline available for families on a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week basis, with requirements that a child-family competent clinician assist the family onsite within 2 hours of receiving a call for help

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

Item 22. Physical health of the child

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 22 was applicable for 48 (74 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were in-home services cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children’s physical health needs (including dental needs) had been appropriately assessed, and the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of the assessment of item 22 are presented in the table below.

Item 22 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	12	10	21	43	90
Area Needing Improvement	1	2	2	5	10
Total Applicable Cases	13	12	23	48	
Not Applicable Cases	4	5	8	17	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	92%	83%	91%		

Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 87.5 percent of the 8 applicable in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 43 cases when reviewers determined that children’s medical and dental needs were routinely assessed and necessary services were provided. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

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

Rating Determination

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. In 90 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was effective in assessing and meeting children's physical health needs. Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires that a child's physical health and medical needs be assessed within 60 days of case opening and reassessed every 6 months thereafter. The Statewide Assessment notes that FCRPCASP has a specific area related to medical issues and medical care for both children and parents, and that for in-home services cases the medical records would be requested if a child or parent had a documented physical health issue.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the CPI or caseworker who removes a child from the child's home is responsible for having the child examined by a physician or nurse practitioner within 24 hours of removal. In addition, the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) program policy requires a complete medical examination of each child entering foster care. The caseworker is responsible for enrolling all eligible children in foster care in the EPSDT program and is expected to encourage parents to enroll the children living at home in the EPSDT program.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, DCYF collaborates with RIte Care, the State's Medicaid provider, to ensure that children in foster care receive timely assessments of medical and behavioral health needs, and to ensure that the services to address those needs are provided in an appropriate manner within appropriate timeframes. The Statewide Assessment also reports that DCYF contracts with Rhode Island/Hasbro Children's Hospital's Child Protection Program to provide a Pediatric Abuse and Neglect Diagnostic Assessment (PANDA) Clinic for DCYF's Child Protection Services Division. The PANDA Clinic provides medical evaluations within 24 hours as required by Rhode Island law in order to conduct medical evaluations regarding abuse and/or neglect conditions.

The Statewide Assessment notes that access to dental care continues to be a struggle for children in foster care and for children and families receiving RIte Care—there is a lack of dentists who accept RIte Care.

Data provided in the Statewide Assessment indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 86 percent of the applicable cases reviewed in the 2008 RI-State CFSR and the applicable case reviewed in the supervisory case reviews.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the agency generally is effective in meeting the medical and dental needs of children in foster care. However, a few stakeholders reported that foster parents do not always receive a child's medical records and/or history at placement.

Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of the child

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 23 was applicable for 58 (89 percent) of the 65 cases reviewed. Cases were not applicable if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or if there were no mental health concerns. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether mental health needs had been assessed appropriately and that services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The results of the assessment of item 23 are presented in the table below.

Item 23 Ratings	Bristol	North Kingstown	Providence	Total	Percent
Strength	12	10	22	44	76
Area Needing Improvement	3	4	7	14	24
Total Applicable Cases	15	14	29	58	
Not Applicable Cases	2	3	2	7	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Strength by Site	80%	71%	76%		

Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 86 percent of the 35 applicable foster care cases and 57 percent of the 23 applicable in-home services cases. The item was rated as a Strength in 44 cases when reviewers determined that children’s mental health needs were appropriately assessed and the identified mental health needs were addressed. Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

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

Rating Determination

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 76 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. Item 23 also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires that children’s mental/behavioral health must be assessed within 60 days of case opening and reassessed every 6 months thereafter. It was noted that the FCRPCASP has a specific area related to behavioral and mental health concerns for both parents and children.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, DCYF uses a variety of specialized clinical resources to provide the necessary mental health services to children and parents. DCYF also provides specialized funding for mental health services when these services are needed and alternative funding sources are not available.

Data reported in the Statewide Assessment indicate that this item was rated as a Strength in 64 percent of the applicable cases reviewed during the 2008 RI-State CFSR.

The Statewide Assessment notes that children in the in-home services cases may have difficulty accessing behavioral health-care services if they are not eligible for RIte Care. Whether a family has a private health insurance provider or no health insurance provider, the behavioral health-care resources that the family can access are restrictive or nonexistent.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the agency is generally effective in meeting the mental health needs of children in foster care.

SECTION B: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

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

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

Rating the Systemic Factor

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

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

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

I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

Status of Statewide Information System

Rhode Island is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The State was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength. Rhode Island's statewide information system, RICHIST, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for every child in foster care. This item also was rated as a Strength in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, RICHIST can track and identify the status, demographics, location, and service plan goal for children in foster care. Each child's location is recorded in RICHIST regardless of whether the child is in a paid, unpaid, unlicensed, or voluntary placement. The Statewide Assessment reports that RICHIST is a comprehensive system designed to link all of DCYF's case-related functions into an integrated system, and is the required method of documenting all DCYF actions. All staff performing case-related functions are able to access case information from RICHIST.

Stakeholder Interview Information

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

data are current and reliable. Some stakeholders reported that placement information usually is entered into the system within 24 hours of the initial placement or a placement change. A few stakeholders noted, however, that entering information into RICHIST is time-consuming and cumbersome.

II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

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

Status of Case Review System

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The State was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State was not consistent in developing written case plans for all children in foster care, particularly children who entered foster care through the juvenile justice system.
- The agency was not consistent in involving parents in the case planning process.
- Periodic reviews were not conducted in a timely manner for every child in foster care, particularly children who entered foster care through the juvenile justice system.
- Permanency hearings were not held in a timely manner for all children in foster care, particularly children who entered foster care through the juvenile justice system.
- Although a process was in place to pursue TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA, this process was not adhered to on a consistent basis.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Developed and implemented a FCRPCA, and a new service plan informed by that assessment, with staff from both FSU and JP&P involved in designing, piloting, and training the new tools
- Trained FSU and JP&P staff on the new assessment and service plan process and tool, with an emphasis on engaging the family in the assessment and planning process

- Directed the Family Court to issue an administrative order mandating that all juvenile justice cases be scheduled for permanency hearings
- Established a process for DCYF to convey critical case information to the Family Court more effectively
- Enhanced the case review process to ensure review standards are in line with the CFSR safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State provides a process to ensure that each child has a written case plan, the case plans are not consistently developed jointly with the child's parents. During the onsite CFSR, case reviewers determined that DCYF made diligent efforts to involve mothers in case planning in 75 percent of the 60 applicable cases and to involve fathers in 15 percent of the 48 applicable cases. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, in Rhode Island, the written case plan is called a service plan and is required for each child under DCYF's supervision. The FCRPCA is the assessment tool from which all case plans are developed. DCYF staff are required to involve both the custodial and noncustodial parent in service planning and service provision, and are responsible for locating and engaging absent parents in the case planning process. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the case plan must be developed within 60 days of the date of the child's removal from the home, must contain a permanency goal for the child, and must be signed by all appropriate parties. Case plans must be updated at least once every 6 months and progress on the case plan is measured through the reassessment process. The Statewide Assessment indicates that the court requires the submission of an appropriate case plan within 30 days of adjudication of abuse and neglect petitions. In addition, the court requires that a current case plan be submitted at all permanency hearings.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the current process that requires entering the service plan into RICHIST at the caseworker's office is a barrier to engaging the family in developing the case plan. In the current process, the caseworker must meet with the family to create the case plan with them, return to the office to enter the plan into RICHIST, and then meet with the family again to review

the case plan and obtain the required signatures. The Statewide Assessment notes that to make this process more efficient and “family friendly,” DCYF has begun to provide laptops on a limited basis to frontline staff.

