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2005 Year-End Report

Minnesota Child and Family Service Review

Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

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Introduction

Background

This review proved to me that Minnesota has a strong desire to improve outcomes and goals for children, as well as continue the connectivity of parents and siblings during times of struggle and agency involvement.

Peer reviewer following a Child and Family Service Review in Nobles County

Minnesota revised its child welfare quality assurance program and protocols in January 2003. This revision was made in response to the federal Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) conducted by the Administration of Children and Families in 2001. Recommendations from the federal review included developing a child welfare quality assurance system focused on evaluating systemic and practice issues that directly impact safety, permanency and well-being for children and families served through the child welfare system. Between January 2003 and December 2005, the state child welfare Quality Assurance Team, along with its county and community partners, completed Minnesota Child and Family Service Reviews (MnCFSR) in 58 counties.

During 2005, 19 county child welfare systems were reviewed. As in the two previous years, each county completed a self assessment of its child welfare infrastructure prior to the onsite portion of the review. While onsite, a select number of child welfare cases were reviewed and an outcome-based case review instrument was completed for each case. As part of this case review process, key persons involved in the case were interviewed to gather their assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the services provided. Additionally, while onsite, community stakeholders were interviewed, providing their perspective of the overall effectiveness of the county child welfare system in promoting improved outcomes for children and families. Following the completion of the onsite stage of the review, counties were provided a detailed report identifying overall ratings of Strength as well as Areas Needing Improvement for each performance item. Counties complete a Program Improvement Plan addressing each of the performance items where less than 85 percent of the applicable cases were rated as strengths.

The review was thorough – we can't improve service if we don't know what it is we're doing. This process gives us insight.

Peer reviewer following a Child and Family Service Review in Lake County

The federal Administration of Children and Families has not communicated a final schedule for commencing the second round of federal CFSRs. From the information provided, it appears the first three states reviewed in the initial round of state reviews (Vermont, Delaware and North Carolina) are scheduled to begin their second reviews in late 2006 or early 2007. Minnesota was the fourth state reviewed in 2001, so it appears likely that the second CFSR for Minnesota will be conducted in 2007.

Measuring Performance

The MnCFSR provides each county with a baseline performance measure across seven child safety, permanency and well-being outcomes and 24 related performance items. This data, along with information from the individual county self assessment and community stakeholder interviews, is available to support counties in their program improvement planning and overall child welfare quality improvement efforts.

In order to analyze MnCFSR data in greater detail, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) developed a database with a number of reporting features. These new 2005 reports are now available and provide specific information related to a number of child welfare practices and outcomes. The following are some of the key questions that these new reports address:

- What percent of child protection (CP) investigations/assessments were initiated within mandated timelines, and how frequently were children interviewed or observed as part of this process?
- Is the role of fathers in families adequately assessed, and were they engaged in the case planning process?
- Do agencies evaluate paternal as well as maternal relatives as part of their mandated relative search practices?
- Is strong performance on caseworker contact with children significantly associated with strong performance on other MnCFSR performance items?
- Is the use of concurrent permanency planning associated with strong performance across a range of performance items?

Starting in 2005, DHS issued two statewide performance reports related to county caseworker's face-to-face contact with children and parents in child protection workgroups in 2004. These reports provided counties with aggregate baseline data that focused on the critical role caseworkers play in supporting their clients and promoting positive change in the life of children and families. Performance reports of caseworker face-to-face contact with children and parents in 2005 will be issued in the same format in 2006. Additionally in 2006, a statewide county-specific report will be released that identifies the time elapsed before initial face-to-face contacts in child protection investigations/assessments. Caseworker face-to-face contact with children and parents, along with time elapsed before initial face-to-face contact in child protection investigations/assessments, will also be evaluated on a limited case-by-case basis as part of the MnCFSR process.

This was a very valuable experience. We had great discussions regarding the practical applications of child protection services and I was happy to learn that the review process is inclusive of outside interviews rather than a "if it's not documented it didn't happen" type of mentality.

Peer reviewer following a Child and Family Service Review in Ramsey County

I enjoyed the process and found it to be very interesting. I do believe the information will be beneficial to counties in assessing and improving outcomes for families.

Peer reviewer following a Child and Family Service Review in Kanabec County

Very valuable experience! The tool is useful and information given to the agency provides constructive feedback. Even if all of the outcomes aren't achieved, you don't feel bad about the work being done because you get useful feedback with this type of evaluation.

