



## **Quality Service Review**

### **Oakland County**

Review Conducted  
September 2018

# Quality Service Review

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## Introduction

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Division of Continuous Quality Improvement (DCQI) conducted a second Quality Service Review (QSR) to provide a comprehensive view of case practice in Oakland County on September 24- 27, 2018. A previous QSR occurred in Oakland County on February 9-13, 2015.

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 is 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	Status/practice is fragmented, unreliable, lacking	Status/practice may be insufficient, inconsistent, or	Status/practice is minimally or temporarily adequate to	At this level, the status/practice is functioning reliably and	At this level, there is exceptional,

inadequate. Performance may be missing or not done. Strategies may be inadvisable and in need of immediate action to address the situation.	necessary intensity, or validity. Performance warrants prompt attention and improvement.	not well matched to need. Performance may be falling below the acceptable range and there is a need for adjustment at the present time.	meet short-term needs or objectives. There is a reasonable prospect of achieving the desired outcomes if this performance level continues or improves.	appropriately under changing conditions and over time. Performance has continued to be generally effective and dependable with signs of stability being apparent.	steady, and 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.

Oakland County is one of the largest and wealthiest metropolitan areas in the state of Michigan. Oakland County is part of Business Service Center (BSC) 5 and is in the southern region of the Lower Peninsula. In September, at the time of the review, Oakland County was providing care for 758 children in the foster care system. This accounted for approximately 5.5 percent of the total number of children in Michigan's foster care population.<sup>1</sup> Children under the age of nine represented 64.2 percent of the foster care population and 65.9 percent of children were temporary court wards.<sup>1</sup>

Oakland County has a wealth of available services to offer children and families. They have dedicated and experienced staff who work well with foster parents and the court system. There has been a marked improvement in the relationship between Oakland County MDHHS and the local family court. Although a strong relationship was identified with the court, challenges still exist in achieving permanency. Permanency scored at 69.2 percent. In the cases reviewed, 56.3 percent of the children remained in care for 13 months or more and out of

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

those cases, 25 percent of the children remained in care for over 19 months. The lack of achievement of permanency in a timely manner was due to criminal charges, pending court proceedings or denied court approval on recommendations presented by MDHHS. Although there appears to be an improved relationship between MDHHS and the family court, some barriers still exist from 2015 and remain in 2018 creating challenges for achieving permanency and developing a strong long-term view.

