



## **Quality Service Review** **Calhoun County**

Review Conducted  
November 2018

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## Introduction

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Division of Continuous Quality Improvement (DCQI) conducted a Quality Service Review (QSR) to provide a comprehensive view of case practice in Calhoun County on November 26-29, 2018.

The QSR is a real-time assessment of how children and their families are benefiting from services, identifying practice strengths, and opportunities where coordination and collaboration can be improved. The QSR examines the county’s progress implementing the MiTEAM case practice model, which focuses on seven competencies: Engagement, Assessment, Teaming, Case Planning, Placement Planning, Case Plan Implementation, and Mentoring using two sets of indicators, “Child and Family Status Indicators” and “Case Practice Performance Indicators.” Child and family status are based on a review of the focus child and the parent(s) or caregiver(s) for the most recent 30-day period, unless stated otherwise in the indicator. Practice performance is based on a review of the most recent 90-day period for cases that have been open and active for at least the past 90 days.

The QSR includes in-depth interviews with case participants, stakeholder interviews, focus groups and surveys. While the QSR process allows an opportunity for participants to share their perceptions in individual and focus group interviews, the validity of the statements made are not verified by the reviewer or facilitators. Child welfare communities may use the information gleaned from the focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and the case reviews collectively, to inform improvement efforts. Following the QSR, a Practice Improvement Plan (PIP) is developed by the county director to address identified areas needing improvement.

The QSR uses a six-point rating scale to determine whether an indicator is acceptable. Any indicator scoring at a four or higher is viewed as acceptable. Indicators that are scored as a three or lower are considered unacceptable. All indicators with an overall baseline score of 75 percent or above are identified as a strength and an area to maintain. Any indicator scoring at 74 percent or lower would be included and addressed as an opportunity for improvement.

The rating scale is also broken into three categories: maintain (5-6), refine (3-4) and improve (1-2). The ranges are as follows:

UNACCEPTABLE			ACCEPTABLE		
<b>1 – Adverse Status/ Performance:</b>	<b>2 – Poor Status/ Performance:</b>	<b>3 – Marginally Inadequate Status / Performance:</b>	<b>4 – Fair Status/ Performance:</b>	<b>5 – Good Ongoing Status/ Performance:</b>	<b>6 – Optimal &amp; Enduring Status / Performance:</b>
Status/practice may be absent or substantially inadequate. Performance	Status/practice is fragmented, unreliable, lacking necessary	Status/practice may be insufficient, inconsistent, or not well matched	Status/practice is minimally or temporarily adequate to meet short-	At this level, the status/practice is functioning reliably and appropriately	At this level, there is exceptional, steady, and

may be missing or not done. Strategies may be inadvisable and in need of immediate action to address the situation.	intensity, or validity. Performance warrants prompt attention and improvement.	to need. Performance may be falling below the acceptable range and there is a need for adjustment at the present time.	term needs or objectives. There is a reasonable prospect of achieving the desired outcomes if this performance level continues or improves.	under changing conditions and over time. Performance has continued to be generally effective and dependable with signs of stability being apparent.	effective status/practice in the function area. Performance has shown an enduring pattern of stability.
<b>IMPROVEMENT</b>		<b>REFINEMENT</b>		<b>MAINTENANCE</b>	

Michigan has developed a four-prong approach to illustrate the connection between the implementation of the MiTEAM case practice model to good outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being for children and families. The four prongs include the use of the evaluation tool MiFidelity, results from a Quality Service Review, measurement of Key Performance Indicators and the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) Outcomes.

The QSR findings in concert with these metrics support local offices and the state to understand the strengths and opportunities within a child welfare community.

When child welfare members implement the key behaviors or activities of the practice model and track key performance indicators on a regular basis, the direct outcomes experienced by children and families as measured by the federal CFSR in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being can be achieved.

Calhoun County is comprised of several small rural communities surrounding one larger metropolitan area. Battle Creek is the largest metropolitan city within the county and is the home of the Kellogg Company Corporate Headquarters since the early 1900's. Calhoun County is part of Business Service Center (BSC) 3 and is located in the south west region of the lower peninsula. In November, at the time of the review, Calhoun County was providing care for 338 children in the foster care system. This accounted for less than one percent (0.02 percent) of the total number of children in Michigan's foster care population.<sup>1</sup> Children under the age of nine represented 63.3 percent of the foster care population and 71.6 percent of children were temporary court wards.<sup>1</sup>

Calhoun County has experienced staffing instability, but do have some staff members who have longevity. The long-term staff are a strength and were described as dedicated, professionally experienced and vested with the children and families they serve. Some challenges were identified within the relationships between child welfare staff, the prosecutor and court personnel. Some of those challenges include delayed and/or pending court proceedings or

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<sup>1</sup> Data provided in the Monthly Fact Sheet November 2018 produced by the Data Management Unit within the Division of Continuous Quality Improvement.

denial of recommendations presented to the court which were identified as possible reasons that foster care cases remain open. In the cases reviewed, 50 percent of the children remained in care for 10 months or longer.

In response to the known challenges, Calhoun County MDHHS has implemented innovative responses to address staffing barriers. Leadership members have partnered with staff from all programs to develop two committees which focus on retention of foster care staff and on providing support to staff when there is a case involving removal of children from a parental home. These committees include staff of all levels and meet on a regular basis. MDHHS staff have also volunteered to assist with other program duties. For example, CPS staff have developed a program called “adopt a foster care worker” to aid with the high volume of caseloads within the foster care units.

