



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

## **FINAL REPORT**

# **Michigan Child and Family Services Review**

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**Final Report: Michigan Child and Family Services Review**

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) assesses State performance during a specified time period on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being and with respect to seven systemic factors. The Michigan CFSR was conducted the week of September 9, 2002. The assessment is based on information from the following sources:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Child and Family Services Administration of the Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA);
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 49 cases from three counties in the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three counties and the State capital) with a wide range of stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, various levels of State and local FIA personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

With respect to State performance on the child welfare outcomes, the State Data Profile indicated that for fiscal year 2000, Michigan met the national standards for the following measures:

- The rate of recurrence of substantiated child maltreatment within 6 months of a prior substantiated maltreatment.
- The incidence of maltreatment of children in foster care.
- The rate of foster care re-entries within 12 months of discharge from a previous foster care episode.
- The percentage of finalized adoptions occurring within 24 months of a child’s entry into foster care.

In addition, the CFSR case reviews and stakeholder interviews identified other strengths for the State:

- Providing services to families to prevent children’s removal from home.
- Preventing repeat maltreatment.
- Preventing re-entries into foster care.
- Establishing appropriate permanency goals for children in a timely manner.
- Implementing diligent efforts to achieve the goal of adoption in a timely manner.
- Placing children in close proximity to their parents or close relatives.
- Preserving children’s connections to their neighborhoods and extended families and friends while in foster care.
- Meeting children’s needs for physical health services.

Despite these many strengths, the State Data Profile indicated that Michigan did not meet the national standards for the percentages of children reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care or for the percentages of children experiencing no more than two placements during the first 12 months in foster care. Also, the case reviews and stakeholder interviews resulted in the finding that the State did not achieve substantial conformity with any of the seven safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

With respect to safety outcome 1 (Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect), the key concern identified pertained to the issue of responding to reports of child maltreatment. Although the CFSR found that responses to maltreatment reports were begun in a timely manner, caseworkers were not consistent in establishing face-to-face contact with the child victim, the caretaker, or the perpetrator in accordance with agency policy. The primary concern noted for safety outcome 2 (Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate) was that the agency was not consistent in its efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children.

Concerns also were identified for the two permanency outcomes. For permanency outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations), the case reviews found that in several cases, the agency did not make concerted efforts to achieve the goals of reunification or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner. For permanency outcome 2 (The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children) the identified concerns were the following:

- Children in foster care were not being placed with siblings on a consistent basis.
- The agency was not always diligent in promoting visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings who were also in foster care.
- The agency was not sufficiently diligent in some cases in their efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources for children in foster care.

In addition, the CFSR found that child well-being outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs), was substantially achieved in only 71.4 percent of the cases reviewed. The case reviews indicated that for many families, FIA was not effective in addressing the needs and services of children, parents, and/or foster parents (item 17). Other identified concerns were that children and families were not consistently involved in case planning (item 18), and caseworker visits with parents and children (items 19 and 20) often were not of sufficient frequency or quality to ensure children's safety and well-being or promote attainment of case goals.

CFSR findings also indicate that FIA is inconsistent in its efforts to address children's educational needs (child well-being outcome 2) and physical and mental health needs (child well-being outcome 3). However, with respect to child well-being outcome 3, the key concern identified pertained to addressing mental health needs rather than physical health needs. The key findings were that for some

children, there was a lack of adequate assessment of mental health needs and for some children, there was an identified need for mental health services that had not been met.

CFSR findings with respect to the State's performance on the systemic factors suggest that the State has most of the necessary systems in place to support the attainment of children's safety, permanency, and well-being. The State was found to be in substantial conformity with factors related to the statewide information system; quality assurance system; training; service array; agency responsiveness to the community; and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention.

However, the State was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of the case review system. Concerns were identified regarding inconsistent involvement of parents in the case planning process even though FIA has a policy requiring joint case plan development. Concerns were also identified regarding the lack of consistency with which permanency hearings are conducted every 12 months. Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that some permanency hearings are not being held timely because of continuances and/or limited time on court dockets. The findings of the review also indicate an inconsistent notification of foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of any periodic review or permanency hearing held with respect to children due in part to a lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities and process for notifying these parties.

The following is a summary of the CFSR findings regarding specific outcomes and systemic factors.

## **KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES**

### **I. SAFETY**

*Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.*

#### **Status of Safety Outcome S1 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that 83.7 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

The CFSR findings with respect to Safety Outcome 1 indicate that, for the most part, FIA is effective in protecting children from abuse and neglect. Repeat maltreatment was observed in only 2 of the 49 cases reviewed, and Michigan's rate of repeat

maltreatment (3.3%), as reported in the State Data Profile, meets the national standard of 6.1 percent. In addition, Michigan's rate of maltreatment in foster care by foster parents or facility staff (.33%) also meets the national standard of .57 percent. The one concern identified during the CFSR pertained to the response to child maltreatment reports. The case reviews found that although FIA caseworkers did begin the investigation in a timely manner, they were not consistent in establishing face-to-face contact with child victims, caretakers, and/or perpetrators within the timeframes established by agency policy.

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

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although 75 percent of the applicable cases were rated as a Strength for this item, in 25 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers found that investigations were initiated in a timely manner, but workers did not routinely establish face-to-face contact with child victims, caretakers, or perpetrators in accordance with agency policy.

**Item 2. Repeat maltreatment**

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following findings.

- There was no maltreatment recurrence in 96 percent of the cases reviewed.
- The State Data Profile indicates that the incidence of repeat maltreatment in calendar year 2000 was 3.3 percent, which meets the national standard of 6.1 percent.

***Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.***

**Status of Safety Outcome S2 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 83.6 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

A general CFSR finding was that FIA makes diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. In the majority of in-home services cases reviewed, families were served by a private provider agency under contract to FIA. Case managers from these agencies have primary responsibility for the cases and routinely report to the FIA caseworker on progress. Reviewers determined that these case managers provided intensive direct home-based services to the families, linked the families to other needed services in the community, and monitored service provision and progress. In addition, in a few cases, services were provided to families after reunification to support the reintegration of the family and prevent another removal from the home. However, the CFSR also found that FIA was less effective in its efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children. For some of the

in-home services cases, reviewers noted that FIA did not provide services to address the families' underlying problems or did not respond appropriately when parents did not follow through with services.

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

This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 90 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that FIA made diligent efforts to provide services to prevent children's placement in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that, since 1988, Families First of Michigan has initiated over 40,000 family interventions involving more than 100,000 children at risk of removal. Of the families served, 84 percent were still together one year later.

**Item 4. Risk of harm to child.**

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although this item was rated as a Strength in 84 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that in 16 percent of the applicable cases FIA had not made sufficient efforts to reduce risk of harm to children. Both the case reviews and stakeholder interviews indicated that, in some instances, FIA is not adequately assessing risk of harm, particularly in situations in which relative placements are occurring without home studies and background checks. Stakeholders also noted that there are situations in which the family's past history with child welfare is not taken into account in the assessment of risk, often because the information has not been collected or is not available to the caseworker. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, case readings of foster care cases conducted as part of the State's self-assessment revealed that the required safety assessment was completed correctly in 76 percent of the cases reviewed.

**II. PERMANENCY**

***Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.***

**Status of Permanency Outcome 1 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- 75 percent of the cases were rated as having substantially achieved Permanency Outcome 1, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity; and
- The State's percentage of children reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care (52.9%) does not meet the national standard of 76.2 percent.
- The State's percentage of children having had no more than 2 placements in a 12-month period (86.2%) does not meet the national standard of 86.7 percent.

Although the State did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1, there were many children in the foster care cases reviewed that experienced permanency and stability in their living situations. This may be attributed to a variety of factors. For one, the State places a major emphasis on placement with relatives, which tends to result in fewer placement changes. Also, FIA is diligent in filing for TPR when appropriate and in encouraging adoptions among relatives and foster parents. In addition, the State attempts to expedite the adoption process through use of the new Birth Match system to check for prior FIA histories in which a parent's rights to other children have been terminated. In cases in which a parent has previously had parental rights terminated for another child, FIA when appropriate will expedite the adoption process by filing for TPR immediately rather than waiting for 15 months. Finally, the State Data Profile indicates that the percentage of finalized adoptions occurring within 24 months of entry into foster care meets the national standard of 32.0 percent. Despite these strengths, the case review process found that there were several cases in which FIA had not made diligent efforts to achieve permanency goals in a timely manner, particularly cases in which the goal was reunification or permanent placement with relatives (item 8).

#### **Item 5. Foster care re-entries**

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following:

- In 86 percent of applicable cases, no re-entries into foster care occurred.
- The data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that the rate of re-entry into foster care within 12 months is 5.0 percent, which meets the national standard of 8.6 percent.

#### **Item 6. Stability of foster care placement**

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that according to the State Data Profile, the percentage of children in Fiscal Year 2000 having 2 or more placements within a 12 month period did not meet the national standard. Although in 89 percent of the applicable cases reviewers determined that FIA had made diligent efforts to ensure children's placement stability, because the two indicators are assessed through different measures, it is necessary to meet the standard or criteria for both in order to receive a rating of strength. Focus groups with FIA staff, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) members (conducted as part of the State's self-assessment process) identified the following as affecting movement of children in foster care:

- Initial placements do not match children's needs.
- Inadequate information is provided to foster parents regarding the child's behavior when the child is initially placed.
- Inadequate support of foster parents to prevent movement when children entering foster care have many problems.
- Specialized foster homes are lacking in Michigan.

#### **Item 7. Permanency goal for child**

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA had established an appropriate permanency goal in a timely manner. Among the 28 foster care cases reviewed, 13 children had a goal of reunification with parents or permanent placement with relatives; 14 children had a goal of adoption; and 1 child had a goal of long-term foster care leading to emancipation to independent living.

#### **Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship or Permanent Placement with Relatives**

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing improvement for the following reasons:

- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year 2000, the State did not meet the national standard for reunifications within 12 months of entry into foster care; and
- Although 69 percent of the cases were rated as a Strength for this item, in 31 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA had not made diligent efforts to achieve the goal of reunification or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a survey of workers identified the three primary barriers to reunification as poor parenting skills (68%), emotional instability (60%), and substance abuse (42%). However, a survey of parents whose children were in foster care revealed that 26 percent reported that they had service needs that were not met by the agency, particularly needs for housing and family counseling.

#### **Item 9. Adoption**

This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following findings:

- In 86 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was making or had made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner.
- According to the State Data Profile, the percentage of children in the State achieving a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care (32.0%) meets the national standard of 32.0 percent.

According to the Statewide Assessment, 90 percent of finalized adoptions in 2001 were with relatives or foster parents.

#### **Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement**

This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in the one applicable case, reviewers determined that FIA had made diligent efforts to support the child's long-term placement and eventual transition to independent living. The child, who also is a parent, received services to help her complete her GED and obtain employment.



***Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.***

**Status of Permanency Outcome 2 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 75.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although the State did not reach the required 90 percent achievement required for substantial conformity, there were areas of strength. For example, family and community connections were preserved for most children in the foster care cases reviewed, and almost all children were placed in close proximity to their communities of origin when relevant. In contrast, FIA was found to be inconsistent in its efforts to place children with siblings or to search for relatives as potential placement resources, particularly paternal relatives. In addition, concerns were identified regarding FIA's efforts to promote visitation and bonding with parents.

**Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement**

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 94 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that FIA had made diligent efforts to ensure that children's foster care placements were in close proximity to their parents or relatives. The Statewide Assessment notes that the Family to Family projects implemented in two counties are designed to ensure that children placed in foster care remain in the communities in which they lived prior to their foster care placement.

**Item 12. Placement with siblings**

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although this item was rated as a Strength in 84 percent of the cases, in 16 percent of the cases, siblings were not placed together and reviewers determined that their separation was not deemed necessary to meet the needs of one or more of the children. The Statewide Assessment notes that according to the 1999 Supervising Agency Report Card, for sibling groups of 2, 33.1 percent were in separate placements; for sibling groups of 3-4, 54.6 percent were in separate placements; and for sibling groups of 5 or more, 82.8 percent were in separate placements. The Statewide Assessment also notes that placing large sibling groups together is problematic because most foster homes are licensed for no more than four children.

**Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care**

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although this item was rated as a Strength in 68 percent of the applicable cases, in 32 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA had not made concerted efforts to facilitate visitation. This finding is in conflict with State policy and the Juvenile Code. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the Juvenile

Code requires that parent-child parenting time occur no less than every 7 days after the dispositional hearing, unless clearly documented as harmful to the child. Scheduling is to be done with primary consideration for the parents' time commitment and supervising agencies must have flexibility to provide a number of hours outside the traditional workday. Legislation requires foster care workers to be present during parenting time so workers will be able to monitor and assess in-home parenting time between parent and child and testify in court as to the interaction between parents and children. The Statewide Assessment cites that if siblings are not placed together, sibling visitation is required.

**Item 14. Preserving connections**

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 89 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections to community, faith, and friends.

**Item 15. Relative placement**

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although the item was rated as a Strength in 82 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that in 18 percent of the cases, the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. A key concern identified was that when one or two relatives were identified and found to be unsuitable, the agency did not continue to search for other relatives. According to the Statewide Assessment, in a survey of parents whose children were in foster care, 64 percent reported that their caseworker had asked them about possible relatives to care for their child.

**Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents**

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although the item was rated as a Strength in 81 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that, in 19 percent of applicable cases, the agency did not adequately support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care.

**III. WELL-BEING**

*Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.*

**Status of Well-Being Outcome 1 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved for 71.4 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

A general finding of the CFSR process was that FIA is not consistent in meeting the service needs of children and families. In addition, there were many cases in which family members, particularly fathers, were not involved in the case planning process, and many cases in which caseworker visits with children and parents was not of sufficient frequency or quality to ensure children's safety and/or promote attainment of case goals.

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

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although the item was rated as a Strength in 73 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that in 27 percent of the cases, FIA had not been effective in addressing the service needs of children, parents, and/or foster parents. This finding is consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, targeted case readings revealed that 77 percent of the foster care cases read contained an up-to-date Child Needs and Strength Assessment and only 62 percent of the needs identified as "priority needs" were addressed in the treatment plan and service agreement. In addition, focus groups with staff, FCRB members, and CASA members for the Statewide Assessment revealed that supportive services to foster parents may not be provided on a consistent basis.

**Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning**

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although the item was rated as a Strength in 70 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that in 30 percent of the cases, FIA had not made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. These findings are consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, although agency policy requires that the family be extensively involved in case planning, foster care case readings conducted as part of the self-assessment process revealed that parents were involved in plan development in 59 percent of the cases. In addition, interviews with parents involved with the CPS program found that 61 percent reported that they had input regarding the services they received. In cases where youth were assessed for independent living needs as part of the Child Needs Assessments (CANS), targeted case readings revealed that 85 percent of the youth were involved in plan development.

**Item 19. Worker visits with child**

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although the item was rated as a Strength in 80 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that in 20 percent of the applicable cases, caseworker visits with children were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality and often did not meet agency policy requirements. Targeted foster care case readings completed during the Statewide Assessment revealed that caseworkers were visiting with children at least monthly in 62 percent of the cases reviewed. Staffing issues were cited as affecting FIA's ability to meet the State policy requirements.

**Item 20. Worker visits with parents**

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although the item was rated as a Strength in 72.5 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that in 27.5 percent of applicable cases, the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with parents were not sufficient to promote the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals. A primary concern identified was lack of caseworker contacts with fathers, even in cases in which fathers had been caretakers and/or maintained connections with the children. The Statewide Assessment notes that targeted foster care readings conducted during the Statewide Assessment process found that caseworkers were visiting with parents at least monthly in 70 percent of cases.

***Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.***

**Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 78.8 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome. This is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

**Item 21. Educational needs of the child.**

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although the item was rated as a Strength in 79 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that in 21 percent of the applicable cases, the educational needs of children were not effectively and appropriately addressed. According to the Statewide Assessment, focus groups with FCRB members and CASA (convened as part of the State's self-assessment process) identified a lack of tutoring services and special education services for children in foster care. In a mail survey of FIA foster parents, a key finding was that 55 percent of the parents responding either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the "child's caseworker was helpful in linking the child to these (educational) services."

***Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.***

**Status of Well-Being Outcome 3 - Not in Substantial Conformity**

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 86.0 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

In general, the CFSR process found that FIA was effective in meeting children's physical health needs, but was less consistent in its efforts to address children's mental health needs. A key concern identified was that mental health services were not always available or of sufficient quality to meet the children's needs. In addition, in some cases children did not receive adequate monitoring to ensure

that recommended mental health services were actually received.

**Item 22. Physical health of the child**

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that, in 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA adequately addressed the health needs of children in foster care and in-home services cases. Overall, medical and dental services were accessible, services were provided, and documentation was thorough. The Statewide Assessment notes that during the targeted case readings conducted as part of the self-assessment process, 75 percent of the children in foster care had a dental exam within 90 days, and 40 percent had a medical exam within 30 days. The key problem regarding medical exams was that it was difficult to schedule a medical exam within 30 days.

**Item 23. Mental health of the child**

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although this item was rated as a Strength in 81 percent of the cases, in 19 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the State did not adequately address children's mental health needs. A key problem identified in the Statewide Assessment is the lack of adequate funding in the State for mental health services.

**KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

**IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM**

**Status of Statewide Information System**

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the factor of Statewide Information System.

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

This item has been rated as a Strength because Michigan's Statewide Information system can, at minimum, readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

**V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM**

### **Status of Case Review System**

Michigan is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System.