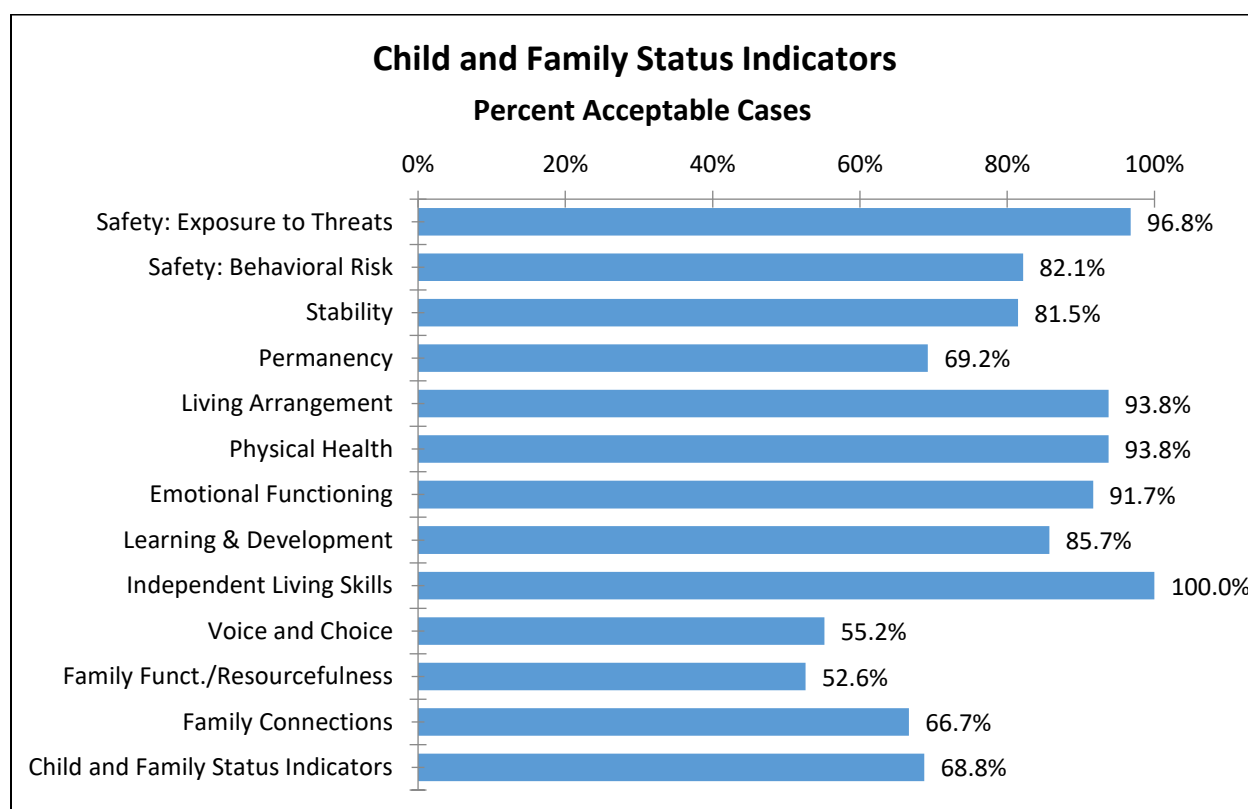
## Summary of Findings

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 110 interviews conducted with case participants.

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



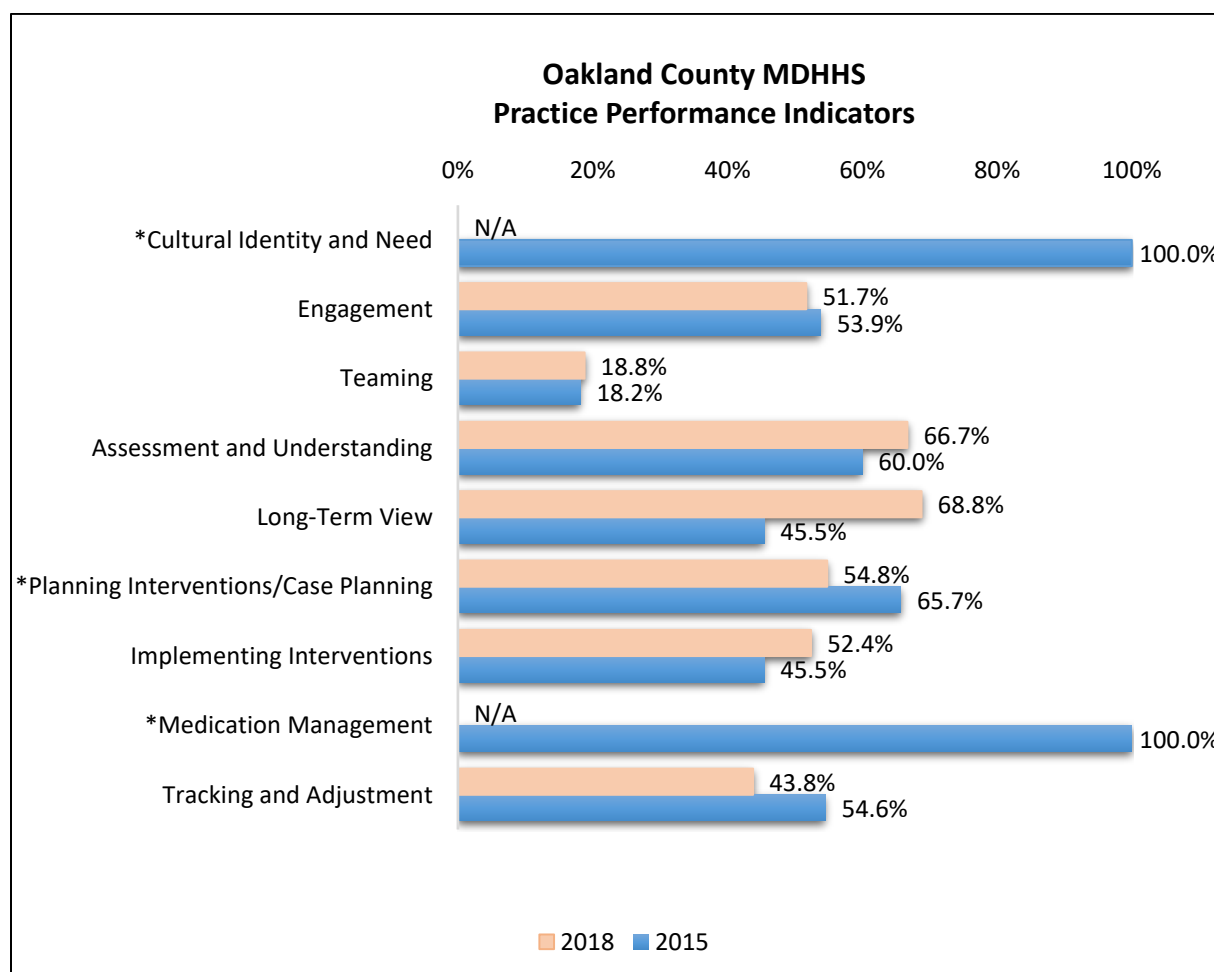
In Oakland County, children appear safe in their current placements. Some children in the sample presented with behavioral challenges that put them at risk of harm to self or others resulting in a lower score in the Safety: Behavioral Risk indicator. Those children are in appropriate placements and are receiving services to address their behavioral and emotional needs; however, their behaviors still provide a risk. Children in Oakland County are placed in appropriate school settings and are receiving all the necessary services to help them succeed. As a result, children's placements in their educational settings were stable due to strong service delivery and accurate educational assessments.