## Summary of Findings

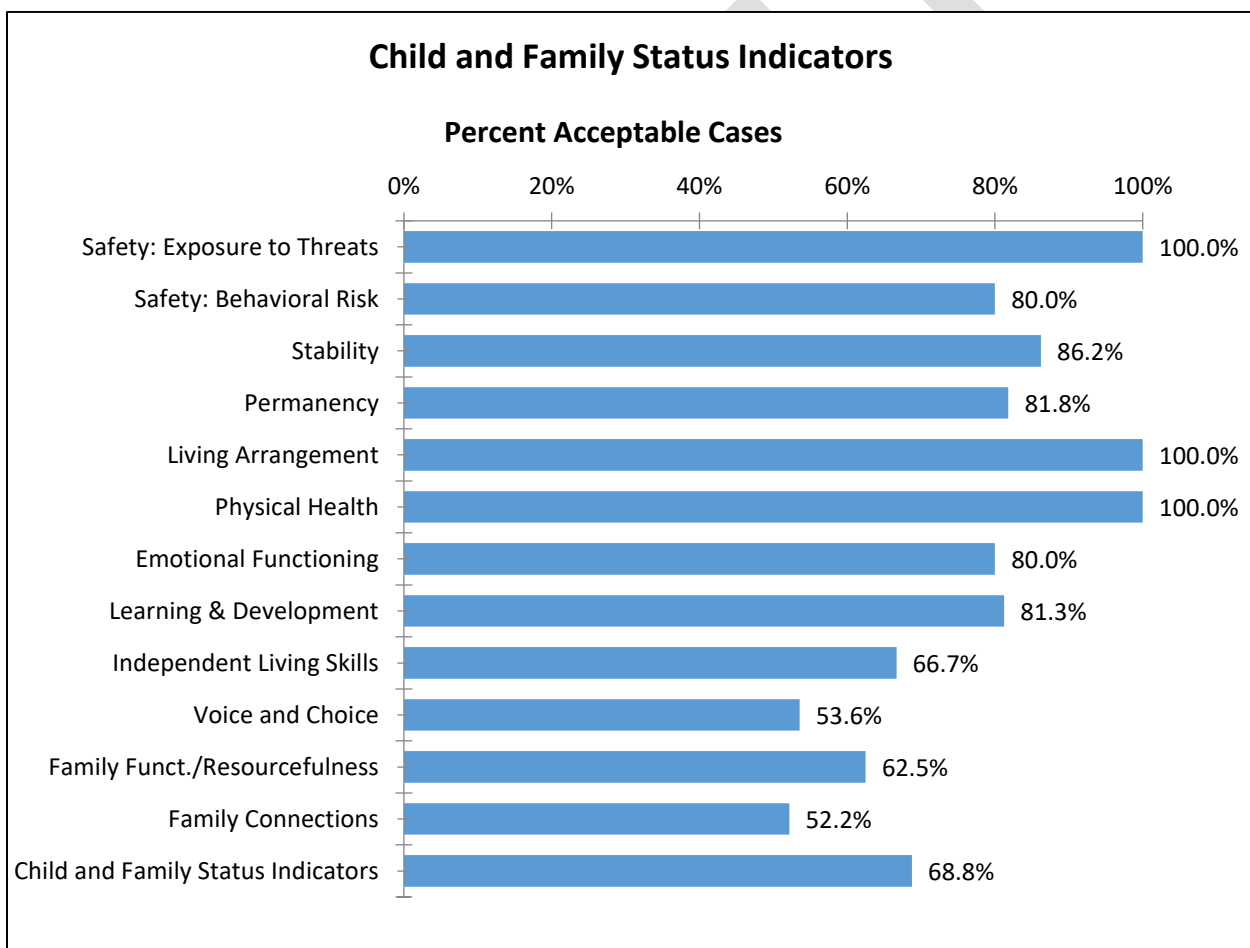
Sixteen cases were randomly selected from a sample that was stratified based on children’s age, placement type and case status representative of the county’s current child welfare population. Twelve foster care cases and four child protective services on-going cases were reviewed as reflected in the chart below. Additionally, there were 101 interviews conducted with case participants.

Age of Children	# Cases
0 to 4 years old	2
5 to 9 years old	9
10 to 13 years old	2
14 to 17 years old	2
18 to 21 years old	1
TOTAL	16
Time in Care	# Cases
4 to 6 months	5
7 to 9 months	2
10 to 12 months	3
13 to 18 months	3
19 to 36 months	1
37 + months	2
TOTAL	16
Type of Placement	# Cases
Parental Home	5
Unlicensed Relative	3
Licensed Relative	1
Unrelated Licensed Foster Home	4
Pre-Adoptive	1
Residential	1

Fictive Kin	0
Independent Living	1
TOTAL	16

## Child and Family Status Indicators

Child and Family Status Indicators provide a picture of where the child and the family are functioning at the time of the review. The length of time a case is open can impact a rating and should be considered when reviewing the overall score. Child and Family Status Indicators concentrate on the outcomes of safety, well-Being and permanency. The following table scores reflects those scores that fell in the acceptable (4-6) range.



In Calhoun County, children appear safe in their current placements. No safety risks were identified during the interview process. Some children in the sample presented with behavioral challenges that put them at risk of harm to themselves or others; resulting in a lower score in the Safety: Behavioral Risk indicator. Currently, those children's behavioral and emotional needs are being addressed; however, their behaviors still put them at risk. Team members are aware of these risks and alternative placements are being sought for those children needing

additional support or services. Children in Calhoun County are placed in appropriate living arrangements with caregivers who can meet the children's needs and provide a supportive environment. Children are receiving appropriate medical and dental services and all focus children were reported as having their health needs assessed.

Families continue to work towards developing strong support systems and to gain knowledge to become resourceful without the agency's support. Resource development and demonstration that parents benefited from services continue to be evolving as seen in 50 percent of the cases remaining open over 10 months which is reflected in the overall score for Family Functioning and Resourcefulness at 62.5 percent.