Stakeholder Interview Information

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

Stakeholders expressed different opinions regarding the involvement of parents in case planning. Some stakeholders indicated that caseworkers discuss issues and case plan content with the parents, return to the office to enter the case plan into the RICHIST, and then present it to the parents. However, other stakeholders maintained that case plans are developed with minimal or no involvement of parents. A few stakeholders reported that parental involvement in developing the case plan varies by caseworker. A few stakeholders also indicated that case plans are developed with minimal or no involvement of noncustodial parents, especially fathers.

Stakeholders also expressed different opinions regarding the quality of case plans. Some stakeholders suggested that the case plans are individualized plans that guide the parents and the agency in achieving case goals. In comparison, other stakeholders said that the individualization and quality of each case plan varies across caseworkers. In addition, several stakeholders expressed the opinion that the automated case plan in RICHIST is cumbersome to complete and manage, and is difficult for parents to understand. As reported by a few stakeholders, when printed the case plan document is very lengthy.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as a Strength. The State provides a process for periodic review of the status of each child at least every 6 months through the Administrative Review Unit (ARU) reviews, with many occurring more frequently. Additionally, judicial reviews also occur in some cases. In spite of current arbitration, the Statewide Assessment and stakeholders indicate that periodic reviews are being conducted as required for JP&P youth. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires that the cases of children in foster care, including children served by JP&P and the Division of Children’s Behavioral Health, must be reviewed every 6 months by the ARU, and every 3 to 6 months by the Family Court. RICHIST notifies caseworkers when a case is due for a 6-month review. If the permanency hearing was done or scheduled within 30 days of the proposed ARU review, the permanency hearing meets the criteria for a periodic review.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the ARU reviews each case using a form that contains ASFA determinations and CFSR elements. Additionally, the ARU reviews collect data on safety, well-being, and permanency items. The data from the reviews are shared on a quarterly basis with administrators of JP&P and FSU. The Statewide Assessment reports that focus-group participants indicated that the ARU focuses primarily on parental behavior change rather than just on compliance with case plan requirements. Concerns identified during an administrative review are communicated to caseworkers, supervisors, and other appropriate staff through written notification. The ARU results and recommendations are entered in RICHIST and can be accessed by family services staff, DCYF attorneys, and CASAs. Additionally, ARU recommendations are included in letters submitted to the court for permanency hearings.

RICHIST data provided in the Statewide Assessment indicate that 93 percent of the 239 periodic reviews due in August 2009 were completed within the Federal guidelines.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, a large number of administrative reviews for JP&P cases are canceled and rescheduled due to ongoing legal questions, raised by JP&P staff and the employee union, whether the ARU staff meet the criteria to review these cases. The status of reviewing children involved in the juvenile justice system is at the State arbitration level, and at the time the Statewide Assessment was prepared no decision had been made.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally ensures that a periodic review of the status of each child is held at least every 6 months, and in some cases more frequently. Stakeholders noted that periodic reviews are always conducted by the ARU, and some stakeholders reported that cases frequently are reviewed by the court as well. According to some stakeholders, in some cases the 6-month review is conducted by the ARU, and the 12-month review, which coincides with the permanency hearing, is conducted by the court.

The few stakeholders commenting on the quality of ARU reviews expressed the opinion that the reviews are effective in addressing the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and in moving cases through the system. However, a few stakeholders reported that the agency is not compelled to follow the recommendations of the ARU. Additionally, some stakeholders reported that the court is not provided with information from the ARU review. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the quality of the court review depends on the presiding judge.

Some stakeholders reported that periodic reviews are held for most juvenile justice cases. However, according to a key State-level stakeholder, at the time of the Onsite Review the employee union was in arbitration concerning the legalities of ARU reviews for JP&P cases.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 27 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that permanency hearings are held timely, the Statewide Assessment also notes that there are instances when a permanency hearing date is not set at the arraignment, which may result in the hearing not occurring in a timely manner. The State did not provide any data related to timeliness of permanency hearings. Additionally, some stakeholders expressed concern that the hearings do not always focus on issues relevant to establishing permanency for the child. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, permanency hearings are conducted for all children in DCYF care and custody whether through FSU or JP&P. Permanency hearings are scheduled 12 months from the date the child was removed from his or her home for children receiving child welfare services. Permanency hearings for children entering out-of-home placements through JP&P are scheduled 10 months from the time of placement to prevent delays. Subsequent Family Court reviews of the child's placement status occur no less frequently than every 12 months. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, DCYF staff are required to provide an updated case plan for each child and a court letter that addresses the status of each child at the permanency hearing.

The Statewide Assessment reports, however, that DCYF staff interviewed as part of the Statewide Assessment process indicated that when a permanency hearing date is set at the time of arraignment of DNA petition, it is likely that the permanency hearing will occur within the required timeframe. However, if the permanency hearing date is not set at the arraignment, it is likely that it will not occur within the required timeframe. The Statewide Assessment also notes that DCYF staff said that there are times when the permanency hearing date gets "lost" in the numerous pretrial hearings as it can often take up to a year to obtain adjudication on the DNA petition.

According to the Statewide Assessment, timeliness of permanency hearings is monitored through the Family Court's Banner data system and RICHIST.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed differing opinions on the effectiveness of permanency hearings. Some stakeholders noted that case plans and case progress generally are not reviewed during permanency hearings and that the hearings are perfunctory and do not focus on key issues related to permanency. Some stakeholders also expressed the opinion that the court frequently disregards the recommendations of DCYF. Additionally, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the structure of the permanency hearings does not vary from the structure of a periodic court review. However, some stakeholders suggested that the permanency hearings focus on issues pertaining to permanency.

Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that permanency hearings are generally held in a timely manner and many confirmed that the permanency hearing usually is scheduled at the arraignment.

