

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

Final Report
Oregon Child and Family Services Review
February 2008

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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Introduction

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

The Oregon CFSR was conducted the week of September 10, 2007. The period under review for the case reviews was from April 1, 2006, to September 10, 2007. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Children, Adults and Families Division (CAF) of the Oregon Department of Human Services
- The State Data Profile, prepared by CB, which provides State child welfare data for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2003, FY 2004, and FY 2005
- Reviews of 65 cases (41 foster care cases and 24 in-home services cases) at three sites throughout the State, including 31 cases in Multnomah County, 17 cases in Deschutes County, and 17 cases in Marion County
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders, including but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys

All 65 cases were open child welfare agency cases at some time during the period under review. The key characteristics of the 65 cases reviewed are presented in the Table of Case Characteristics on the following page.

The first section of the report (Section A: Outcomes) presents the CFSR findings relevant to Oregon's performance in achieving specified outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table that presents the data for the case review findings and national indicators (when relevant). The table is followed by a discussion of Oregon's status with regard to substantial conformity with the outcome at the time of the State's first CFSR review in FY 2001, the State's status relevant to the current review, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed under the outcome. Differences in findings across the sites included in the Onsite Review are described when noteworthy. Variations in outcome and item ratings as a function of type of case (i.e., foster care or in-home services) also are identified when appropriate. The second section of the report (Section B: Systemic Factors) provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

Table of Case Characteristics

Case Characteristics	Foster Care Cases 41*	In-Home Cases 24*
When case was opened/child entered foster care		
Open prior to the period under review	29	11
Open during the period under review	12	13
Child entered foster care during the period under review	12	**
Child's age at start of period under review		
Younger than age 10	26 (63%)	**
At least 10 but younger than 13	3 (7%)	**
At least 13 but younger than 16	8 (20%)	**
16 and older	4 (10%)	**
Race/Ethnicity		
African American (non-Hispanic)	4 (10%)	**
White (non-Hispanic)	24 (59%)	**
Hispanic (of all races)	4 (10%)	**
American Indian or Alaska Native	1 (2%)	**
Asian	1 (2%)	**
Two or more races	7 (17%)	**
Primary reason for opening case		
Neglect (not including medical neglect)	15 (37%)	7 (29%)
Physical abuse	4 (10%)	3 (12.5%)
Sexual abuse	2 (5%)	1 (4%)
Medical neglect	2 (5%)	0
Mental/physical health of parent	5 (12%)	0
Mental/physical health of child	0	1 (4%)
Substance abuse by parent	7 (17%)	9 (37.5%)
Child's behavior/child in juvenile justice system	3 (7%)	0
Domestic violence in child's home	3 (7%)	2 (8%)
Other (mother requested assistance via the hotline because she was without formula, diapers, money, food stamps, or WIC services)	0	1 (4%)

*The CFSR usually includes 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home services cases. However, during the Onsite Review, it was discovered that one of the in-home services cases involved a child who was in foster care. Therefore, the case was designated as a foster care case.

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

SECTION A: OUTCOMES

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

ACF has established a very high standard of performance for the CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our country'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 at the end of their PIP implementation. ACF recognizes that the kinds of systemic and practice changes necessary to bring about improvement in particular outcome areas often are time-consuming to implement. Also, improvements are likely to be incremental rather than dramatic. Instead, States work with ACF to establish a specified amount of improvement or to determine specified activities for their PIP. That is, for each outcome or item that is rated as an Area Needing Improvement, each State (working in conjunction with CB) 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 PIP 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 is intended to assess a State's current level of performance by once more applying the high standards and a consistent, comprehensive, case-review methodology. The results of this effort are intended to serve as the basis for continued PIPs addressing areas in which a State still needs to improve, even though prior PIP requirements may have been achieved. The goal is to ensure that program improvement is an ongoing process and does not end with the closing of a PIP.

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

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

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

I. SAFETY

Safety Outcome 1

Outcome SI: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect					
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:					
	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total	Percent
Substantially Achieved	6	8	11	25	62.5
Partially Achieved	3	1	2	6	15.0
Not Achieved or Addressed	2	0	7	9	22.5
Total Applicable Cases	11	9	20	40	
Not Applicable	6	8	11	25	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	
Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards:					
Absence of maltreatment recurrence	National Standard (%)			State's Percentage	Meets Standard
Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff	94.6 or higher			99.68 or higher	No
				90.2	No
				99.35	No

Status of Safety Outcome 1

Oregon did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 62.5 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance varied across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 89 percent of Marion County cases compared to 55 percent of Multnomah and Deschutes County cases.

Oregon also did not meet the national standards for the two data indicators relevant for Safety Outcome 1. These indicators pertain to the absence of maltreatment recurrence and absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

Oregon did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1 during its first CFSR conducted in Federal FY 2001. In the 2001 CFSR, Item 1: Timeliness of investigations was rated as an Area Needing Improvement, and the statewide data indicator for repeat maltreatment did not meet the national standards. The data indicator for maltreatment of children in foster care met the national standards at that time, although this was determined through resubmission of data after the Onsite Review and before PIP approval. The following key concerns were noted in the 2001 CFSR:

- A lengthy screening process delayed assignment of cases to an intake caseworker.
- There was inadequate documentation in the case files of the intake and investigation timelines.
- Repeat maltreatment was found in some of the in-home services cases.

To address these concerns, Oregon implemented the following strategies during its PIP:

- Developed specialized data reports regarding timeliness of investigations and repeat maltreatment and disseminated them to the field to be used to monitor performance in these areas
- Revised agency policy to ensure consistent practice with regard to screening maltreatment reports and determining dispositions
- Supported implementation of new policies and practices through developing online applications of the new tools and procedures and incorporating them into the agency's information technology system
- Provided staff training for the current staff on new policies and incorporated this training into the training for new caseworkers

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

The key concerns identified in Oregon's 2001 CFSR were not found in the 2007 CFSR for Safety Outcome 1. In particular, few cases in 2007 involved concerns regarding the timeliness of the screening process and assigning cases for investigation. The key concerns identified in the 2007 CFSR pertained to a lack of timely initiation of investigations. Most (77 percent) of the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for timeliness of investigation involved reports that were given a 5-day timeframe for initiation of response.