Instability of the workforce causes delays in case planning and interventions for children and families. For example, a staff member joining the case may not know what previous referrals have been made or need to be made leading to delays in service delivery. The delays in service delivery may result in cases remaining open longer and impacting permanency outcomes from being achieved. In addition, staff turnover negatively impacts the case planning process as new staff members must be brought up to speed on case history, may not have sufficient information to provide the court a comprehensive report on progress made in the treatment plan which results in case extension and prolonged court oversight. In addition, parents reported not feeling as if they had a voice when it came to case planning. Parents reported that they were provided a plan and had no option but to follow what the team and court developed. Overall, parents were happy with the services they were provided and felt in most cases they benefited from the services.

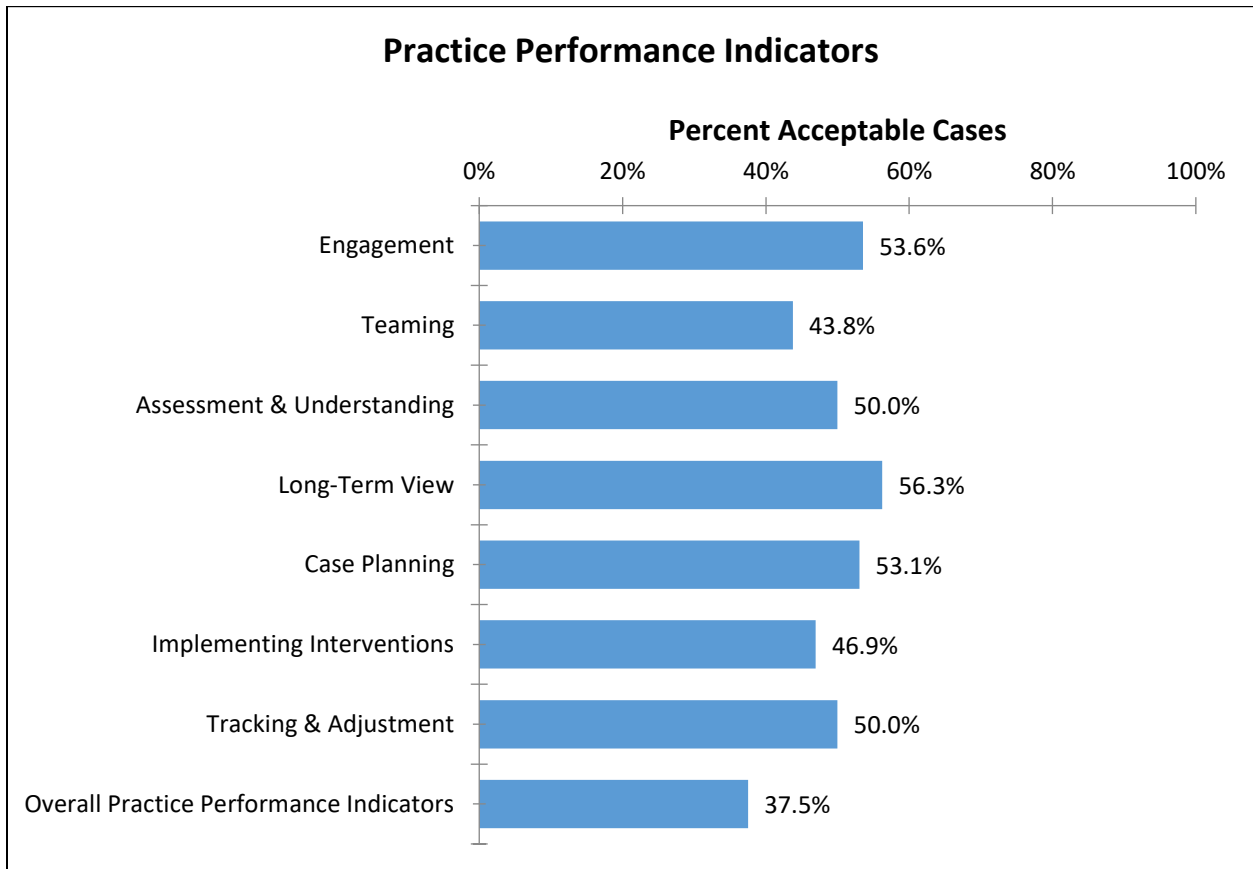
Teaming has been identified as an area for improvement. One area that consistently was articulated during interviews was the need for inclusion of both informal and formal supports as part of the team to better assist the family in developing the skills needed to maintain self-efficiency. When families have the benefit of both formal and information supports, the family is better positioned to address issues that do not require formal interventions, ultimately leading to stronger outcomes for children and families and less recidivism.

Both Permanency and Stability scored in the acceptable range. An acceptable Stability rating is a strength for Calhoun County, children experience the least amount of disruptions while in an out of home placement. Permanency was observed to be strength; Calhoun County is reunifying families and finalizing adoptions.

## **Practice Performance Indicators**

Practice Performance Indicators are a set of activities that correlate with the seven MiTEAM competencies and are the primary tool used to measure how well the child welfare community is implementing the case practice model. The practice indicators are assessed based on (1) whether the strategies and supports are being provided in an adequate manner; (2) whether the strategies and supports are working or not based on the progress being made; and (3)

whether the outcome has been met. The practice performance indicator table reflects only scores that fell in the acceptable (4-6) range.



In Calhoun County, engagement is inconsistently occurring. Those interviewed shared that staff are engaging during the initial opening of the case, but due to staff turnover engagement decreases overtime. Engagement takes time to build a trusting relationship between workers and families. When staff turnover is prevalent, families are forced to re-engage with a new worker and share difficult and personal information with someone they consider a stranger.