The stakeholders commenting on permanency hearings for JP&P cases indicated that those youth frequently return home prior to 12 months; however, when required, a permanency hearing is conducted.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Data reported in the Statewide Assessment indicate that TPR is not being filed in a timely manner. In addition, the findings of the onsite CFSR indicate that ASFA requirements with regard to filing for TPR were met in 43 percent of 14 applicable cases. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF policy requires that when a child has been in foster care for 12 months, a determination must be made whether a TPR petition needs to be filed. DCYF may petition the court for TPR prior to the 12-month mark if any of the ASFA specifications are relevant.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, DCYF staff review cases of children in foster care for 15 of the previous 22 months on a monthly basis to track the ASFA timeline requirements and assess the progress being made by families. Regional directors and supervisors hold ASFA reviews for these cases, and if there are reasons for not filing a TPR petition, the reasons are documented in RICHIST and also in the court letter presented at permanency hearings. The Statewide Assessment identifies the following as the most common reasons for not filing for TPR:

- The child requires long-term treatment in a residential facility for a serious emotional disturbance, the treatment only is available through placement with DCYF, and the parents are actively engaged in the treatment process.
- The case goal is guardianship or reunification with another parent.
- Reunification is imminent.

Data provided in the Statewide Assessment indicate that for children in foster care on January 1, 2008, who subsequently had TPR filed, the median number of days from the removal date to the date the TPR was filed was 608.

The Statewide Assessment notes that a key barrier to filing for TPR in a timely manner is the Family Court's preference to have an adoptive resource in place prior to the filing of the TPR petition. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, when a petition is filed and no pre-adoptive home has been identified, the court will make it clear either from the bench or in mediation that it will not address

the petition until an adoptive resource has been identified. The Statewide Assessment reports that because agency policy requires that TPR be filed before the permanency goal of adoption can be formally established, DCYF often must continue to work on permanency goals that may not be appropriate.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, State law requires that TPR petitions be adjudicated within 180 days of filing. The Statewide Assessment indicates that when the court believes there is insufficient time to adjudicate the petition within the 180 days, DCYF legal counsel feels that the court is looking for DCYF to withdraw the petition without prejudice (a dismissal that allows for refile the case in the future) and refile (to start the 180 day cycle anew, thus preserving the evidence). In these cases, DCYF legal counsel advises DCYF staff that it would be prudent to proceed accordingly even if DCYF staff may not agree with the delay in processing and feel pressured to withdraw and refile.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed different opinions regarding the timeliness of filing a TPR petition. Some stakeholders reported that the State is effective in filing for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA and that when DCYF does not file for TPR, compelling reasons usually are documented in RICHIST and presented to the court in the court letter. A few stakeholders indicated that DCYF will file a TPR petition even when there is no identified adoptive resource for the child. Finally, several stakeholders noted that mediation often is used when TPR is under consideration and that, when successful, can result in a voluntary relinquishment of parental rights.

Other stakeholders, however, reported that in some cases, the court discourages the filing of a TPR petition in order to give parents more time to continue with their reunification efforts, particularly when parents are intermittently engaged in services. Several stakeholders also suggested that some courts discourage a TPR petition if there is no identified adoptive resource for the child. Some stakeholders at the State level and across the review sites reported that State statute requires that TPR hearings occur within 180 days of the date the TPR petition is filed. These stakeholders reported that DCYF is often pressured by the judiciary to withdraw the petition “without prejudice” if the hearing is not held and the 180-day deadline is approaching. A few stakeholders reported that when the petition is withdrawn, the permanency goal will either revert to reunification and the parents will be provided with more time to complete their case plan, or DCYF will immediately refile the TPR petition.

Additional information pertaining to TPR is provided in item 7 and item 9 of the Outcome Section of this Final Report.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that caregivers are not being notified consistently about court hearings and are not given an opportunity to be heard at court hearings. This item was rated as a Strength in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, policy requires that DCYF provide notification to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of any court proceedings and administrative reviews regarding children in their care. A Notice of Court Proceedings or a Notification of Foster Care Review must be sent to the caregiver no later than 2 weeks prior to the date of the scheduled proceedings. There are templates for these notification documents. When it is not possible to provide written notification due to the scheduling of a court hearing, the caseworker is required to provide verbal notification to the caregiver.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, RICHIST has automated the scheduling process for administrative reviews and generates 6-month review notifications to foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers. However, the Statewide Assessment also reports that RICHIST does not have the same system for notification of court hearings and that it is the responsibility of the caseworker to track those hearing dates and notify the caregivers. The Statewide Assessment notes that the volume of court hearings per case is a barrier to ensuring consistent notification to foster parents.

The Statewide Assessment notes that Rhode Island law provides foster parents/relative caregivers and pre-adoptive parents with the right to file a written or verbal report with the court to convey information relevant to the child in their care, although they are not considered a party to the proceedings. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, almost all courts will accept a written report from the caregiver that is entered into the record, but whether a caregiver will be permitted to speak in court varies among the judges.

The Statewide Assessment further notes that caregivers can have input into the ARU reviews either in person or by completing the Foster Parent Information for Service Plan form. According to the Statewide Assessment, approximately 5 percent of the caregivers use the form while most foster parents submit verbal information through the caseworker or through a conference call format if they cannot attend the review.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that DCYF has an effective system for ensuring that foster and pre-adoptive parents receive invitations to ARU reviews. However, stakeholders expressed varied opinions in terms of how effective the procedure is for notification of foster, relative, and pre-adoptive parents about court hearings. A few stakeholders reported that foster parents will typically receive notice of hearings either verbally or in written form. Other stakeholders reported that that notice of court hearings is not consistently received by caregivers.

Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that caregivers have the opportunity to be heard in ARU reviews and court hearings involving the children in their care, either in person or in writing. Other stakeholders said that the opportunity to be heard in court hearings depends on the judge.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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

Status of Quality Assurance System

Rhode Island is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance (QA) System. The State was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The primary concern from the 2004 review was that the State had not developed an identifiable QA system.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Created a QA function within DCYF
- Designed a comprehensive QA system to focus on outcomes and address quality of services
- Implemented the QA system by conducting reviews, modeled after the Federal CFSR, in each regional office
- Developed a process for providing evaluation and QA findings to stakeholders to inform systemic change

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has standards and procedures in place to protect the safety and health of children. However, information from stakeholder interviews also

indicates some concern regarding the implementation of standards in foster homes, particularly group homes and relative foster homes. This item was rated as a Strength in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, foster care regulations ensure the safety of children in foster care and mandate face-to-face visitation with children; fire inspections; foster parent training; and restrictions on use of restraints, seclusion, and other forms of discipline both in foster homes and residential facilities. Additionally, agencies that provide care for children in living arrangements other than foster homes are assigned program monitors within the Division of Children's Behavioral Health and through a private contractor. The program monitors are responsible for ensuring that these agencies adhere to the standards and regulations, including ensuring that all children in residential care have appropriate treatment plans to address their needs and that the appropriate services are being provided.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, foster parents are provided with two comprehensive manuals regarding medical and emotional/behavioral issues that address issues such as recognizing symptoms of illness in their foster child, recognizing common behavioral and emotional responses to trauma and separation, and deciding when a child should be seen by a doctor. The manuals also provide foster parents with advice about taking care of themselves as they deal with the challenges of fostering.