Proper assessment and consideration of case circumstances; such as relative placements, expected time frames for treatment, understanding of other pending court proceedings and knowledge of family challenges at the initial intervention may inform appropriate case and concurrent goal planning. Parents reported feeling that they did not have a voice when it came to case planning. They identified their biggest challenges as being court proceedings, lack of

available housing and transportation. Inclusion of the parents in the case planning process in addition to having a comprehensive assessment, allows the team to create a clear path for achievement of permanency for the family.

## Practice Performance Indicators

Practice Performance Indicators are a set of activities that correlate with the seven MiTEAM competencies and are the primary tools 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 2018, the QSR Protocol was updated. The Case Planning indicator has changed. Previously this indicator was named Planning Interventions and scored in four categories: Safety/Protection, Well-Being, Permanency and Transition to Life Adjustment. The Implementing Interventions indicator has changed, and multiple individuals are now scored (child, mother, father, caregiver and other). The previous QSR Protocol only assessed one score for this indicator.*

All practice indicators scored as an opportunity for improvement. Oakland County did improve the overall scores in the areas of Assessment and Understanding, Long-Term View and Implementing Interventions indicators from their previous QSR held in 2015.

Although Teaming increased slightly, it continues to be a challenge. In Oakland County, family team meetings are being held but the meeting attendees are limited and do not include all the relevant formal or informal supports. The communication between team members was observed to be limited and often only include one or two members. Due to these challenges, team members are not in agreement with case planning or permanency goals. This often leads to delays in achieving permanency and case closure.

For Oakland County, a significant increase was seen in practice scores with mothers. However, the QSR identified a pattern of excluding fathers in the case planning process which resulted in a decrease in practice scores. Incarceration and lack of participation were identified as challenges for team members to engage with fathers. The fathers scored lower than mothers in most Child and Family Status Indicators and in all Practice Performance Indicators, as demonstrated in the comparison table below:

Child and Family Status Indicators	Father 2015	Father 2018	Mother 2015	Mother 2018
Voice and Choice	57.1%	0.0%	28.6%	50.0%
Family Functioning and Resourcefulness	71.4%	25.0%	42.9%	72.7%

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

Practice Performance Indicators	Father 2015	Father 2018	Mother 2015	Mother 2018
Engagement	57.1%	0.0%	50.0%	66.7%
Assessment and Understanding	50.0%	37.5%	28.6%	72.7%
Case Planning	N/A	25.0%	N/A	45.5%
Implementing Interventions	N/A	12.5%	N/A	27.3%

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

## Summary from Focus Groups and Stakeholder Interviews

Two individual stakeholder interviews and 11 focus groups were conducted with a total of 62 participants. Specific findings from the focus groups are outlined in Appendix A.

### Strengths:

- Positive work environment for staff and supervisors. Workers feel supported by supervisors (Peer Support Group, Team Extreme).
- A strong and supportive relationship with court was identified.
- Supervisors work as a team and provide support to one another.

### Opportunities for Improvement:

- Improvement is needed with teaming within the second and third level management. Staff would like to see more support from second and third level management.
- Additional resources are needed for services. Service gaps were noted with transportation, housing and domestic violence services for batterers.
- Additional support is needed for new staff and improvement in training was identified as a challenge.