Family team meetings are being held but attendees are limited and do not include all the relevant formal or informal supports. Meetings are often limited to the parent and the worker. Service providers and court personnel are not invited to the family team meetings as they are not scheduled in advance to allow invitees opportunities to make arrangements to attend. The communication between team members was observed to be limited and often did not include all team members. Due to the limited participation of team members, not all team members are provided with up to date information and are unclear of the steps needed to achieve permanency resulting in an unclear Long-Term View for children and families. The teaming process can provide continuity for families and children when the team includes informal and formal supports and all members have a clear understanding of what they are responsible to contribute and what is to happen when there is a shift to the plan.



Permanency scored in the acceptable range; however, Long-Term View was assessed as an area needing improvement. It appears that cases move swiftly to achieve reunification or case closure, but in the process of assessing, planning and providing services, only the immediate factors are considered with little or no consideration for the Long-Term View. This results in families coming back under the supervision of MDHHS. In 14 out of the 16 cases reviewed, families had either a prior foster care case or prior CPS ongoing case within the last three years. Some families had multiple cases within that time frame. During the planning process, case plans should include informal and formal supports that will remain after case closure. This would provide the family with the necessary resources to assist after case closure reducing the likelihood of the families returning into the care of the child welfare system.

For Calhoun County, there was significant strength in all practice scores with mothers, except in the area of Engagement. It does appear that team members do make efforts to contact fathers in the beginning of cases but are unsuccessful in including them into the assessment and planning process. The exclusion of fathers in the assessment and case planning process resulted in a decrease in practice scores. The fathers scored lower than mothers in most Practice Performance Indicators, as demonstrated in the comparison table below:

Practice Performance Indicators	Father	Mother
Engagement	66.7%	44.4%
Assessment and Understanding	20.0%	54.5%
Case Planning	20.0%	45.5%
Implementing Interventions	10.0%	54.5%

*\*Percentages represents the number of cases that scored within the acceptable range (4-6)*

## Summary from Focus Groups and Stakeholder Interviews

Four individual stakeholder interviews and nine focus groups were conducted with a total of 46 participants. Specific findings from the focus groups are outlined in Appendix A.

### Strengths:

- Positive work environment for staff and supervisors. Workers feel supported within units and across programs. Teamwork was identified as a strength.
- A strong and supportive collaboration between MDHHS, private agencies and service providers was identified.
- Supervisors were described as experienced and knowledgeable.
- Staff are invested in the in children and families they serve.

### Opportunities for Improvement:

- Staff turnover has led to higher caseloads for staff and present challenges to meet all job expectations.
- Improved training for new workers is needed. A lack of knowledge on how to navigate MiSACWIS and how to meet the standards of promptness was identified as a stressor for new staff.
- Service gaps were noted with transportation, access to mental health services, domestic violence services for batterers, and substance abuse services (inpatient/outpatient).
- A challenging relationship was described with court personnel and the prosecutor.

### **Ongoing Monitoring Systems**

The QSR is one-step in measuring and monitoring the ongoing progress within the child welfare system statewide. Although the QSR uses a unique and qualitative approach, other monitoring systems examine the compliance of statewide standards.

The Fidelity Tool is used to ensure that the main competencies of the case practice model: teaming, engagement, assessment and mentoring, are being implementing and used effectively by field staff.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are identified areas of compliance used to benchmark progress within the child welfare system statewide. All these areas of measurement are used to lead to the desired outcomes as measured in the CFSR.

The CFSR assesses the outcomes of services provided to children and families. The CFSR examines systemic factors that affect the ability of the state to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. The CFSR includes a review of the Michigan AFCARS and NCANDS data, statewide self-assessment, case reviews conducted by federal and state reviewers and interviews with key stakeholders.

The CFSR assesses the following areas to promote child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes:

- Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
- Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

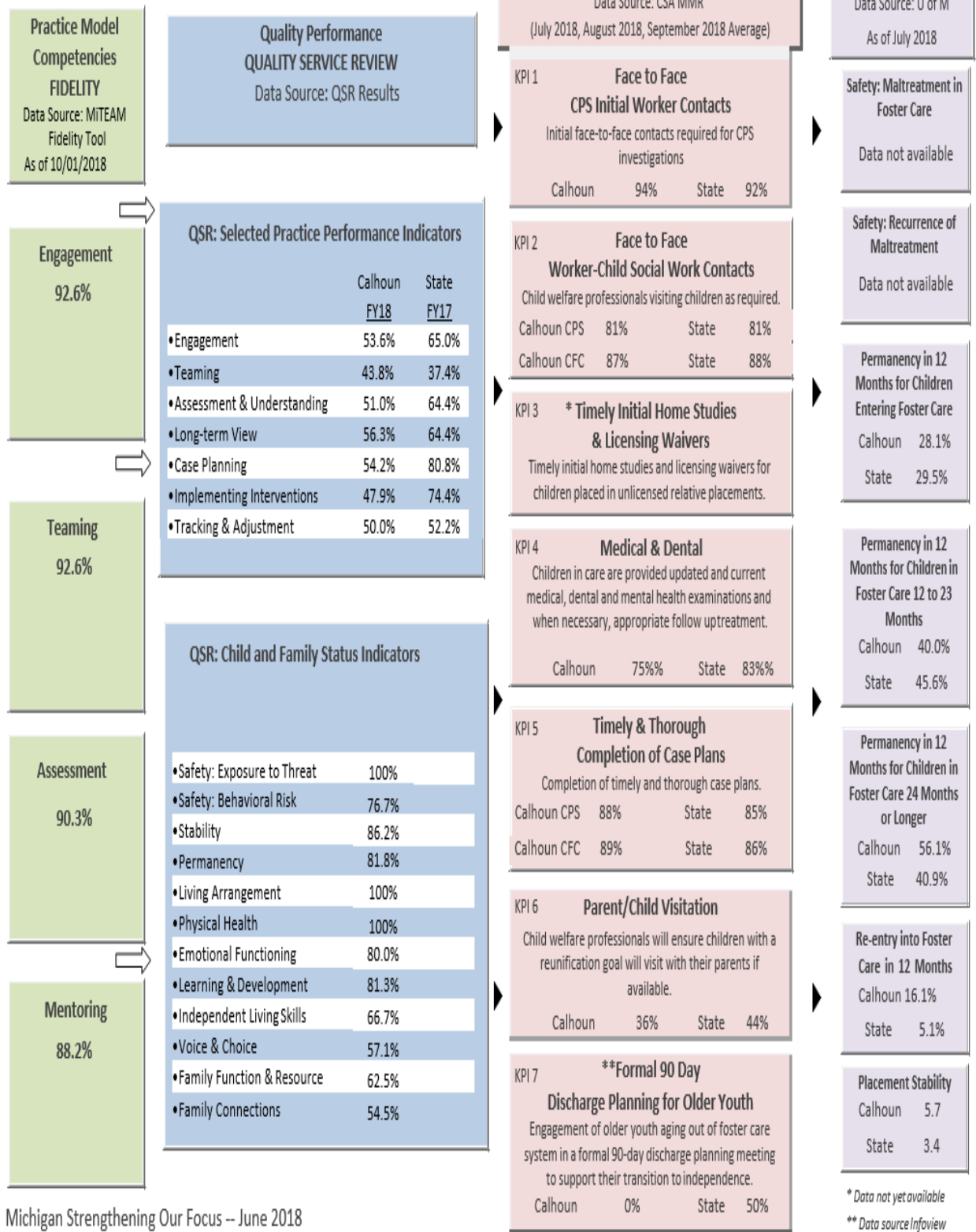
- Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