The Statewide Assessment reports that DCYF maintains a utilization management process for children and youth placed in residential facilities. DCYF contracts with a private provider to conduct onsite utilization reviews and to collect data from providers about child-specific services delivered. The utilization review ensures that the child is placed in the necessary level of care, is receiving the appropriate treatment services, and is in the least-restrictive placement setting. The review places significant emphasis on determining whether the individual treatment plan targets the necessary treatment concerns, and assisting the child/youth in transitioning to the least-restrictive level of care in a timely manner.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State has effective standards in place to address safety of children and the quality of services provided to children in foster care. Additionally, a few stakeholders reported that services to children in foster care are evaluated through ARU reviews and utilization reviews conducted by a private contractor. However, a few stakeholders expressed concerns about the quality of some relative foster homes and some group homes. A few stakeholders across the review sites expressed the opinion that the court sometimes places children with relatives against the recommendation of DCYF.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 31 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has a identifiable and functioning QA system that addresses key practice areas and provides feedback on key findings. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following are the major components of the DCYF QA system:

- **RICHIST:** This component provides approximately 600 monitoring and QA reports that are automatically e-mailed to department recipients on a monthly basis. Reports also are generated that show trends in data over time. Information from these reports is used for program planning and evaluation, particularly when new initiatives are implemented.
- **The RICHIST Dashboard:** This component provides all department staff with 50 Dashboard reports in areas covering safety, permanency, and well-being. The Dashboard provides the raw data to the user as well as aggregated data and graphs. The Dashboard also permits the users to manipulate the data within the reports. The data are used primarily by department managers to manage programs, caseloads, and child/family services such as face-to-face monthly visits, case plans, CPS investigations, licensing, and placements.
- **ARU:** This component provides a review of all out-of-home cases in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being consistent with the Federal CFSR instrument. The information from these foster care reviews is shared within the department through multiple communication channels and a monthly aggregate report is published to all FSU regions and discussed quarterly at FSU regional quarterly data meetings and in the senior executive team meetings.
- **RI-State CFSR:** DCYF implemented the RI-State CFSR, modeled on the Federal CFSR process, in 2006 and a subsequent RI-State CFSR occurred from October 2007 through May 2008. The findings are used to identify shared areas of needs across the four regions, most notably service array, caseworker visits, and caseworker service plans.
- **Monthly case reviews:** FSU supervisors review one randomly chosen, RICHIST-generated, in-home case from within their unit, and ARU staff review one randomly chosen foster care case. To assure and support consistent interpretation of the tool and consistent ratings of the items, the QA specialist randomly samples case reviews for QA purposes.
- **Rhode Island Data Analytic Center:** This component is a collaboration of DCYF, the Yale University School of Medicine, and Placement Solutions, Inc., to provide evaluation, research consultation, and data analytic capacity for all DCYF divisions. Information provided by the collaboration includes analysis and reporting of Federal performance indicators, DCYF performance indicators for more than 150 programs, and quality improvement studies to assess the nature and extent of emerging problems.

According to the Statewide Assessment, data from monthly case reviews, selected data elements from the RICHIST Dashboard and reporting system, aggregate ARU foster care review data, and data from the Rhode Island Data Analytic Center is distributed to FSU supervisors and regional directors by the Data and Evaluation Unit in quarterly data meetings, where trends and areas of concern are highlighted. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, this information, along with other QA data, is used by DCYF to inform practice, interventions, service planning, and policy.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Many stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review indicated that various data reports are available from the multiple data sources indicated in the Statewide Assessment and that these data are discussed at regular intervals. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that supervisor and ARU monthly reviews inform practice at a local level and that the aggregate data from these reviews describe statewide trends. Additionally, some stakeholders reported that caseworkers generally receive feedback on the findings of these reviews. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that although data are being used at the State level to inform policy and organizational improvement, data are not consistently shared with frontline caseworkers.

IV. STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

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

Status of Staff and Provider Training

Rhode Island is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. The State was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State did not mandate initial training for juvenile probation workers who deliver services under titles IV-B and IV-E.
- The requirements for ongoing training were not consistently applied or enforced.
- Ongoing training and development opportunities were not consistently extended to supervisors.
- There was insufficient ongoing training and support for foster parents to assist them in performing their duties.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Developed and implemented a core curriculum for JP&P staff
- Developed and implemented an in-service training program for supervisors
- Developed a statewide, in-service training program for foster and adoptive families based on a survey of the training needs of participants through the Adoption and Foster Care Taskforce, of which DCYF is a member

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State provides competency-based pre-service training to new FSU caseworkers and JP&P officers. Caseworkers and JP&P officers are required to pass a final examination at the conclusion of training. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, initial training for new DCYF staff, including FSU caseworkers, CSTs, and JP&P officers, is provided through the Child Welfare Institute (CWI) and is only offered when DCYF receives authorization from the Department of Administration to hire new staff. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the 6-month training program for FSU caseworkers and JP&P officers includes two quizzes and a final examination that participants are required to pass. The CWI provides progress reports every 2 months during the 6-month training that are shared with the new hires and their supervisors. Although training for the different positions has similar components, the training curricula are tailored to each new hire's exact position and duties.

The Statewide Assessment notes that pre-service training for FSU caseworkers is comprised of 37 percent classroom education and 63 percent field experience. FSU caseworkers are gradually assigned a caseload as they progress through the curriculum and reach a full caseload at the end of the 6-month training series. The classroom trainers and the supervisor of the new hire maintain regular contact with the new hire throughout this period via e-mail, telephone, and office meetings. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the current pre-service curriculum for JP&P is comprised of the same 16 modules listed for FSU pre-service and include the following:

- Comprehensive Assessment and Service Planning
- Understanding Safety, Risk and Protective Capacity
- Engagement and Building Positive Relationships
- Interviewing Children and Adolescents
- Sexual Abuse

The Statewide Assessment also notes that the JP&P training includes topics that are unique to JP&P, such as JP&P Report Writing and Restorative Justice.

According to the Statewide Assessment, JP&P new hires are assigned cases at the onset of employment and advance quickly to a full caseload. The FSU and JP&P pre-service training participants complete an evaluation tool after each workshop. The tool helps to assess the connection between classroom material and work in the field. The participants also are asked to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the instructor. Trainers are asked to evaluate each participant based on the trainers' observations, the participant's questions, participant's responses, and participant's contributions to classroom discussions and activities.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, although it is uncommon to have multiple CSTs hired at the same time, curriculum is available to train a full cohort. However, in the absence of multiple CST hires, the CWI and the CST's supervisor collaborate to identify training opportunities for the newly hired CST. If an FSU class is occurring, the CST is able to attend any/all relevant classes. Supervisors will arrange and oversee the classroom training and any on-the-job training for newly hired CST.