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

Item 25 has been assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because case plans are not being consistently developed jointly with parents even though FIA has a policy requiring joint case plan development. In 30 percent of the 47 applicable cases, case reviewers found that parents and children (when appropriate) were not involved in the development of the case plan.

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

This item was rated as a Strength because periodic reviews are generally held within the 6-month timeframe required by Federal statute. According to the Statewide Assessment, legislation passed in 1998 requires that review hearings must be held every 91 days for all children in foster care, except for children placed permanently with a relative or in a permanent foster family agreement. For children placed permanently with a relative or in a permanent foster family home, the legislation requires that the court must hold a review hearing every 182 days after the first year of placement. Reviews can be held by either a referee or a judge.

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

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because the consistency with which reviews are completed is variable. In some instances, although the reviews are held in a timely manner, the focus is not always on advancing permanency. According to the Statewide Assessment, permanency planning hearings (PPH) are required by Michigan statute for all children who are wards of the State due to abuse and/or neglect. The PPH must be held 1 year after the petition requesting removal is filed with the court and annually thereafter. Hearing schedules are determined by the court. (Michigan statute does not require a PPH for juvenile justice youth, although some courts are convening PPH for these youth.)

#### **Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.**

This item was rated as a Strength because Michigan has a process and policy in place for the termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings that exceeds the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Furthermore, information from stakeholder interviews and the Statewide Assessment suggest that the TPR process is usually implemented in accordance with the policy.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan statute requires a permanency planning hearing (PPH) within 1 year after the petition requesting removal is filed with the court and annually thereafter. At the PPH, if the court finds that the child should not be returned to his/her home, the court must order the agency to file a termination petition with the court unless the court finds that initiating the TPR is clearly not in the child's best interest. Policy supports documenting a compelling reason or filing the petition to coincide with the 12-month timeframe and the PPH, rather than waiting for the 15th month. Michigan statute requires the termination petition to be filed within 42 days of the PPH; although there are no sanctions for not filing within the timeframe.

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

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because the findings of the review indicate an inconsistent notification of foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers due in part to a lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities and process for notifying these parties.

## **VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM**

### **Status of Quality Assurance System**

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the factor of Quality Assurance System.

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

This item is rated as a Strength because Michigan has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children. According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan's Child Care Organization Licensing Act (Public Act 116) provides for the protection of children placed out of their homes through the establishment of standards of care for child placement agencies, institutions, and family foster homes. The Act also contains provision of penalties for noncompliance with promulgated administrative rules. New licensing rules for foster and group homes and child placing agencies were effective January 1, 2001.

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

This item was rated a Strength because Michigan has a multi-level quality assurance system comprised of both internal and external components which evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs, provides relevant reports and evaluates program

improvement measures that are implemented. According to the Statewide Assessment, Core Children's Services Universal Outcomes in the areas of prevention, protection, preservation, permanency and proficiency were established in 1998 as part of performance monitoring. Michigan also has instituted a performance appraisal process, the Performance Management and Development Program (PMDP), for division-level staff that is tied to the critical success factors of its strategic plan. Michigan's quality assurance system for safety, permanency and well-being for children and families served by the Agency includes a CPS peer review process.

## VII. TRAINING

### Status of Training

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training.

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

Item 32 was rated as a Strength because Michigan has a statutorily mandated initial orientation program for new staff which is competency based and outcome focused. According to the Statewide Assessment, the Michigan Child Welfare Training Plan is predicated on a competency-based and outcome-focused comprehensive training initiative. Components include: an 8-week pre-service child welfare curriculum, the Child Welfare Institute (CWI), for public and private agency staff; advanced child welfare modules; bachelor and master's level university course work; and collaborative training with the courts, State police, Tribes, and Prosecuting Attorney Association of Michigan.

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

Item 33 was rated as a Strength because Michigan has in place an ongoing training program for staff commensurate with their duties. According to the Statewide Assessment, each worker and supervisor must receive at least 14 hours of training annually. Individual staff development plans, begun during CWI, are a requirement of FIA's Performance Architect Performance Management System, which is maintained by the Office of Human Resources and supported with learning resources. All training data are tracked by the Office of Professional Development. Every time someone registers for a training session, a record is generated that indicates whether the person successfully completed the training, canceled attendance, failed to show, or failed the program.



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

Item 34 was rated as a Strength because Michigan provides training for current or prospective foster and adoptive parents that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children. According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan requires that foster parents receive no less than 12 hours of training, which can include up to 6 hours of orientation, within the first 6 months of initial licensing and before placement of a child. During the next 2 years, an additional 12 hours of training is required and then 6 hours annually after that. New direct care workers at child caring institutions must participate in a minimum of 50 hours of planned training within the first year of employment and then at least 25 hours annually thereafter.

## **VIII. SERVICE ARRAY**

### **Status of Service Array**

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of service array.

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

Item 35 was rated as a Strength because the State has in place an array of services to meet the needs of children and families. According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan has a State-level interactive initiative, Putting It Together With Michigan Families (PIT Crew) that enables State partners to plan joint initiatives and training opportunities and share best practices that address the needs of its constituents. At the local level, each county has one Multipurpose Collaborative Body (MPCB) that coordinates services within the community. The goal is to ensure that families receive services that are strength-based, community driven, family-oriented, and have demonstrated effectiveness.

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

Item 36 was rated as a Strength because services are available in the vast majority of communities within the State, although there is a paucity of services available in the outlying areas and service delivery may be time limited. According to the Statewide Assessment, all of Michigan's counties have the capabilities to design services to meet their community needs via the MPCB and FCC structures in

place. The County Child Care Fund (CCF) is a State cost-sharing program for reimbursement to local counties for the cost of providing eligible services. Family reunification is available in those counties with the highest-out-of-home care populations.

**Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.** Item 37 was rated as a Area Needing Improvement because services are not consistently being individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, wraparound services are being provided for children and families at risk of out-of-home placement with 2,000 families receiving the service in FY2000. According to the Statewide Assessment, CASA and FCRB members noted that service plans for children and families tend to be generic and not address the individualized needs of the families.

## **IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY**

### **Status of Agency Responsiveness To The Community**

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community.

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

Item 38 was rated as a Strength because the State engages in ongoing consultation with key external partners and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP. According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan has two main avenues for consulting and coordinating on the development of its CFSP: Citizen Review Panels (CRP) and the Native American Task Force. CRPs were created to provide an opportunity for citizens to aid in ensuring that the State meets the goal of protecting children from abuse and neglect.

**Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered.**

Item 39 was rated as a Strength because Michigan develops its annual reports of progress and services in consultation with representatives identified in Item 38.

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

Item 40 was rated as a Strength because Michigan's services are coordinated with other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population and collaboratives exist both at the State and local level.

## **X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION**

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

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention.

#### **Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and childcare institutions, which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.**

Item 41 was rated as a Strength because the State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

#### **Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.**

Item 42 was rated as a Strength because standards are in place that are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions. According to the Statewide Assessment, prior to the implementation of the ASFA Final Rule, Michigan relaxed the foster home licensing standards for relatives. Specifically, relatives did not need to attend training. The policy was changed in November 2000 to require relative homes to meet the same licensing requirements as non-relative foster homes. The number of licensed relative homes is believed to be small as many relatives either do not meet licensing requirements or do not wish to go through the licensing process.

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

Item 43 was rated as a Strength because the State has in place a process which complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements.

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

Item 44 was rated as a Strength because Michigan has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. According to the Statewide Assessment, Child Placing Agency Licensing Rules require that each supervising agency develops and maintains an ongoing recruitment program. The Foster Care Support Unit provides an array of programs and services to all public and

private agencies, many of the States' foster parent training coalitions, and the MFAPA. The overall goal is to increase the number of qualified foster parents. Within that general goal, there are targeted recruitment efforts for foster/adoptive families that focus on the ethnic and racial diversity of the State population. There are regional recruitment coalitions that include FIA and private agencies.

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

This item was rated as a Strength because Michigan has in place a process for the effective use of cross jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely permanent placements for waiting children. According to the Statewide Assessment, as a State-administered child welfare system, movement of children into nearby counties is frequent and not problematic. Recruitment efforts are accomplished through the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) photo-listing book. It is updated monthly and sent to all FIA offices and private agencies with FIA adoption contracts, as well as many local public libraries. The MARE website is used to reach potential out-of-State adoptive parents. In FY2001, 39 children were placed out of State.

## Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Michigan. The on-site review was conducted during the week of September 9, 2002. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Child and Family Services Administration of the Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA);
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services providing State data for the year 2000;
- Reviews of 49 cases at three sites throughout the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites) with State and local stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, service providers, court personnel, legislators, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 49 cases reviewed are the following:

- 24 cases were reviewed in Wayne County (Detroit), 14 in Saginaw County, and 11 in Jackson County.
- All 49 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- 28 of the cases were “foster care cases” (cases in which children were in the care and custody of the State child welfare agency and in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 21 were “in-home services cases” (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained in their homes).
- In 33 cases, all children in the family were African American; in 10 cases, all children in the family were Caucasian; in 1 case, all children in the family were American Indian; in 1 case, the children in the family were Hispanic; in 1 case the children were of two or more races; and in 1 case, all children in the family were Arab American. There were two cases in which the race/ethnicity of the children was not identified.
- Of the 49 cases reviewed, the **primary** reasons for opening the child welfare agency cases were the following:
  - Neglect (not including medical neglect) - 22 cases (45%)
  - Physical abuse - 11 cases (22%)
  - Substance abuse by parent - 6 cases (12%)
  - Medical neglect - 3 cases (6%)
  - Abandonment - 1 case (2%)
  - Domestic violence in child's home - 1 case (2%)
  - Emotional maltreatment - 1 case (2%)

- Substance abuse by child -1 case (2%)
  - Sexual abuse - 1 case (2%)
  - Other - 2 cases (4%)
- Of the 49 cases reviewed, **all** reasons cited for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency were the following:
    - Neglect (not including medical neglect) –36 cases (73%)
    - Physical abuse – 19 cases (39%)
    - Substance abuse by parents – 18 cases (37%)
    - Domestic violence in child’s home – 7 cases (14%)
    - Medical neglect – 7 cases (14%)
    - Mental/physical health of parent – 5 cases (10%)
    - Abandonment – 4 cases (8%)
    - Sexual abuse – 4 cases (8%)
    - Mental/physical health of child – 2 cases (4%)
    - Child in juvenile justice system – 1 case (2%)
    - Child’s behavior – 1 case (2%)
    - Substance abuse by child – 1 case (2%)
    - Emotional maltreatment – 1 case (2%)
    - Other– 3 cases (6%)
  - In 20 (71%) of the 28 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in foster care during the entire period under review.

The first section of the report presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State’s performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting key findings, a discussion of the State’s status with regard to the outcome, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency’s ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

## SECTION 1: OUTCOMES

### I. SAFETY

#### Safety Outcome 1

<b>Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Saginaw</b>	<b>Wayne</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	8	13	20	41	83.7
Partially Achieved:	2	1	4	7	14.3
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	0	0	1	2.0
Not Applicable:					
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Repeat maltreatment	6.1 %	3.3%	X		
Maltreatment of children in foster care	0.57%	0.33%	X		

#### STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1:

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that 83.7 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved this outcome, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

The CFSR findings with respect to Safety Outcome 1 indicate that, for the most part, FIA is effective in protecting children from abuse and neglect. Repeat maltreatment was observed in only 2 of the 49 cases reviewed, and Michigan's rate of repeat maltreatment (3.3%), as reported in the State Data profile, meets the national standard of 6.1 percent. In addition, Michigan's rate of maltreatment in foster care by foster parents or facility staff (.33%) also meets the national standard of .57 percent. The one concern identified during the CFSR pertained to the timeliness of initiating investigations in response to child maltreatment reports. The case

reviews found that although FIA caseworkers did begin the investigation in a timely manner, they were not consistent in establishing face-to-face contact with child victims, caretakers, and/or perpetrators within the timeframes established by agency policy.

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

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

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 28 of the 49 cases. Twenty-one cases were not applicable because they did not involve reports of child maltreatment during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review was initiated in accordance with child welfare agency policy. Michigan policy regarding responding to child maltreatment reports is the following:

- For reports classified as Priority Response I, the investigation must commence immediately and face-to-face contact with the child victim, person responsible for child’s care, or perpetrator must be established within 24 hours.
- For reports classified as Priority Response II, the investigation must commence within 24 hours and face-to-face contact must be established within 24 hours.
- For reports classified as Priority Response III, the investigation must commence within 24 hours and face-to-face contact must be established within 72 hours.

The results of the assessment of item 1 were the following:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 21 (75%) of the 28 applicable cases (7 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (25%) of the 28 applicable cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

This item was rated as a Strength in all cases in which reviewers determined that investigations were initiated in a timely manner, including establishing face-to-face contact in accordance with agency policy. In all cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement, reviewers determined that although the investigation was begun in a timely manner, face-to-face contact with the child victim, the caretaker, or the perpetrator was not established in accordance with agency policy. For these cases, reviewers noted that telephone contacts were made instead of face-to-face contact. Of the seven cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, two involved reports classified as Priority Response II and four involved reports classified as Priority Response III. For one case, the priority classification was not available in the case file, but face-to-face contact was not initiated within 72 hours. It should be noted that the State policy allows for exceptions to the face-to-face contact requirement if supervisor approval is obtained and this was taken into consideration in rating the cases.



Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that FIA responds to most maltreatment reports in a timely manner. However, stakeholders suggested that when responses are not timely, it often is due to the high level of turnover among caseworkers. In addition, in one county, stakeholders expressed concern about caseworker safety and noted that FIA workers are expected to go out in the field alone. The worker's concerns regarding their safety may contribute to a reluctance to establish face-to-face contact in some of their cases.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 25 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that, although investigations were initiated in a timely manner, FIA did not establish face-to-face contact with child victims, caretakers, or perpetrators in accordance with agency policy.

The Statewide Assessment cited a 2000 CPS workload study conducted by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) which was designed to estimate the staff resources FIA requires to protect children effectively from abuse or neglect, strengthen families, and achieve permanence for children in care. The study incorporated service effectiveness into workload measurement by observing the staff time required to serve a case according to service standards established by the state. The approach explicitly recognized that there was a direct link between service standards, staff time required to serve a case and the safety of children. Findings revealed that the number of CPS staff was not adequate. The Statewide Assessment notes that the numbers of child welfare staff have increased significantly but have not kept pace with the increase in the number of investigations. As of November 2001, CPS was staffed at 98.6 percent of its workload demand. However, an early retirement option between the months of July, 2002 and November, 2002 will result in the loss of many line staff and supervisors.

## **Item 2. Repeat maltreatment**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** The assessment of item 2 was applicable for all 49 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had been at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report occurred within 6 months of that report. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 47 (96%) of the 49 applicable cases (28 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (4%) of the 49 applicable cases (neither of which were foster care cases).

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in cases in which there was no repeat maltreatment. In 20 of the 47 cases rated as a Strength, the child was in foster care during the entire period under review.

In the two cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement, a substantiated report received during the period under review occurred within 6 months of another substantiated report. There were 25 cases in which there was at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report during the period under review.

Additional findings with respect to maltreatment reports for the 49 applicable cases were the following:

- In 11 cases, there was only 1 maltreatment report over the life of the case.
- In 25 cases, there were between 2 and 4 maltreatment reports over the life of the case.
- In 5 cases, there were between 5 and 8 maltreatment reports over the life of the case.
- In 7 cases, there were over 10 maltreatment reports over the life of the case.
- In 1 case, the number of reports over the life of the case could not be determined.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the low rate of recurrence of maltreatment may be attributed to the active prosecution of offenders, particularly in domestic violence cases, and to the efforts of contracted service providers who provide services to families while children remain at home.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following findings:

- There was no maltreatment recurrence in 96 percent of the cases reviewed.
- The State Data Profile indicates that the incidence of repeat maltreatment in calendar year 2000 was 3.3 percent, which meets the national standard of 6.1 percent.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the low rate of maltreatment recurrence may be attributed to the State's use of a Structured Decision Making (SDM) Risk Assessment model with all families.

## Safety Outcome 2

<b>Safety Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Saginaw</b>	<b>Wayne</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	7	11	23	41	83.6
Partially Achieved:	2	2	0	4	8.2
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	1	1	4	8.2
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	0	

### STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 83.6 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

A general CFSR finding was that FIA makes diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. In the majority of in-home services cases reviewed, families were served by a private provider agency under contract to FIA. Case managers from these agencies have primary responsibility for the cases and routinely report to the FIA caseworker on progress. Reviewers determined that these case managers provided intensive direct home-based services to the families, linked the families to other needed services in the community, and monitored service provision and progress. In addition, in a few cases, services were provided to families after reunification to support the reintegration of the family and prevent another removal from the home. However, the CFSR also found that FIA was less effective in ensuring reducing the risk of harm to children. For some of the in-home services cases, reviewers noted that FIA did not provide services to address the families' underlying problems or did not respond appropriately when parents did not follow through with services.