Peer reviewer following a Child and Family Service Review in Rock County

This review allows for a comprehensive study of practice. The stakeholder and client/ collateral interviews provided additional information that highlighted the workers' efforts that may not have been included in the case file.

Peer reviewer following a Child and Family Service Review in Roseau County

Observations and Findings from 2005 MnCFSRs

Safety Performance

In both Safety Outcome 1, "Children are, first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect," and Safety Outcome 2, "Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate," county performance in 2005 was very similar to the aggregate performance of all counties reviewed since 2003. Providing services to protect children and prevent unnecessary removal was rated as a strength in over 90 percent of the cases reviewed. Minnesota met both National Safety Standards in 2005, recurrence of child abuse/neglect and incidents of child abuse/neglect in out-of-home care were lower than the established national standards.

Permanency Performance

Permanency Outcome 1, "Children have permanency and stability in their living situations," dropped nearly 11 percent in 2005. This occurred primarily because of lower performance on Item 5, "Foster care re-entries" and Item 9, "Adoption." Statewide re-entry and adoption data is **contrary** to findings in those same areas for counties reviewed in 2005. Specifically, Minnesota's performance on foster care re-entries has steadily improved since this national standard was established. In 2000, 31 percent of children who were placed in out-of-home care and returned to their home, subsequently re-entered out-of-home care within 12 months. In 2005, approximately 19 percent of children re-entered out-of-home care. Additionally, the state has met the adoption national standard (finalized adoption within 24 months of a child's most recent entry into out-of-home care) since 2001. In 2004, over 40 percent of finalized adoptions met this standard; and in 2005, the standard was met in nearly 47 percent of the cases.

Performance on Permanency Outcome 2, "Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children," dropped 4.42 percent in 2005. This occurred largely because of lower performance in Item 15, "Relative placement." This trend for counties reviewed in 2005 is contrary to statewide performance. State data indicates that over the last three years, an increasing percentage of children were placed with relatives. It should also be noted that in 2005, Item 12, "Placement with siblings," improved 4.79 percent.

Well-being Performance

Performance on Well-being Outcome 1, "Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs," dropped 5.64 percent in 2005. Reduced performance on Items 17, "Needs and services of child, parents and foster parents," and Item 20, "Worker visits with parents," accounted for this change in performance. For both of these items, a lack of consistent engagement of fathers was a principle factor in the drop in performance.

In 2005, performance on Well-being Outcome 2, "Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs," improved 2.42 percent and was rated as substantially achieved in 92.92 percent of cases. For both 2004 and 2005, Minnesota exceeded the federal substantial conformity standard of 90 percent for this outcome.

Performance on Well-being Outcome 3, "Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs," dropped 3.66 percent in 2005. This reduction resulted from lower performance in Item 23, "Mental health of the child." In 2005, completion of mental health screening of children was a new requirement, and inconsistent practice in this area significantly contributed to the reduction in performance. Performance on Item 22, "Physical health of the child," improved nearly two percent in 2005.

I really found the review helpful in looking at ways to match services to identified risks in a more direct way. The review also points out that social workers need to have the time to do actual social work and conduct meaningful face-to-face contacts with children, parents and foster parents.

Peer reviewer following a Child and Family Service Review in Wright County

I think that the reviews are strength-based and should remain as such. The review is such a learning tool for counties being reviewed and for the peer reviewers.