The CFSR focuses on the entire statewide welfare system and examines the effectiveness using the following seven systemic factors:

- Statewide information system
- Case review system
- Quality assurance system
- Staff and provider training
- Service array and resource development
- Agency responsiveness to the community
- Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention

The University of Michigan with the collaboration of the MDHHS has developed a monitoring tool. The CFSR Observed Performance dashboard is a useful resource in monitoring county and BSC performance. The dashboard allows users to monitor Michigan's performance on CFSR measures by county and BSC, on a monthly basis. The dashboard can be found at <http://ssw-datalab.org/project/cfsr-in-michigan/>.

# Measuring and Monitoring Progress - Calhoun



Michigan Strengthening Our Focus -- June 2018

## Next Steps

The Calhoun County child welfare director, in partnership with the child welfare community will utilize the results of the QSR focus groups and practice performance measurements to develop a Practice Improvement Plan (PIP) to address identified areas needing improvement. The BSC director will provide oversight to the county director on the development of the plan, its implementation and tracking of progress. A copy of the final approved plan will be provided to the director of the Division of Continuous Quality Improvement, as well as the executive director of the Children Services Agency.

It is recommended that Calhoun County use their Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) team to explore ways to address staff retention and staff training. Calhoun County has demonstrated an ability to address identified barriers with innovative approaches. Some other areas of focus for the Calhoun County CQI team may be:

- Ongoing training and implementation of the case practice model. With the high volume of staff turnover, an ongoing schedule or plan to review in the learning management system MiTEAM Practice Modules would be beneficial to ensure that all staff understand and implement the case practice model as designed. This would allow staff to discuss practice challenges and engage in a solution focused discussion to identify possible steps toward resolution. All staff could benefit from a training aimed at coaching key caseworker activities outlined in Michigan's case practice model. Focus should be in the areas of engagement, case planning and service implementation. This may assist in closing the gap between the fidelity ratings, the ratings of the QSR and the achievement of outcomes measured through the CFSR.
- Specialized focus on the teaming process. Team members need to focus on the teaming process which includes improving communication and including informal and formal supports. Scheduled meetings should be convenient for case participants and empower parents to have a voice in their case plans. The team should be adjusted and plan for family needs beyond case closure.
- Active efforts to engage fathers in the case planning. Identify challenges and develop steps for team members to decrease these barriers.
- Community partners may benefit from exploration of how to bridge service gaps identified in the areas of substance abuse treatment and transportation for families.

## Appendix A Calhoun County Interviews and Focus Groups

### Calhoun County Interviews and Focus Groups

#### Individual Stakeholder Interviews

The QSR process allows an opportunity for participants to share their perceptions in individual interviews. It should be noted that the validity of the statements made during group sessions are not verified by the facilitators, but rather the information is intended to be an opportunity for further exploration by the county child welfare leadership. Stakeholder interviews were conducted with MDHHS Calhoun County director, program manager, Family Court judge and Chief referee and a foster parent. Their experience ranged from twelve years to 30+ years.

Strengths: Among all participants, a significant strength within the county was the dedicated and hardworking staff. Participants report that the department, stakeholders and community partners are open to teaming and collaboration. Paperwork is improving, staff are addressing logistical issues and communication is improving.

Another major strength reported was the inclusion of staff in addressing internal challenges. Staff are working together to help brainstorm how to address issues within the office that has been hindering their casework. Some committees now in place are “how to retain foster care staff” and “how to assist with removals.”

Staff volunteering to assist with other program duties was also identified as a strength. CPS staff have developed “adopt a foster care worker” because they saw the need to provide assistance with the high volume of caseloads within the foster care units. The MiTEAM CQI Analyst volunteered to assist with visitations. Staff among various programs recognized the urgency and volunteered to participate.

Opportunities for Improvement: All stakeholders interviewed agreed that staff retention is a significant area needing improvement. Although the department is making efforts to retain and increase the quantity and quality of staff, it remains a barrier, impacting the staff’s ability to complete timely casework, be prepared for court, etc. Participants believe that staff have one of the most challenging jobs, which contributes to the turnover.