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

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** There were 31 cases for which an assessment of item 3 was applicable. Eighteen cases were excluded from this assessment because there were no substantiated maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to children in the home during the period under review, or because the target child entered foster care prior to the period under review and there were no other children in the home who were at risk of maltreatment. For this item, reviewers were to assess whether, in responding to a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 28 (90%) of the 31 applicable cases (8 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (10%) of the 31 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

Twenty-eight cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that FIA assessed the family's service needs appropriately and provided or referred the family for services to meet those needs. These services were provided to prevent an initial removal (21 cases), support voluntary placements with relatives (2 cases), or prevent a re-removal after reunification (3 cases). The services provided included, but were not limited to, drug and alcohol evaluation and treatment, parenting classes, Head Start, day care, financial assistance, mental health assessments and counseling, transportation assistance, in-home services, post-reunification services, domestic violence counseling, employment assistance, family preservation services, legal assistance, and wraparound services. Three cases were rated as a Strength because reviewers determined that FIA had appropriately removed the children from the home to ensure their safety.

Three cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that the agency had not fully assessed family caregiver needs or adequately followed up to determine the effectiveness of service referrals in relation to protecting children in the home or preventing removal.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue indicated that there is a wide range of services available to families to prevent children from being removed from their homes. Several stakeholders mentioned that the Families First program, which FIA has implemented for many years, is particularly responsive and effective in working with families to prevent children's removal from their homes. In addition, while some stakeholders commented that the agency provides post-reunification services to families, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that these services are not being provided. Stakeholders identified, that beginning in October, 2002, 70 percent of children being reunified with their parents will receive 6 months of supportive services provided by a masters and bachelors level team for a minimum of 8 hours per week the first month and 4 hours per week thereafter with a linkage to their community system at the end of 6 months.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 90 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that FIA made diligent efforts to provide services to prevent children’s placement in foster care. The Statewide Assessment notes that, since 1988, Families First of Michigan has initiated over 40,000 family interventions involving more than 100,000 children at risk of removal. Of the families served, 84 percent were still together one year later.

#### Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 49 cases reviewed. The assessment of item 4 required reviewers to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 41 (84%) of the 49 applicable cases (24 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (16%) of the 49 applicable cases (4 of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined the following:

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by removing the children from their homes and providing services to parents to address risk issues (12 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by removing the children from their homes and seeking TPR prior to or during the period under review (12 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remained in the home or after children were reunified with their families (17 cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency did not provide the necessary services to adequately address the risk of harm to children remaining in their homes (5 cases). In one of these cases, there was a substantiated maltreatment report while the case was open for services.
- The agency caseworker did not follow up to ensure that parents were participating in and receiving services to reduce risk of harm (1 case).
- The agency did not provide adequate monitoring of visitation to protect children (1 case).
- The agency did not conduct background checks on relatives and individuals residing in their homes before placing children (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed a number of opinions. Some stakeholders reported that the use of the Structured Decision Making model is effective in determining how best to manage risk of harm to children. Stakeholders also noted that a risk and safety assessment are completed before children are returned home. However, several stakeholders said that children are returned home too soon without adequate assessment of risk prior to reunification. Other stakeholders expressed concern that children are being placed with relatives or "reunified" with relatives without the agency conducting criminal background checks and completing home study investigations.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 16 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA had not made sufficient efforts to reduce risk of harm to children. Both the case reviews and stakeholder interviews indicated that, in some instances, FIA is not adequately assessing risk of harm, particularly in situations in which relative placements are occurring without home studies and background checks. Stakeholders also noted that there are situations in which the family's past history with child welfare is not taken into account in the assessment of risk, often because the information has not been collected or is not available to the caseworker. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, case readings of foster care cases conducted as part of the State's self-assessment revealed that the required safety assessment was completed correctly in 76 percent of the cases reviewed. In addition, in a mail survey of FIA foster parents, 55 percent reported that they "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statement, "foster care workers consider a child's safety when returning children to their homes."

## II. PERMANENCY

### Permanency Outcome 1

<b>Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Saginaw</b>	<b>Wayne</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	6	7	8	21	75.0
Partially Achieved:	1	1	5	7	25.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	0	0	0.0
Not Applicable:	4	6	11	21	
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Foster care re-entries	8.6%	5.0%	X		
Length of time to achieve reunification	76.2%	52.9%		X	
Length of time to achieve adoption	32.0%	32.0%	X		
Stability of foster care placements	86.7%	86.2%		X	

### STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME P1

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- 75 percent of the cases were rated as having substantially achieved Permanency Outcome 1, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity; and
- The State's percentage of children reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care (52.9%) does not meet the national standard of 76.2 percent.
- The State's percentage of children having had no more than 2 placements in a 12-month period (86.2%) does not meet the national standard of 86.7 percent.

Although the State did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1, there were many children in the foster care cases reviewed that experienced permanency and stability in their living situations. This may be attributed to a variety of factors. For

one, the State places a major emphasis on placement with relatives, which tends to result in fewer placement changes. Also, FIA is diligent in filing for TPR when appropriate and in encouraging adoptions among relatives and foster parents. In addition, the State attempts to expedite the adoption process through use of the new Birth Match system to check for prior FIA histories in which a parent's rights to other children have been terminated. In cases in which a parent has previously had parental rights terminated for another child, when appropriate FIA will expedite the adoption process by filing for TPR immediately rather than waiting for 15 months. Finally, the State Data Profile indicates that the percentage of finalized adoptions occurring within 24 months of entry into foster care meets the national standard of 32.0 percent.

Despite these strengths, the case review process found that there were several cases in which FIA had not made diligent efforts to achieve permanency goals in a timely manner, particularly cases in which the goal is reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives (item 8).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the implementation of the Binsfeld legislation has positively affected the State's permanency planning efforts. Significant changes in Michigan statute and FIA policy were implemented as a result of the Binsfeld Children's Commission, established by Governor Engler and chaired by then Lt. Governor Connie Binsfeld. The theme of the committee was child safety, permanency and child and family well-being. After review of current laws, programs, procedures, policies and training procedures affecting children via in person and written testimony, the Commission generated a report containing 197 recommendations for change both within FIA and the broader child welfare system including the courts. Initial legislative changes occurred in 1998.

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

#### **Item 5. Foster care re-entries**

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Seven of the 28 foster care cases were applicable to an assessment of item 5 because they involved children who entered foster care during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 5 was rated as a Strength in 6 (86%) of the 7 applicable cases.
- Item 5 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (14%) of the 7 applicable cases.



The case rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item involved a re-entry into foster care within 9 months of discharge from a prior episode. The primary reason for removal at both times was that the family did not have an adequate living facility.

Some stakeholders in one of the counties expressed the opinion that re-entries occur because of the inability of the agency and/or the family to access needed services because funding for so many services has been cut.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following:

- In 86 percent of applicable cases, no re-entries into foster care occurred.
- The data reported in the State Data Profile indicate that the rate of re-entry into foster care within 12 months is 5.0 percent, which meets the national standard of 8.6 percent.

According to the Statewide Assessment, FIA attributes the low re-entry rate to the caution taken by the court and FIA when returning children home. However, this also is reflected in a rate of reunification within 12 months that does not meet the national standards. In addition, as noted in the Statewide Assessment, Michigan did not appropriately report children on trial home visits with its data submission for the CFSR. Children who are returned home were reported as discharged from foster care on the date they were returned home, even though the case was not closed. The majority of the time when children are returned home, the court and FIA supervise the placement to determine if the child is safe within the home. Michigan is going to change the data submission for AFCARS in the 2002A submission to include children in their homes on a trial basis for 6 months. After the sixth month, they will be reported as discharged from foster care.

#### **Item 6. Stability of foster care placement**

Strength             Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** All 28 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of Item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 25 (89%) of the 28 applicable cases.
- Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (11%) of the 28 applicable cases.

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 19 cases experienced only one placement during the period under review.
- Children in 5 cases experienced 2 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 4 cases experienced 3 or more placements during the period under review.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item if reviewers determined that a child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (19 cases), or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest (e.g., movement from emergency foster care to a relative's home) (6 cases).

A rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item was assigned when reviewers determined the following:

- Placement changes resulted from problems in the foster home and the agency did not make diligent efforts to prevent the disruption (2 cases).
- A child under age 2 was placed in a shelter for a month prior to being placed in a foster home (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that placement stability is enhanced by placing children with relatives. However, several stakeholders commented that children often are placed on the basis of what is available rather than what is the best match for the child.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that according to the State Data Profile, the percentage of children in Fiscal Year 2000 having 2 or more placements within a 12 month period did not meet the national standard. Although in 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA had made diligent efforts to ensure children's placement stability, because the two indicators are assessed through different measures, it is necessary to meet the standard or criteria for both in order to receive a rating of Strength.

According to the Statewide Assessment, FIA staff have identified lack of funding for wraparound and assisted care as having an effect on placement types. Large metropolitan counties may place children in shelter care at the initial placement. However, the largest metropolitan county does have a Family Assignment System (FAS) designed to prevent shelter placements through rotational assignment of cases to 20 private child placing agencies. In addition, focus groups with FIA staff, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) members, identified the following as affecting movement of children in foster care:

- Initial placements do not match children's needs.
- Inadequate information is provided to foster parents regarding the child's behavior when the child is initially placed.
- Inadequate support of foster parents to prevent movement when children entering foster care have many problems.

- Specialized foster homes are lacking in Michigan.

### Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 28 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner, including filing termination of parental rights (TPR) petitions when relevant. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 7 was rated as a Strength in 25 (89%) of the 28 applicable cases.
- Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (11%) of the 28 applicable cases.

The case review found that the children in the 28 foster care cases had the following permanency goals:

- 13 children had a goal of reunification with parents or permanent placement with relatives.
- 14 children had a goal of adoption.
- 1 child had a goal of permanent placement (long-term foster care) leading to eventual emancipation.

At the time of the onsite review, 16 children had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. Termination of parental rights (TPR) had been filed in 10 cases and attained in 9 cases. In 3 of these cases, TPR was filed prior to the child being in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. Of the remaining 6 cases eligible for TPR filing, compelling reasons not to file for TPR were provided in the case files in 2 cases. In 4 cases, compelling reasons were not noted in the files.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the most recent goal was not appropriate given the needs of the child (1 case); that the goal was appropriate, but had not been established in a timely manner (1 case); or that the goal was appropriate, but the child had been in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months without TPR or compelling reasons not to file for TPR (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the Binsfeld legislation has been instrumental in expediting permanency because it focuses staff on the need to take action regarding permanency within 1 year of the child's entry into foster care. Stakeholders identified that staff were aware of compelling reasons and that compelling reasons were used appropriately. Stakeholders noted that although TPR petitions generally are being filed in a timely manner, concurrent planning is either not well

understood or not used. The findings of the review indicate that Michigan does not have a formal policy regarding concurrent planning.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA had established an appropriate permanency goal in a timely manner. According to the Statewide Assessment, foster care case readings conducted as part of the State's self-assessment process revealed that in 81 percent of the cases, children had a permanency goal with achievable timeframes consistent with the child's developmental needs. The Statewide Assessment indicates that a pilot foster care permanency initiative implemented in the largest metropolitan county will be expanded county-wide beginning in October, 2002. The goal of the initiative is to reduce the number of days a child spends in care and increase the number of children who are maintained in a successful permanent placement, defined as placement with parents, relatives, or guardians; independent living; and adoption.

#### **Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship, or Permanent Placement with Relatives**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Item 8 was applicable for 13 cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved children's goals of reunification or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner or, if goals had not been achieved in a timely manner, whether FIA had made diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 8 was rated as a Strength for 9 (69%) of the 13 applicable cases.
- Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement for 4 (31%) of the 13 applicable cases.

The cases assessed for item 8 included 10 with a goal of reunification and 3 with a goal of permanent placement with relatives. Review findings with respect to these goals were the following:

- For the 10 cases with a goal of reunification, the goal was achieved in 5 cases, and in 4 of those cases, the goal was achieved within 12 months.
- For the 3 cases with a goal of permanent placement with relatives, the goal was achieved in 2 cases within 12 months.
- Overall, in 7 of the 13 cases, the child's permanency goal was achieved and in 6 of those cases, the child's goal was achieved within 12 months.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner or that the agency was making, or had made, concerted efforts to achieve the goals in a timely manner. This item was rated as an Area Needing

Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency did not address the service needs of the parents or relatives that would permit reunification or permanent placement with relatives.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that FIA is effective in seeking relatives as permanent placement options, although it is less likely to formalize these placements as legal guardianships. At present, the State does not have a supported guardianship program which offers financial assistance to relatives beyond TANF funds.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing improvement for the following reasons:

- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year 2000, the State did not meet the national standard for reunifications within 12 months of entry into foster care; and
- In 31 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA had not made diligent efforts to achieve the goal of reunification or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a survey of workers identified the three primary barriers to reunification as poor parenting skills (68%), emotional instability (60%), and substance abuse (42%). However, a survey of parents whose children were in foster care revealed that 26 percent reported that they had service needs that were not met by the agency, particularly needs for housing and family counseling. The Statewide Assessment also noted that, with a great deal of emphasis placed on Family Preservation and prevention services in Michigan, children who are removed frequently come from families with serious problems (substance abuse; domestic violence; and serious problems with attachment, bonding, and parenting). These issues were identified by staff and CASA members in focus groups for the Statewide Assessment and by the 2000 FCRB Annual Report as having an impact on reunification rates. The 2000 FCRB Annual Report also identified lack of adequate housing as a barrier to reunification. Finally, although the Binsfeld legislation requires that substance abuse licensees give priority to a parent whose child has been removed or is in danger of being removed, this has not helped to reduce waiting lists for treatment.

## **Item 9. Adoption**

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** Fourteen of the 28 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 9. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether appropriate and timely efforts had been, or were being, undertaken to achieve finalized adoptions. The results were the following:

- Item 9 was rated as a Strength in 12 (86%) of the 14 applicable cases.

- Item 9 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (14%) of the 14 applicable cases.

The case reviews found that adoption had been finalized in 8 of the 14 cases in which the child's permanency goal was adoption. In seven of those cases, the adoption had been finalized within 24 months of the child entering foster care. For the 6 children who were found to have not yet achieved a finalized adoption, TPR had been achieved for all children and 2 of the children are expected to have adoptions finalized within 24 months of their entry into foster care.

This item was assigned a rating of Strength when reviewers determined that FIA had made or was making diligent efforts to achieve a finalized adoption in a timely manner. Cases were rated as Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that adoptions were not finalized within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care (2 cases). In one case, the delay was attributed to the court not agreeing with a TPR petition. In the other case, the delay was attributed to lengthy efforts on the part of the agency to have the maternal grandmother (who was the intended adoptive parent) obtain a formal divorce from the grandfather, which she refused to do. After 6 years, the child was adopted by another relative.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in general agreement that most adoptions in the State occur as quickly as possible. In one county, stakeholders commented that caseworkers make concerted efforts to locate relatives for adoptive placements, even searching outside of the State. However, some stakeholders noted that FIA does not have enough adoption workers and that obtaining an adoption subsidy for children is becoming more difficult.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following findings:

- In 86 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency was making or had made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner.
- According to the State Data Profile, the percentage of children in the State achieving a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care (32.0%) meets the national standard of 32 percent.

The findings of the case review and stakeholder interviews are consistent with information reported in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, 90 percent of finalized adoptions in 2001 were with relatives or foster parents. Focus groups with staff and CASA members for the Statewide Assessment identified the following key barriers to adoption:

- Difficulty in obtaining approval for the adoption subsidy.
- Age and special needs of children in foster care.
- Changes and redistributing adoption staff to other child welfare areas.

Also noted in the Statewide Assessment, FIA has instituted the following to resolve barriers to adoption:

- Changes within the adoption subsidy process to meet the required 30 day standard of promptness.
- Increasing adoption staff allocations.
- Contracts for regional post adoption support services.
- Piloting a program to address the backlog of TPR appeals.
- Implementing recommendations of the State Court Administrators' Office Adoption Discussion Group.

**Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** One foster care case was applicable for an assessment of item 10. Reviewers were to determine if FIA had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist the child in attaining goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements. This item was rated as a Strength for the one (100%) applicable case. The case was rated as a Strength because reviewers determined that the goal and the living arrangement met the child's needs and that assessments and services to support independent living were provided when appropriate.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that independent living services generally are available and addressed in service plans. However, stakeholders also noted that not all workers are aware of the availability of independent living services. In addition, some stakeholders stated that only children enrolled in school or working are eligible for independent living services and that the services are offered as a privilege rather than as a right. Other stakeholders identified foster parents as making efforts to support older children in their efforts to develop independent living skills.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in the one applicable case, reviewers determined that FIA had made diligent efforts to support the child's long-term placement and eventual transition to independent living. The child, who also is a parent, received services to help her complete her GED and obtain employment.

The Statewide Assessment reported that a focus group of youth aged 14 and older revealed that all receive some type of service designed to help them live independently. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that although the range of services mandated by the Chafee Independent Living Act are provided, most of the youth did not report receiving all of the services. The focus group found the following with respect to services:

- All of the youth received educational services.
- Most youth reported receiving informal independent living services at home from either foster or kinship care providers.

- Most youth knew what a mentor was but few had formal mentor relationships.
- Most youth reported receiving preventive health/hygiene, substance abuse prevention, smoking avoidance, money management and budgeting services while in school.

## Permanency Outcome 2

<b>Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Saginaw</b>	<b>Wayne</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	5	8	8	21	75.0
Partially Achieved:	2	0	5	7	25.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	0	0	0.0
Not Applicable:	4	6	11	21	

### STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME P2:

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 75.0 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although the State did not reach the required 90 percent achievement required for substantial conformity, there were areas of strength. For example, family and community connections were preserved for most children in the foster care cases reviewed, and almost all children were placed in close proximity to their communities of origin when relevant. In contrast, FIA was inconsistent in its efforts to place children with siblings or to search for relatives as potential placement resources, particularly paternal relatives. In addition, concerns were identified regarding FIA's efforts to promote visitation and bonding with parents.