In addition, according to the Statewide Assessment, Oregon has changed its policy regarding the timeframe for initiating an investigation. In the past, the timeframe started at the point that the referral was assigned to an investigative caseworker. At the time of the onsite CFSR, the policy was that the timeframe started at the point of receipt of the report.

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

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

___ Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 40 (62 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.

Oregon policy states that, upon receipt of an allegation of abuse or neglect, a screener determines whether a child protective services (CPS) assessment is required or the allegation can be closed at screening. If a CPS assessment is required, the screener determines the timeline for the CAF response. This can be either (1) within 24 hours of receipt of the report (immediate response) or (2) within 5 calendar days of receiving the report (response required). Oregon requires that the CPS worker make face-to-face contact with the alleged victim, his or her siblings, his or her parent or caregiver, and other children and adults living in the home within the prescribed timeframe of either 24 hours or 5 days. Oregon also noted in its policy document that agency policy was revised in March 2007 to set the expectation that all reports of abuse and neglect receive a 24-hour response. If the 5-day response is applied, the screener must document that the child is safe.

The results of the assessment of item 1 are presented in the following table:

Item 1	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	6	9	12	27	67.5
Area Needing Improvement	5	0	8	13	32.5
Total Applicable Cases	11	9	20	40	
Not Applicable	6	8	11	25	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Marion County cases, 60 percent of Multnomah County cases, and 55 percent of Deschutes County cases.

Item 1 was rated as a Strength when the investigation was initiated and face-to-face contact was made within the timeframes required by State policy or law. It was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when the investigation was not initiated within the required timeframes. In 3 (23 percent) of the 13 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement, the report had been assigned as an "immediate response" (the investigation must be initiated within 24 hours). In 10 (77 percent) of the 13 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement, the report had been assigned as a "response required" (the investigation must be initiated within 5 days).

Rating Determination

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 67.5 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 less than the 90 percent required for an overall item rating of Strength. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Oregon's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Although some stakeholders who commented on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the agency responds in a timely manner to abuse and neglect reports, they also noted that, in some situations, there can be delays in responding if there is a need for a Spanish interpreter or if the investigation must be coordinated with law enforcement. Some stakeholders noted that while some branch offices have very positive coordination with law enforcement, others do not and do not always follow the protocols in place. Several stakeholders also expressed concerns about the lack of feedback from the agency regarding whether reports that stakeholders have made are accepted and the results of the investigation.

Stakeholders reported that the new policy requires that the clock (with respect to the 24-hour or 5-day requirements) begins at the time that the initial call comes in. They noted that, in the past, the clock did not begin until the screening was completed. Stakeholders also indicated that the agency has developed a dashboard report so managers can review the response times in their locations.

Several stakeholders expressed concern about the agency practice of screening out maltreatment reports on youth, particularly if they are 16 or 17 years old. These stakeholders noted that when these youth are reported to the agency as alleged victims of abuse or neglect, the agency rarely responds.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Oregon met the timeliness performance measure on only 66.7 percent of the cases reviewed in its 2001 CFSR. In response to this finding, the agency implemented several new measures as part of its PIP. The Statewide Assessment reports that a September 2006 statewide case review found that item 1 was met in 87.2 percent of the cases reviewed, and the January 2007 review found that item 1 was met in 82.4 percent of the cases reviewed. In February 2007, the Oregon Repository –

Bring Information Together (ORBIT) report shows an achievement of timeliness of CPS contact in 77.4 percent of referrals during that month. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, achievement of timeliness was better for referrals with 24-hour response times (83.6 percent) than it was for referrals with 5-day response times (71.5 percent). The Statewide Assessment also reports that, in this analysis, rural counties achieved timeliness in 84.7 percent of the cases, compared to urban counties, which achieved timeliness in 73.1 percent of their cases. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, although this is an area that continues to need improvement, the State has made significant progress in performance and in monitoring of the measure.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 24 (37 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 whether there had been a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on the family during the period under review and, if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report involving similar circumstances had occurred within a 6-month period before or after that identified report. Information regarding the ratings is provided below.

Item 2	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	6	4	11	21	87.5
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	1	3	12.5
Total Applicable Cases	7	5	12	24	
Not Applicable	10	12	19	41	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	

Item 2 was rated as a Strength when there was no indication of two or more substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports on the family within a 6-month period.

Although there was little evidence in the cases reviewed of the recurrence of substantiated maltreatment during the period under review, there were many cases in which there were multiple reports on the family during the life of the case regardless of disposition. The "life of the case" refers to the time span from the first time that an allegation of abuse or neglect was reported on any child in the family to the time of the Onsite Review. In 40 cases, there were 6 or more child maltreatment reports during the life of the case, and in 20 of these cases, there were 10 or more reports during the life of the case. Of the 20 cases with 10 or more reports, 8 had more than 20 reports. For one case, there were 47 maltreatment reports during the life of the case. Information about the types of allegations involved in these reports was not collected during the onsite CFSR unless the report occurred during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 87.5 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that there was no recurrence of maltreatment. In addition, the State did not meet the national standard for the data indicator pertaining to the recurrence of maltreatment.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Some stakeholders who commented on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that repeat maltreatment does occur and that it usually happens in cases that are substantiated for threat of harm (which is a category of "abuse" in Oregon) or neglect. Several stakeholders expressed concern about the number of reports that occur before the agency actually intervenes or takes action. Stakeholders suggested that multiple reports are due to a lack of preventive services and ongoing treatment services, particularly for mental health and substance abuse problems.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the data for the 2007 CFSR suggest that maltreatment recurrence is an area needing improvement for the State. The Statewide Assessment reports that a research report conducted by the agency in 2004 found that neglect and threat of harm are the types of maltreatment that are most likely to recur. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, the use of threat of harm as an abuse disposition has been increasing over the last several years, and appropriate use of this category is a concern. The agency is in the process of updating the "threat of harm" guidelines used to assist CPS workers in substantiating this category appropriately.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that the most common family stressors associated with recurrence are drug and alcohol abuse and law enforcement involvement. It was noted in the Statewide Assessment that in 2005, 44.7 percent of founded abuse reports indicated that familial drug use was a risk factor and 29.6 percent indicated that parental involvement with law enforcement was a risk factor. Also, between 2000 and 2005, methamphetamine use by parents played a role for nearly 67 percent of children who entered foster care in Oregon. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Oregon's ability to provide treatment to families affected by both drug and alcohol abuse and child maltreatment has diminished in recent years, which has had a negative affect on child safety.

