

**Laurens County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
October 2005**

During the week of October 17-21, 2005 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Laurens County. A sample of open and closed foster care and treatment cases was reviewed. Also reviewed were screened-out intakes, foster home licensing records, and unfounded investigations. Stakeholders interviewed for this review included foster parents, Laurens DSS supervisor, representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem, law enforcement, legal representatives, foster children, and biological parents.

Period included in Case Record Review: April 1, 2005 – September 30, 2005

Period included in Outcome Measures: October 1, 2004 – September 30, 2005

Purpose

The Department of Social Services engages in a review of child welfare services in each county to:

- a) Determine to what degree services are delivered in compliance with federal and state laws and agency policy; and
- b) Assess the outcomes for children and families engaged in the child welfare system.

State law (sec 43-1-115) states, in part:

The state department shall conduct, at least once every five years, a substantive quality review of the child protective services and foster care programs in each county and each adoption office in the State. The county's performance must be assessed with reference to specific outcome measures published in advance by the department.

The information obtained by the child welfare services review process will:

- a) Give county staff feedback on the effectiveness of their interventions.
- b) Direct state office technical assistance staff to assist county staff with their areas needing improvement.
- c) Inform agency administrators of which systemic factors impair county staff's ability to achieve specific outcomes.
- d) Direct training staff to provide training for county staff specific to their needs.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

The county-specific review of child welfare services is both quantitative and qualitative.

The review is **quantitative** because it begins with an analysis of every child welfare outcome report for that county for the period under review. The outcome reports reflect the performance of the county in all areas of the child welfare program: Child Protective Services (CPS) Intake, CPS Investigations, CPS In-Home Treatment, Foster Care, Managed Treatment Services (MTS), and Adoptions.

The review is **qualitative** because it assesses the quality of the services rendered and the effectiveness of those services. The review seeks to explain why a county's performance data looks the way it does.

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Section One

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding

Partially Achieved

-Safety Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations.

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

-Safety Item 2: Repeat maltreatment.

Finding: Strength

Analysis of Safety Item 1 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment				
Data Time Period: 10/01/04 to 09/30/05				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective $\geq 99.99\%*$	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,472	15,964	16,470.35	(506.35)
Laurens	269	249	268.97	(19.97)

* This standard is based on state law. It is not a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	100	0	0	9	0
Treatment	2	67	1	33	7	0
Total Cases	3	75	1	25	16	0

Explanation of Item 1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Laurens DSS. State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. The outcome report indicates that for the 12-month period under review Laurens initiated 92.57% (249/269) of the investigations of alleged abuse and neglect within 24-hours. The objective for this item is 99.99%. Based on CAPSS the county missed the established objective. The results of the on-site review indicate that 75% of the cases met the objective. Based upon both data sources the standard was not met.

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Analysis of Safety Item 2 Findings**

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure S1.2: Recurrence of Maltreatment – Of all children who were victims of indicated reports of child abuse and/or neglect during the reporting period, the percent having another indicated report within a subsequent 6 month period.

Indicated Report Between April 1, 2004 and March 31, 2005

	Number of Child Victims	Number of Child Victims In Another Founded Rept	Number of Children Objective >= 93.90%	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	9,771	71	9,174.97	525.03
Laurens	113	1	106.11	5.89

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Safety Item 2: Repeat Maltreatment.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	8	80	2	20	0	0
Total Cases	18	90	2	10	0	0

Explanation of Item 2

This is a “Strength” for Laurens DSS. According to CAPSS data only one of the 113 cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review was a victim in a previously founded report. Two of the applicable cases reviewed on-site involved repeat maltreatment. In one of the open treatment cases, an additional report was indicated for physical abuse the following year. The other treatment case was not documented well enough for the reviewers to determine whether or not repeat maltreatment had occurred. Laurens DSS met the federally established objective for this item.

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Section Two

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding

Not Achieved

-Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal.

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

-Safety Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren).