## **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:

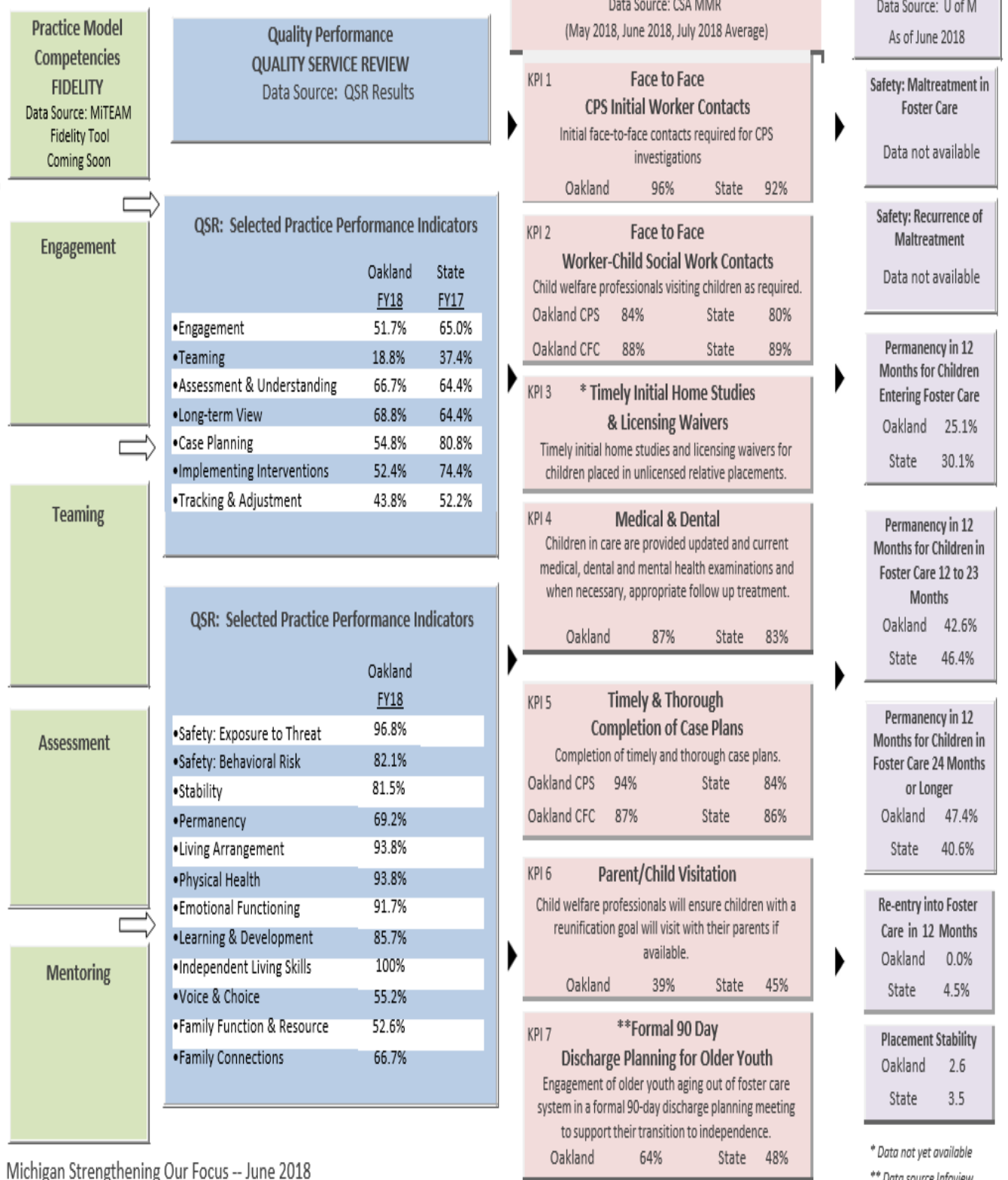
- Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- Permanency Outcome 2: 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 - Oakland



## Next Steps

The Oakland 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 Oakland County use their Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) team to explore ways to address staff retention and staff training. Some other areas of focus for the Oakland County CQI team may be:

- Training and implementation of the case practice model. Staff performance 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. It does appear that workers are obtaining a good understanding of the case participants needs but challenges exist in moving a case forward.
- 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 in the teaming process. Scheduled meetings should be convenient for case participants and empower parents to have a voice in their case plans.
- Active efforts to engage fathers in the case planning. Identify challenges and develop steps for team members to decrease these barriers.
- Address the identified service gaps, including the need for additional transportation and housing resources for families. The team should problem solve and brainstorm additional resources that would be useful in the implementation of services.

## **Appendix A**

### **Oakland County Interviews and Focus Groups**

#### **Individual Stakeholder Interviews**

Individual stakeholder interviews were held with MDHHS Oakland County director and district manager.

#### **Focus Groups**

The QSR process allows an opportunity for participants to share their perceptions in individual and 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 eight youth participated and provided feedback in this focus group. The youth who participated had a length of time in care from six months and longer.

Strengths: Youth found workers were telling them what was happening with their case, as well as making sure their voice was “heard in court.”

Some youth identified positive opportunities available in Oakland County. Specifically, the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) and Youth In Transition (YIT) funds which pays for drivers education and other resources to help them with independence.

Several of the youth stated they have a “good worker” who comes to visit frequently, up to once daily and involves them with case planning, as well as brings them to court hearings.

Opportunities for Improvement: Some youth stated they feel like it is a “race against time due to age” when aging out of foster care and wish that workers would be more prepared to assist the youth earlier with the aging out transition and providing resources.

Most youth stated a need for more foster care placements that are willing to take older youth. Furthermore, the youth indicated that although the homes that are available have a bed and food, there are a lot of other things that are “let go” such as poor house conditions.

Many of the youth identified worker turnover as an opportunity to improve, as some youth identified up to 10 different workers during their time in care. The majority of the youth had at least two to five different workers and felt not all of them empathized with what was happening in that youth’s life at the time.

## **Foster Parents**

There were six individuals who participated and offered feedback in this focus group. The participants have experience from three months to three years of being a licensed foster parent(s). All participants were currently licensed through private agencies and MDHHS.