The Statewide Assessment also indicates that as a result of the 2004 Performance Improvement Plan, CWI and DCYF collaborated to design a competency-based supervisory training that, at the time of the Statewide Assessment, had been attended by 87 percent of the total supervisory staff across the State.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in providing comprehensive training for new caseworkers and JP&P officers. Stakeholders reported that CWI does not have a set schedule for pre-service training but offers the training as needed. Stakeholders also indicated that CWI staff provide ongoing feedback to supervisors on a new hire's performance and that FSU caseworkers receive a graduated caseload. A few stakeholders reported that the current supervisor training is beneficial for supervisors and helps them fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although ongoing training is required for staff and supported through training opportunities, these requirements are not monitored consistently. Additionally, supplemental information, provided after the review, included RICHIST data that indicate that during the review period, 27.7 percent of 491 DCYF caseworkers completed ongoing training requirements as indicated by completion of CWI training courses. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF's Minimum Standards for Staff Training policy mandates a minimum of 20 hours of ongoing training per year for all DCYF staff. The immediate supervisor, in conjunction with the caseworker/JP&P officer determines the caseworker's individual training needs. The immediate supervisor and his/her immediate supervisor are responsible for ensuring that each staff person receives the required hours by arranging staff's schedules to maximize training attendance. However, as reported in the Statewide Assessment, this does not occur in all divisions or regions of the State.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that in 2007 and 2008, DCYF implemented additional training modules for FSU and CSTs, which are offered through in-service training. In addition, mandatory trainings related to the new risk assessment model have been provided to all DCYF staff. The Statewide Assessment acknowledges, however, that because of current budget restrictions, DCYF staff have limited opportunities to attend conferences both in and out of State.

The Statewide Assessment indicates that RICHIST has the capability to develop and record training plans for individual caseworkers and can track the training that DCYF staff attend. However, it is reported in the Statewide Assessment that supervisors routinely do not assess the training needs or complete the training plan due to time constraints.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review were in agreement that ongoing training is required for all DCYF staff. Other stakeholders, however, were unaware of ongoing training requirements but were aware of mandatory trainings. However, stakeholders expressed different opinions about the availability of ongoing training. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that effective ongoing training readily is available through CWI and other community resources and that incentive pay is available for attending ongoing training. Some stakeholders also reported that there are mandatory trainings for DCYF staff. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that supervisors are supportive of caseworkers attending ongoing training.

Despite these positive views, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that there is not enough time for DCYF staff to take full advantage of available training opportunities. Additionally, a few stakeholders reported that the training that is available is not always relevant to the job responsibilities and that there is a need for ongoing training related to skill development for caseworkers.

A few stakeholders reported that RICHIST can track ongoing training hours if the training is through the CWI.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 34 is rated as a Strength. The State provides initial and ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents, including licensed relative caregivers. Although ongoing training is not required for foster parents, it is available through various venues. Additionally, residential facilities are required to maintain a written training plan. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, prospective foster parents are required to complete a 9-week training series. The Adoptive and Foster Training Series explores topics that affect children in the foster care system. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, 30 hours of training are required for generic DCYF foster parents. Relative and kinship foster parents, who provide foster care under title IV-E, are required to complete 6 hours of training that include the same topics as the Adoptive and Foster Training Series. The Statewide Assessment reports that ongoing training for foster parents is offered periodically by various resources and is open to DCYF and child placing agencies (CPA) foster parents, but attendance is not mandatory for DCYF foster parents to maintain the license.

According to the Statewide Assessment, each residential care facility maintains a written plan for the orientation, training, ongoing development, supervision, and annual evaluation of staff. Each new employee receives orientation and training consistent with the facility's written plan, including mandatory training and certification in a nationally recognized model of crisis intervention, use of restraints and seclusion as discipline methods, as well as first aid and CPR. Direct-care staff must receive a minimum of 16 continuing education hours annually in topics related to residential treatment, 8 hours of which must pertain to crisis intervention.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State provides initial training for foster and adoptive parents. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the information provided in the initial training is beneficial. Stakeholders noted that non-relative foster parents are required to complete more hours than relative/kinship foster parents. Many stakeholders indicated that ongoing training opportunities are available through community resources and private agencies, but that foster parents are not required to participate.

Some stakeholders reported that the State has established minimum requirements for CPA foster parents and the CPAs have additional requirements for therapeutic homes, including ongoing training for foster parents. According to a few stakeholders, the foster parent training model used by CPAs varies. Additionally, a few stakeholders reported that group homes have requirements for pre-service and in-service training for their staff.

V. SERVICE ARRAY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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

Status of Service Array and Resource Development

Rhode Island is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. The State was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- There were service gaps in key areas that affected children's safety, permanency, and well-being.
- The availability of key services varied by region and long waiting lists for some services impeded the timely delivery of services to parents and children.
- The State did not consistently individualize services to meet the unique needs of children and families.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Worked on the development of an administrative services organization to provide a statewide comprehensive network of prevention services (the precursor to the FCCP)
- Worked on redesigning how it procures and manages services for children and families with the most complex needs (preliminary work for the State's current system of care effort)

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that Rhode Island has an array of services that addresses the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children and families. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF provides publicly funded programming through a statewide continuum of services for the population of children and families it serves, which includes child welfare, children's behavioral health, and juvenile corrections. The Statewide Assessment reports that all of these services are available statewide; however, families may have to travel for up to 1 hour to obtain some services.

The State's continuum of services includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Prevention and early intervention programs for family preservation and support, including FCCP
- Substitute-care living arrangements, including regular, relative, and therapeutic foster homes; shelters and group homes; residential counseling treatment centers; and supervised independent living apartments
- After-care programs, including subsidized adoption, probation services, and end-of-sentence support for youth in the juvenile justice system
- Wraparound case management structures and programs
- Programs and services to support permanency, timely reunification, and timely adoption
- Evaluation and treatment for sexual abuse
- Evaluation and counseling for youth and adult caregivers for substance abuse
- Mental health evaluations and counseling for children and parents
- Intensive home-based services for families with children who have high-level behavioral health needs
- Anger management and domestic violence
- Parent education services
- Parent aide services
- Transportation (bus passes)

The Statewide Assessment also reports that DCYF purchases services through contracts with private providers to ensure that services are available to meet higher intensity levels of care if necessary.

According to the Statewide Assessment, policy mandates that DCYF help youth 16 years of age and older become self-sufficient and offers the following programs and services:

- Life Skills
- Real Connections
- Medicaid Coverage
- Young Adults Establishing Self Sufficiency (YESS)

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the State identifies service gaps in the following ways:

- The Performance Initiative, a project of the Rhode Island Data Analytic Center, provides ongoing assessments and reports of agency performance indicators for more than 150 programs. DCYF uses these reports to assess gaps in service array and develop resources to address gaps.
- Placement Solutions and the RI-State CFSR identified the primary gaps in the current service array as services for developmental disabilities; child/youth sex offender therapy services; child psychiatrists; and resources for parent-child evaluations.
- Resource Management Teams (RMTs) meet to address needs specific to high-end, out-of-home and out-of-State placements. The teams determine gaps in service needs and develop resources to ensure that all needs are met. The work of this team has resulted in an increase in intensive in-home community resources.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State also operates Family Treatment Drug Courts to protect children whose health and welfare may be adversely affected by parental substance use. Participation in this court is voluntary and adjudication of the Neglect and Abuse Petition is delayed to give the parent an opportunity to address his or her substance abuse.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed different opinions about the adequacy of the array of services available to assess and address the needs of children and families in the State. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that services are available to meet the needs of children and families, promote timely reunification, and maintain children safely in their homes. Some of the key services noted by stakeholders were family preservation, visitation, reunification, the FCCP, and early intervention services for young children.