Safety Outcome 2

Safety 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:					
	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total	Percentage
Substantially Achieved	9	13	17	39	60.0
Partially Achieved	4	3	4	11	16.9
Not Achieved or Addressed	4	1	10	15	23.1
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	

Status of Safety Outcome 2

Oregon did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 60 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 95 percent or higher required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance on this item varied across sites. The outcome was substantially achieved in 76 percent of Marion County cases, 55 percent of Multnomah County cases, and 53 percent of Deschutes County cases.

Key Concerns of the 2001 CFSR

Oregon did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 2 in the 2001 CFSR. In that review, Item 3: Services to family to protect children in the home and prevent removal was rated as a Strength, and Item 4: Risk of harm to child was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. The following concerns relevant to this item were noted in the 2001 CFSR:

- In some cases, services did not address pertinent risk factors such as co-occurring drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence.
- There was little evidence that risk was assessed on an ongoing basis or that it was adequately assessed at case closure.
- Stakeholders expressed concern about the adequacy of safety plans.
- Stakeholders expressed concern about the availability of post-reunification support services.
- In some cases, when new potential maltreatment information was received on an open case, it was noted in the case record but it was not formally reported or investigated.

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

- Developed standards for treatment service providers requiring them to document parent behavior changes for parents in both the in-home services cases and the foster care cases, including a specific requirement that behavior changes be assessed for parents before a reunification decision
- Developed a Guided Assessment Process (GAP) and needs-planning process that includes standards, tools, and procedures for assessing safety and risk on an ongoing basis and at critical case junctures

- Revised agency policy to support comprehensive ongoing assessments and safety planning

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

In the 2007 review, both item 3 and item 4 were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. One of the key concerns noted in the 2001 CFSR continued to be a concern in the 2007 CFSR. This pertains to providing services to families after reunification. Other key findings of the 2007 CFSR were as follows:

- The agency was appropriately removing children from the home without service provision to the family before removal due to safety concerns for the child.
- In many cases, although the agency provided services, they were not sufficient to adequately address the safety issues in the home and the children remained at risk in their homes.
- There was a lack of adequate safety and risk assessments in the child's home and in the foster home.

Another key finding is that, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, Oregon began a new statewide practice in March 2007, the Oregon Safety Model (OSM), to address safety concerns. This model was intended to provide workers with critical thinking tools to better assess the key factors necessary to develop in-home safety and services plans and to determine if children can be maintained safely in their own homes. However, stakeholders reported that the OSM is not implemented consistently across the State.

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

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 3 was applicable in 43 (66 percent) of the 65 cases. Cases were excluded from this assessment if the children entered foster care before the period under review and there were no other children in the home or if there was no substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or identified risk of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent placement of children in foster care while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment are shown in the following table:

Item 3	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	7	11	14	32	74
Area Needing Improvement	5	0	6	11	26
Total Applicable Cases	12	11	20	43	
Not Applicable	5	6	11	22	
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	

There was variation in performance on this item across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 100 percent of Marion County cases, 70 percent of Multnomah County cases, and 58 percent of Deschutes County cases.

Item 3 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Services were provided to the parents and child to prevent removal (18 cases).
- The child was placed voluntarily with relatives, and services were provided to the relatives, parents, and children (four cases).
- The children were appropriately removed from the home because the removal was necessary to ensure the child's safety (four cases).
- Services were provided after the reunification of the child to support the reunification and prevent reentry (eight cases).

Case review information indicates that a range of services was offered or provided to families. These included (but were not limited to) the following: domestic violence counseling; substance abuse treatment; parenting skills education and development; mental health assessment; mental health counseling; medication management; housing services; assistance in obtaining restraining orders; individual and family counseling; residential alcohol and drug treatment; outpatient drug and alcohol treatment; in-home parent training (with child present in the home); mentoring; funds for concrete needs (e.g., vehicle repairs, rent); relief nursery programs; and in-home life-skills services, including budgeting, homemaking, child care, parenting, family counseling, transportation, gas vouchers, rent support, and referrals for Head Start.

Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 11 of the 43 applicable cases when reviewers determined the following:

- No services were provided, and the children remained at risk in the home (six cases).
- Some services were provided, but they did not adequately address the safety issues in the family, and the children remained at risk in the home (four cases).
- The case was closed prematurely without all of the safety risks addressed (one case)

Rating Determination

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 74 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. This percentage is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of Strength. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

A few stakeholders who commented on this item during the onsite CFSR indicated that the agency makes concerted efforts to provide services to prevent removal. Many stakeholders indicated that a lack of effective services and, in particular, the scarcity of substance abuse treatment and mental health services contributes to the difficulty of maintaining children safely in their own homes.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, 75 percent of the applicable cases were rated as a Strength for this item in the State's 2001 CFSR. The Statewide Assessment reports that in statewide CFSR reviews conducted between 2003 and 2006, an average of 85 percent of the cases were rated as a Strength for this item; in the two quarterly statewide reviews held in 2006 and 2007, 97.1 percent and 87.5 percent of the cases, respectively, were rated as a Strength for the item. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that because of the disparity between results from the branch reviews in 2003 to 2006 and the two statewide reviews in 2006 and 2007, and because the sample size is not statistically representative, the agency does not feel that significant weight can be given to the improved scores at this time.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that a number of services are available to prevent child placement, including addiction recovery teams, domestic violence programs (which are funded by other sources in all counties), and family-based services such as parent training, intensive home-based services (in 13 counties), and family sexual abuse treatment services.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

___ Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 65 cases. The results of this assessment are shown in the following table:

Item 4	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total	Percent
Strength	10	13	18	41	63
Area Needing Improvement	7	4	13	24	37
Total Cases	17	17	31	65	

Performance on this item differed across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 76 percent of Marion County cases, 59 percent of Deschutes County cases, and 58 percent of Multnomah County cases. Performance on this item also differed based on the type of case. The item was rated as a Strength in 70 percent of the foster care cases, compared to 50 percent of the in-home services cases.

Item 4 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by the agency through (1) conducting initial and ongoing assessments of risk and safety either in the children's home or in children's foster home and (2) addressing all safety-related concerns identified through the assessment. Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 23 cases when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The case was closed, and there was no assessment at the time or no follow-up to ensure that the safety plan had been implemented (three cases).
- There was a lack of adequate safety and risk assessments in the foster home during the period under review (seven cases).
- There was a lack of adequate safety and risk assessments in the child's home during the period under review (13 cases). In one of these cases, there was a third child living in the home of whom the caseworker was unaware and whose safety was never assessed.
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to engage the child or family in necessary services to address risk issues (one case).
- The child was a chronic runaway, and no assessment was done to determine and address the cause of the runaway behavior (one case).

There were six cases in which reviewers identified significant concerns regarding the safety of the child in the foster home. For the most part, reviewers questioned whether the agency's response in these situations was appropriate.

Rating Determination

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 63 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had appropriately addressed the risk of harm to the children. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for an overall rating of Strength. This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in Oregon's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders who commented on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency has a risk and safety assessment tool and process in place. However, several stakeholders suggested that there are difficulties with implementing the process on a routine basis. Marion County stakeholders reported that because of the shortage of foster homes, children are placed where there is a bed available and homes are over capacity, which creates safety issues that are not being monitored on an ongoing basis. Although it was noted that foster homes that are over capacity must be visited every 90 days by the licensing caseworker, there is no system in place to track these visits to ensure that they are being made. Stakeholders also noted that the shortage of foster homes results in a situation in which insufficient attention is given to ensure that the children placed in the homes do not represent a risk to one another. One stakeholder noted that when parents express concern about their children's treatment in foster care, these concerns often are not taken seriously, even when they may be valid.

Marion County stakeholders also reported that insufficient assessment is done when children transition from supervised visits with parents to unsupervised visits.

Stakeholders expressed different opinions regarding the efficacy of the new OSM in addressing risk of harm to children. While most stakeholders who commented on this suggested that there is a greater emphasis on safety initially in the case, others expressed the opinion that there is less focus on safety throughout the life of the case.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, 80 percent of the cases were rated as a Strength for this item in the 2001 CFSR, 86 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as a Strength in the State's 2003 to 2006 case reviews, 77.4 percent were rated as a Strength in the 2006 quarterly review, and 82.5 percent were rated as a Strength in the 2007 quarterly review.

The Statewide Assessment reports that a formal policy transmittal memorandum was issued to child welfare staff members on March 1, 2005, clarifying and providing direction about the quality and content of face-to-face contacts with children in foster care as well as documentation requirements for the existing policy. Clarification also was provided that unannounced visits to foster homes are recommended. Administrative rule was later changed to incorporate these practices into 30-day face-to-face visits. A checklist was provided for staff use during their visits to enhance their quality.

At the same time that administrative rules for 30-day visits and safety plan reviews at critical junctures were implemented, policy changed in regards to CPS allegations on an open case. If the CPS report reflected new allegations or safety threats, that report was referred to CPS screening. If it reflected the same general issue that was being addressed by the current service plan, the report went to the assigned worker. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, this item appears to be affected by caseworker lack of experience and training in understanding safety threats. The Statewide Assessment reports that a primary goal in implementing the OSM is to provide caseworkers and their supervisors with critical-thinking tools to better assess the key factors necessary to develop an in-home safety and services plan. They noted that these tools will assist caseworkers in determining when children can be safely maintained in their own home.

II. PERMANENCY

Permanency Outcome 1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations						
Number of cases reviewed by site according to degree of outcome achievement:						
	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total		Percent
Substantially Achieved	6	5	8	19		46.3
Partially Achieved	3	5	12	20		48.8
Not Achieved or Addressed	1	0	1	2		4.9
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	10	21	41		
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0		
Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards:						
		National Standard (Scaled Score)	State's Composite Score	Meets Standard (Yes/No)		
Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification		122.6 +	118.5	No		
Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions		106.4 +	96.4	No		
Composite 3: Permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods		121.7 +	107.8	No		
Composite 4: Placement stability		101.5 +	96.7	No		

Status of Permanency Outcome 1

- Oregon did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:
- The outcome was substantially achieved in 46.3 percent of the cases, which is less than the 95 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
 - The State Data Profile indicates that Oregon did not meet the national standards for any of the four data composites.
- Oregon's performance on the individual measures included in each composite is presented in the discussion of the items related to each measure.

Although Oregon's performance on this outcome was low in all sites, there was variation across sites. The outcome was found to be substantially achieved in 60 percent of Deschutes County cases, 50 percent of Marion County cases, and 38 percent of Multnomah County cases.