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



### Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Of the 28 foster care cases, 16 were applicable for an assessment of item 11. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which (a) TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, (b) contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest, or (c) parents were deceased or whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 11 was rated as a Strength in 15 (94%) of the 16 applicable cases.
- Item 11 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (6%) of the 16 applicable cases.

In the 15 cases rated as a Strength, the child either was placed in the same community or county as parents or relatives (14 cases), or the child was placed with a relative in a different county (1 case). The case rated as an Area Needing Improvement involved a child who, although placed in the same county, was not in close proximity to either parent. The lack of transportation posed a barrier for maternal visits with the child. However, this placement was noted to be an "emergency placement."

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that children may not be placed in close proximity to their parents because there are not enough placement resources. However, some stakeholders noted that the agency does provide bus tickets to parents to facilitate contact.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 94 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that FIA had made diligent efforts to ensure that children's foster care placements were in close proximity to their parents or relatives. According to targeted case reviews conducted during the Statewide Assessment process, in 81 percent of the cases, the children were placed in close proximity to their families. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the Family to Family projects implemented in two counties are designed to ensure that children remain in the communities that they lived in before they were placed in foster care.

### Item 12. Placement with siblings

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Nineteen of the 28 foster care cases involved a child with siblings who were also in foster care. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 16 (84%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (16%) of the 19 applicable cases.

In 16 of the 19 applicable cases, the child was in a placement with at least one other sibling, and in 10 of these cases, the child was in a placement with all siblings. Reviewers determined that in 5 of the 19 cases, the children's separation from some or all siblings was necessary to meet the treatment needs of one of the siblings. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that siblings were placed apart due to lack of placement resources available to accept sibling groups.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue stated that although siblings often are placed together, the lack of placement resources available to accommodate sibling groups is a barrier to keeping siblings together. In one county, it was stated that FIA uses relative placements to promote placement with siblings. Stakeholders noted that the Child Welfare Licensing Division within the Bureau of Regulatory Services in the Department of Consumer and Industry Services does have the capacity to issue variances in foster home licenses to accommodate sibling groups but that this does not routinely occur.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 16 percent of the cases, siblings were not placed together, and their separation was not deemed necessary to meet the needs of one or more of the children. The Statewide Assessment notes that according to the 1999 Supervising Agency Report Card, for sibling groups of 2, 33.1 percent were in separate placements; for sibling groups of 3-4, 54.6 percent were in separate placements; and for sibling groups of 5 or more, 82.8 percent were in separate placements. Placing large sibling groups together is problematic because most foster homes are licensed for no more than four children.

### **Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 13 was applicable for 22 of the 28 foster care cases. Six foster care cases were not applicable for assessment because parental rights were terminated for both parents and the parents were no longer involved in the lives of the children. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine (a) whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care, and (b) whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 15 (68%) of the 22 applicable cases.
- Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (32%) of the 22 applicable cases.

Case reviews revealed the following visitation patterns between children and their mothers in the 17 applicable cases:

- Weekly visits - 13 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits – 2 cases.
- No visits – 1 case.

In the two cases in which visits between the mother and child occurred on a less than monthly basis, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation. However, in the one case in which there were no visits between the mother and child, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to promote visitation.

Case reviews revealed the following visitation patterns between children and their fathers in the 16 applicable cases:

- Weekly visits - 3 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits - 2 cases.
- No visits – 10 cases.

In one of the two cases in which visits between the father and child occurred on a less than monthly basis, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation. In 3 of the 10 cases in which there were no visits between the father and child, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote visitation. Consequently, in 9 cases in which visitation between father and child was either occurring less than twice monthly or not at all, reviewers determined that concerted efforts had not been made to promote visitation.

Typical visitation patterns between siblings for the 9 cases in which children were placed apart were identified as the following:

- Weekly visits – 5 cases.
- Monthly visits - 2 cases.
- No visits - 2 cases.

In one of the two cases in which sibling visits did not occur, reviewers determined that the agency had made efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that visitation had occurred with sufficient frequency to promote attainment of case goals and to ensure continuity of the relationships of children in foster care. Cases also were rated as a

Strength when visits were not of sufficient frequency, but reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to promote more frequent visitation. Case reviews revealed evidence of concerted efforts on the part of the agency and foster parents to facilitate visitation, including providing transportation and increasing the schedule of visits prior to reunification.

Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that visitation was not of sufficient frequency and that the agency had not made diligent efforts to promote more frequent visitation. The concerns noted pertained to a failure to conduct a diligent search for the father (1 case), the absence of visitation plans pertaining to child visits with parents (2 cases) and siblings (4 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that when siblings are separated in foster care, visitation often is insufficient.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 32 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA had not made concerted efforts to facilitate visitation. This finding is in conflict with State policy and the Juvenile Code. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the Juvenile Code requires that parent-child parenting time occur no less than every 7 days after the dispositional hearing, unless clearly documented as harmful to the child. Scheduling is to be done with primary consideration for the parents' time commitment and supervising agencies must have flexibility to provide a number of hours outside the traditional workday. Legislation requires foster care workers to be sufficiently present during parenting time to be able to monitor and assess in home parenting time between parent and child and testify in court as to the interaction between parents and children. The Statewide Assessment cites that if siblings are not placed together, sibling visitation is required.

#### **Item 14. Preserving connections**

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** Item 14 was applicable for assessment in 27 of the 28 foster care cases. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child's connections to neighborhood, community, family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 24 (89%) of the 27 applicable cases.
- Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (11%) of the 27 applicable cases.

Reviewers indicated that in 22 of the 27 applicable cases, children's primary connections were “significantly” preserved while in foster care; in 3 of the 27 cases, children’s primary connections had been “partially” preserved; and in 2 of the 27 cases, children’s primary connections had been “not at all” preserved.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that critical primary connections were at least partially preserved while the child was in foster care. One child in the cases reviewed was determined to be Native American. In this case, reviewers determined that the Tribe was notified in a timely manner and that the child was placed with extended family. In addition, although the Tribe determined that the child was not an enrolled member, the Michigan Indian Child Welfare Agency continued to assist the agency with the case.

Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to maintain connections.

Several stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed concern that there is insufficient attention to the child's culture when making placement decisions, particularly when the children are Native American. Stakeholders noted that there are not enough Native American foster homes, and the procedures used to identify Native American children and notify Tribes are not sufficient. Also, stakeholders expressed the opinion that private agency staff providing foster care services do not understand the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and do not receive training on ICWA. In addition, stakeholders commented that the agency that has the contract to provide services to Native American children does not have Native American staff, despite its efforts to recruit Native Americans.

A few stakeholders expressed concern that State law requires that visitation with parents and other family members be suspended once TPR is attained, unless the court rules otherwise. They suggested that there should be advocacy to change this law so that children can maintain connections with their families of origin. Stakeholders also noted that workers may not aggressively pursue relationships with children’s family members when families are resistant, difficult to work with, or hostile.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 89 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections to community, faith, and friends. According to the Statewide Assessment, proximity and educational needs are to be considered when making placement decisions.

## Item 15. Relative placement

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 28 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 15. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 23 (82%) of the 28 applicable cases.
- Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (18%) of the 28 applicable cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children were, at the time of the case review, placed with relatives (13 cases), had been previously placed with relatives (6 cases), or were not placed with relatives but the agency had made diligent efforts to seek relatives and assess them as placement resources (4 cases).

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- The agency had not conducted a thorough search or evaluation of relatives as potential placement resources (3 cases).
- Relatives requested to be considered as placement resources, but the agency did not follow up (2 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that a large number of children are in relative care. However, stakeholders noted that in most places in the State relatives are not receiving foster care payment. In addition, some stakeholders voiced concern that assessments of relatives are not completed prior to placement.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 18 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. According to the Statewide Assessment, in a survey of parents whose children were in foster care, 64 percent reported that their caseworker had asked them about possible relatives to care for their child. However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that a 1999 study (called the Supervising Agency Report Card) found that 26 percent of relative placements disrupted, requiring children to be placed in a licensed foster home. These disruptions were attributed in large part to the lack of financial supports available for relative caregivers, particularly the lack of a subsidized guardianship option. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, relatives caring for children whose parents' rights have not been terminated can apply for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Once

parental rights are terminated, State funding at the foster care rate is provided to relatives. The Statewide Assessment also notes that relatives may apply to be licensed foster parents but few apply. It is believed that the number of relatives licensed as foster parents is small; many cannot meet licensing requirements and many do not want to go through the licensing process. To address these problems, in February 2000, three offices in Wayne County began piloting a Kinship Care and Family Preservation program that increases monetary assistance and provides financial assistance to relatives seeking guardianship.

#### **Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents**

Strength  Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 16 was applicable for 16 of the 28 foster care cases. A case was considered not applicable if parental rights had been terminated and parents were no longer involved with the child or if a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child's best interests. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between the child and both of his/her parents through visitation and provision of services that promote bonding. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 13 (81%) of the 16 applicable cases.
- Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (19%) of the 16 applicable cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that (a) there was a strong bond between the parent and the child that the agency supported through facilitating frequent visitation or, (b) there was not a strong bond between the parent and the child, but the agency made concerted efforts to promote bonding through frequent visitation or services designed to strengthen the parent-child relationship.

In cases where the item was rated as a strength, reviewers noted the opportunity for more frequent or flexible visitation between parent/child through the use of relative placements or expanded visitation schedules offered to parents in conjunction with services. Cases were rated Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency did not promote visitation or provide services to strengthen the parent-child relationship (3 cases). In cases where the item was rated as an area needing improvement, reviewers cited that visitation/contact was not flexible to meet the scheduling needs or case dynamics of the family situation or the environment in which visitation occurred was not conducive to promote a supportive bond between parent and child.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that, in 19 percent of applicable cases, the agency did not provide adequate services to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care. Particular concerns pertained to a lack of consistent efforts to locate and involve fathers.

### III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

#### Child Well-Being Outcome 1

<b>Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Saginaw</b>	<b>Wayne</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	10	11	14	35	71.4
Partially Achieved:	1	1	7	9	18.4
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	2	3	5	10.2
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	0	

#### STATUS OF CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved for 71.4 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

A general finding of the CFSR process was that FIA is not consistent in meeting the service needs of children and families. In addition, there were many cases in which family members, particularly fathers, were not involved in the case planning process, and many cases in which caseworker visits with children and parents was not of sufficient frequency or quality to ensure children's safety and/or promote attainment of case goals.

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



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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 49 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had (a) adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents; and (b) provided the services necessary to meet those needs. The results were the following:

- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 36 (73%) of the 49 applicable cases (25 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 (27%) of the 49 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

Reviewers made the following determinations from the case reviews:

- Children's needs were assessed in 45 of the 49 cases and services were provided in 42 cases.
- Mothers' needs were assessed in 38 of the 45 cases for which an assessment of mothers' needs was applicable and services were provided in all 38 cases. (Assessments of mother's needs was considered not applicable if TPR was attained for the mother or if the mother could not be located despite a diligent search).
- Fathers' needs were assessed in 12 of the 30 cases for which an assessment of fathers' needs was applicable and services were provided in all 12 cases.
- Foster parents' needs were assessed in 18 of the 20 foster family cases, and services were provided in 16 cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met.

A rating of Area Needing Improvement was assigned when reviewers determined one or more of the following for the 49 cases assessed for this item:

- Children's needs were not assessed and/or services to address identified needs were not provided (4 cases).
- The services provided were not adequate to meet the needs of parents and/or children (4 cases).
- Parents' and/or siblings' needs were not assessed and/or services to address needs were not provided (4 cases).
- Foster parent's needs were not assessed and/or services to address needs were not provided (1 case).
- Fathers were not contacted by the agency to determine needs (2 cases).

Several stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency's use of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) model to assess risk and safety facilitates identification of needs and provision of appropriate services. However, other stakeholders suggested that the SDM approach forces caseworkers to categorize family members as being particular "types," which does not promote individualization of services. Some stakeholders voiced concern that decisions were being made and then the SDM tool was used to justify those decisions. Stakeholders also identified that overrides in the SDM system allow workers the flexibility of increasing the intensity of intervention for a family; however, there is not an override that will allow the intensity of the intervention to be lessened.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 27 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that FIA had not been effective in addressing the service needs of children, parents, and/or foster parents. This finding is consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, targeted case readings revealed that 77 percent of the foster care cases read contained an up-to-date Child Needs and Strength Assessment and only 62 percent of the needs identified as "priority needs" were addressed in the treatment plan and service agreement. In addition, focus groups with staff, FCRB members, and CASA members for the Statewide Assessment revealed that supportive services to foster parents may not be provided on a consistent basis. Finally, the Statewide Assessment notes that although parents whose children are either in foster care or at risk of placement are to be given priority for receiving substance abuse treatment services, this priority standing has not helped to reduce the waiting list for treatment. The findings of the Statewide Assessment indicate that a Substance Abuse and Child Welfare Task Force has been convened to address this issue and a Task Force is working to implement Family drug courts.

### **Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 18 was applicable for 47 of the 49 cases. Cases were determined to be not applicable for assessment if TPR had been attained for both parents prior to the period under review and were no longer involved in planning for their children, and the children were too young to be involved in the case planning process. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents (including pre-adoptive parents or permanent caregivers) and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interest. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent (or child) had actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. This assessment produced the following findings:

- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 33 (70%) of the 47 cases (19 of which were foster care cases).

- Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 14 (30%) of the 47 cases (7 of which were foster care cases).

In assessing this item, reviewers made the following determinations:

- Mothers were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 34 cases. In 9 cases, the mother was not involved but should have been because there was no TPR on the mother and her location was known. There were 4 cases in which the mother's participation in the case plan was contrary to the child's interests, and 2 cases in which the mother was not available to participate.
- Fathers were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 8 cases. In 12 cases the father was not involved but should have been because there was no TPR on the father and his location was known. There were 24 cases in which the father was not available to participate, and 5 cases in which the father's participation was considered to be contrary to the child's best interest.
- Children were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 15 cases. In 5 cases, children were not involved, although reviewers determined that they were old enough to have been involved. There were 29 cases in which reviewers determined that the children were not old enough to participate in the case planning process.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that all relevant parties had actively participated in the case planning process. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that one or more of the key parties had not been involved in the case planning process. In most of these cases (11), the general finding was that case plans were prepared by the caseworkers and presented to parents for signature without requesting their input (although in some cases, the case plans were not signed by the parents). In one case, there was no diligent search for the non-custodial father to involve him in the case planning process. In two cases, pre-adoptive parents were not involved in case planning and changes in case plans were not communicated to them.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that in many cases, the case plans tend to be "generic" or "boiler plate," and are not individualized to families. One stakeholder suggested that this may be due to a lack of engagement skills among agency workers. At least one stakeholder indicated that plans do not provide the birth parent(s) with a prioritization of what must be done in what order to achieve reunification and that the numerous requirements overwhelm the parents.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that, in 30 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that FIA had not made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. These findings are consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, although agency policy requires that the family be extensively involved in case planning, foster care case readings conducted as part of the self-assessment process revealed that parents were involved in plan development in 59 percent of the cases. In addition, interviews with parents involved with the CPS program found that 61 percent reported that they had input regarding the

services they received. In cases where youth were assessed for independent living needs as part of the Child Needs Assessments (CANS), targeted case readings revealed that 85 percent of the youth were involved in plan development.

### Item 19. Worker visits with child

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 49 cases were applicable for an assessment of item 19. In conducting this assessment, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the caseworkers and the children were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 39 (80%) of the 49 applicable cases (26 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 10 (20%) of the 49 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 28 foster care cases:

- In 3 cases, visits typically occurred once a week.
- In 2 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 20 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 3 cases, visits typically occurred less frequently than once a month.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 21 in-home cases:

- In 5 cases, visits occurred once a week.
- In 5 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 4 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 7 cases, visits typically occurred less frequently than once a month.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals.

Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children was not sufficient (all 10 cases) or of adequate quality (3 cases) to meet the needs of the child. As noted above, only two

of the cases assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item were foster care cases. In many of these cases, telephone contacts were made rather than in-person visits.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed concern regarding visitation with children. They suggested that the primary problem was that visitation is not consistent because of the high levels of caseworker turnover.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 20 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality and often did not meet agency policy requirements. According to the Statewide Assessment, CPS policy requires minimum contact standards based upon the risk level identified by the SDM Risk Assessment. Children in cases assessed as low risk must be seen once per month; moderate risk must be seen twice per month; high risk must be seen 3 times per month; and intensive risk must be seen 4 times per month. A contractual provider who is paid with local purchase of service monies to reduce risk to children may meet the face-to-face contacts requirements; however, the CPS worker must still maintain at least once a month face-to-face contact. In addition, foster care workers are required to have two face-to-face contacts with the child the first month after initial placement and monthly thereafter. When Family Reunification or Family First of Michigan (FFM) is serving a family, they are responsible for making the required contacts. The foster care worker is required to have one contact (phone or in-person) per month with the service provider. Targeted foster care case readings completed during the Statewide Assessment revealed that caseworkers were visiting with children at least monthly in 62 percent of the cases reviewed. Staffing issues were cited as affecting FIA's ability to meet this requirement. Additionally, the Statewide Assessment cited the 2000 NCCD workload study which revealed that the number of foster care staff was not adequate. With the addition of prevention and juvenile justice worker positions to the foster care allocation between 1997 and 2002, the foster care caseload ratio was reduced from approximately 30:1 to 20:1. These changes resulted in foster care services being staffed at 80 percent of the workload demand, up from an earlier 56 percent of the workload demand. Additionally, the number of foster care cases where services are purchased from a private agency increased.