**Strengths:** Many foster parents reported that the training they received was beneficial and included some of the things that could happen when you're a foster parent.

Foster parents reported that the Oakland County court supports the parent agency agreement most often and holds the parents accountable.

Some foster parents identified that caseworkers are coming to visit monthly with the children and seeing their bedroom and sleeping arrangements.

**Opportunities for Improvement:** Foster parents identified the need for trauma training for caregivers and caseworkers. Foster parents want workers to understand behaviors and what to expect from a child with trauma, to provide better support to the foster parent and stabilize the placement. It was also stated there is "red tape" in getting a trauma assessment done and then, the services are not readily accessible.

Some foster parents noted that often daycare and other financial supports are not readily available, especially when they are a relative placement. Services and resources should be also available from day one rather than having to apply for them (i.e. WIC, daycare assistance, food stamps, clothing).

The foster parents reported that transportation to and from visitation can be a barrier, indicating that sometimes children are placed from different counties and need to be brought to visits at the out of county office.

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

Seven individuals participated in this focus group. The participants who provided feedback in this group were identified as five foster care, one licensing, and one CWFS supervisors. The experience of participants ranged from one year to nine years.

**Strengths:** All supervisors reported having a good "team" and provide support and back-up to one another as supervisors, as well as looking for ways to provide support to staff. It was also noted that they get along well with each other and make a point to provide support to new supervisors.

Another strength are the number of committees and collaboratives to help support supervisors, workers, foster parents, and youth. Some of those committees were Team Extreme, Peer support (for traumatic events with supervisors and workers); collaboratives includes the Tri-

County Coalition (licensing), Community Team Meeting (wraparound), I Care for Children (recruitment of foster parents), and Foster Friends (assisting with purchases for older youth).

Supervisors did report that they stress and practice the teaming model, ensuring that their staff are using the model as well. It was noted that supervisors shadow staff, attend FTMs, and attend court when necessary to ensure that the teaming practice is occurring.

Opportunities for Improvement: Supervisors shared an opportunity for improvement as their workers or staff having “too much to do with little time.” It was indicated that even though case loads are down to 13:1, staff still must manage ISEP requirements, spreadsheets, and other paperwork and are pulled in many different directions at once. It was suggested that a caseload ratio of 10:1 would be more manageable for foster care workers.

Another noted opportunity by several supervisors is to improve specific services that are provided to the children and families served. Mentioned were transportation services, detailed psychological evaluations, expansion of parenting class providers, and life skills providers (for youth).

The relationship with upper management was viewed as an opportunity for improvement by a majority of the supervisors. It was explained that supervisors do not feel “supported” by their managers and if a problem does arise, the message to them is “what didn’t you do” instead of trouble shooting and supporting the supervisor to resolve the issue.

### **MDHHS Foster Care Workers**

Three individuals participated in this focus group. Members who provided feedback had experience ranging from one and a half to six years.

Strengths: Foster care staff identified the court relationship as a strength. Specifically mentioned was the consistency within the court standards for written reports, timeliness of scheduled hearings, strict policy is expected, and the overall organization of court.

Another identified strength is the positive relationship between workers and supervisors. It was noted that supervisors help workers in a variety of “hands on” ways including helping workers file, making corrections on reports, team building beyond the professional environment (i.e. supervisors had a BBQ and cooked for staff), Team Extreme, Peer Support Groups, and ensuring one on one time to meet with the worker.

Workers also reported working overtime without compensation. Often, they work late to ensure parenting time occurs for families as well as KPIs are met. This demonstrates the dedication of workers and they have the best interest of the children and families at heart. Caseloads reportedly remain in compliance, although many workers believe the number should be lower to make their job expectations more manageable.

Opportunities for Improvement: An area identified as an opportunity to improve unanimously was training for workers. Although it was mentioned that after a worker's initial training there are more than enough trainings available to workers, it is the initial crucial training that does not prepare them for the job. Furthermore, examples of areas that are not covered in trainings such as children in foster care receiving disability or social security payments, transitioning older youth out of foster care, and more information about child support payments and assisting clients with understanding it once the child is in foster care.

Parenting time expectations are also noted as a large barrier for workers. For children under the age of five years old, the expectations are extremely high and consumes a large amount of the assigned worker's time. Workers commented that in some instances their own families suffer because they are spending more time at work and not tending to their own family unit. It was suggested that when a case comes in with a high amount of parenting time ordered, the worker be able to carry a lighter case load. The county does have a supportive visitation service, but it often has a long waiting list.

Many foster care workers identified KPIs as a barrier to balance responsibilities and most agreed it was "impossible" to be a "good worker or KPI performer" and meet weekly caseworker activities in 40 hours per week. It was mentioned, "kids could go home, but missed KPIs are the focus."

### **Private Agency Foster Care (PAFC) Foster Care Workers**

Two PAFC foster care workers participated and provided feedback in this focus group. Their experience ranged between one and a half to two and a half years.