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Analysis of Safety Item 3 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	0	0	1	100	9	0
Treatment	1	10	9	90	0	0
Total Cases	1	9	10	91	9	0

Item 3

Item 3 is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Laurens DSS. This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency’s interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. Reviewers rated only one of the applicable cases “Strength” for this item. Half of the cases reviewed did not meet the objective. The treatment area was the most problematic for the agency. Documentation of services offered to the families was missing from four of the treatment cases. One treatment case was indicated in February 2005. Based on the available information (earliest dictation was dated May 2005) Mental Health services did not commence until October 2005. In a separate treatment case, the case manager’s dictation did not indicate the child had been seen during or after the initial investigation. Safety precautions were either not put into place or were ineffective in several of the cases. In one instance the treatment plan did not address all issues known to the agency. Reviewers assessed that children in treatment cases were not safe in their homes.

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Analysis of Safety Item 4 Findings

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 4: Risk of harm.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0
Treatment	1	10	9	90	0	0
Total Cases	9	45	11	55	0	0

Strategic Outcome Report Findings				
Measure S2.2: Risk of harm to child – Of all unfounded investigations during the reporting period, the percent receiving subsequent reports within six months of the initial report.				
	Number Alleged Child Victims in an Unfounded Rept 04/01/04 to 03/31/05	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective >= 91.50%*	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	13,748	1,180	12,579.42	(11.42)
Laurens	251	14	229.67	7.33

*This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure

This item is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The standard for the outcome report in CAPSS is that no more than 8.5% of alleged child victims have another report within six months of the initial report. According to CAPSS, Laurens DSS met the objective for this item. It must be understood that “subsequent reports of abuse” is a proxy measure for “risk of harm” since additional unsubstantiated reports of abuse do not always mean that a child remains at risk.

On-site reviewers are able to assess what CAPSS cannot. On-site reviewers determine how effective the county DSS office is at managing the risks of harm that necessitate continued involvement by DSS. By these criteria, risk of harm was reduced in only 45% of the foster care and treatment cases. Based upon the lack of documentation in the treatment files, it appeared as though case management services were not being provided to the families. In one case involving criminal domestic violence, referrals were not followed-up by the case manager. There appeared to be sporadic contact with the family—no home visits were documented. The only face-to-face visits occurred at the office.

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Professional collaterals were not contacted (officials from the health department, law enforcement, alcohol and drug center, DJJ, etc.) in several of the cases. There was a pattern of not visiting with children and their families. The risk of harm was reduced in only nine of the twenty cases reviewed.

Section Three

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding

Partially Achieved

-Item 5: Foster care re-entries	Finding: Strength
-Item 6: Stability of foster care placemt.	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 7: Permanency goal for child	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 8: Reunification, plmt w/ relatives	Finding: Strength
-Item 9: Adoption	Finding: Strength
-Item 10: Perm goal of other planned arrangmt	Finding: Strength

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 5 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 5: Foster care re-entries.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	100	0	0	6	0

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.1: Foster Care Re-entries – Of all children who entered care during the year under review, the percent that re-entered foster care Within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.				
	Number Children Entering Care 10/01/04 to 09/30/05	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Fos Care Episode	Number of Children Objective >= 91.40%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,204	235	2,928.46	40.54
Laurens	53	0	48.44	4.56

* This is a federally established objective.

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Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is a “Strength” for Laurens DSS. According to CAPSS, none of the children who entered care in Laurens County during the period under review had been returned home in the previous 12 months. This percentage exceeds the federally established objective of 91.40%.

On-site reviewers determined none of the four applicable foster care cases was a re-entry. The cases rated “not applicable” were opened prior to the period under review.

Stakeholders rated DSS very effective in preventing multiple entries of children into foster care.

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 6 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 6: Stability of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.2: **Stability of Foster Care Placement** – Of all children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, the percent that had not more than 2 placement settings.