#### **Item 20. Worker visits with parents**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 20 was applicable for 40 of the 49 cases. Cases that were considered not applicable for an assessment of this item were those in which (a) parental rights had been terminated and the parents were no longer involved in planning for the child; or (b) the parents could not be located despite diligent efforts by the agency. Reviewers were to assess whether

the caseworker had sufficient face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers to promote attainment of case goals or to ensure the children's safety and well being. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 29 (72.5%) of the 40 cases (13 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 11 (27.5%) of the 40 cases (6 of which were foster care cases).
- Of the 19 foster care cases applicable for this item, 13 were rated as a Strength and 6 were rated as Area Needing Improvement.
- Of the 21 in-home services cases applicable for this item, 16 were rated as a Strength and 5 were rated as Area Needing Improvement.

Typical patterns of caseworker visits with mothers were the following (38 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits - 8 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 8 cases.
- Monthly visits - 12 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 10 cases.

Typical patterns of caseworker visits with fathers were the following (26 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits - 3 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 3 cases.
- Monthly visits – 2 cases.
- Less than monthly visits – 11 cases.
- No visits - 7 cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that visits were not sufficiently frequent to meet the needs of parents and children (9 of the 40 applicable cases), or no attempts were made to visit the non-custodial father (2 of the 40 applicable cases).

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 27.5 percent of the 40 applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with parents were not sufficient to promote the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals. A primary concern identified was lack of caseworker contacts with fathers, even in cases in which fathers had been caretakers and/or maintained connections with the children. Targeted foster care readings conducted during the Statewide Assessment process found that caseworkers were visiting with parents at least monthly in 70 percent of cases. Staffing issues were cited as affecting FIA's ability to meet this requirement. Policy requires that

CPS standards for face-to-face with parents is the same as those listed in Item 19. Foster care workers are required to have 2 face-to-face contacts with parents the first month after initial placement and monthly thereafter. When Family reunification or Family First of Michigan is serving a family, they are responsible for making the required contacts and the foster care worker is required to have one contact, either phone or in-person, per month with the service provider. Upon a child’s return to the home, weekly face-to-face contacts with the parents are required during the first month and can be extended up to 90 days if needed. In subsequent months, at least twice a month in-person contacts are to occur.

**Well-Being Outcome 2**

<b>Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Saginaw</b>	<b>Wayne</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	6	9	11	26	78.8
Partially Achieved:	0	2	3	5	15.2
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	0	1	2	6.0
Not Applicable:	4	3	9	16	

**STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2**

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 78.8 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome. This is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with this outcome as the general finding of the CFSR process was that FIA was inconsistent in its efforts to address children's educational needs. The findings for the item assessed for Well Being Outcome 2 are presented below.

**Item 21. Educational needs of the child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 21 was applicable for 33 of the 49 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for assessment were foster care cases in which the children were too young to be enrolled in school or preschool, or in-home services cases in which the children did not have needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 26 (79%) of the 33 applicable cases (17 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (21%) of the 33 applicable cases (4 of which were foster care cases).

Reviewers reported the following additional findings with respect to this item:

- Services were provided to meet educational needs in 22 of 29 cases in which service needs were identified. Services were not provided in 7 cases where service needs were identified, and service provision was not applicable in 20 cases.
- Of the 22 service needs identified, 5 were special education, 3 received educational advocacy, 3 received tutoring, 8 received early intervention, and 3 received other services (e.g., alternative school, therapeutic support services, speech therapy, gifted program and school-based placements).
- School records were included in 12 of the 14 applicable foster care cases.
- In four foster care cases, foster parents or relative caretakers did not receive the children's school records at the time of placement.
- In four foster care cases, the children experienced multiple school changes as a result of placement changes.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item if there was evidence that the agency had assessed the children's educational needs and had provided services to meet those needs (if necessary). Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement (7 of 33 applicable cases) when reviewers determined that educational assessments had not been conducted to identify needs (6 of the 33 applicable cases), or that educational needs had been identified, but services were not provided to address those needs (1 of the 33 applicable cases). Although the rating was not affected by this finding, reviewers also noted that, for children in foster care, educational needs were more likely to be addressed by foster parents than by the FIA caseworker.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that there are problems between the agency and the school systems in some areas of the State. They noted that the agency has had to advocate extensively to ensure that children in foster care get Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) when necessary. In one instance, the agency had to file suit against the school district to get an IEP for a child. However, it was reported that one county has an agreement in place with the local Head Start agency which gives preference to foster children.



**Determination and Discussion:** Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that in 21 percent of 33 applicable cases, the educational needs of children were not effectively and appropriately addressed. According to the Statewide Assessment, agency policy requires that placement decisions take into consideration the educational needs of the child. This includes "placement in the county of residence, preferably in the child's own school district." However, the Statewide Assessment also notes that a survey of parents revealed that 75 percent of their school-age children requiring placement outside of their home had to change schools because of the placement in foster care. To address this problem, the Foster Care Permanency Initiative provides payment to a supervisory agency based upon their ability to maintain a child in the same school. The Statewide Assessment also notes that for children aged 10 and older, FIA will pay for tutoring services geared toward raising a failing grade if recommended in writing by the teacher and not required of the school under the Special Education Act. Focus groups with FCRB members and CASA identified a lack of tutoring services and special education services for children in foster care. In a mail survey of FIA foster parents, a key finding was that 55 percent of the parents responding either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the "child's caseworker was helpful in linking the child to these (educational) services."

### Child Well-Being Outcome 3

<b>Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Saginaw</b>	<b>Wayne</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	11	10	16	37	86.0
Partially Achieved:	0	2	1	3	7.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	1	2	3	7.0
Not Applicable:	0	1	5	6	

#### STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

Michigan did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 86.0 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

In general, the CFSR process found that FIA was effective in meeting children's physical health needs, but was less consistent in its efforts to address children's mental health needs. A key concern identified was that mental health services were not always available or of sufficient quality to meet the children's needs. In addition, in some cases children did not receive adequate monitoring to ensure

that recommended mental health services were actually received.

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

## **Item 22. Physical health of the child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 22 was applicable for 38 of the 49 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for this assessment were in-home services cases for which no physical health issues were identified. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (a) children's physical health needs had been appropriately assessed, and (b) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 34 (89%) of the 38 applicable cases (25 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (11%) of the 38 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the children's health needs were routinely assessed and services provided as needed. Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- Initial health screening was not completed in a timely manner (within State-mandated timeframe) (2 cases).
- Physical exams were not provided on a routine basis (1 case).
- Dental exams were not provided on a routine basis (1 case).
- There was no case plan or documentation of the worker discussing or addressing the child's health needs (1 case).
- Foster parents did not receive health records (1 case).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that FIA is effective in addressing children's physical health needs. However, stakeholders in one county indicated that there is difficulty obtaining Medicaid services for children who are in relative placements.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that, in 89 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that FIA adequately addressed the health needs of children in foster care and in-home services cases. Overall, medical and dental services were accessible, services were provided, and documentation was thorough. Reviewers did identify that the transfer of Medicaid from Medicaid managed care upon entry into foster care does cause a gap in medical services.

According to the Statewide Assessment, it is required that each child entering foster care has a physical examination within 30 days

of the initial foster care placement, receives a yearly physical examination, has current immunizations, and has a dental examination within 90 days of placement and annually thereafter, unless greater frequency is indicated. The Statewide Assessment notes that during the targeted case readings conducted as part of the self-assessment process, 75 percent of the children in foster care had a dental exam within 90 days, and 40 percent had a medical exam within 30 days. The key problem regarding medical exams was that it was difficult to schedule a medical exam within 30 days.

### **Item 23. Mental health of the child**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 23 was applicable for 26 of the 49 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were foster care cases in which the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs, and in-home services cases in which the children's mental health needs were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (a) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and (b) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 21 (81%) of the 26 applicable cases (16 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (19%) of the 26 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

For the 26 applicable cases, reviewers noted that children's mental health needs were "significantly assessed" in 21 cases, "partially assessed" in 2 cases, and "not at all assessed" in 3 cases. Reviewers also reported that mental health needs were "significantly met" in 16 cases, "partially met" in 2 cases, "not at all met" in 4 cases. In four cases, the assessment resulted in a finding of no need for mental health services.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength if mental health needs were "significantly" assessed and the children's mental health needs were "significantly" met. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that assessments and services were provided only partially or not at all. The following problems were found in cases rated as Area Needing Improvement:

- Child's mental health needs or behavioral issues were not assessed (2 cases).
- Child had an identified service need that was not being met (3 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that mental health services are difficult to access and that many of the existing services are of questionable quality. However, a few stakeholders indicated that there are high quality services for victims of sexual abuse. Stakeholders also voiced concern that there is no State policy regarding assessing mental health needs of children when

they enter foster care. In addition, stakeholders reported that mental health services can be difficult to access and that a recent change in mental health services provision under Medicaid has created confusion about where to obtain services. According to stakeholders, state funded community mental health services are being cutback financially, which is negatively impacting the availability of these services.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 19 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the State did not adequately address children's mental health needs. According to the Statewide Assessment, in Michigan, there are no policy requirements that children in foster care receive an initial mental health assessment. Children's mental health needs are assessed as a part of the CANS and services are provided based upon identified needs. According to the Statewide Assessment, legislation requires that an assessment or psychological evaluation be completed for all Michigan Children's Institute (MCI) wards (permanent wards whose parental rights have been terminated) who have suffered sexual abuse, serious physical abuse or mental illness. The assessment is to be conducted by a licensed mental health professional or certified social worker trained in children's assessments. For very young children (e.g., one year olds), a developmental assessment will meet the requirement. Mental health services are not always available to treat children. Community Mental Health (CMH) services are difficult to obtain; local CMH agencies have limited funding and, although Medicaid is accepted, most families in Michigan are in managed care programs which limit the number of therapy sessions available. The capacity for CMH to serve foster children, though not in managed care, is low. Often times, children must meet the criteria for a mental health diagnosis to receive CMH services. If a child is placed out of their home county, funding for services is problematic. Psychiatric services are difficult to find. Payment for psychological exams is limited for foster care cases. Counseling services may be provided via fair market rate contracts. Focus groups with FCRB members and staff for the Statewide Assessment report that reimbursement for outreach counseling is not high and the quality of these services may not always be the best. Funding for mental health services to children living in an unlicensed relative home and whose parents' rights have not been terminated is limited to county child care funds.

## SECTION 2: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

### IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

### STATUS OF STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the factor of Statewide Information System. Findings with respect to the item assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

This item has been rated as a Strength/ because the Statewide Information system can, at minimum, readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan is in the process of implementing its statewide automated child welfare system (SACWIS) called the Services Worker Support System (SWSS). The process is being phased in incrementally. In 1996, Michigan implemented a basic children’s protective services application (SWSS CPS) as a distributed system with a database in each county. A foster care, adoption, and juvenile justice system (SWSS FAJ), using a central server and statewide database, was phased in during 2001. Though cases can be electronically transferred from SWSS CPS to SWSS FAJ, the State plans to redesign SWSS CPS with a central server and an Oracle database like SWSS FAJ. SWSS FAJ functionality includes sufficient information to comply with the

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and contains legal, placement, medical, and education information for each child. SWSS FAJ has reports and ticklers that facilitate day-to-day caseload management. Plans call for inclusion of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) System used by foster care staff beginning in 2003. Currently, only FIA has the capability to input data into SWSS FAJ. The target date to allow access to private agencies is October 2002.

While SWSS is being phased in incrementally, Michigan also maintains a number of mainframe legacy systems. Legacy systems continue to produce point-in-time or periodic reports including monthly CPS case lists, quarterly and annual aggregate data. Although this results in some redundancy of data entry, there is an interface between the legacy systems and SWSS, most notably in the area of case opening and tracking. New systems such as SWSS FAJ provide local on-demand reports primarily intended for local management and control. Stakeholders identified that, within the next few months, CPS SWSS will have the capacity to allow counties to gather statewide child abuse and neglect history on families.

The State provides training on the automated system as part of the core training for caseworkers. Training includes theoretical and practice applications of using the data systems, as well as hands-on use of SWSS. All foster care, juvenile justice, and adoption staff received training on SWSS FAJ in 2001. CPS workers received training on the SWSS Transfer to Foster Care system. This process is the manner in which a foster care case is transferred from CPS to foster care and requires both certain elements to be data entered as well as certain activities to occur in order for the transfer to be completed.

According to the Statewide Assessment, focus group participants drawn from various disciplines convened as part of the State's self assessment process identified the following concerns/needs, which are more applicable to the legacy and transition systems due to limited experience with the newer system:

- There is a need for flexibility to construct/select custom reports.
- The existence of the various legacy and SWSS data systems is confusing to many workers and managers.
- There are too many conflicting reports being generated and workers and managers do not receive training on how to interpret and use the reports.
- The accuracy and quality of data under the legacy system was deemed variable based upon the value placed upon accuracy and usability of reports at each local office.
- Corrections to information stored in legacy systems were cumbersome to complete.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR reported that SWSS has the capacity to identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, goals, and placement of each child in foster care. Stakeholders indicated that compared to prior systems, SWSS provides more data, generates more useful data reports (for making management decisions), and addresses the issue of accountability by collecting outcome information. Stakeholders also noted that although CPS data currently are recorded in a legacy

system until full conversion to SWSS CPS, it is expected that within the next quarter (after the CFSR onsite review), a family’s CPS history will be accessible on a statewide basis.

Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that agency caseworkers “love” SWSS. Workers appreciate the fact that the system has ticklers to remind them of important dates and provides updates to assist them in case management and case tracking. Stakeholders noted that supervisors and managers also are very positive about SWSS. In particular, supervisors and managers appreciate the fact that they receive reports on outcomes from the system and that the system permits tracking of trends within counties.

Despite the generally positive views of SWSS, several stakeholders expressed concern about the ongoing existence of the multiple information systems during the implementation phase (there are about 4 different systems that staff must use to input data). Stakeholders noted that as a result of having all of these systems, inputting and accessing information is time-consuming and labor intensive. Stakeholders also expressed concern about the large number of reports generated by the systems, which was described by one stakeholder as “overwhelming.” Not only are the reports too numerous for managers to review, but many of the reports are difficult to interpret and use in any meaningful way. Stakeholders noted that the inability of private sector to input information is a drawback although it was also noted that FIA will forward information to the private sector requesting feedback on the information’s accuracy. It is not known, however, how successful this process is and how closely the information is monitored for errors by the private sector and reported back to FIA. Stakeholders expressed concern about the impact the recent reorganization of local office Information Technology Specialist under a new State department and loss of IT staff will have on SWSS and the capacity to develop county specific ad hoc reports.

While Michigan is found to be in substantial conformity with this systemic factor for the purpose of the CFSR, the existence of multiple case management systems would be problematic in a SACWIS review.

**V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM**

<b>Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity</b>				
Rating	<b>Not in Substantial Conformity</b>		<b>Substantial Conformity</b>	
	1	2 X	3	4

**STATUS OF CASE REVIEW SYSTEM**

Michigan is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Findings with regard to specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 has been assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because case plans are not being consistently developed jointly with parents even though FIA has a policy requiring joint case plan development.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Michigan requires that each child has an Initial Service Plan (ISP) completed within 30 days of entering care and an Updated Service Plan (USP) completed every 90 days thereafter while the case remains open for services. The service plans incorporate strength and needs assessments into the development of a plan's goals and objectives. In the plan, each identified need must be addressed with a service designed to ameliorate the need. Supervisory approval (indicated by the supervisor's signature on the plan) is required for all case plans. Most courts require that ISP/USPs must be submitted to the court before review hearings.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the child's family, the child, and the foster parent or relative caregiver must be offered the opportunity to participate in preparing the plan. Additionally, recognizing the importance of non-related household members, Michigan policy requires consideration be given to the boyfriend/girlfriend or "living together partner" (LTP) of the parent; however, participation in developing the plan and compliance with the plan is mandatory only when court ordered. Michigan has adopted the Solution Focused Interviewing model and provides training to all child welfare workers on this approach. Families are viewed as partners in the case planning process and are to assist in identifying solutions to any identified problems. This ensures that parents and children take ownership of the plan that is developed to assist them. Parents are to participate actively in developing the Parent-Agency Treatment Plan and Service Agreement section of the service plan. The worker negotiates goals and action steps in these sections of the plan.

Despite these policy requirements, the Statewide Assessment noted that focus group participants, representing the FCRB members and CASA, reported that parents and youth are not regularly involved in the case planning process, although they acknowledged that there is a variation in this practice across caseworkers. Focus group participants stated that in many cases, the Parent-Agency Treatment Plans and Services Agreements section of the service plan are not even signed by the parent.



The Statewide Assessment also noted that a survey of parents whose children were in foster care during the State's self-assessment process produced the following results:

- 68 percent of parents remembered discussing a plan or goal for the family with the worker.
- 32 percent of parents did not remember discussing a plan for their child with the foster care worker.
- 83 percent of the parents who remembered discussing their child's goal or plan stated that they were able to give input into the plan.
- 70 percent of the parents reported that the caseworker was willing to listen to suggestions on how to improve their situation.