A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State is providing beneficial services to youth to assist in the transition to independence, primarily through the YESS and Real Connections programs.

Some stakeholders, however, expressed the opinion that services are available but accessibility is sometimes a problem (this will be discussed further in item 36).

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although there is a range of services in the State, there are many challenges to ensuring that families and children in all areas of the State can access the services including limited transportation, insufficient resources in some areas of the State, and loss of eligibility for Medicaid services for parents whose children are in foster care. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the following are not always accessible to children and families:

- Mental health services
- Dental services, especially from dentists who accept Medicaid
- Child psychiatrists
- Parent/child evaluations
- Substance abuse treatment services, particularly inpatient treatment services
- Parent aide services

The Statewide Assessment also notes that focus-group participants (including community-based social services staff, youth groups, and other stakeholders) identified the following as having limited accessibility:

- Community-based placement resources
- Language-appropriate services
- Services and resources for parents with mental disabilities and/or dual diagnoses
- Intensive, home-based reunification services
- Transportation, especially in Region 3
- Services for developmentally delayed children or children with serious emotional disturbances
- Therapeutic recreation and respite
- Treatment, services, and placements for sexual offenders
- Services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth

The Statewide Assessment reports that focus-group participants also voiced concern that there is no formal way for staff to have input into the process of negotiating contracts with private providers. However, if DCYF staff have problems with a private provider, they can share their concerns with the program monitor.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the accessibility of services is better in urban areas than in small communities. Some stakeholders reported that families living in small communities frequently must drive long distances to access some needed services and that lack of transportation restricts access to these services.

Additionally, some stakeholders indicated that services have been reduced due to budget restraints resulting from the current economic situation. A concern noted by some stakeholders is that because of the lack of accessible services, the provision of needed services may be delayed. Various stakeholders across the three CFSR sites indicated that many available services in the State frequently have a waiting list, including the following:

- Psychiatrist and other mental health services
- Drug screens
- Affordable housing
- Post-adoption services
- Culturally sensitive services
- Independent living services

Stakeholders identified the same services noted in the Statewide Assessment as insufficient to meet needs, and added:

- Parent educators
- Foster homes including homes for older youth and children with special needs
- Evaluation and treatment for sexual abuse victims
- In-home services
- MST
- Step-down programs for youth involved in JP&P
- Community-based intensive treatment
- Trauma counselors
- Respite care

Additionally, a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that when the State reduced the age of foster care eligibility to 18, it had an adverse affect on the State's ability to prepare youth for emancipation.

A number of stakeholders commenting on this item indicated that when children enter foster care, parents are no longer eligible for RIte Care and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) which, in their opinion, often limits the needed services. Additionally, it is very difficult for families without RIte Care or other insurance coverage to obtain services such as mental health services. A few stakeholders noted that even if a family has private insurance, some services are limited or the copay is extremely high. A few stakeholders expressed the concern that some services, although accessible, are time- or visit-limited by Medicaid or private insurance, which in turn decreases the effectiveness of the service.

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

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that although services can be individualized for families served by the FCCPs and for youth with high-end needs reviewed by the RMTs, the same individualization is not available to all children and families open to DCYF. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, FSU and JP&P are required to complete the FCRPCA for all families with cases open to the department. The FCRPCA is completed on all members of the family and results in an individualized plan for each child.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the FCCPs use a wraparound services process to provide individualized, coordinated, family-driven care to meet the complex needs of families, children, and youth relating to child welfare, children's behavioral health, and/or juvenile corrections. The FCCPs have flexible funds available to use with enrolled families and youth. These funds are used to meet needs identified in the Family Care Plan that do not have a funding source. This flexible funding is not available to families who are not involved with the FCCP.

The Statewide Assessment reports that the RMT meets to identify individual needs of children needing high-end or out-of-State placements. Services already provided to the child and the current needs of the child are reviewed to identify appropriate programs that will meet the child's individualized needs while maintaining the child in the least-restrictive setting and preferably within the State. This team also has the authority to authorize funds for child-specific programming, allowing DCYF to purchase individualized services from community providers specific to one child or family.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, children in the in-home services cases have fewer resources available to them than children in foster care, particularly if they are not covered by Medicaid. Most resources developed by DCYF are for Medicaid-eligible children and not available in the same form to non-Medicaid-eligible children.

The Statewide Assessment also indicates that language barriers provide a challenge to completing comprehensive and timely assessments of children and families. Caseworkers rely on outside interpreters whose availability is limited. Additionally, the ability of providers to accommodate families quickly whose primary language is not English is limited.

Stakeholder Interview Information

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

- Case plans appear to be similar from family to family.
- Flexible funding is not available for families active in FSU.
- There is a limited number of culturally and linguistically competent services for children and parents whose primary language is not English.
- FCCP services are generally early intervention services and not available to families with open FSU cases.

Despite these concerns, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in individualizing services to meet the unique needs of children and families. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that each child and each family receives an individual plan to meet their individual needs. Additionally, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that services are available; however, the quality of the services is poor and the expertise of the service providers is limited. A few stakeholders also reported that reports from service providers are of poor quality and provide information only about compliance and not on progress or behavioral changes.

VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

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

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Rhode Island is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The State was not in substantial conformity with this systemic factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address it in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- Key stakeholders reported having little input into the development of DCYF's CFSPs and APSRs.
- Although there was strong collaboration among State-level agency leadership to coordinate Federal and Federally-assisted programs, these collaborative efforts were not implemented consistently at the level of local service provision.
- There was very limited collaboration between DCYF and the Family Court.

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

- Created a QA Advisory Committee comprised of internal and external stakeholders to review QA results and provide policy and practice recommendations to the department
- Established a process for public input on development and implementation of the CFSP and APSR
- Established regular monthly meetings between the DCYF director and the chief judge of the Family Court, began holding regular retreats for DCYF and court staff, and improved collaboration between DCYF and the court on Court Improvement Program (CIP) activities
- Established a process for DCYF to more effectively convey critical case information to the Family Court

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that the State has consulted with stakeholders regarding the goals of the CFSP and engages in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders through the Child Welfare Advisory Committee. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF conducted a 2-day, statewide strategic planning event in late February 2009 focusing on development of its 2010-2014, 5-year CFSP. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, there were 77 participants, including members of the Child Welfare Advisory Committee, community providers, CASAs, the child advocate, youth, foster parents, adoptive parents, department staff, and representatives from other State agencies. The Narragansett Tribal representative, although invited, was not available for this retreat. In workgroups, participants assisted DCYF in identifying achievable objectives. Youth were included in each workgroup to ensure that their perspectives were heard since they are the primary consumers of the child welfare system. The resulting draft plan was then distributed to all participants by e-mail for further review and comment before finalizing and submitting to the Federal Administration for Children and Families.