	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number of Children With No More Than 2 Placements	Number of Children Objective $\geq 86.70\%*$	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,720	3,011	3,225.24	(214.24)
Laurens	63	53	54.62	(1.62)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Stability of foster care placement is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The outcome report shows 53 of the 63 children (84%) in care less than 12 months had no more than two foster care placements. This is below the standard of 86.70%. On-site reviewers not only counted the number of moves children in foster care experienced, but also looked at the reasons for those moves. One child has had three placements since entering foster care in April 2005. Another child has had three placements during the past year.

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Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 7 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.5: Permanency Goal for Child – Of all children who have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, the percent for which a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petition has been filed.				
	Children in Care At Least 15 of Last 22 Months 10/04 –09/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective >= 53.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,571	1,640	1,892.63	(252.63)
Laurens	65	10	34.45	(24.45)

* This is DSS established objective. The federal agency, Administration for Children & Families, gathers data on this measure, but has not established a numerical objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 7: Permanency goal for children.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	50	5	50	0	0

Explanation

Item 7 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. To meet the criteria established in the CAPSS report, 53.00% or more of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months must have a TPR petition filed. In Laurens DSS, 15% (10/65) of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. The objective for this item was not met in CAPSS.

On-site reviewers rated this item based on two criteria: 1) is the permanency goal appropriately matched to the child’s need? And 2) is the agency acting to cause the goal to be achieved timely? Only half of the cases were rated “Strength” for this item. An overall rating of “area needing improvement” is being assigned based on the results of the on-site review and CAPSS data. The reviewers determined the permanency plans needed improvement in five of the cases. In some instances the plans were not appropriate or the length of time to achieve permanency was excessive.

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One child's goal is reunification with parents. This child was placed in care in May 2004. The permanency planning hearing was held in April 2005 and will be reviewed in six months. There is little parental progress toward goals. Concurrent planning was not done on this case.

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 8 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.3: Length of Time to Achieve Reunification – Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caregiver, at the time of discharge from foster care, the percent reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children Where Fos Care Services Closed. Last Plan Was Return Home 10/01/04–09//30/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	1,965	1,638	1,497.33	140.67
Laurens	50	42	38.10	3.90

* This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	20	4	80	5	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Laurens DSS. To meet this federally established criteria at least 76.20% of the children returned to their parents from foster care must be returned within 12 months of their removal from home. In Laurens County 84% (42/50) of the children returned home within a year of removal. The agency average is that 82% of the children entering foster care return home within one year. The rating for this item is based on the CAPSS data. During the on-site review four of the applicable cases were rated “needing improvement”. The plans were not appropriate. In one case reunification had been the plan for more than one year. The parents have not been compliant with the treatment plan objectives. One parent did not receive psychological or substance abuse evaluations. The Foster Care Review Board recommended termination of parental rights and adoption in May 2005.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 9 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.4: Length of Time to Achieve Adoption – Of all children who exited from foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children With Finalized Adoption W/in Past 12 Months	Number of Children Where Adoption Was Finalized Within 24 Months of Entering Care	Number of Children Objective $\geq 32.00\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	366	54	117.12	(63.12)
Laurens	3	2	0.96	1.04

Note: This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 9: Adoption.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	0	0	6	100	4	0

Explanation

This item is a “Strength”. According to the outcome report Laurens had two finalized adoptions within the past 12 months. The federally established objective was met.

All of the applicable cases reviewed on-site were rated “area needing improvement”. Documentation of staffing with the Adoptions Unit was missing in one of the case records. The adoptions will not be finalized within 24 months in several of the cases. The plan of adoption was not appropriate in one case. The adoptive family could not meet the needs of the child, even with supportive services. The dictation reflected continued complaints about the adoption not working.