Finally, according to the Statewide Assessment, case reviews of targeted foster care cases conducted as part of the State's self-assessment process found that caseworkers involved the parent in the development of the service plan in 59 percent of the cases reviewed. Also, interviews conducted with parents involved with the CPS program found that 61 percent reported that they had input regarding the services they received.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that although case plans are routinely developed and updated in accordance with the timeframes established by policy, there is considerable variation regarding the involvement of parents in the case planning process. Stakeholders noted that in many cases, parents are being effectively involved in the process of developing the case plan. However, in many other cases, the case plan is discussed with the parents and presented to the parents for review, but the parents are not involved in plan development. Some stakeholders commented that efforts are not being made to engage fathers in planning, particularly when they are not living with the mother and the children or if they are perceived to be difficult to work with. The CFSR case reviews found that in 30 percent of the cases reviewed, FIA did not involve parents and children in the case planning process. However, several stakeholders noted that the agency places an emphasis on family involvement in case planning and has made efforts to educate workers regarding the importance of family involvement. Also, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the Family-to-Family initiative currently being implemented in the State and the implementation of Family Group Decision Making in 12 locations will result in greater involvement of parents in the case planning process.

Some stakeholders also commented on the quality of the case plans. They suggested that many of case plans are "generic" and are not addressing the individualized needs of families and children. Families tend to receive the same services, such as parenting classes and counseling, without attention to specific needs or underlying issues related to the child maltreatment. A few stakeholders suggested that many caseworkers are relying on generic case plans because they are following the SWSS case plan format.

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

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because periodic reviews are generally held within the 6-month timeframe required by Federal statute.

According to the Statewide Assessment, legislation passed in 1998 requires that review hearings must be held every 91 days for all children in foster care, except for children placed permanently with a relative or in a permanent foster family agreement. For children placed permanently with a relative or in a permanent foster family home, the legislation requires that the court must hold a review hearing every 182 days after the first year of placement. Reviews can be held by either a referee or a judge. Court reviews for juvenile justice cases take place every 182 days. These reviews are conducted by a referee, who is a licensed attorney or a Family Court Judge. Hearing schedules are set by the court. Notice of the hearing is provided by the court to the parents or guardian, if parental rights have not been terminated by the court. Transportation maybe provided by the supervising agency (either FIA or a private child placing agency under contract with FIA). Parents are assigned an attorney to represent them in court based upon financial need.

Despite the policy requirements, the Statewide Assessment notes that there are frequent delays in court hearings. A review of foster care cases conducted as part of the State’s self-assessment found that 70 percent of the cases reviewed had court review hearings every 91 days.

Many stakeholders commenting on periodic reviews noted that most cases are being reviewed by the courts every 3 months and that the courts have instituted a tracking system to ensure that reviews are held in a timely manner. Stakeholders also noted that the agency has developed a specialized Attorney General’s (AG) unit in the largest metropolitan area. This unit, comprised of 20 attorneys, represents FIA and private agency staff in all cases and at all hearings. The AG’s unit provides ongoing consultation to workers on cases and to prosecutors across the State upon request.

Other stakeholders, however, reported that the timeliness of reviews varies across judicial districts. Districts with larger caseloads experience greater challenges in meeting the 91-day timeframe. Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that in some districts, reviews are not held in a timely manner because judges do not agree that the 91-day timeframe is appropriate or necessary. In addition, stakeholders suggested that there are many judges and child welfare agency staff members who believe that the frequency of

the reviews results in a great deal of redundancy of effort. Finally, stakeholders suggested that reviews sometimes are not timely because the court grants too many continuances. Stakeholders indicated that delays may be due to the need for additional information resulting in consensual agreement by attorneys to waive hearings; children not being seen by their Guardian ad litem; reassignment of Judges' duties; worker turnover; and the increased number of post termination hearings subsequent to the enactment of the Binsfeld legislation. Some stakeholders identified the process of scheduling general court calls as opposed to specific appointments for court appearances as a hardship impacting attendance at court hearings.

With regard to the quality of the reviews, several stakeholders expressed the opinion that the reviews are meaningful and promote attainment of permanency. Other stakeholders, however, expressed concerns about the quality of the reviews because they believe that the Guardians Ad Litem (GALs) are not adequately representing the children during the review hearings. Stakeholders reported that GALs, who carry caseloads of 140 to 180 children, do not see most of the children they represent, and therefore cannot adequately represent the interests of their clients. Other stakeholders expressed the opinion that the reviews are “perfunctory.”

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

Strength                       Area Needing Improvement

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because the consistency with which reviews are completed is variable.

According to the Statewide Assessment, permanency planning hearings (PPH) are required by Michigan statute for all children who are wards of the State due to abuse and/or neglect. The PPH must be held 1 year after the petition requesting removal is filed with the court and annually thereafter. Hearing schedules are determined by the court. (Michigan statute does not require a PPH for juvenile justice youth, although some courts are convening PPH for these youth.)

During the PPH, the court reviews written or oral information concerning the child provided by the child's parent, guardian, custodian, foster parent, child caring institution, or relative caregiver. The court then makes the following determinations:

- Whether the child should be returned to the home of the parent, if parental rights have not been terminated.
- Whether the child should continue in foster care pending a determination on a petition to terminate parental rights.
- Whether the child's foster care placement should be continued for a limited time period or on a long-term basis, if the agency demonstrates that termination of parental rights (TPR) is not in the child's best interest.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, case reviews were conducted as part of the State's self-assessment process to determine whether PPHs were held in a timely manner. The review found that 59 percent of the cases had a permanency planning hearing in accordance with the 12-month timeframe established by State statute.

Many stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that most permanency hearings are being held in a timely manner, although some are not because of continuances and/or limited time on the court dockets. Stakeholders identified that a newly instituted CASA program has been used to eliminate barriers to permanency in some pending adoption cases. The court has its own tracking system that tracks the age of the case, length of time since "wardship," and length of time since the agency requested permanent custody. However, stakeholders also expressed concern that the hearings do not always adequately address permanency issues. The hearings are held to meet requirements, but the focus is not always on advancing permanency.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because Michigan has a process and policy in place for the termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings that exceeds the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Furthermore, information from stakeholder interviews and the Statewide Assessment suggest that the TPR process is usually implemented in accordance with the policy.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan statute requires a permanency planning hearing (PPH) within 1 year after the petition requesting removal is filed with the court and annually thereafter. At the PPH, if the court finds that the child should not be returned to his/her home, the court must order the agency to file a termination petition with the court unless the court finds that initiating the TPR is clearly not in the child's best interest. Policy supports documenting a compelling reason or filing the petition to coincide with the 12-month timeframe and the PPH, rather than waiting for the 15th month. Michigan statute requires the termination petition to be filed within 42 days of the PPH; although there are no sanctions for not filing within the timeframe.

A PPH is held within 28 days after an ASFA mandatory TPR petition is adjudicated and the allegations in the petition are found to be true. At this PPH hearing, the request for TPR is considered by the court. Michigan uses the SDM model, which incorporates outcomes of the Reunification Assessment into recommendations on placement and permanency planning goals, to be used at court reviews and the PPH. Binsfeld legislation in 1998 required the court to issue an opinion or order regarding a TPR petition within 70

days after the commencement of the initial hearing on the petition. However, if the court fails to issue an opinion within the 70 days, the petition is not dismissed.

The Michigan Child Protection law mirrors the ASFA mandatory termination petition requirements with the inclusion of a provision for TPR if a parent has voluntarily released parental rights to an abuse/neglect court ward and there is current risk to the child. These petitions must be filed within 24 hours of CPS making a determination of abuse/neglect and contain a request for TPR at the dispositional hearing. Legislation requires that court petitions be filed in certain circumstances (e.g. immediate filing of TPR petition when a parent's rights have been terminated for other children); and a new Birth Match program in which new birth records are matched against FIA records of parents whose rights to other children were terminated.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the number of foster care cases in which parental rights have been terminated (permanent wards) has increased by 22 percent since 1998. The increase in the number of terminations has resulted in an increase in the number of children adopted; although there is a concern that Michigan is creating "legal orphans" and is not considering a child's best interest when filing and supporting termination petitions. Data collected in February/March 2002 on children who had been in out of home care for at least 15 months indicated that for 41 percent of these children, a termination petition had been filed; and for 47 percent of the children, a compelling reason had been noted.

TPR on juvenile justice cases occurs very infrequently. The juvenile justice youth must also be adjudicated as an abuse/neglect ward for parental rights to be terminated. According to data collected in February/March 2002 on children who had been in out of home care for at least 15 months, 82 percent of the juvenile justice youth had a compelling reason documented, .9 percent had a termination petition filed, and the remaining youth were either returned home or their cases were closed. Seventy percent of the juvenile justice cases had a compelling reason of, "youth in custodial care and treatment services are not yet completed."

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue agreed that the number of TPRs has increased and that TPRs are being processed within a reasonable amount of time. They noted that the court and agency staff are knowledgeable about TPR and receive assistance on preparing petitions from the prosecuting attorney. This assistance can begin as early as the point in which placement and care of the child is initially sought, resulting in a more solid and prepared case being presented to the court. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that better preparation of TPR petitions has reduced the number of appeals and that early TPR is being sought when the situation is appropriate. Stakeholders also said that compelling reasons are exercised and that the court is responsive to the agency's decision to extend the time before TPR. Stakeholders reported that children age 14 and older have the right to decide whether TPR will be filed.

Despite these positive views, there were some stakeholders who expressed the opinion that TPR preparation needs improvement and that TPRs frequently are delayed by continuances and large caseloads. Some stakeholders reported a lack of consistency among judges in their attitudes toward TPRs. However, other stakeholders expressed concern that TPRs are being filed too quickly.

**Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in any review or hearing held with respect to the child.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because the findings of the review indicate an inconsistent notification of foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers due in part to a lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities and process for notifying these parties.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan statute requires that foster parents, preadoptive parents and relative caregivers receive notification of all review hearings and permanency planning hearings and have any written or oral information about the child in their care considered by the court. Some courts send the notification; others require the supervising agency to notify the placement provider. Michigan’s SACWIS system generates a letter to the care provider that notifies them of the hearing.

Foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers have the opportunity to submit information to the court. Michigan statute requires the court to consider any written or oral information concerning the child from the child’s foster parent, child caring institution, or relative caregiver.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, foster and adoptive parents participating in focus groups stated that the practice of notifying them of court hearings varies around the State. Some courts discourage them from attending the hearings. The practice of involving them in the case plan also varies by worker. In a mail survey of FIA foster parents, 66 percent reported being notified of court hearings. Forty-three percent either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the child’s case worker asked them about their opinion about the child’s case plan. During targeted foster care case readings, 79 percent of the foster parents were involved in the development of the plan.

A foster parent handbook is being developed by Michigan State University, the Michigan Foster and Adoption Parent Association and FIA. This handbook advises foster parents of their rights regarding access to information regarding the child living within their home, their right to submit information to the court, and other relevant information.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue held divergent opinions about whether foster parents regularly receive notification of reviews and hearings. In two counties, stakeholders reported that appropriate notices of hearings and reviews are provided to foster parents in a timely manner. In the third county, stakeholders expressed the opinion that foster parents are not routinely informed of upcoming hearings or reviews, although some will attend if they know of the hearing. Stakeholders also expressed different opinions about whether foster parents attend the hearings. Some stakeholder suggested that foster parents rarely attend because they are not encouraged to do so by their caseworkers. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that foster parents do attend the hearings, although they are not always given the opportunity to be heard. There was general agreement among stakeholders that foster parents are not clear about their rights or expectations regarding participation in reviews and permanency hearings.

**VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM**

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

**STATUS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM**

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the factor of Quality Assurance System. Findings with respect to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

  X   Strength             Area Needing Improvement

This item is rated as a Strength because Michigan has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan's Child Care Organization Licensing Act (Public Act 116) provides for the protection of children placed out of their homes through the establishment of standards of care for child placement agencies, institutions, and family foster homes. The Act also contains provision of penalties for noncompliance with promulgated administrative rules. New licensing rules for foster and group homes, and child placing agencies were effective January 1, 2001. Public Act 203 of 1994, "The Foster Care and Adoption Services Act," includes requirements for child placing agencies and adoption attorneys.

The Child Welfare Licensing Division, Bureau of Regulatory Services within the Department of Consumer and Industry Services issues licenses to child placing agencies, child caring institutions, and foster homes. They conduct annual licensing reviews of all child placing agencies (local FIA offices and private child placing agencies) and child caring institutions in Michigan to ensure compliance with Public Act 116 and administrative rules. Child placing agencies conduct initial and annual reviews of individual foster homes. The chief administrator of each child placing agency must conduct an annual assessment and verify the agency's compliance with the rules. The administrator must also develop, maintain, and monitor an outcome measurement system to ensure that: provided services comply with applicable provisions of the rules; positive outcomes are produced for those served; and risk to children, youth and families served is minimized. Annual reviews are conducted by the Licensing Division to decide the agency's compliance with the rules. If the agency is found to be in non-compliance with any rule, the agency must develop a corrective action plan. The plan must correct the non-compliance within 6 months.

The Division of Child Welfare Licensing investigates allegations of abuse and/or neglect in child caring institutions. Child placing agencies investigate foster homes for licensing rule violations. These investigations may be conducted at the same time as a CPS investigation if the rule violation includes allegations of abuse and/or neglect. The agency completes a Special Evaluation Report and recommendations are made regarding the licensing action to be taken. Revocation of a license is done at the State level administration of the Division of Child Welfare Licensing.

One-hundred and fifteen private agencies in Michigan are accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services. As part of this process, the agency must have a program development and quality improvement process in place. In addition, contracted private child placing agencies are subject to the same policy requirements as the local FIA office. The Purchased Care Division (PCD) within the FIA is responsible for the administration and monitoring of all foster care contracts. Contract monitors perform annual reviews to ensure that the contract providers are fulfilling their contractual responsibilities. As part of the monitoring process, PCD responds to complaints from the field or the community regarding the provision of services. This may include coordination with the Child Welfare Licensing Division in the investigation of licensing rule violations and CPS when there are allegations of abuse/neglect.



Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that Michigan has clearly defined licensing standards that ensure safety. Stakeholders expressed positive opinions about the quality of foster homes and mentioned that the State caps the foster care ratio at 20 cases per worker in order to address quality of services. Stakeholders noted that, in one large metropolitan site, beginning in October, 2002, a pilot program in which some private agency foster care providers are reimbursed based upon outcomes, will be expanded to include all private agency foster care providers in that county. One stakeholder commented that there is a need to do more outcome-based contracting with providers.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated a Strength because Michigan has a multi-level quality assurance system comprised of both internal and external components which evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs, provides relevant reports and evaluates program improvement measures that are implemented.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Core Children's Services Universal Outcomes in the areas of prevention, protection, preservation, permanency and proficiency were established in 1998 as part of performance monitoring. An Outcomes report is published annually. Michigan has also instituted a performance appraisal process, the Performance Management and Development Program (PMDP), for division-level staff that is tied to the critical success factors of its strategic plan.

Michigan's quality assurance system for safety, permanency and well-being for children and families served by the Agency includes a CPS peer review process. CPS Peer Review began in 1999 and is designed to review all counties within the State on an approximate 4-year cycle. The Peer Review Team consists of CPS supervisors from various counties throughout the State temporarily assigned to the program policy office. The reviews involve case readings, worker observations, and interviews. The interviews include workers, supervisors, and managers, as well as customers. Policy compliance, customer satisfaction, and continuous quality improvement practices are examined through case readings, worker observations, and interviews. Fifty-six of 62 policy areas improved between the composite reviews for the years 2000 and 2001. A similar peer process for foster care is in the developmental stage.

Supervisory Case Readings are also required as part of quality assurance efforts. Each child welfare supervisor must review a minimum of 3 cases per worker per quarter. Quarterly case reading reports are submitted to the Zone Office. In March 2002, the

CPS, foster care, juvenile justice, and adoption case reading forms were revised in preparation for the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The Onsite Review Instrument guided the changes in the case reading forms. The revised form is longer and requires a qualitative analysis on the part of the supervisor.

Michigan's Statewide Assessment lists an array of other quality assurance procedures, both internal and external, including the following:

- The Child and Family Services Administration within FIA produces an annual report card (Supervising Agency Report Card) for each supervising agency that evaluates the achievements of that agency in obtaining permanency for children and making recommendations for the removal of barriers to permanency. The report card is intended to be used by the agency in evaluating its programs.
- FIA's Field Operations Administration has oversight responsibility for all 83 county FIA offices and facilitates development of corrective action plans when needed to address identified problems.
- The Office of the Family Advocate within FIA reviews approximately 85 cases per year and provides input into policy law and practice. Reviewed cases include media and child death cases, complaints, and legislative inquiries.
- FIA has contracted with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to perform comparison reviews on cases reviewed by supervisors to determine supervisory operational knowledge of SDM and identify needed follow-up in SDM training areas.
- The Office of the Children's Ombudsman (OCO), a separate State entity, investigates complaints regarding children supervised by FIA and private child placing agencies. Since 1995, the OCO has issued 105 Annual Report recommendations, 70 percent of which have been fully implemented by FIA.
- Another outside organization that reviews foster care cases within the State of Michigan is the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB). The boards make recommendations on individual cases, which are then sent to the court. Binsfeld legislation passed in 1998 expanded this program statewide. The rationale was to provide more oversight of the FIA. The FCRB issues an annual report to the Governor and legislature that contains program recommendations and lists barriers to permanency achievement for children in foster care. It should be noted that FCRB reviews do not fulfill the requirement for periodic reviews.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue described many of the quality assurance measures listed above, such as FCRB review, annual report cards, peer review, the Office of the Children's Ombudsman, supervisory case reading, licensing reviews, performance-based contracting, Zone-level reports, and the Performance Management and Development Program. Stakeholders also mentioned child death review teams and collaboratives used by county managers and directors. One stakeholder commented that technical assistance is needed to help managers be aware of all of the data that are available and how to use and interpret the data to enhance management.