Strengths: A noted strength that both workers reported is the responsiveness and "high standard" held amongst Oakland County DHHS POS monitors. It was stated they are "good and consistent" and respond timely to requests and inquiries from the PAFC workers, even when there is a waitlist for services.

Another recorded strength is the relationship between the PAFC and the court. It was reported that the court is highly organized and the LGALs "actually see their kids in Oakland." Furthermore, the judges and referees understand "the needs of the foster parents and kids."

Workers reported that they found their managers as a strength. Specifically, the "open door" policy at the agencies which included discussing issues with the CEO, program manager, or supervisor when there are issues. It was reported that supervision happens at least twice a month and a supervisor is always available when there is a question, especially if you are new.

Opportunities for Improvement: An area of improvement identified are timelines when a worker has a large sibship on their caseload. There were many facets identified including parenting times, full family responsibilities, entering contacts within five days into MiSACWIS, and having to wait on services sets back the progress of those cases.

Another barrier was reported as some cases not moving to termination of parental rights, within 15 months, when case circumstances warrant termination and alternatively moving to termination of parental rights at 15 months regardless of case status. The workers voiced being the “ones in the home who see what is happening.”

Services were also identified as a barrier. There are not enough services for the amount of referrals being made and families must be on a waitlist, which prevents movement in their termination case.

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

Thirteen individuals participated in this focus group. The experience within the participants ranged from one year to 11 years.

Strengths: All supervisors identified having cohesive CPS unit(s); it was noted that each unit has an ongoing worker, which allows them to “know about the case before we get it.” They also reported that when calls come in after hours, they all help each other out.

Another strength identified is the relationship between CPS and the court in Oakland County. Although turnover with the prosecutor’s office was mentioned, it does not appear to have impacted the relationship and the supervisors felt represented at court.

It was noted that although there is monthly supervision occurring between section managers and supervisors, there also seems to be a disconnect between first line and upper management. Supervisors reported that this rift has created a stronger bond amongst the supervisors and in turn this cohesive bond is transferred onto the workers, and ultimately they feel supported amongst one another.

The supervisors reported that teaming is occurring at the table during FTMs and meetings include the workers, families and supervision. It was noted that more of the “right people” need to be included at the table, but these meetings to engage the family are occurring.

Opportunities for Improvement: It was reported by some supervisors that an opportunity to improve would be with the use of the Regional Placement Unit (RPU). It was noted that placement requests can take days and weeks to complete and often it appears there is a lack of relationship between RPU and the PAFC agencies.

Most supervisors agreed that another opportunity is the lack of services to address mental health. Specifically, children with severe problems need services to maintain them in their homes. It was noted that often, children wait several days for services and in the interim the parents become frustrated and leave children in hospitals against advice, hence becoming a new CPS case.

It was unanimously reported by the supervisors that an important area that needs to improve is CPS worker recruitment. It was noted that the new “generation” of workers are under prepared for the job, do not have a “team” mentality, and are overwhelmed by being put in the field with cases before being fully trained. It was suggested that more shadowing occur in the field, better safety training, and trauma screening be developed for new hires. The impact of worker turnover negatively affects the current CPS workers, the environment, and the workers who are left experience a heavier case load.

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

Six CPS workers participated in this focus group. The group of participants had experience from one to seventeen years. The group consisted of both CPS investigators and on-going workers.

Strengths: CPS workers support one another, as well as supervisors supporting staff. Specifically described as a strength is the “team” which includes schools, hospitals, doctors, and teachers who are willing to participate and are quick to respond.

The overall relationship with the court was reported as “generally good” and that the court liaison can be helpful to bridge the gap between workers and the court. Prosecutors were also mentioned as being responsive and open to questions, to better prepare workers for court.

The caseload ratio was identified as manageable and appears to fall within the expectations of the federal lawsuit and gives most workers time to manage their cases and not fall too far behind on paperwork.

Opportunities for Improvement: Areas of improvement were identified by most of the workers as needing more trainings on safety. Some suggestions included self-defense training, what to do in specific situations, and more time one on one with a mentor upon entering the field. Some of the workers noted that the CPS investigation audit says “we do not feel safe” and this needs to be revisited.

Another area identified by some of the workers was balancing workload. Specifically, “what am I going to get today” or even when a case is going to be assigned. Then worrying about “which is going to be due and which do you worry about.” It was reported that sometimes a case is already open for 30 days, but services haven’t started because there is a wait list. Workers mentioned wanting to help, but uncertain what to do at that point.

Although the county has a wide variety of services, there are not enough and often include a wait list. Specifically mentioned were additional parenting classes, in-home services, domestic violence, services for single fathers, public transportation and availability in homeless shelter programs.

## **MDHHS and PAFC Program Managers**

Six individuals participated in this focus group. The experience of the participants ranged from just a few years to 30+ years.