Another opportunity reported by some stakeholders was staff preparedness and understanding of court processes. Due to many young and inexperienced staff, the court is now allowing new staff to observe court hearings before receiving cases. From the court’s perspective, workers do not articulate the work they are doing to support family’s achievement of permanence or the reasonable efforts that are being made to rectify the conditions that led to the court’s involvement. Also reported was the need for concurrent planning to promote timely

permanency. Lastly, preparing staff for court as attorneys defend their clients and new workers, as well as seasoned staff, may benefit from training to understand court procedures.

Recruiting additional foster homes was also identified as a need by some participants. Current foster homes have the capacity to take on more children. Children also have more acute needs, requiring special training for caregivers. The staff are using relatives as much as possible, but there is a need for more foster homes when relatives are not an option.

## **Focus Groups**

The QSR process allows an opportunity for participants to share their perceptions in focus group interviews. It should be noted that the validity of the statements made during group sessions are not verified by the group facilitators, but rather the information is intended to be an opportunity for further exploration by the county child welfare leadership. Focus groups were conducted with the following groups:

### **Foster Youth**

A total of five youth participated in this focus group. The youth who participated had a length of time in care is greater than six months.

Strengths: Youth reported having a good relationship with their assigned workers. Most youth stated that the educational planner was very helpful in getting paperwork completed.

All youth identified positive opportunities available in Calhoun County. Specifically, the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) which provides support, teaches living skills, provides college trips and pays for driver's education and other resources to help them with independence.

Many youth reported that although their siblings were not placed in the same placement as their siblings, they always knew where their siblings were placed and why they were not placed together. Most youth reported regular contact with their siblings.

Opportunities for Improvement: Some youth stated that clothing allotments were inadequate and need to be more frequent. Specifically, for older youth the allowance was not sufficient to cover costs of clothing or shoes during growth spurts or to purchase name brand items.

Most youth report their assigned Lawyer-Guardian Ad Litem (LGAL) did not visit frequently and youth were unable to develop a positive relationship with them. However, they did identify the LGAL was helpful in court proceedings. Due to the lack of consistency among LGAL work standards, variations among LGAL assignments led to varying opinions about LGAL's helpfulness. Many of the youth identified worker turnover as an opportunity to improve, as some youth identified having been assigned multiple workers during their time in care. Most

youth reported having to re-tell their stories to new staff due to the lack of knowledge by the incoming worker and that was disruptive to them.

### **MDHHS and Private Agency Foster Care Workers**

Five individuals participated in this focus group. Members who provided feedback had experience ranging from eight months to two and half years.

#### Strengths:

Foster care staff report having a strong team that is helpful and supportive to one another. CPS and adoption staff are teaming on parenting times, and foster care staff are getting help from the team when needed.

Purchase of service (POS) workers were also described as a strength among foster care workers. POS workers are knowledgeable of case information, as well as Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) and Determination of Care (DOC) program and policies; they also attend court hearings.

Another identified strength is the positive relationship between workers and supervisors. Foster care staff describe their supervisors as supportive. Formal case conferences are occurring monthly, supervisors are available daily for support, and workers feel they can go to their supervisor to vent, receive emotional support regarding a case, or check to make sure they are getting things right.

Opportunities for Improvement: Training was an area identified as an opportunity to improve unanimously among workers. Workers reported the initial training is too long and suggested more on the job training and MiSACWIS training. It was noted that workers believe better training may enhance the system and aide in worker retention.

Foster care staff reported high caseloads as a barrier to effective case management. Many workers reported feeling this as the root of the problem. They reported efforts being made with promises of more staff; however, no new staff have been hired at this time. Workers reported staff turnover as a possible contributing factor.

Another area for improvement identified by foster care staff was court support. It was noted that workers do not feel supported at court and feel they are not represented in hearings when prosecutors are not representing the department.

### **CPS (Investigative and Ongoing) Workers**

Seven CPS workers participated in this focus group. The group of participants had experience ranging from nine months to eighteen years. The group consisted of both CPS investigators and on-going workers.



Strengths: CPS workers support one another and use teamwork to get the job done. Specifically described was how workers with higher longevity are assisting newer staff as they learn to become more self-reliant.

The overall relationship with the prosecutors was described as a good one, with prosecutors attending all hearings except the preliminary hearing. Prosecutors were mentioned being supportive at hearings and workers appreciate this support.

The caseload ratio was identified as being manageable and within the expectations of the federal lawsuit. This gives most workers time to manage their cases and complete required paperwork.

Opportunities for Improvement: An area of improvement identified by most CPS participants was consistency among supervision. It was noted that supervision focus varies from quality of standard of promptness (SOP), having happy staff, child safety or to entering social work contacts into MiSACWIS timely.

Although the county has a wide variety of services, still an additional need and services often include a wait list. Additional service providers for psychological, Families First of Michigan (FFM) and Families Together/Building Solutions (FTBS) services were noted, as well as a drug testing site for clients. Services are also needed for domestic violence, neglect/poverty and substance abuse assessment and services for uninsured clients.

The need for representation at preliminary hearings and timely notice of court hearings were viewed as an opportunity for improvement by some CPS workers. It was noted that without representation, workers feel personally attacked while testifying in court, with more focus on them instead of the issues being presented. Workers also reported little advance notice of hearings, sometimes arriving the day after the hearing.

### **MDHHS and Private Agency Child Welfare Supervisors (Foster Care, Licensing, Adoption and CWFS)**

Five individuals participated in this focus group. The participants were identified as three foster care, one licensing/funding, and one program director/adoption supervisor. The experience of participants ranged from seven years to fifteen years.

Strengths: All supervisors reported teaming as a significant strength, with cohesiveness and consistency among one another. Their experience and having been on a team for a long time were noted. Participants shared that the culture in Calhoun demonstrates teamwork and allows private agencies to feel a part of the team.

Another strength identified was case transfers. Private agency staff report case transfers from Calhoun County as superior, and far better than others.

Supervisors also reported the program manager being a welcome change for the past eleven months. Supervisors described no consistent manager prior to the current program manager taking position.