## VII. TRAINING

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

### STATUS WITH RESPECT TO TRAINING

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Findings with respect to items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 was rated as a Strength because Michigan has a statutorily mandated initial orientation program for new staff which is competency based and outcome focused.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Child Placing Agency Licensing Rules require that each social service worker and supervisor receive at least 16 hours of orientation prior to assuming assigned duties and 14 hours of training relative to their current position within the first year of employment.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Michigan Child Welfare Training Plan is predicated on a competency-based and outcome-focused comprehensive training initiative. Components include: an 8-week pre-service child welfare curriculum, the Child Welfare Institute (CWI), for public and private agency staff; advanced child welfare modules; bachelor and master's level university course work; and collaborative training with the courts, State police, Tribes, and Prosecuting Attorney Association of Michigan. Eighty percent of FIA new hires are automatically enrolled in the 8-week pre-service training before being assigned a caseload. This was made possible through the establishment, in 1999, of a Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool (CCHP) to fill children's services vacancies in the bottom half of lower Michigan (which represents staffing across 80% of Michigan). All 8 weeks of the CWI are pre-

service for FIA child welfare staff. Private agency workers have the first 6 months on the job to complete the training. Beginning in October 2002, private agency staff must begin the training within the first 8 weeks of the job. Private agency compliance with training mandates is monitored during annual contract compliance reviews.

On average, 95 percent of attendees passed the post-test given upon completion of the 8-week pre-service CWI training. In 1999 and 2000, 94 percent of trainees rated the training as “good”, “very good” or “excellent.” Evaluation of the CWI resulted in 158 recommendations (with a common theme of “less theory” and more “hands-on”), one-third of which have been implemented. The remaining two-thirds were unable to be implemented without massive restructuring. Focus groups with FIA staff held in 2001 revealed the following needs: more “hands-on” training; increased funding at the county level for attending conferences; and additional training for juvenile justice staff on safety issues, criminal sexual assault, and assaultive behavior. CWI revisions occurred in January 2002, with the outcomes of the CFSR process incorporated into the CWI beginning June, 2002. Michigan’s Child Welfare Institute was featured on the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect website in 2000 as a premier training program. Moreover, Michigan has been used as a consultant by other States when developing their child welfare training programs.

Many stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed positive opinions about Michigan’s pre-service training and felt that staff has a good understanding of FIA policy. However, they also mentioned the importance of on-the-job training provided by peer mentors and supervisors. The training curriculum for on-the-job training, which was revised to be more hands on, was viewed favorably by stakeholders. Stakeholders said that workers outside FIA have difficulties meeting an 8-week obligation for pre-service training.

Some stakeholders were concerned about the quality of training on forensic interviewing and legal processes and procedures.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 was rated as a Strength because Michigan has in place an ongoing training program for staff commensurate with their duties.

According to the Statewide Assessment, each worker and supervisor must receive at least 14 hours of training annually. Individual staff development plans, begun during CWI, are a requirement of FIA’s Performance Architect Performance Management System which is maintained by the Office of Human Resources and supported with learning resources. All training data are tracked by the Office of Professional Development utilizing the Registrar tracking system. Every time someone registers for a training session, a

record is generated that indicates whether the person successfully completed the training, canceled attendance, failed to show, or failed the program.

FIA encourages staff to further their education through educational leave and paid tuition initiatives. FIA worked in partnership with 6 graduate schools of social work to develop core competencies for a child welfare specialty so that staff wishing to obtain an MSW could specialize in a child welfare program embodying the strength-based, solution-focused approach to case work. The Agency grants employees the opportunity to pursue higher educational degrees via an Educational Leave of Absence. Such leaves may be granted for up to 2 years. FIA also operates a Partial Tuition Refund Program to assist employees who are pursuing degrees that would qualify them for child welfare positions, with a partial refund of their tuition cost and enrollment fee at accredited educational institutions. Courses eligible for reimbursement must be directly related to an employee's current job or another FIA classified position. Fifty FIA staff completed an MSW under the partnership program in 2001, and 34 staff completed the program in 2000.

Under the Child Protection Law, FIA has a statutory obligation to assure a continuing education program for department, probate court and private agency personnel. The Michigan Federal Child Abuse and Neglect grant contributed financially to a variety of groups to support training for children's services workers through the Michigan Child Abuse and Neglect conference and various conferences on subjects such as kinship care, infant mental health, structured decision making, juvenile justice, adoption, child abuse and neglect prevention, and independent living.

The Statewide Assessment describes a variety of other training initiatives, including the following:

- Michigan contracted with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton to "train trainers" to recognize "Touchpoints" (predictable periods in an infant's development that can disrupt family relations). The training team includes staff members, a university professor, and Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association members.
- The Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan (PAAM) continues to provide cross-professional training on forensic interviewing, coordinated investigative protocols, and other topics. Over 3,140 people have attended seminars sponsored by PAAM.
- All foster care workers, juvenile justice workers and supervisors were trained on Title IV-E eligibility between August 2001 and March 2002. Approximately 750 people attended this training.
- Eastern Michigan University is developing a training curriculum for child welfare workers on independent living.
- Other trainings include new Child Placing Agency and Foster Home Rules; Supportive Visitation (attended by 125 people in two separate one-day sessions in 2000 and 2001); and Fatherhood 2002 (geared toward workers, foster, adoptive and biological parents).
- FIA has had collaborative agreements with Wayne State University and the University of Michigan. The latter developed a training curriculum for supervisors in public child welfare.

- Customer Service Excellence Training was provided because FIA identified a need to improve its internal customer focus.
- The Child Welfare Training Institute conducted Native American cultural awareness training for approximately 320 staff. Training on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Indian Child Welfare policy has been provided for approximately 180 FIA workers and is included in new worker training. FIA’s intranet includes an interactive “Indian Child and Family Welfare” web board where workers can share information or conduct question and answer sessions.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue mentioned that ongoing training opportunities are available, including conferences and joint training between FIA, law enforcement and the Court. Stakeholders noted that FIA has a new three week supervisory training with a 3 day addendum focusing on child welfare issues. Stakeholders noted that training in forensic interviewing by the Prosecuting Attorneys Association has been helpful. However, stakeholders had a variety of concerns regarding ongoing worker training. They mentioned that trainings are available in the community but sometimes FIA staff cannot attend due to lack of funds and/or time. They also reported that there was a lack of funding in 2002, which impacted the amount of ongoing training available.

Stakeholders commented on the need for more ongoing training on topics such as the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Training on ICWA currently is not mandatory for staff, although ICWA is discussed briefly in the pre-service training. In addition, stakeholders noted the need for ongoing training addressing substance abuse dynamics, child management, sexual abuse, children on medications, mental health issues, and court procedures. Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that it was important for workers to have training focused on developing skills in conducting comprehensive assessments, engaging difficult parties, managing purchased services, forensic interviewing, and mediation and negotiation. Some stakeholders mentioned the need for more cross-training with police.

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

  X   Strength      Area Needing Improvement

Item 34 was rated as a Strength because Michigan provides training for current or prospective foster and adoptive parents that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan requires that foster parents receive no less than 12 hours of training, which can include up to 6 hours of orientation, within the first 6 months of initial licensing and before placement of a child. During the next 2

years, an additional 12 hours of training is required and then 6 hours annually after that. New direct care workers at child caring institutions must participate in a minimum of 50 hours of planned training within the first year of employment and then at least 25 hours annually thereafter.

FIA has contracts with the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (MFAPA) to provide foster parent training (using the PRIDE curriculum), mentoring, foster home support, and communication services. MFAPA also has a number of regular in-service trainings. Staff is encouraged to attend training along with foster parents so that all are “on the same page.” Michigan is also partnering with other States and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) to increase training and learning opportunities electronically.

According to the Statewide Assessment, focus groups with foster and adoptive parents identified that MFAPA conferences were helpful, as was PRIDE training. In a mail survey of foster parents, 78 percent responded that training helped them to care for children in their home. Foster parents attending focus groups and responding to the mail survey identified training needs in children’s mental health, grief/loss issues, independent living preparation, mental health issues, sexual abuse, and accessing local services.

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) provides pre-adoptive training for prospective adoptive families four times a year at various locations. In addition, a portion of the Federal Adoption Incentive Award has been used to provide training funds for adoptive parents and local professional training for the past 3 years. Child Placing Agency Rules require that an orientation for prospective adoption applicants be completed before a family assessment is completed. However, neither statute nor policy requires adoption-specific training for adoptive parents. Fifty-six percent of the finalized adoptions are with foster parents who have received mandatory training. In 2002, FIA’s Adoption Division conducted a statewide survey of public and private adoption agencies regarding training requirements. The preliminary findings indicate that, although a wide array of trainings is provided, the average number of hours of training is minimal.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that foster and adoptive parents are provided with PRIDE and PATH training opportunities. They also commented that PRIDE, though not mandated, is the training of choice and the majority of child placing agencies do use PRIDE. They also noted that there is a mentoring program that connects new foster parents with more experienced ones. Stakeholders reported that there are numerous options available in the community for training for foster parents to maintain licensing requirements. Training resources include 20 regional training coalitions between FIA and private agencies that provide ongoing training with FIA providing funding for child care, transportation and refreshments as well as statewide foster and adoptive parent conferences. Stakeholders also noted that ongoing training is available on working with special needs children.

Stakeholders expressed the opinion that foster parents need training regarding resource availability and coping with behaviorally challenging children. Some stakeholders commented that foster parents are not prepared to respond to the children that are placed with them. Stakeholders reported that resources vary depending on the agency with whom the foster parent is licensed. Stakeholders identified that an agency goal is to work on an independent living training for foster parents in the coming year.

**VIII. SERVICE ARRAY**

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

**STATUS WITH RESPECT TO SERVICE ARRAY**

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of service array. Findings pertaining to the specific items relevant to this factor are presented and discussed below.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 was rated as a Strength because the State has in place an array of services to meet the needs of children and families.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan has a State-level interactive initiative, Putting It Together With Michigan Families (PIT Crew) that enables State partners to plan joint initiatives and training opportunities and share best practices that address the needs



of its constituents. At the local level, each county has one Multipurpose Collaborative Body (MPCB) that coordinates services within the community. The goal is to ensure that families receive services that are strength-based, community driven, family-oriented, and have demonstrated effectiveness. Strong Families/Safe Children (SF/SC) is Michigan's statewide implementation for family preservation and family support. Services are provided collaboratively via development of a coordinated preservation and support service plan developed by Family Coordinating Councils (FCC) that are active in all counties. Funds must be used for new or enhanced family preservation, family support, family reunification and adoption promotion and support services. SF/SC funds purchased over 600 individual and varied services.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, pre-placement prevention services include Families First of Michigan (FFM), Wraparound services, Partnership for Safety, Families Together/Building Solutions (FTBS), Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), Family to Family, Child Protection/Community Partners Program, Preventive Services for Families (PSF), Juvenile Justice Prevention Programs, Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG), Zero to Three Secondary Prevention, *Early On*®, Runaway and Homeless Youth Hotline, Teen Parent Program, Michigan Teen Outreach Program, Teen Pregnancy Prevention Project, and Maternal/Infant Support Services.

According to the Statewide Assessment, other services available in the State include the following:

- The Family Reunification model is available in those counties with the highest out-of-home care populations. The program is currently active in 16 counties with expansion to 6 more urban counties planned for October 2002, which will then cover at least 80 percent of the caseload. Over 400 families were served during fiscal year 2001 with 86 percent of the families remaining safely intact.
- Adoptive services include post adoption parent training, adoption awareness campaigns, crisis intervention services, family stabilization in-home services, wraparound services, educational advocacy, mentoring and support groups for adoptive parents.
- Wraparound services are available to youth living in their own homes, with relatives or in foster care. Wraparound is available in 75 counties and was used with approximately 2,000 families during fiscal year 2000.
- Eighteen counties with communities with a high teen pregnancy rate have a Teen Parent Program for youth under the age of 21 who are TANF-eligible.

The Statewide Assessment also identified service gaps. It was noted that there is a lack of funding for adequate medical exams in CPS investigations. Focus groups with staff and FCRB members identified that a lack of mental health and substance abuse treatment services affected the State's ability to reunify children with their families. Additionally, Juvenile Justice staff reported that post-release services by residential service providers are lacking once a youth returns home. Private contract providers report that providing Families First and counseling services is difficult because the reimbursement rate for these services has not increased in 10 years. Parents reported that their greatest unmet needs were housing and family counseling.

Stakeholders commenting on the State’s overall service array generally noted that there is a good array of services available. The services mentioned as available on a widespread basis were family preservation, family reunification, counseling, aftercare, and wraparound services. Despite the strong array of services, several stakeholders reported that service providers often are overburdened and that there have been decreases in recent years in the availability of services.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed different opinions. For example, in one site, stakeholders suggested that substance abuse treatment services were readily available, while in the other sites, there was a lack of substance abuse treatment services and there were waiting lists for services. In general, stakeholders expressed concern about the reductions in services available in their communities, particularly community mental health services for children and services for sexual abuse victims and perpetrators. Funding and communication issues arise because of the difference in how family services and mental/physical health agencies are administered at the State department level. Family services are State-administered, whereas, mental/physical health services are county administered. Other service needs mentioned by stakeholders include: culturally relevant services for Native Americans, domestic violence services that are not connected to substance abuse, mentoring, services to homeless/runaway youth, services to teen parents, independent living services, transportation, day care, and education services. Stakeholders also mentioned the need for more foster and adoptive homes, especially homes for teenagers, sibling groups, and medically fragile children. Housing was another key concern identified by stakeholders. They noted that the availability of affordable housing is limited. Stakeholders in one county noted that the county is implementing a program to provide incentive payments to landlords to provide low-income housing.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 was rated as a Strength because services are available in the vast majority of communities within the State, although there is a paucity of services available in the outlying areas and service delivery may be time limited.

According to the Statewide Assessment, all of Michigan’s counties have the capabilities to design services to meet their community needs via the MPCB and FCC structures in place. The County Child Care Fund (CCF) is a State cost-sharing program for reimbursement to local counties for the cost of providing eligible services. Family reunification is available in those counties with the highest-out-of home care populations. Families First/Domestic Violence was piloted in 5 sites selected to include a mix of urban and rural settings and serving 14 counties. It has been expanded to 11 sites serving 27 counties.

Staff focus group participants reported there has been a great deal of improvement in the number and quality of services available to families within the last 10 years; however, rural counties have fewer services than urban. Focus group participants also reported the need for more contracting money because the process to develop contracts is difficult and time consuming and not all counties have a staff person who is responsible for this process. They noted that there needs to be more flexibility in the way services are provided at the local level and that the contracting process tends to reduce flexibility in services. Workers are also confused when determining what service is available to a particular client, e.g., whether a CPS case is eligible to receive Zero to Three services. Focus group participants stated that determining which funding source is used to pay for a particular service is confusing and that paperwork requirements are time consuming.

Some of the variation in service availability across jurisdictions was apparent in the different comments made by stakeholders in the three counties included in the onsite review, as noted in the discussion of item 35. In addition, stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that in rural areas, the key problems in service accessibility were related to the availability of transportation and availability of services (particularly downstate). Acknowledging the benefits of Family First as a county level program, stakeholders also noted that not all communities within the county may have access as contractors in the program may be allowed a service travel area of no more than 50 miles; this can be a barrier to services in a county covering a large geographic area.

Stakeholders also noted that prevention services vary from county to county. A particular concern noted by stakeholders was the lack of service for families who are reported to the child welfare system, but there is not sufficient evidence to open the case. Another concern was the fact that most of the services are time-limited, which does not meet the needs of all families.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because services are not consistently being individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families.

In the Statewide Assessment, wraparound services are noted as being provided for children and families at risk of out-of-home placement with 2,000 families receiving the service in FY2000. According to the Statewide Assessment, CASA and FCRB members noted that service plans for children and families tend to be generic and not address the individualized needs of the families.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that children and families tend to get services depending on what is readily available rather than what is needed. Some stakeholders cited worker turnover as a factor contributing to the difficulty of individualizing services. Others identified the categorical nature of services as a barrier to individualization of services and that courts order standard treatment options, such as parenting and counseling, for families without a focus on individual needs. Some stakeholders did identify that wraparound services were being utilized. Stakeholders also noted that the State is trying to develop 2 toolkit models which will identify what services are of value to families and children.

**IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY**

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

**STATUS OF AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

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

  X   Strength             Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 was rated as a Strength because the State engages in ongoing consultation with key external partners and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Michigan has two main avenues for consulting and coordinating on the development of its CFSP: Citizen Review Panels (CRP) and the Native American Task Force. CRPs were created to provide an opportunity for citizens

to aid in ensuring that the State meets the goal of protecting children from abuse and neglect. Panels are composed of volunteers broadly representative of the State and community. Michigan has built on the work currently being done by the three existing groups to fulfill the citizen review panel requirements. These entities were chosen because they were already performing functions required by the Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) and because they had the capacity to meet the intent of the Federal requirements. The three groups are the Children's Justice Act Task Force, the Children's Trust Fund, and the Child Death Review Advisory Committee. Ongoing meetings with the CRP monitor FIA's compliance with its plan.