Stakeholders rated DSS as not effective in achieving timely adoptions (within 24 months or less) when that is appropriate for a child. One stakeholder stated the county is not effective because he/she is still trying to obtain court orders for cases that have already been heard and the orders were never written.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 10 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.6: Permanency Goal of “Other Planned Living Arrangement” – Of all children in foster care, the percent with a permanency goal of emancipation (Indep Liv Services) or a planned permanent living arrangement other than adoption, guardianship, or return to family.				
	Number of Children In Care at Least One Day 10/01/04 – 09/30/05	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective >= 85.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,078	1,079	6,866.30	132.70
Laurens	123	9	104.55	9.45

* This is a DSS established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	100	0	0	9	0

Explanation

Item 10 is a “Strength” for Laurens DSS. The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan. Based on the outcome data 7% (9/123) of the children in Laurens County have this permanency goal.

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Section Four

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:	Partially Achieved
-Item 11: Proximity of placement	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 12: Placement with siblings.	Finding: Strength
-Item 13: Visiting w/ parents & siblings	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 14: Preserving connections	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 15: Relative placement	Finding: Area Needing Improvement
-Item 16: Relationship of child w/ parents	Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Analysis of Permanency Item 11 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P4.1: **Proximity of Foster Care Placement** – Of all children in foster care during the reporting period (excluding MTS and Adoptions children), the percent placed within their county of origin.

	Number of Children In Care 10/01/04 – 09/30/05	Number of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Percent of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Number of Children Objective >= 70.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	5,969	3,905	65.42	4,178.30	(273.30)
Laurens	123	34	27.64	86.10	(52.10)

* This is a DSS established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	88	1	12	2	0

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Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Laurens DSS. To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in Laurens County. The outcome report indicates 28% (34/123) of the children in care are placed within the county. Based on the outcome report Laurens did not meet this objective.

The results of the on-site review also show Laurens did not meet the standard of 90%. Only 88% of the children were placed within the county. On-site reviewers considered those factors that were not captured in CAPSS. If a child was placed out of county because of a need for therapeutic services the item was rated “Strength”. If maintaining a relationship with parents/relatives was not an issue the item received a rating of “Not Applicable”.

Stakeholders reported DSS is not effective in placing children close to their birth parents or their own communities. Laurens does not have enough foster homes

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 12: Placement with siblings						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	100	0	0	5	0

Explanation

Placement with siblings is a “Strength”. When appropriate, the agency placed siblings together in all of the applicable cases reviewed.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	29	5	71	3	0

Explanation

Item 13 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Reviewers determined visits with parents and siblings placed separately in foster care did not occur on a consistent basis. Even though parent/child visitation was court ordered in one case, there was no documentation of the agency’s efforts to facilitate the visits. Reviewers could not locate any documentation of visits in several of the cases.

Stakeholders stated DSS is not very effective in planning and facilitating the visiting of children in foster care with their parents and siblings. One stakeholder stated it is difficult to visit with his/her children because the children are placed out of county in separate homes.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	83	1	17	4	0

Explanation

This item is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. All but one of the applicable cases reviewed were rated “Strength” for this item. The case manager documented efforts to preserve connections through visits and telephone contacts with grandmothers and other family members. In one case there was no documentation of the agency’s efforts to preserve the connections between the foster child and half-siblings that were not in foster care.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 15: Relative placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	60	4	40	0	0

Explanation

Relative placement is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. In six of the cases the agency explored placements with other relatives, including grandmothers and an aunt. One of the children was placed with a relative, however the placement disrupted. Documentation to indicate maternal and paternal relatives were assessed was missing from the cases rated “Needing Improvement”.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	1	20	4	80	5	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Only one of the four applicable cases had sufficient documentation to indicate the relationship of children with their parents. One foster care case contained excellent documentation of the agency’s efforts to promote the parent/child relationship. The case manager, in collaboration with group home staff, arranged for and monitored visits between the children and their parents. This item was rated “not applicable” in half of the cases due to TPR, the parents’ location not known or the agency being relieved of providing services to the parents. The other applicable cases were rated “area needing improvement” due to the agency’s lack of efforts to facilitate parental involvement

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Section Five

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 17: Needs & services
- Item 18: Involvement in case planning
- Item 19: Worker visits with child
- Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)

Not Achieved

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	70	3	30	0	0
Treatment	1	10	9	90	0	0
Total Cases	8	40	12	60	0	0

Explanation

This item asks two questions: 1) Were the needs of the child, parents, and foster parents assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Laurens DSS. Reviewers determined needs were properly assessed in only 40% of the foster care and treatment cases. In one treatment case the dictation indicated the Guardian-Ad-litem had concerns about the services to the family. However, the case manager did not indicate what follow-up was to take place.