Key Concerns From the 2001 CFSR

Oregon did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 in its 2001 CFSR. Item 6: Stability of foster care placement was rated a Strength. All other items in this outcome area were rated as Areas Needing Improvement, including Item 5: Foster care reentry, Item 7: Permanency goal for child, Item 8: Independent living services, Item 9: Adoption, and Item 10: Permanency goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA). The following concerns were identified in the 2001 CFSR:

- Some reunification decisions were not based on a determination that a substantial change had occurred in the family, thus potentially increasing the likelihood of reentry.
- There were insufficient post-reunification services to prevent reentry.
- There were delays in establishing permanency goals in a timely manner that were attributed to changes in caseworker assignments and the lack of concurrent planning. Even when concurrent goals were established, caseworkers often did not work toward the goals simultaneously.
- Children were in foster care for long periods of time before a finalized adoption due to delays in adoption home studies, delays in the paperwork required for finalization of parental rights (TPR), and insufficient legal assistance before TPR.
- When efforts to reunify were continued for long periods of time without success, the plan often was changed to OPPLA by default rather than the agency considering other possible options. The OPPLA plan often was established because concurrent planning had not been ongoing during the efforts to reunify so that by the time the agency gave up on reunification efforts, the child was considered "unadoptable" either because of the child's age or behavior problems. The OPPLA plan also frequently was established because foster parents had the perception that money and services would be lost if they adopted the child in their care.
- Judges were found to be reluctant to approve a petition for TPR if there was no adoptive resource for the child.
- In some cases, children with severe behavioral problems had case plans that focused on remediation of the problems and delayed efforts to work toward permanency until the child's behavioral problems had improved.
- Independent living program (ILP) services were not available in all areas of the State.

The following strategies were implemented in the Oregon PIP to address these concerns:

- Developed policy and training on concurrent planning and decision-making regarding TPR
- Enhanced the ILP by increasing youth's access to ILP providers throughout the State, conducting additional training throughout the State, and establishing specialized consultant staff at each service delivery office to serve as community liaisons and consultants for agency staff
- Conducted a pilot study of specific groups of children to determine whether factors such as age, length of stay in foster care, and other characteristics contributed to delays in achieving permanency
- Established protocols for expediting adoptions and provided legal assistance to caseworkers in the adoption process
- Identified statewide system barriers to adoption

- Created a standardized checklist with timelines to monitor each child's progress through the adoption process and developed and disseminated management reports providing tracking information
- Streamlined the process for assessing potential adoptive resources
- Improved the legal process for freeing children for adoption
- Developed specific criteria for determining when adoption is not an appropriate permanency goal

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

Key Findings of the 2007 CFSR

During the 2007 review, item 5 was rated as a Strength, while all other items included in the outcome were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Most of the concerns identified in the 2001 CFSR also were noted in the 2007 CFSR. Key findings of the 2007 review included the following:

- Although there was only one case rated as an Area Needing Improvement with regard to reentry into foster care, Oregon's statewide data in FY 2005 for the national measure of foster care reentry exceeded the national median for this measure.
- Although many children experience placement stability, there were a substantial number of cases in which the child was not in a stable placement at the time of the onsite CFSR, and in which the child had experienced placement changes that were not in the child's best interest nor intended to further attainment of the child's permanency goal.
- The agency was inconsistent with regard to its effectiveness in establishing appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner.
- Although concurrent goals were established frequently, caseworkers were not working on the goals simultaneously.
- Children were assigned the goal of OPPLA at very young ages. Four children with this goal were younger than age 13 at the onset of the period under review, and two children were younger than age 7. In addition, there was a lack of adequate consideration of other permanency options before establishing this goal.
- There were extensive delays in achieving adoptions in a timely manner.
- Although most reunifications were determined to occur in a timely manner, this was not consistent across cases.

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

Item 5. Foster care reentries

Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

An assessment of item 5 was applicable for 12 (29 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. Cases were not applicable for assessment if the child did not enter foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into

foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment are presented in the following table:

Item 5	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	1	3	7	11	92
Area Needing Improvement	0	0	1	1	8
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	1	3	8	12	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	9	7	13	29	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	21	41	

The State's FY 2005 performance on the individual measure of foster care reentry (measure C1.4) included in Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification was as follows: 15.9 percent of the children exiting foster care to reunification in the 12 months before FY 2005 reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the time of discharge. The national median for this measure was 15.0 percent. For this measure, lower percentages are associated with higher levels of performance. Oregon's performance on the measure is about equal to the national median but is greater than the 25th percentile for this measure of 9.9 percent. This suggests that despite performance on the cases reviewed during the onsite CFSR, foster care reentry continues to be an area of concern for the State.

Item 5 was rated as a Strength in nine cases in which the child's entry into foster care during the period under review did not take place within 12 months of discharge from a prior episode. It was rated as a Strength in two cases in which the child entered foster care within 12 months from the time of exit, but reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to prevent the reentry. One case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the child reentered foster care within 12 months of the time of exit from foster care.

Rating Determination

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength. Reviewers determined that in 92 percent of the applicable cases the child had either not reentered foster care in less than 12 months or had reentered but the agency had made efforts to prevent the reentry. This percentage exceeds the 90 percent required for an overall rating of Strength. However when statewide data are considered in FY 2005, the State performed only at about the level of the national median for the national measure of foster care reentry.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders who commented on this item during the onsite CFSR attributed reentries into foster care to a variety of factors including the following:

- Services often cease when the child goes home.