As reported in the Statewide Assessment, in January 2009, DCYF created a Child Welfare Advisory Committee, co-chaired by the Deputy Director at Rhode Island Kids Count and the DCYF's Deputy Director. The advisory committee includes representatives of home- and community-based providers, residential providers, RIFPA, Adoption Rhode Island (ARI), the Citizen Review Panel, and advocacy organizations. The Child Welfare Advisory Committee meets monthly and assisted with the planning and development of the current CFSP and preparation for the CFSR.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Narragansett Tribe and DCYF maintain a positive relationship, particularly with CPS. The Statewide Assessment notes that CPS staff and the Tribal representative communicate easily and as often as necessary on individual cases.

The Statewide Assessment reports that monthly meetings occur between DCYF leadership and the chief judge of the Family Court to discuss issues common to the two systems. Additionally, DCYF and the Family Court collaborate on the planning for CIP grants. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, issues of mutual concern and the initiatives supported by the CIP grants have been incorporated into the CFSP.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that DCYF met with other agencies and with providers to solicit input for the most recent CFSP. Stakeholders provided information about the 2-day planning event consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. Additionally, most stakeholders expressed the opinion that participants' opinions and input were valued and used by DCYF. Stakeholders also reported that the Child Welfare Advisory Committee has regular planning meetings.

Two key, State-level stakeholders reported that DCYF and the Tribal representatives meet on a regular basis to discuss Tribal issues. Additionally, other State-level stakeholders confirmed that monthly meetings occur between DCYF leadership and the court and expressed the opinion that the relationship has improved significantly since the Round One CFSR.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 39 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates the APSR is completed with input from various stakeholders who also consult on the CFSP. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the QA Advisory Committee, established in February 2006 for consultation on the Program Improvement Plan's implementation, was involved in the preparation of the APSRs of the 5-year CFSP. This committee was comprised of representatives of provider agencies, the Narragansett Tribe, the Family Court, Placement Solutions, and the Rhode Island Data Analytic Center at Yale University. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the QA Advisory Committee was disbanded and the Child Welfare Advisory Committee was formed in January 2009.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review reported that the Child Welfare Advisory Committee has regular planning meetings and will be involved in the APSR.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that DCYF services are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or Federally-assisted programs serving the same population. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) was statutorily created in 2006. This agency is comprised of DCYF, Department of Human Services (DHS); Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals; and Department of Elderly Affairs. The EOHHS is in the process of streamlining operations, coordinating service mechanisms and funding, and ensuring that contracts with community-based agencies that are common across the departments for similar services are not duplicative. Additionally, the EOHHS departments collaborated on the development and implementation of the Global Consumer Choice Compact Waiver. This Medicaid waiver, which went into effect in January 2009, is designed to promote greater flexibility in the use of the Federal and State funds to provide home and community-based services and supports.

The following collaborative efforts are identified in the Statewide Assessment:

- Families receiving support through TANF and that have open cases in DCYF are allowed to have a shared, coordinated case plan between DHS and DCYF.
- A data interface for the Federal Parent Locator Service was established between DCYF and the DHS Office of Child Support Services to assist DCYF in determining the whereabouts of absent parents.
- Youth aged 18 to 21 who are leaving DCYF foster care can continue to receive health-care coverage through DHS.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in the coordination of services of Federal and Federally-assisted programs for children and families. A few stakeholders reported that coordination is facilitated by weekly meetings of the department directors of the EOHHS agency. Although stakeholders expressed the opinion that coordination of services at the State level is effective, some stakeholders reported that coordinating services at the case level is sometime challenging, particularly for accessing TANF and Medicaid.

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

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

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

Rhode Island is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The State was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2004 CFSR and was required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

Key Concerns From the 2004 CFSR

The following concerns were identified in the 2004 review:

- The State did not have an effective process in place to ensure the recruitment of foster and adoptive families who reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of the children in State custody.
- Although a process was in place for the use of cross-jurisdictional resources, it was not effective to facilitate permanency for children.

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

- Improved the process for the timely completion of license applications to promote sufficient capacity by leasing fingerprinting equipment to expedite the background check process and by contracting home studies to reduce the completion time
- Provided training to supervisors and caseworkers on the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process and on resources available to facilitate cross-jurisdictional adoptions

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

Key Findings of the 2010 CFSR

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

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength. Information in the Statewide Assessment and from stakeholders indicates that the State has comprehensive written regulations and standards for foster family homes and child care institutions in place. This item also was rated as a Strength in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF is the State agency authorized and responsible for the regulation and the promulgation of regulations governing foster homes and residential care programs. These regulations are written to assist providers in ensuring a basic quality of care, health, and human rights for the children in their care. The prospective foster parent must provide DCYF with the information necessary to verify compliance with required standards and to participate in the licensing study process and the Foster Parent Training Program.

The Statewide Assessment notes that State law requires all non-related persons who care for children in their own homes to be licensed as foster parents. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, the State has written foster care regulations that establish the guidelines for relative and non-relative (generic) foster homes. Residential Child Care Regulations for Licensure (formerly Child Care Regulations) provide a comprehensive updated set of regulations in compliance with Federal and State laws and regulations for the licensing of residential child care facilities. Group homes and residential child care facilities are relicensed annually and all foster homes are relicensed biennially.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the State has standards for family foster homes and child care facilities that are effective and comprehensive. They noted that the standards the State has established include training, criminal history checks, DCYF checks, and fire inspections of foster homes. A few stakeholders noted that foster homes are relicensed biennially and child care facilities relicensed annually. Additionally, stakeholders reported that ongoing training is not required for foster homes to maintain their license.

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 Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength. According to the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews, the State applies standards to all licensed child care facilities and foster homes, including licensed relative homes. This item also was rated as a Strength in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF utilizes the same standards in licensing all kinship and non-relative prospective foster homes, with the exception of placing a child with a relative who is not licensed for up to 6 months pending completion of the licensing process, but only after all background checks have been conducted. Additionally, relative/kinship families receive an expedited 6-hour kinship training session compared to the 30-hour training required of general foster parents. Waivers for kinship foster parents who are unable to attend foster parent training due to an inflexible work schedule or other hardship may be granted by the licensing administrator on a case-by-case basis. Waivers also are granted to kinship foster parents who are not fluent in English as the State does not currently offer kinship foster parent training in other languages on a regular basis.