The Tribal State Partnership, Physician's Advisory Committee and the Substance Abuse Task Force provide ongoing vehicles to obtain customer feedback on performance, barriers, needs, opportunities and solutions. Monthly meetings are also held with Child and Family Services Administration and the Field Operations Administrations on areas of concern.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that regular meetings with the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association help ensure that FIA involves foster parents in program design, development, implementation, and evaluation. MFAPA has worked side-by-side with FIA in essential initiatives such as mentoring, recruitment strategies, training and the Family to Family project.

Overall, stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that the agency makes concerted efforts to be responsive to the community and to consult with community representatives. Stakeholders stated that since the inception of the Tribal-State Partnership, the FIA has increased levels of communication and works more effectively with Tribes and other Indian groups to ensure that their issues and concerns are being heard. A stakeholder noted that, beginning in 2002, the Native American Affairs Coordinator for FIA will also be engaging in consultation with each of the 12 recognized tribes separately to ensure opportunities for input into the CFSP and updates.

Stakeholders expressed the opinion that county directors and managers are responsive, innovative and flexible in addressing stakeholders' concerns, and that they participate in several collaborative bodies in the community, which promotes openness and responsiveness. Stakeholders described positive relationships between the agency, law enforcement, service providers, legal, and the FCRB. FIA uses the internet to allow public comment on the CFSP and updates.

Stakeholders expressed concern about the need to provide outreach to the suburban and Arab community. Stakeholders also noted that relationships between FIA and the courts and individual Native American tribes vary from county to county. Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that there is a need for greater collaboration with the school systems.

**Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 was rated as a Strength because Michigan develops its annual reports of progress and services in consultation with representatives identified in Item 38.

According to the Statewide Assessment, ongoing meetings with the Citizen Review Panels (CRP) monitor FIA’s compliance with the CFSP. Each panel meets at least every 3 months. In addition, Information and Action Advisories are used to communicate and coordinate service delivery. Advisories are irregularly sent to all stakeholders to announce opportunities, change, and present best practice.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that ‘report cards’ are completed annually; annual reports are received from the Ombudsman and the FCRB; and input from the three Citizen Review Panels and the Tribal State Partnerships are incorporated in the annual progress reports.

**Item 40. The State’s services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 was rated as a Strength because Michigan’s services are coordinated with other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population and collaboratives exist both at the State and local level.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a task force was appointed in 1994 to investigate what would be needed to increase cooperation and collaboration among Michigan’s human service agencies. Members included people from all agencies as well as external stakeholders. The recommendations of that task force were documented in the “Systems Reform for Children and Their Families” report, which was signed by the directors of education, public health, mental health, aging and social services and released in 1995. This report is the blueprint for coordinating services between agencies, as well as between agencies and communities. It stressed the need for collaboration between agencies and a commitment to family-centered practice.

Putting It Together With Michigan Families (the PIT Crew) is the initiative implementing the recommendations of the report. The PIT Crew serves as an umbrella organization that covers all human services. It ensures that agencies are aware of each other's activities. A State-level collaborative body, the PIT Crew reflects the Multi Purpose Collaborative Body (MPCB) created in each county. Committees were created to address financial issues, technical assistance, and evaluation. The Barrier Busters committee was formed to address policies that prohibited collaboration. Currently (in 2002), the Pit Crew continues to meet at least 9 times a year and has representatives from human services, licensing, housing, career development, and budget agencies. The Technical Assistance Workgroup and Barrier Busters are still meeting. A special committee to address housing issues has been added.

At the county level, MPCBs are responsible for developing community alliances needed to meet local needs. State funding for MPCBs, often in the form of competitive grants, encourages innovative responses to community issues. Focus groups held in April 2002 revealed that their approaches to working together and using different funding sources is as varied as the groups themselves.

Michigan's Strong Families/Safe Children (SF/SC) aims to foster consumer, community and intergovernmental collaborative partnerships that develop and expand direct services to children and families. Services are provided collaboratively via development of a coordinated preservation and support service plan by Family Coordinating Councils (FCC) that are active in all counties. These local plans are reviewed and approved at the State level. Funds must be used for new or enhanced family preservation, family support, family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services. SF/SC funds purchased over 600 individual and varied services.

Other examples of interagency collaboration described in the Statewide Assessment include:

- Partnership with the Department of Education in Zero to Three, an interagency initiative that provides education/mentoring at the local level.
- Collaboration with the State Court Administrator's Office Court Improvement Program (CIP) to implement Adoption and Safe Family Act requirements.
- FIA is in the process of completing a title IV-E contract agreement with the Wayne County Department of Community Justice (WCDCJ), which has care and supervision responsibility for delinquent youth in Wayne County. Additionally, FIA has title IV-E agreements with Bay Mills Indian Community, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Hannahville Potawatomi Indian Community, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, and the Saulte Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue described positive interagency collaboration between FIA and Head Start, local police, public health, education, substance abuse and Drug Court, and community collaboratives. Stakeholders identified the Birth Match Program as a positive collaboration between FIA and Public Health in which new birth records are checked against FIA databases of

individuals whose parental rights to other children have been terminated. Stakeholders in one site noted that the County Director uses his discretion to allocate staffing between programs to provide as much staff capacity as possible for critical services. Some stakeholders were concerned about a lack of consistency in the working relationships between local offices and Native American Tribes.

**X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION**

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

**STATUS WITH REGARD TO FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION**

Michigan is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Findings for the items pertaining to this factor are presented below.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 was rated as a Strength because the State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Child Care Organization Licensing Act provides for the protection of children placed out of their own homes through the establishments of standards of care for child placement agencies, institutions, and family foster homes. The Child Welfare Licensing Division, Bureau of Regulatory Services (BRS) within the Department of Consumer and Industry Services (DCIS), issues licenses to child placing agencies, child caring institutions and foster homes. Child placing agencies license individual foster homes and conduct annual reviews of individual foster homes. Foster Family Home and Foster Family Group Home



rules set forth requirements for all licensed foster homes in the State. The rules are the minimum standards that must be met to ensure the safety of children in foster care.

A home study is completed before a foster home is licensed and annually thereafter. The home study process must include visits at the residence of the foster home applicants for observations of, and interviews with, each member of the household. The certifying agency is to complete a written reevaluation at license renewal to assess the family's ability to provide care. Any changes are to be documented. The reevaluation must include documentation of each member of the household and each foster care worker who has had a child in the home during the licensing period.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the Child Welfare Licensing Division conducts initial licensing evaluations and annual reviews of child caring institutions. Child Caring Institutional rules set forth requirements for all child caring institutions in the State. The rules are the minimum standards that must be met to ensure the safety of children in institutional placements. If these foster home or child caring institutional reviews are not done in a timely manner, the license will expire and the FIA payment system will not generate a payment. New licensing rules for foster homes, group homes, and child placing agencies were effective January 1, 2001. Focus groups with Native American Tribes, the Tribal-State Partnership, FIA staff and foster parents revealed that the majority believes that the new licensing rules are focused on child safety.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in agreement that there are standards for foster homes and child care institutions in effect and that these standards are taken seriously.

**Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.**

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 was rated as a Strength because standards are in place that are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions.

According to the Statewide Assessment, prior to the implementation of the ASFA Final Rule, Michigan relaxed the foster home licensing standards for relatives. Specifically, relatives did not need to attend training. The policy was changed in November 2000 to require relative homes to meet the same licensing requirements as non-relative foster homes. The number of licensed relative homes is believed to be small as many relatives either do not meet licensing requirements or do not wish to go through the licensing process.

The Child Welfare Licensing Division has the authority to grant a variance to a foster home rule if the licensing agency and the foster parent have reviewed and agreed with the request; the agency requests the variance in writing; and the variance from the rule assures that the health, care, safety protection, and supervision of a foster child are maintained. Binsfeld legislation in 1998 allows the FCRB to recommend that a licensing variance be granted to allow siblings to remain or to be reunited in the same foster home. When DCIS receives a report from the FCRB recommending a variance, they will send a letter to the agency responsible for the foster home. The agency must either support the recommendation or provide documentation as to the reasons why the worker does not believe the variance should be granted. Once a decision has been made, DCIS will send a letter to the agency and the FCRB with its decision. Forty-three variances were granted between January 1, 2002 and June 30, 2002.

According to the Statewide Assessment, foster parents participating in focus groups as part of the State's self-assessment process expressed the opinion that the rules are not applied consistently by all agencies and for all foster homes.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that the State applies licensing standards consistently to all foster care providers. They noted that staff appears to be very conscious of licensing standards and safety issues for foster homes. Some stakeholders expressed concern that BRS was very inflexible in issuing variances to meet the needs of large sibling groups. Some stakeholders were concerned that new licensing standards have slowed the licensing process.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 was rated as a Strength because the State has in place a process which complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a Record Clearance Form is completed for each adult member in the prospective foster home household and for all institutional staff. This includes a Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN) check and Central Registry check (CPS perpetrator check) completed by the Division of Child Welfare Licensing. FIA and private agency workers have access to the Internet Criminal History Access Tool (I-CHAT), which is run by the Michigan State Police Records Division. I-CHAT contains criminal record information, misdemeanors, and felony convictions. Criminal history information from other States and Canada is not available.

LEIN and Central Registry checks are only conducted at the initial licensure and for institutional staff at initial hiring. They are not required at an annual review. They are completed whenever a new household member is added to the foster home or the foster parent moves.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, Michigan has a process in place that allows persons convicted of certain crimes to become a foster or adoptive parent. For foster parents, if the certifying agency recommends that the prospective foster parent be licensed in spite of a specified crime listed in the administrative rules, the licensing worker will submit the criminal conviction or CPS substantiation/preponderance of evidence information to the Administrative Review Team (ART) at the Division of Child Welfare Licensing. The ART team will either approve the license or deny it. The administrative rules that govern the assessment of good moral character recognize that criminal convictions do not in and of themselves represent a risk of predictable harm to a child. The criteria used to assess good moral character include the following: circumstances surrounding the offense, length of time since the offense, severity of the offense, evidence of rehabilitation and relationship of the offense to licensed activity. For adoptive parents, the adoption worker and supervisor evaluate the same criteria to decide whether a child should be placed within the home.

Foster parents and adoptive parents with a felony conviction for one of the following crimes cannot receive Title IV-E payments:

- Child abuse/neglect,
- Spousal abuse,
- A crime against children (including pornography),
- A crime involving violence, rape, sexual assault, or homicide but not including other physical assault or battery, or
- A conviction within the last 5 years for a physical assault, battery, or a drug related offense.

Current policy and licensing rules prohibit the licensure of a prospective foster parent or adoptive placement for a person who has been convicted of a crime against a child. If a child is Title IV-E eligible and is placed within a foster home or adoptive home where a person has been convicted of any of the other above listed crimes, Title IV-E funds will not be paid. Edits within the payment system prevent these payments.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that criminal background checks and central registry checks are done for all licensed foster care providers. However, stakeholders reported that there is a great deal of inconsistency in the timeliness of conducting the background checks for foster care families and whether sufficient background checks are conducted at all before placing children with relatives.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 was rated as a Strength because Michigan has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Child Placing Agency Licensing Rules require that each supervising agency develops and maintains an ongoing recruitment program. The Foster Care Support Unit provides an array of programs and services to all public and private agencies, many of the States' foster parent training coalitions, and the MFAPA. The overall goal is to increase the number of qualified foster parents. Within that general goal, there are targeted recruitment efforts for foster/adoptive families that focus on the ethnic and racial diversity of the State population. There are regional recruitment coalitions that include FIA and private agencies.

A subcommittee of the Tribal/State Partnership identifies and addresses recruitment of Native American foster homes, foster parent training, and hiring Native American professional staff. FIA contracts with the Saulte Sainte Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indian's Binogii Placement Agency for foster care and adoption services for Native American children. However, participants in focus groups with Tribal members reported that more needs to be done to recruit Native American foster homes. The FIA, in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, will address systemic changes needed to develop local community resources and partnerships to recruit foster families in the neighborhoods from which children come into foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Wayne County has a shortage of emergency foster homes and shelters for children entering care. Wayne County addressed this shortage in its Recruitment Plan. Efforts include participation in the Mentoring Program; development of a database which tracks foster parents from initial inquiry until licensure; and implementation of the Family to Family Program.

Barriers to recruiting foster and adoptive parents include physical structure requirements for foster homes; requiring a telephone; and costs for physical exams if the prospective parents do not have insurance. A Foster/Adoptive Parent Mentoring program, with 22 public/private partners throughout the State, matches prospective foster parents with experienced foster parents to provide support and

guidance throughout the entire licensing process. The program has provided mentoring through licensure for 178 foster parents. In a mail survey of FIA foster parents, 72 percent believed that mentors would be helpful and 17 percent had a mentor.

Retention efforts include contracting with the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (MFAPA) to provide 70 Parent-Agency Support groups across the State. A mail survey of FIA foster parents found that 33 percent reported belonging to a support group and 80 percent either “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” that foster parents need support groups.

Other FIA programs to increase recruitment of foster parents were described in the Statewide Assessment, including:

- Statewide strategies are being developed to attract and retain foster parents, including marketing research, industry networking, and a mixed media approach. A more targeted “social marketing” approach will be pursued.
- Appreciation/Recruitment Billboards are placed around the State during May, Foster Parent Appreciation Month.
- A Foster/Adoptive Parent Recruitment Video was produced by FIA, which includes a foster parent, a birth mother and a foster parent who used to be in foster care.
- Neighborhood-Based Recruitment – FIA, in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, will address the systemic changes required to develop local community resources and partnerships to recruit foster families in the “neighborhoods” from which children come into foster care.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue described both challenges and successes in recruiting foster homes. Stakeholders reported that foster parents do a considerable amount of word-of-mouth recruitment with family, friends and church members. Some stakeholders reported that the agency is moving toward a marketing approach to recruitment based on census data and the geographic locations from which children are removed. Stakeholders identified a that a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is in the development stage to identify three consortiums that would focus on recruiting homes for special needs children and offer supportive services. Stakeholders commented that the State was recently selected to participate in the Casey Foundation Breakthrough Program examining ways to retrain and recruit foster, adoptive and kinship care providers. Stakeholders also mentioned efforts such as the foster parent mentor program and foster parent associations. However, stakeholders reported that there are not enough foster homes, particularly Hispanic, Native American and Arab homes and homes that can take teenagers and medically fragile youth. Others identified the stringent variance process as a barrier in meeting the placement needs of large sibling groups. Some stakeholders commented that foster parent retention is problematic because foster parents do not receive adequate respect or support. Other stakeholders reported that there is variation among agencies in their success at recruiting foster parents as well as variation among counties in the number of staff designated to specifically focus on recruitment and retention efforts.

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

Strength       Area Needing Improvement

This item was rated as a Strength because Michigan has in place a process for the effective use of cross jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely permanent placements for waiting children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, as a State-administered child welfare system, movement of children into nearby counties is frequent and not problematic. Recruitment efforts are accomplished through the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) photo-listing book. It is updated monthly and sent to all FIA offices and private agencies with FIA adoption contracts, as well as many local public libraries. The MARE website is used to reach potential out-of-State adoptive parents. In FY 2001, 39 children were placed out of State.

FIA policy requires that agencies without an identified adoptive family contact other county FIA offices and private agencies serving the area for possible suitable families. Actual recruitment of adoptive families is handled locally by individual agencies or a consortium of local agencies using a variety of recruitment methods. Adoptive placements are also facilitated by Field Operations Administration by holding regular and frequent county FIA supervisors and managers meetings on adoption.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that the Michigan website is used to list children available for adoption, which is also linked to a national site. However, stakeholders were concerned that, although the State level ICPC staff is knowledgeable and helpful, ICPC is a very slow process and that the agency is hesitant to rely on interstate placements with relatives. Stakeholders identified that visitation and family assessments/home studies pose barriers to out-of-state adoptions. To address these, Michigan has freed up contractual dollars and developed letters of agreement with private adoptions agencies in other states when it has not been able to access these services from the other State.

**XI. DETERMINATION OF SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY**

For each outcome and systemic factor listed below, mark “Y” where the State is determined to be in substantial conformity and “N” where the State is determined not to be in substantial conformity. For each outcome or systemic factor marked “N,” place a check beside the performance indicator, listed by item number in this form, that has been determined to be an area needing improvement.

Outcomes

**I. Safety**

  N   **Outcome S1**  
  X   Item 1  
       Item 2

  N   **Outcome S2**  
       Item 3  
  X   Item 4

**II. Permanency**

  N   **Outcome P1**  
       Item 5  
  X   Item 6  
       Item 7  
  X   Item 8  
       Item 9  
       Item 10

  N   **Outcome P2**  
       Item 11  
  X   Item 12  
  X   Item 13  
       Item 14  
  X   Item 15  
  X   Item 16

**III. Child and Family Well-Being**

  N   **Outcome WB1**  
  X   Item 17  
  X   Item 18  
  X   Item 19  
  X   Item 20

  N   **Outcome WB2**  
  X   Item 21

  N   **Outcome WB3**  
       Item 22  
  X   Item 23

Systemic Factors

**IV.   Y   Statewide Information System**  
       Item 24

**V.   N   Case Review System**  
  X   Item 25  
       Item 26  
  X   Item 27  
       Item 28  
  X   Item 29

**VI.   Y   Quality Assurance System**  
       Item 30  
       Item 31

**VII.   Y   Training**  
       Item 32  
       Item 33  
       Item 34

**VIII.   Y   Service Array**  
       Item 35  
       Item 36  
       Item 37

**IX.   Y   Agency Responsiveness to the Community**  
       Item 38  
       Item 39  
       Item 40

**X.   Y   Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**  
       Item 41  
       Item 42  
       Item 43  
       Item 44  
       Item 45