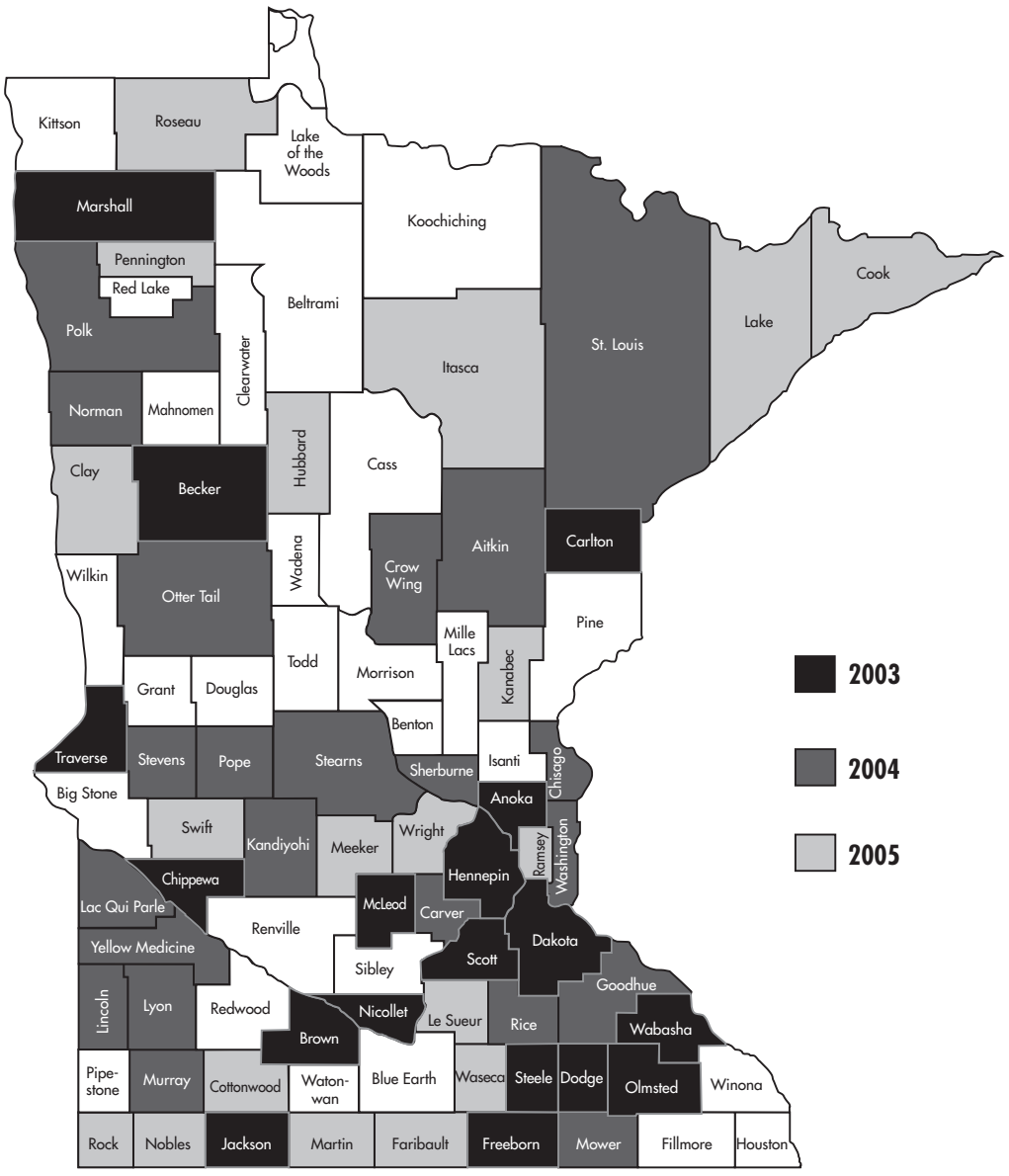
Peer reviewer following a Child and Family Service Review in Pennington County

Appendix

2005 Minnesota Child and Family Service Reviews

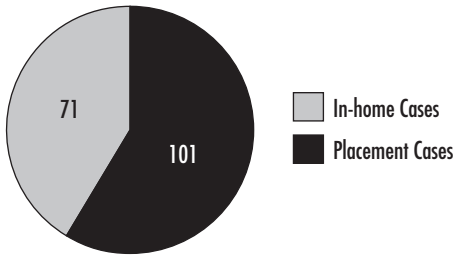
The Department of Human Services conducted Minnesota Child and Family Service Reviews in 19 counties in 2005. This sample included counties from each of the five quality assurance regions in the state. The most populous county reviewed in 2005 was Ramsey County (population 511,035), and the least populous was Cook County (population 5,168). The number of cases reviewed in each county was based on the county's child population. In Ramsey County, 32 cases were reviewed, while in Cook County, six cases were reviewed. This was the first MnCFSR for each of the 19 counties. The review established a county-specific baseline for each of the seven MnCFSR Outcomes and 24 Performance Items.

Fifty-eight counties have completed Minnesota Child and Family Service Reviews from 2003 through 2005



Case Demographics

Cases are randomly selected to represent both placement and in-home cases. The review focuses on the activity in a case that occurs during a 12-14 month period under review. Each case has at least 60 days of placement or 60 days of services during the review period.