Opportunities for Improvement: Supervisors identified more support for relative providers as an opportunity for improvement. It was noted that although recently mandated, payments are not yet being sent to relative providers for the child(ren) in their home. In addition, supervisors reported a lengthy 30-page subsidized daycare application and stringent rules and policies for being eligible for state assistance. Supervisors reported not all relative providers or workers being aware of available services such as clothing allowances and ineligible grantee monies, leading workers to spend extra time navigating this system, taking away from their other work duties.

The relationship with the court was viewed as an opportunity for improvement. It was noted that supervisors do not feel the court respects the department and find the court an adversarial environment. Many reported feeling targeted when the court frequently moves a case in the opposite direction from their recommendation.

Training was another area of opportunity reported by several supervisors. Given the comprehensive nature of the job, supervisors reported staff not fully prepared when coming to the counties. Supervisors reported finding little to no value in the Pre-Service Institute (PSI) training, and many have developed their own local office training to cover key aspects of the job, specifically MiSACWIS.

### **MDHHS CPS (Investigative and Ongoing) Supervisors**

Three individuals participated in this focus group. The experience within the participants ranged from one year to ten years.

Strengths: All supervisors identified teamwork across CPS staff as a strength. It was noted that even during a removal, staff will stop and help one another.

Supervisors report the culture of CPS being a positive one and that staff genuinely care about children's safety.

Another strength identified was the relationship between CPS and local law enforcement and Calhoun County Court. It was noted that although getting reports can be a challenge at times, overall the relationship is a good one.

Opportunities for Improvement: One of the biggest challenges reported by CPS supervisors was having enough time to complete all of the job requirements. It was noted that paperwork was taking away from child safety and assessment of family needs and many find MiSACWIS functionality challenging, with errors and corrections being quite time consuming.

Supervisors identified the relationship between CPS staff and foster parents as an area that could be improved. It was noted that a decline in the relationship began after licensing staff took over the responsibility of contacting caregivers for placement; CPS workers no longer make contacts for placement, resulting in less contact with foster parents.

Worker recruitment and training was identified as an area of improvement among all supervisors. CPS Supervisors suggested more flexibility with interview questions to ensure new workers understand the job expectations.

### **Licensing (MDHHS and Private Agency)**

Ten individuals participated in this focus group. The experience of the participants varied, comprising of both workers and supervisors, half representing MDHHS and the other representing private agencies.

Strengths: A strength reported by all participants was the positive relationship among MDHHS and private agency staff. Staff experience, having worked together for many years, and consistent collaborative efforts were noted between MDHHS and private agencies, leading staff to feel supported and part of the team.

Another strength identified was the relationship between licensing staff and foster parents. It was noted that foster parents are reaching out to licensing staff when needs arise, and licensing staff have become a support to the family's team.

Licensing staff reported the new contract for recruitment and retention of foster homes as a strength. It was noted that various ways are being used to recruit families, and that foster parents are assisting in those efforts, which has been helpful.

Opportunities for Improvement: Most licensing staff reported training as an area of improvement. It was noted that although staff found the licensing worker training beneficial, it was confusing to understand at times, with inconsistencies between the Division of Child Welfare Licensing (DCWL) expectations, the licensing process, and the application of MDHHS policies. Training suggestions included licensing rules, as well as how to use, navigate and document information in MiSACWIS.

The licensing requirement for relative providers was reported as an opportunity for improvement; providers are trying to accept placement of children but are being scrutinized to meet expectations that licensing workers believe are too strict, since many have no intentions of accepting additional children for placement.

Licensing staff report the need for more licensed foster homes, specifically for older children and children that may have special needs or behavioral challenges. MDHHS staff report a more

than a fifty percent drop in their licensed foster homes, as some foster parents are adopting their foster children, and some don't receive enough support.

### **Service Providers**

Seven individuals participated and offered feedback in this focus group. Combined, they have over 30 years experience in child welfare.

Strengths: The variety of services offered within the community was reported a strength within Calhoun County. Employment training, life enrichment classes, parenting classes, resiliency for life changes, monthly support groups, General Education Diploma (GED) completion, tutoring, Word and Excel training, janitorial/commercial training, education, work, housing and support classes are all among one service provider's trainings offered. Other services offered among the focus group participants include Families Together Building Solutions (FTBS) services, Family Reunification Program (FRP) services, in home services, and counseling services.

Service providers reported communication between themselves and MDHHS staff as a strength. MDHHS staff return service provider calls and emails timely and are receptive to service provider recommendations and advice.

Service providers reported significant strength in how most workers are in this business because they care. Service providers stated that workers focus on the entire family and not just the child, leading to better outcomes.

Opportunities for Improvement: The service providers reported service gaps presenting a barrier to families. Although Calhoun County has a wide variety of services, there are still service gaps related to transportation, prevention services, and subsidized daycare, as well as a wait list for Community Mental Health (CMH), subsidized housing, utility and rent assistance, and appliance and furniture vouchers. These wait lists are preventing families from accessing needed services.

Service providers expressed a desire to participate in family team meetings and court hearings more regularly. Service providers reported rarely being invited, and have witnessed parents being told what to do, without having a clear understanding of the process or why they were being asked to participate. Service providers would also like to receive a copy of the family team meeting report upon conclusion of the meetings.

Caseworkers becoming up to date on new or newly transferred cases was identified as an area for improvement. Service providers have learned that customers are being asked to repeat their history, life circumstances and individual needs, which is traumatic and retraumatizing to the clients.

### **Attorneys (LGAL and Parent Attorney)**

Three individuals participated in this focus group. All participants who provided feedback in this group were identified as attorneys in combined roles (both LGAL and parent attorneys) practicing in Calhoun County.