- Children are reunified before the family is ready when it is determined that parents have complied with service plan requirements, even if no assessment has been conducted regarding changes in behaviors that resulted from participation in services.
- Problems such as drug relapse and domestic violence are ongoing and difficult to change.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, a study completed in spring 2007 by Honors in Economics students at the University of Oregon examined some of the factors associated with foster care reentry using a statistical analysis based on the new CFSR reentry measure for 2006. This analysis found that, controlling for all other factors, older children were less likely to reenter foster care than younger children. Furthermore, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Native American children were all found to have a high likelihood of reentry at the 90 percent confidence level. The Statewide Assessment notes that children who had special needs, disabilities, and/or behavior problems were more likely to reenter foster care than children who did not have those concerns.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

____ Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 41 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs. Reviewers also assessed the stability of the child's current placement setting. The findings of this assessment are presented in the following table:

Item 6	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	8	6	13	27	66
Area Needing Improvement	2	4	8	14	34
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	10	21	41	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0	

Performance on this item varied somewhat across counties. The item was rated as a Strength in 80 percent of Deschutes County cases, 62 percent of Multnomah County cases, and 60 percent of Marion County cases.

Oregon's performance on the individual measures included in Composite 4: Placement stability is as follows:

- 83.4 percent of the children in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months experienced two or fewer placement settings, which is about equal to the national median for this measure of 83.3 percent.

- 65.9 percent of the children in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings, which is about equal to the 75th percentile for this measure of 65.4 percent.
- 34.4 percent of the children in foster care for at least 24 months experienced two or fewer placement settings, which is about equal to the national median for this measure of 33.9 percent.

These data indicate that Oregon performed at the level of the national median on two of the three measures of placement stability but reached the level of the 75th percentile for the measure of placement stability for children in foster care between 12 and 24 months.

Item 6 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The child did not experience a placement change during the period under review, and either the current placement was stable or the child was discharged from foster care during the period under review (21 cases).
- The placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest and were intended either to further achievement of the child's permanency goal or to provide specialized services to the child (six cases). For example, placement changes were made to move the child to a relative's home or from a foster home to an adoptive home.

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 further attain the child's permanency goal (nine cases).
- The child's current placement setting (at the time of the onsite CFSR) was not stable (seven cases).

Additional findings of the case review were as follows:

- Twenty-three children experienced only one placement.
- Twelve children experienced two placements during the period under review.
- Four children experienced three to four placements during the period under review.
- Two children experienced five or more placements during the period under review.

Rating Determination

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 66 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children experienced placement stability or that changes in placements were in the best interests of the child. This percent is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. Item 6 was rated as a Strength in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Although a few stakeholders expressed the opinion that placement stability is not a problem for children in foster care, most stakeholders who commented on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that placement stability is a challenge in the

Oregon child welfare system. They attributed this primarily to the lack of foster homes, which results in placements based on available beds rather than appropriate matches.

Several stakeholders also attributed placement instability to the inability of many foster parents to deal with the behavioral and emotional issues of children who are placed in their care. Multnomah County stakeholders suggested that the lack of services for youth, particularly mental health services, increases the difficulties experienced by foster parents in managing the behaviors of their foster children.

Stakeholders noted that youth report that they have to change placements because of abusive foster homes or because they were placed in an emergency home that would only take children for 24 hours.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, Oregon's performance on placement stability needs to improve. Entry cohort data (first episode, first placement) examined by the foster care unit every 6 months indicate that, although Oregon does not generally use "receiving centers" for initial placement into foster care, approximately one-third of first placements of children are with foster homes that provide care for 2 weeks or less. Specifically, for the last 6 months of 2006, 31.9 percent of children who entered foster care for the first time were placed in homes in which the placement lasted 2 weeks or less. This rate of first placements into short-term emergency shelter care has remained somewhat stable over the past several years.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that 15 to 16 percent of children are placed with relatives when first entering foster care. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, delays in identifying and placing children with relatives is one of the factors that results in a higher number of placements, because once a relative is identified, Oregon's preference is to transition that child to the relative placement. As indicated by the data, 30.5 percent of children in family settings on an average daily basis in Federal FY 2006 were placed with a relative, which is roughly twice the percentage of children placed with relatives at the time of entry into foster care.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

____ Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

All 41 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established a permanency goal for the child in a timely manner and whether the most current permanency goal was appropriate. The results of this assessment are shown in the following table:

Item 7	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	8	9	15	32	78
Area Needing Improvement	2	1	6	9	22
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	10	10	21	41	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	0	0	0	0	

Performance on this item varied across sites. The item was rated as a Strength in 90 percent of Marion County cases, 80 percent of Deschutes County cases, and 71 percent of Multnomah County cases.

- Oregon did not meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. Performance on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:
- 25.8 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 (e.g., adoption, reunification with parents or other relatives, or guardianship) by the end of the target period. This percentage is about equal to the national median of 25.0 percent.
 - 98.4 percent of the children exiting foster care in 2005 who were legally free for adoption at the time of exit were discharged to a permanent home. This percentage exceeds the 75th percentile for this measure of 98.0 percent.
 - 62.7 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 exceeds the national median of 47.8 percent. For this measure, lower scores indicate more positive performance.

These data suggest that Oregon's particular strength with regard to this data composite pertains to the percentage of children who are legally free for adoption at the time of exit from foster care who are discharged to a permanent home. The data also suggest that a particular area needing improvement pertains to the percentage of children who were in foster care for 3 years or longer at the time of their emancipation from foster care or on their 18th birthday, if they remained in foster care past the age of majority.

- Item 7 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. The case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:
- The child's current permanency goal was not appropriate given the case situation and the needs of the child (two cases).
 - The child's permanency goal was not established in a timely manner (two cases).
 - Not all options were thoroughly considered before establishing a permanency goal of OPPLA (six cases). (In one case the foster mother wanted to adopt the child and the child wanted to be adopted by the foster mother, but the agency maintained a goal of OPPLA.)

- A child was assigned a goal of OPPLA at age 9 because the grandmother determined that adoption would result in a financial hardship for her, although she was committed to raising the target child and her siblings. No efforts were made to help the grandmother identify alternative financial resources if she adopted the children.