Strengths: One major strength reported by most managers is the relationship between the department and private agencies, reporting frequent meetings, strong communication, and common challenges.

Another strength identified by managers in the private sector is the prompt receipt of payments from MDHHS and workers processing foster care payments. It was noted that foster care is on top of transferring payments when relatives become licensed, providing the 3600 contract, and communicating with the PAFC agencies.

The program managers identified another strength as the courts in Oakland County, citing their promptness and ability to move cases along. Also, court orders are provided timely and the LGALs visit the children frequently.

Opportunities for Improvement: Most of the managers agreed that staff retention is an area needing improvement. It was reported that it is “hard to keep new staff for more than 18 months” as a worker and they struggle with all the expectations of the job. It was suggested that staff be able to “shadow” the actual position before taking the job or that the new worker screening and training process change.

Another opportunity cited by the managers is training provided to both workers and foster parents. It was reported that new workers are not receiving the training needed to prepare them for the job and that Preservice Institute training is “general and broad with the expectations that staff will receive more specifics when they get to the field.” Regarding foster parents, it was noted that “PRIDE training needs to shift towards trauma focused solutions and how to handle trauma.” It was suggested that the expectations of foster parents has affected their desire to foster children (i.e. more complaints called in and investigated on foster parents, number of parenting time visits and requirement of transporting children, and late payments).

The PAFC program managers identified another opportunity would be recruiting more relative homes by compensating them for placement and increasing the per diem rate. This could in turn positively impact children who are waiting to be placed in specialized programs such as residential facilities or unrelated foster homes due to lack of placement availability. This way, relatives may be more apt and financially willing to provide relative care versus having to take placement of the child unpaid, while going through the licensing process.

## **Service Providers**

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

Strengths: Both providers viewed the relationship between the workers, court, law enforcement, and service providers as a team collaborative and a strength within the child welfare community. There is open and responsive communication with CPS, foster care workers, LGAL, and the service providers interviewed.

Support groups are provided to parents, foster parents, and caregivers and was viewed as a strength within the community. These groups provide childcare and a meal to the attendees as well as ongoing support in understanding trauma exposure and how to handle it.

It was noted that every other month case reviews are held, to ensure each case has services tailored to the specific needs of the family and ongoing monitoring.

Opportunities for Improvement: The service providers interviewed viewed transportation and housing as a barrier to families. Although Oakland County Housing Commission has been helpful, there is still a great need for low-income housing.

Another opportunity noted was the lack of training workers receive on dealing with assistance payments and specifically families receiving daycare or having it activated. This presents as a barrier to families that are being served.

The last barrier identified was the frequency and duplication of services for parents who are completing a treatment plan. Specifically, too many agencies and services being involved with the parents at once, pulling them in several directions and making it difficult to complete services.

## **Family Court Judges**

Three individuals participated in this focus group. All the participants who provided feedback in this group were identified as Oakland County Family Division judges. The experience within the participants was from two to six years.

Strengths: All participants cited having a court liaison worker between MDHHS and the court, has not only strengthened the relationship between the entities but also provides better insight to the court, keeps workers on time and accountable, as well as prepared. It was also noted that these workers do difficult work that is appreciated by the court.

Another strength in Oakland County are the different dockets and variety of court programs to suit the needs of most families. This includes adding another judge to the family division in 2019, drug treatment court, veterans court, and family court handling abuse/neglect, juvenile

justice, and divorces. The family court docket is not set to a specific day, cases and petitions can be submitted and dealt with as necessary, versus waiting for a designated day.

It was noted that another strength is the number of valuable programs provided to families and children in Oakland County, such as intensive parenting programs and family reunification. However, it was noted that it would be beneficial if these programs were duplicated and resources expanded to avoid delay in services.

Opportunities for Improvement: Some of the judges indicated a major area of improvement for Oakland County is the issue of worker turnover. It was noted that the turnover impacts not only the family and children, but impedes the court process and often results in workers showing up to court unprepared or unable to give an accurate report. It was suggested that the department make a stronger presentation in their petitions; this could include but is not limited to completing petitions, double checking for errors (i.e. making sure boxes are checked and facts listed), as well as the recommendation being clear. It was noted that perhaps an “overhaul” of the department could occur resulting in staff retention and better pay.

Another opportunity mentioned by some of the participants is the timeliness of the case progression and achieving reunification. There were a variety of improvement opportunities identified when working with a family towards reunification including: waitlist for services, quality placements for children, worker turnover, availability of community resources (i.e. transportation) and other services that could benefit the family. It was suggested the court and child welfare staff need to do a better job of immediately “servicing the parents and children,” including making reunification services “quick and comprehensive” to ensure the case can move forward.

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

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

Strengths: A strength reported by most of the attorneys participating is the variety of services available to families in Oakland County, once services start they seem to be “good.” It was noted that although services can take time to start, they are being provided to families to reduce barriers in areas such as domestic violence, substance abuse and poverty.