Strengths: The relationship between the attorneys and MDHHS staff was reported as a strength and said, “we are in this work together.” MDHHS staff and attorneys are invested in the community and share efforts to help families achieve permanency. The program manager is involved and responsive, and communication has improved. Prosecutors feel a part of the MDHHS team and the relationship is being built.

A strength identified was the attendance and involvement of purchase of service staff and foster parents/caregivers at court. Children are also attending, when age appropriate.

Trainings was an area of strength reported by attorneys. Attorneys are facilitating a training on preliminary hearings to increase worker confidence in court and plan to have a mock hearing to assist. Four other trainings have been offered to workers within the last two years for CPS, foster care and private agency staff.

Opportunities for Improvement: Attorney presence at family team meetings (FTM) was noted as an area for improvement. Attorneys report limited invitation and an inability to provide input when attending previously, with no give and take regarding the meeting topics. It was also noted that attorneys are not being paid to attend FTMs; however, the county is making efforts for this to begin January 1, 2019.

Another noted area for improvement shared by most of the attorneys present was staff preparation for court. Attorneys reported that preparation could be enhanced if workers were aware of services available to families, more clearly understood the role attorneys play within a hearing. Attorneys also plan to offer a training specific to preliminary hearings, given the lack of worker representation at these hearings.

Attorneys reported that services available to families could be improved. Attorneys stated that mental health and inpatient services were lacking or nonexistent. Domestic violence counseling for batterers is only available to clients who pay for their own services, and attorneys are very concerned that youth are not accessing needed services.

## Appendix B

### Child and Family Status Indicators

\* The following scores reflect only scores that fell in the acceptable (4-6) range.

Category	Item	Statewide 2017	Calhoun County
Safety: Exposure to Threats	a. Home	91.7%	100.0%
Safety: Exposure to Threats	b. School	87.5%	100.0%
Safety: Exposure to Threats	c. Other Settings	100.0%	100.0%
Safety: Behavioral Risk	a. Risk to Self	91.7%	86.7%
Safety: Behavioral Risk	b. Risk to Others	91.7%	73.3%
Stability	a. Home	83.3%	81.3%
Stability	b. School	100.0%	92.3%
Permanency	a. Placement Fit	91.7%	N/A
Permanency	b. Security & durability	83.3%	N/A
Permanency	c. Legal permanency	50.0%	N/A
Living Arrangement	Living Arrangement	100.0%	100.0%
Physical Health	a. Physical Status	100.0%	N/A
Physical Health	b. Receipt of Care	100.0%	N/A
Emotional Functioning	Emotional Functioning	90.0%	80.0%
Learning & Development	a. Early Learning / Development	83.3%	100.0%
Learning & Development	b. Academics	83.3%	78.6%
Learning & Development	c. Prep for Adulthood (14-17)	100.0%	N/A
Learning & Development	d. Trans to Adulthood (18+)	N/A	N/A
Independent Living Skills	Independent Living Skills	N/A	66.7%
Voice and Choice	a. Child/Youth	50.0%	40.0%
Voice and Choice	b. Mother	16.7%	33.3%
Voice and Choice	c. Father	75.0%	66.7%
Voice and Choice	d. Caregiver	66.7%	66.7%
Voice and choice	e. Other	N/A	100.0%
Family Functioning/Resourcefulness	a. Mother	14.3%	63.6%
Family Functioning/Resourcefulness	b. Father	44.4%	50.0%
Family Functioning/Resourcefulness	c. Other	N/A	100.0%
Caregiving	a. Family Setting	100.0%	N/A
Caregiving	b. Residential Care (Group Setting)	100.0%	N/A
Family Connections	a. Mother	50.0%	83.3%
Family Connections	b. Father	71.4%	14.3%
Family Connections	c. Siblings	50.0%	55.6%
Family Connections	d. Other	83.3%	100.0%

## Practice Performance Indicators

\* The following scores reflect only scores that fell in the acceptable (4-6) range.

Category	Item	Statewide 2017	Calhoun County
Cultural Identity and Need	Overall	91.7%	N/A
Engagement	a. Child/Youth	50.0%	40.0%
Engagement	b. Mother	33.3%	44.4%
Engagement	c. Father	75.0%	66.7%
Engagement	d. Caregiver	66.7%	66.7%
Engagement	e. Other	0.0%	50.0%
Teaming	a. Formation	41.7%	N/A
Teaming	b. Functioning	33.3%	N/A
Teaming	c. Coordination	16.7%	N/A
Teaming	Overall	3741.0%	43.8%
Assessment & Understanding	a. Child/Youth	83.3%	62.5%
Assessment & Understanding	b. Mother	33.3%	54.5%
Assessment & Understanding	c. Father	50.0%	20.0%
Assessment & Understanding	d. Caregiver	88.9%	66.7%
Assessment & Understanding	e. Other	66.7%	25.0%
Long-Term View	Long-Term View	58.3%	56.3%
Planning Interventions	a. Safety/Protection	91.7%	N/A
Planning Interventions	b. Permanency	58.3%	N/A
Planning Interventions	c. Well-Being	66.7%	N/A
Planning Interventions	d. Transition/Life Adjustment	0.0%	N/A
Case Planning	a. Child/Youth	N/A	75.0%
Case Planning	b. Mother	N/A	45.5%
Case Planning	c. Father	N/A	20.0%
Case Planning	d. Caregiver	N/A	66.7%
Case Planning	e. Other	N/A	33.3%
Implementing Interventions	Overall	66.7%	46.9%
Implementing Interventions	a. Child/Youth	N/A	62.5%
Implementing Interventions	b. Mother	N/A	54.5%
Implementing Interventions	c. Father	N/A	10.0%
Implementing Interventions	d. Caregiver	N/A	55.6%
Implementing Interventions	e. Other	N/A	33.3%
Tracking and Adjustment	Tracking and Adjustment	52.2%	50.0%