Case review findings pertaining to case goals were as follows:

- Eight children had a goal of adoption only.
- Eleven children had a goal of reunification with parents or other relatives.
- Thirteen children had a goal of OPPLA only (i.e., OPPLA is a living arrangement other than adoption, reunification, living with other relatives, or guardianship that involves the child remaining in State custody until reaching the age of majority).
- One child had concurrent goals of guardianship and OPPLA.
- One child had concurrent goals of OPPLA and reunification with parents or other relatives.
- Six children had concurrent goals of adoption and reunification.
- One child had a goal of guardianship.

Case review findings pertaining to TPR were as follows:

- At the time of the Onsite Review, 25 (61 percent) of the 41 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.
- TPR had been filed in a timely manner in 8 (32 percent) of the 25 cases.
- A compelling reason for not filing for TPR was noted in only 11 (65 percent) of the 17 cases in which TPR had not been filed, despite the 15-month criterion being met. In 6 (35 percent) of the 17 cases, no compelling reason was in the case file.

Rating Determination

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 78 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the State's 2001 CFSR. A key concern identified pertained to establishing a goal of OPPLA without full consideration of other permanency options. This included exploring with caretakers other financial assistance sources if they adopted the children in their care and exploring with children their reasons for saying that they do not want to be adopted.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders who commented on this item during the Onsite Review expressed a range of perspectives with regard to the agency's effectiveness in establishing timely permanency goals for children. Although a few stakeholders indicated that appropriate goals are established in a timely manner, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that the agency is not effective in establishing goals in a timely manner. A few stakeholders suggested that the scarcity of services often results in delays in goal changes because the parents are on a waiting list for the services.

Stakeholders also expressed different opinions regarding the use of concurrent planning. While some stakeholders expressed the opinion that concurrent planning is being done in the agency and that plans are worked simultaneously, other stakeholders suggested that concurrent goals are being established but that caseworkers are not working on them at the same time. These stakeholders suggested that efforts are made toward the goal of adoption only when reunification is completely ruled out.

Most stakeholders agreed that the goal of OPPLA is used too frequently and sometimes is a default goal if the agency has no plan for the child. This was noted to be a particular concern in Multnomah County. Agency stakeholders reported that to address this concern, a policy was established last year that the agency must continue to search for a permanent home for a child even if the child's goal is OPPLA.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State's CFSR case reviews on this item that were conducted between the years 2003 and 2006 resulted in an average Strength rating of 87 percent. In the two quarterly statewide reviews in 2006 and 2007, this item was rated as a Strength in 80.6 percent and 82.1 percent of cases, respectively. A review of 12 cases that failed to achieve adequate permanency goals for the child revealed the following two types of concerns:

- Staff members failed to document the permanency plan. Either the permanency plan that was entered in the case file was different than the plan that was being implemented, or there was insufficient documentation about the plan in the electronic or hard case file.
- The movement toward permanency did not occur within Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeframes for reasons such as caseworker turnover or the appearance of a previously absent parent late in the case.

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

_____ Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 8 was applicable for 20 (49 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the permanency goals of reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment are shown in the following table:

Item 8	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	3	5	9	17	85
Area Needing Improvement	1	1	1	3	15
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	6	10	20	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	4	11	21	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	21	41	

Oregon did not meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification. Performance in FY 2005 on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:

- 76.1 percent of the reunifications occurred in less than 12 months of the child's entry into foster care, which exceeds the national 75th percentile of 75.2 percent.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children discharged to reunification was 6.3 months, which is about equal to the national median of 6.5 months but greater than the 25th percentile of 5.4 months. For this measure, a lower number of months represents a higher level of performance.
- 40.6 percent of children who entered foster care in the last 6 months before the 12-month target period were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months of entry into foster care. This percentage exceeds the national median of 39.4 percent but is less than the national 75th percentile of 48.4 percent.

These data suggest that Oregon's strongest performance occurred in the area of achieving reunifications in less than 12 months for children exiting foster care. However, when reunifications within 12 months were examined based on an entry cohort longitudinal analysis, Oregon's performance was higher than the national median but less than the 75th percentile. Performance on the fourth measure included in this composite pertains to foster care reentry and is provided in the discussion of item 5. As noted under that item, the statewide data indicate that the rate of foster care reentry is only at the level of the national median.

Item 8 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency was making concerted efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in two cases when reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to achieve the goal in a timely manner. In one additional case, a rating of Area Needing Improvement was assigned when reviewers determined that although the reunification occurred in less than 12 months, reviewers felt that the reunification was not appropriate and that safety concerns remained with the family. In all three cases, reviewers determined that inadequate services had been provided to parents to ensure a safe reunification.

Rating Determination

Item 8 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 85 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 or higher required for a rating of Strength. In the State's 2001 CFSR, there was no comparable item. In the reviews conducted in 2001, item 8 pertained to independent living services. The change for item 8 from an assessment of independent living services to an assessment of timeliness of achieving goals of reunification, guardianship, and permanent placement of relatives was not made until Federal FY 2002.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Stakeholders who commented on the area of reunification during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that a key barrier to achieving reunifications in a timely manner is the lack of services for parents and the scarcity of key services such as substance abuse treatment. It was noted that to get into drug treatment centers, parents often have to call every day to see if there is an opening. Stakeholders noted that when children are removed from the home, parents lose their access to the resources to pay for services. A few stakeholders indicated that there is a successful mentor program to support parents who are trying to access services, but they also indicated that this program is still quite small.

Stakeholders reported that a recent policy change in the State has shifted the criteria for reunification from parental compliance with case plan specifications to establishing that a change in parental behaviors has occurred. They expressed the opinion that, although this change may prevent reentries into foster care, it also may lengthen the time to reunification.

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, the State's CFSR reviews have shown consistent and steady improvement on this item. The statewide CFSR reviews conducted between 2003 and 2006 resulted in an average rating of 76 percent. In addition, in two quarterly statewide reviews conducted in 2006 and 2007, the item was rated as a Strength in 90.0 percent and 94.7 percent respectively. The Statewide Assessment reports that "due to the large disparity between results from the branch reviews in 2003 to 2006 and the two statewide reviews in 2006 and 2007, and the sample size not being statistically representative, we do not feel we can put significant weight on the improved scores at this time."