Stakeholders stated DSS is not effective in assessing the needs of children, parents and foster parents in order to provide needed services.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	44	5	56	1	0
Treatment	1	10	9	90	0	0
Total Cases	5	26	14	74	1	0

Explanation

Child and family involvement in case planning is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for **Laurens County**. Documentation of the child and family’s involvement in case planning was absent from most of the records reviewed. The documentation in one treatment case indicates the case manager “reviewed” the treatment plan with the client and advised her to follow it. Copies of signed treatment plans were available in some records, but missing in others. There was no indication the plans had been developed collaboratively.

Stakeholders rated DSS as not being effective in involving parents and children in the case planning process.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 19: Worker visits with child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	70	3	30	0	0
Treatment	0	0	10	100	0	0
Total Cases	7	35	13	65	0	0

Explanation

Item 19 is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) is Laurens DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) do the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? The county did not meet the objective for foster care nor treatment. In the majority of the foster care cases the monthly visits were documented. The dictation indicates the case managers focused on treatment objectives and discussed well-being issues with the foster children and their caretakers. Due to the absence of dictation in the treatment records, it appears as though case managers were not making the monthly face-to face visits with children as required by policy.

Stakeholders reported a vast improvement in this area within the six or seven months prior to the review. Staff turnover was given as the reason for not meeting this objective.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	0	0	6	100	4	0
Treatment	0	0	10	100	0	0
Total Cases	0	0	16	100	4	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Laurens DSS. Four of the cases were not applicable for reasons of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR), pending adoption, or the court relieving the agency of providing services to the parents. The agency consistently failed to document visits with parents. Available case dictation indicates that visits, when documented, were very sporadic and did not address treatment plan objectives. In treatment cases, visits were not documented with both parents, although information on file indicated both parents should have been involved in treatment planning.

Stakeholders stated DSS is very effective in conducting face-to-face visits as often as needed with parents of children receiving in home services. This response is based on the last six or seven months prior to the review. In the past, face-to-face visits were very sporadic. This lack of monitoring and oversight was attributed to staff turnover.

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Section Six

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding **Not Achieved**

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	89	1	11	1	0
Treatment	2	29	5	71	3	0
Total Cases	10	63	6	37	4	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Laurens DSS. This item asks two questions: 1) Did DSS assess the educational needs of the children under their supervision, and 2) Were identified educational needs addressed? Although the county was very close in meeting the standard for foster care, the goal of 90% was not achieved for that program area. Some of the foster care records contained excellent documentation to verify that children’s education needs were being met. School reports, conversations with school officials, visits to the schools and assessments of children’s school performance were on file. Documentation was missing from the majority of the treatment records.

Stakeholders assessed DSS as not being effective in addressing the educational needs of children in foster care and those receiving services in their own homes.

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Section Seven

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

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding

-Item 22: Physical health of the child
-Item 23: Mental health of the child

Not Achieved

Finding: Area Needing Improvement
Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 22: Physical health of the child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0
Treatment	2	20	8	80	0	0
Total Cases	11	55	9	45	0	0

Explanation

Item 22 is an “Area Needing Improvement”. With the exception of one case, all of the foster care records contained copies of physical exams or at a minimum documentation that children’s health had been assessed. Only two of the treatment cases contained health assessments. In one of the cases rated “area needing improvement” there was evidence of some physical problems; however the child did not see a doctor.

Stakeholders interviewed stated DSS is not effective in identifying and addressing the physical health and medical needs of children receiving in home and foster care services.