The licensing administrator may grant a variance on a case-by-case basis when the situation does not jeopardize the health, safety, and well-being of the child in foster care. Variances are most typically offered to allow a relative foster care provider to sleep in a common area of the home, such as the living room, when there is not sufficient bedroom space, and for capacity increase to accommodate a sibling of a foster child currently in placement. When a variance is granted and all other licensing requirements are met, the foster home is issued a regular 2-year license.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Federal funds are not claimed for children who reside in unlicensed foster homes. Foster children residing in unlicensed homes are coded in RICHIST as "eligible—not claimable, licensing problem," which automatically disqualifies them in RICHIST from Title IV-E reimbursement claims.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that generally standards are applied consistently to all licensed foster parents and to all licensed child care institutions. However, a few stakeholders reported that training requirements for relative/kinship foster homes differ from training requirements for generic foster parents. Additionally, training for relative/kinship foster parents can be waived if the foster parent is unable to attend. Some stakeholders reported that variances are granted in some cases for non-safety related standards, especially to increase the capacity limitations in a foster home to accommodate a sibling group.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 43 is rated as a Strength. According to the Statewide Assessment and stakeholders interviews, the State provides for criminal background checks and fingerprinting as a component for all licensed foster and adoptive placements, including relatives, kinship, and child care institution staff. This item also was rated as a Strength in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF conducts criminal background checks on all prospective foster and adoptive parents. The DCYF staff have access to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) database through the Attorney General's Office and are able to conduct criminal background checks expeditiously. No license is issued to any foster or pre-adoptive parent without every household member age 18 years and older submitting to the State and nationwide criminal record check, and no variances or waivers are granted on this requirement. Licensed child care facilities must conduct department child welfare record checks and State and nationwide criminal record checks on all staff prior to employment.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that background checks and fingerprint checks are consistently conducted prior to children being placed in foster homes. Prior to children being placed with a relative or kinship provider, all family members 18 years and older must have a BCI and DCYF check, and a fingerprint check must be completed within 7 days of placement. A few stakeholders reported that child care institution staff are required to have background checks and be fingerprinted prior to employment.

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

Strength **Area Needing Improvement**

Item 44 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State engages in a wide variety of recruitment activities, the diversity of foster and adoptive parent applicants does not reflect that of the foster care population. Data in the Statewide Assessment indicate that as of June 2009, 14 percent of foster care families in the home study process were African-American, and 8 percent were Hispanic. At the same time, 18 percent of children in foster care identified as African-American and 22 percent identified as Hispanic. In addition, some stakeholders expressed concern that a key recruitment effort supported by the State has not been as successful as anticipated with regard to recruiting Hispanic and African-American foster families. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island's 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF's statewide Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) Comprehensive Adoption Recruitment Plan and MEPA Foster Parent Recruitment Plan provide for the diligent recruitment of families needed for foster and adoptive placements. The plans include maintaining a database with demographic information of children waiting to be adopted and needing placement, making the home study process and training accessible, conducting timely searches for adoptive placements for waiting children, implementing strategic recruitment efforts to targeted communities, and providing cultural diversity training for staff.

The Statewide Assessment notes that DCYF's recruitment efforts have resulted in increases in the number of families in the foster parent process; however, DCYF, via the Statewide Assessment, acknowledges the need for greater improvement in this area, and in particular with tailored recruitment efforts to families of racial and ethnic diversity. As reported in the Statewide Assessment, approximately 35 percent of the children in foster care are from racial and ethnic minority groups. Additionally, data in the Statewide Assessment indicate that as of June 2009, 14 percent of foster care families in the home study process were African-American, and 8 percent were Hispanic; the percentage of children identified as such in foster care were 18 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

Additional data in the Statewide Assessment indicate that the number of minority applicants in the home study process did not exceed 29 percent over the 3 years prior to the Statewide Assessment and that the number of minorities issued generic foster care licenses never exceeded 31 percent for the same 3-year period.

DCYF, according to the Statewide Assessment, contracts with a private agency to recruit, conduct home studies, and provide pre-service training for foster and adoptive families interested in fostering and adopting African-American and Latino children. Additionally, ARI has a campaign specifically targeted to finding homes for minority children. The campaign has produced and disseminated brochures and conducted advertising focused on minority children who are waiting for adoptive families.

The Statewide Assessment notes that DCYF staff speak directly to prospective adoptive and foster parents by hosting informational meetings, staffing booths at fairs, festivals, businesses, churches, conferences, community events, and distributing informational material in other community settings. Additionally, DCYF conducts child-specific recruitment on a case-by-case basis, using television, newspapers, and other methods to locate homes for specific children. Children waiting for adoptive families are registered with appropriate exchanges, including ARI and **AdoptUsKids**. ARI and DCYF recently produced its sixth annual "Heart Gallery," portraits of 20 of the longest-waiting children.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed different opinions about efforts to target recruitment of foster parents who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that DCYF could increase recruitment efforts to better target families that meet the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care, while other stakeholders indicated that the State has made improvements in this area. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the contract to recruit more Hispanic and African-American foster homes has not been as successful as the State expected.

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

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a Strength. Information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews indicates that DCYF uses cross-jurisdictional resources to locate placements for waiting children. Additionally, the State’s PSTs have been instrumental in identifying relatives and kinship providers within and outside of the State. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Rhode Island’s 2004 CFSR.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, children who do not have an identified adoptive resource are registered with appropriate exchanges, including ARI, **AdoptUsKids**, private and contracted agencies, and regional exchanges. Additionally, in conjunction with ARI, DCYF conducts child-specific recruitment on a case-by-case basis, using television, newspapers, and other methods to locate homes for specific children. A review of “waiting children” and “waiting families” is conducted every 6 weeks by DCYF’s Adoption Preparation and Support Unit, ARI, and other contracted providers. The Statewide Assessment reports that recruitment efforts targeted for older child adoptions were developed and implemented during 2009, including a print campaign titled *The Top 10 Reasons to Adopt a Teen*.

According to the Statewide Assessment, out-of-State recruitment of adoptive resources is coordinated by ARI, which features many of the State’s waiting children on its website. In the year prior to the Statewide Assessment, ARI registered 61 new families, provided matching assistance to more than 100 families, helped place 11 children with families from other States and, at the time of the Statewide Assessment, had 4 children waiting on ICPC approval for out-of-State placement. According to the Statewide Assessment, DCYF’s ICPC administrator frequently visits the regions to provide support to caseworkers on the ICPC process.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that the State features children through the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids programs. Rhode Island also uses the services of the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange, including its Wednesday’s Child program, to recruit permanent homes for children. The Statewide Assessment indicates that DCYF, in collaboration with members of the PSTs, has increased efforts to identify and reach out to kinship family members both in State and out of State, and from January 1, 2009, through January 30, 2010, had placed more than 27 children with a goal of adoption in out-of-State kinship homes.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders commenting on this item during the Onsite Review expressed the opinion that the State generally is effective in the use of cross-jurisdictional resources on behalf of children awaiting permanency. Several stakeholders noted that DCYF uses ICPC to facilitate placements across State lines, mostly for placement with relatives or kinship providers; although stakeholders also noted that the ICPC process often is time-consuming.

Additionally, stakeholders noted that the State uses ARI, Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Tuesday's Child, Heart Gallery, and matching meetings to locate cross-jurisdictional placements for children who are free for adoption. A few stakeholders expressed the opinion that the PSTs have been instrumental in identifying relatives and kinship providers within and outside of the State. A few stakeholders voiced concern about the lack of public awareness of the need for permanent placements for Rhode Island children.