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, Oregon has continued the title IV-E Waiver Subsidized Guardianship Program, which has been of great assistance to children and families. Between 2000 and 2006, the number of children who exited to guardianship increased from 181 children to 259 children, a 43.1 percent increase. In Federal FY 2006, 4.6 percent of all children who exited foster care exited to guardianship. The Statewide Assessment reports that "the Subsidized Guardianship program serves a critical need for many families and assists children in finding permanency."

Item 9: Adoption

Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 9 was applicable for 14 (34 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. The results are shown in the following table:

Item 9	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	2	1	2	5	36
Area Needing Improvement	3	1	5	9	64
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	2	7	14	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	5	8	14	27	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	21	41	

Oregon did not meet the national standard for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions. Performance in FY 2005 on the individual measures included in this composite was as follows:

- 18.0 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 less than the national median of 26.8 percent.
- The median length of stay in foster care for children adopted was 33.3 months. This length of stay is slightly higher than the national median of 32.4 months. For this measure, a lower number of months reflects a higher level of performance.
- 21.9 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period were discharged to a final adoption by the last day of the target period. This percentage exceeds the national median of 20.2 percent but is less than the 75th percentile for this measure of 22.7 percent.
- 11.9 percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer on the first day of the CFSR 12-month target period became legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for both mother and father) within 6 months. This percentage exceeds the national 75th percentile for this measure of 10.9 percent.
- 48.3 percent of children who were legally free for adoption were adopted within 12 months of becoming legally free. This percentage exceeds the national median of 45.8 percent but is less than the 75th percentile for this measure of 53.7 percent.

These data suggest that achieving adoptions in a timely manner is a challenge for Oregon. Although the State exceeds the 75th percentile for the percent of children in foster care for 17 months or longer who become legally free for adoption, it did not achieve the 75th percentile for any of the other measures and performed below the median on two measures.

Item 9 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the State had made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in nine cases due to the following concerns:

- There was a lack of concerted efforts to achieve adoption in a timely manner with no clear explanation for the lack of effort (three cases).

- There were extensive paperwork delays (one case).
- There were placement stability issues with disruptions in adoptive placements because adoptive parents could not meet the child's needs in four cases. In three cases, the adoption had not yet been finalized even though the children had been in foster care for at least 45 months. In the fourth case, the adoption was finalized after the child had been in foster care for 31 months. In all four cases, disruptions in adoptive placements contributed to the delays.
- There was a lack of diligent effort to find an adoptive home for the child in a timely manner (one case).

Additional case review findings relevant to this item were as follows:

- Of the 14 cases with a case goal of adoption, the adoption had been finalized in 4 cases, and in 2 of those cases, the adoption had been finalized within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care. In the two other cases, the adoption was finalized in 28 months in one case and in 31 months in the other case. For both of these cases, reviewers determined that concerted efforts had not been made to achieve the adoption in a timely manner.
- Of the remaining 10 cases with a goal of adoption, only two children were placed in a pre-adoptive home at the time of the onsite CFSR.

Rating Determination

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Case reviewers determined that in 36 percent of the cases, the agency had made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner. This percentage is less than the 90 percent or higher required for a rating of Strength. This item also was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in the State's 2001 CFSR.

Stakeholder Interview Information

Most stakeholders interviewed during the onsite CFSR expressed concerns with regard to achieving adoptions in a timely manner. The following barriers to timely adoptions were noted by several stakeholders:

- A lack of a sufficient number of State attorneys to provide CAF with the support necessary to prepare a case for TPR
- Extensive delays in the paperwork process in the central office, which cause delays in finalizing the adoptions
- Delays due to appeals to the TPR decision
- Delays due to prospective adoptive family appeals of the Adoption Committee decisions

Statewide Assessment Information

According to the Statewide Assessment, since Oregon's 2001 CFSR, Oregon has implemented the following strategies to improve performance in the area of timely adoptions:

- Made the adoption process more transparent
- Launched a concurrent planning workgroup
- Developed internal case-tracking tools to help provide managers with performance reports (ORBIT) at both the State and local levels

- Shortened placement supervision from 1 year to 6 months before adoption finalization
- Streamlined the process for foster parents to become adoptive parents with the development of the progressive home study, the 90-day completion date of the home study, and the quick processing of basic rate adoption assistance requests
- Streamlined the process to free children for adoption

The Statewide Assessment reports that since the 2001 CFSR, the State has shown steady and sustained improvement in its performance on timeliness of adoptions. However, the Statewide Assessment also reports that there is need for improvement in this area. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, one concern is the delay resulting from appeals to the TPR by biological parents. Adoptions can sometimes be delayed a year due to TPR appeals. The Statewide Assessment notes that DHS, in collaboration with the Department of Justice (DOJ), is piloting a project that offers a mediation process in TPR appellate cases. There are no findings to date because the project did not begin until October 2006.

Another concern reported in the Statewide Assessment pertains to the adoptive family selection process. Oregon currently uses a committee process to select the most appropriate family to adopt a child based on the needs of the child. Over the last year, this process has been challenged by various community stakeholders. It is criticized as being a closed process. In several instances, the adoptions have been delayed while committee placement decisions have been questioned and reviewed. To address this issue, Oregon has recently received technical support and assistance from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Adoption.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

____ Strength Area Needing Improvement

Case Review Findings

Item 10 was applicable for 15 (36 percent) of the 41 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to OPPLA. The results are presented in the following table:

Item 10	Deschutes	Marion	Multnomah	Total Number	Percent
Strength	4	1	4	9	60
Area Needing Improvement	0	3	3	6	40
Total Applicable Foster Care Cases	4	4	7	15	
Not Applicable Foster Care Cases	6	6	14	26	
Total Foster Care Cases	10	10	21	41	