Most group participants identified that there is a “better” rapport between workers and attorneys. It was specifically mentioned that workers are more accessible than before with cell phones and being able to text with the attorneys. Also, most workers seem to prioritize the “best interest” of the children and on the same page as the LGAL.

Another strength identified is the improved relationship between the court and department, specifically citing the court liaison as “an asset” and serves as a “buffer” to the court.

Furthermore, the liaison can go in with workers and assist them with first time prelims, filing petitions, and support staff testifying in front of the judge. This makes the court process work more smoothly, especially when there is a gap due to worker turnover.

Opportunities for Improvement: An area identified by the group to be improved is case planning by the team versus the department. It was noted that the attorneys are not included in case planning unless at disposition and that workers struggle to identify priority services and implementing them in a timely manner. A more team-based approach could build a better case plan with the inclusion of all parties.

Another noted area to be improved, shared by most of the attorney's present is staff preparation for testifying and knowing the case. It was suggested that turnover impacts case management and consistency, as well as progress on the case, along with staff needing training on court procedures, and needing to review history of the case at intake or prior to filing petitions. Overall, it was mentioned that staff are "generally prepared" for court, but that the jurists also drive more accountability with the workers.

The most notable area to be improved, as reported by this group, is the worker turnover. This appears to be a trend throughout interviews and zeros in on the inconsistency, progress, and negative impact on a case when there are new workers. It was suggested that a restructuring occur within the agency, regarding the number of workers on a case and services being provided to prevent confusion, increase communication, and accountability.

## Appendix B

### Child and Family Status Indicators

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

Category	Item	Oakland 2015	Oakland 2018
Safety: Exposure to Threats	a. Home	100.0%	93.8%
Safety: Exposure to Threats	b. School	83.3%	100.0%
Safety: Exposure to Threats	c. Other Settings	100.0%	100.0%
Safety: Behavioral Risk	a. Risk to Self	72.7%	78.6%
Safety: Behavioral Risk	b. Risk to Others	72.7%	85.7%
Stability	a. Home	81.8%	81.3%
Stability	b. School	83.3%	81.8%
Permanency	Permanency	80.7%	69.2%
Living Arrangement	Living Arrangement	100.0%	93.8%
Physical Health	Physical Health	100.0%	93.8%
Emotional Functioning	Emotional Functioning	75.0%	91.7%
Learning & Development	a. Early Learning / Development	100.0%	100.0%
Learning & Development	b. Academics	100.0%	75.0%
Independent Living Skills	Independent Living Skills	N/A	100.0%
Voice and Choice	a. Child/Youth	50.0%	83.3%
Voice and Choice	b. Mother	28.6%	50.0%
Voice and Choice	c. Father	57.1%	0.0%
Voice and Choice	d. Caregiver	83.3%	85.7%
Voice and choice	e. Other	N/A	N/A
Family Functioning/Resourcefulness	a. Mother	42.9%	72.7%
Family Functioning/Resourcefulness	b. Father	71.4%	25.0%
Family Functioning/Resourcefulness	c. Other	N/A	N/A
Family Connections	a. Mother	75.0%	33.3%
Family Connections	b. Father	75.0%	80.0%
Family Connections	c. Siblings	40.0%	75.0%
Family Connections	D . Other	66.7%	83.3%

## Practice Performance Indicators

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

Category	Item	Oakland 2015	Oakland 2018
Engagement	a. Child/Youth	50.0%	66.7%
Engagement	b. Mother	42.9%	50.0%
Engagement	c. Father	57.1%	0.0%
Engagement	d. Caregiver	83.3%	85.7%
Engagement	e. Other	0.0%	N/A
Teaming	Teaming	18.2%	18.8%
Assessment and Understanding	a. Child/Youth	72.7%	62.5%
Assessment and Understanding	b. Mother	28.6%	72.7%
Assessment and Understanding	c. Father	50.0%	37.5%
Assessment and Understanding	d. Caregiver	100.0%	100.0%
Assessment and Understanding	e. Other	0.0%	N/A
Long-Term View	Long-Term View	45.5%	68.8%
Planning Interventions	Planning Interventions	65.7%	N/A
Case Planning	a. Child/Youth	N/A	62.5%
Case Planning	b. Mother	N/A	45.5%
Case Planning	c. Father	N/A	25.0%
Case Planning	d. Caregiver	N/A	85.7%
Case Planning	e. Other	N/A	N/A
Implementing Interventions	a. Child/Youth	N/A	68.8%
Implementing Interventions	b. Mother	N/A	27.3%
Implementing Interventions	c. Father	N/A	12.5%
Implementing Interventions	d. Caregiver	N/A	100.0%
Implementing Interventions	e. Other	N/A	N/A
Implementing Interventions	Overall	45.5%	52.4%
Tracking and Adjustment	Tracking and Adjustment	54.6%	43.8%