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Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 23: Mental health of the child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	89	1	11	1	0
Treatment	1	14	6	86	3	0
Total Cases	9	56	7	44	4	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The cases rated “Strength” contained adequate documentation to support the child’s mental health needs were being addressed. The dictation reflected contact with the mental health counselor or therapist. This type of documentation was found in only 56 % the cases reviewed. In one foster care cases there was no documentation of follow-up with a child who had suicidal ideations. The dictation had a reference to refer the child for o counseling, but nothing to document the outcome. Only one treatment case contained adequate documentation to indicate children’s mental health was assessed. Documentation was absent from the other applicable case records.

Stakeholders reported DSS is very effective in identifying and addressing the mental health needs of children receiving in home and foster care services. Many improvements have occurred in the last six to seven months. Prior to the current Mental Health worker it was very difficult to receive reports on time.

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Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses

All of the open foster home licensing records were reviewed. They were not properly documented in CAPSS. It was difficult to determine whether the case manager visited quarterly or spoke with the foster parents about the home environment. It appeared as though most homes did not receive quarterly visits. These records were in compliance with the yearly fire inspections.

FINDINGS:

1. Only one of the records was in compliance at the time a license was issued.
2. The SLED, Sexual Offender (SO) checks, Central Registry, etc. were completed after the license was issued
3. One case record had pre-license work completed, but no license in place.
4. In most instances, the license was issued prior to state office signing off.
5. Training hours need to be monitored closely. Documentation of training hours was missing.

Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	Yes	No
Investigation Initiated Timely?	5	0
Assessment Adequate?	0	5
Case Decision Appropriate?	3	2

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”

Analysis: The initial investigations were all initiated timely. The assessments were not adequate. Interviews were not conducted with all relevant parties. Professional collaterals (DJJ staff and medical personnel) were not contacted on two of the cases. In one case the decision was based only on the allegations and not assessed for all typologies as required by policy. Dictation was absent in one file.

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Section Ten – Screened Out Intakes

Explanation

Not all calls made to DSS meet the legal definition of child abuse or neglect. Each DSS office must have an intake process that accurately determines which calls should be accepted for investigation and which should be screened out. Ten screened out intakes were reviewed. Screened out intakes are evaluated solely on the information contained in the agency database CAPSS

	Yes	No	Cannot Determine
Screen-Out Decision Appropriate?	8	0	2
	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Necessary Collaterals Contacted?	0	0	10
Appropriate Referrals Made?	1	5	4

Analysis

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. One report contained an allegation of no food in the home. There was no address listed on the intake, however the family received AFDC/food stamps. The reviewer could not determine why the intake was screened out. There were seven children in the home. Another intake contained an allegation of a parent using crystal meth. There was no dictation to support the decision to screen out. This report was not referred to law enforcement

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Case Rating Summary

The performance and outcome ratings below show the number of cases receiving that rating, followed by the percent of the total that number represents. Not Applicable (N/A) cases do not factor in the percentage.

Performance Item or Outcome	Perf. Item Ratings			Outcome Ratings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	N/A*	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	N/A*
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				17 (85%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	16				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				8 (40%)	1 (5%)	11 (55%)	0
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	1 (10%)	10 (90%)	9				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	9 (45%)	11 (55%)	0				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				3 (30%)	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	4 (100%)	0	6				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	5(50%)	5 (50%)	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5				
Item 9: Adoption	0	6 (100%)	4				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	1 (100%)	0	9				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				5 (50%)	5 (50%)	0	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	2				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	5 (100%)	0	5				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	3				
Item 14: Preserving connections	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	4				
Item 15: Relative placement	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				5 (25%)	4 (20%)	11 (55%)	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	8 (40%)	12 (60%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	5 (26%)	14 (74%)	1				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	7 (23%)	13 (65%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	0	16 (100%)	4				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				10 (63%)	0	6 (37%)	4
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	10 (63%)	6 (37%)	4				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				11 (55%)	2 (10%)	7 (35%)	0
Item 22: Physical health of the child	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	0				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	9 (56%)	7 (44%)	4				