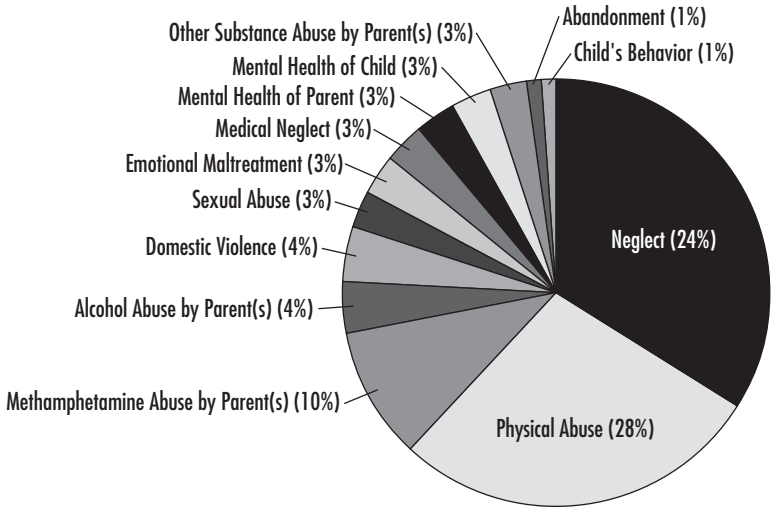


In 2005, 172 cases were reviewed: 101 placement cases and 71 in-home cases.

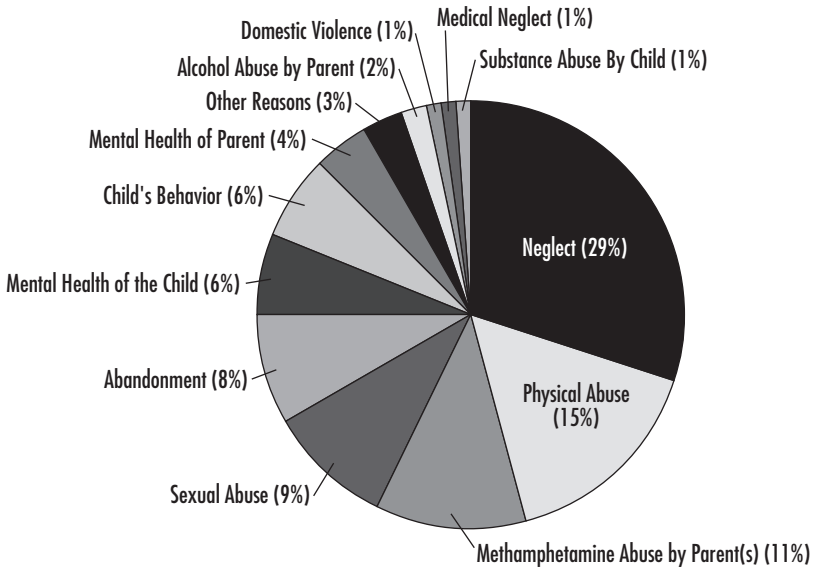
Primary Presenting Problem

Neglect and physical abuse were the most commonly cited primary reasons for agency involvement in both placement and in-home cases reviewed. Additional information on primary reasons for agency involvement included:

In-home Cases



Placement Cases



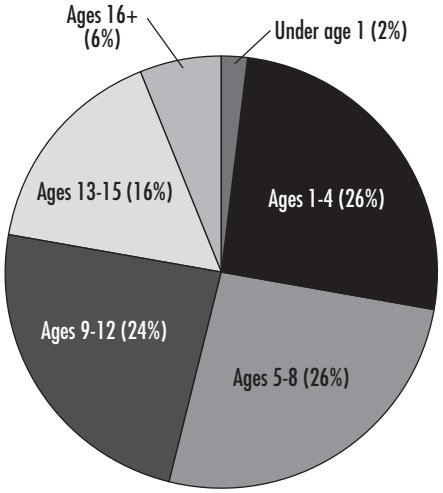
The majority of cases reviewed in 2005 were child protection cases. However, this represents only the primary type of case management being provided. In many child protection cases, children are also involved with children's mental health or juvenile corrections.

- *Child protection (151 cases)*
- *Children's mental health (11 cases)*
- *Other child welfare (nine cases)*
- *Juvenile corrections (one case)*

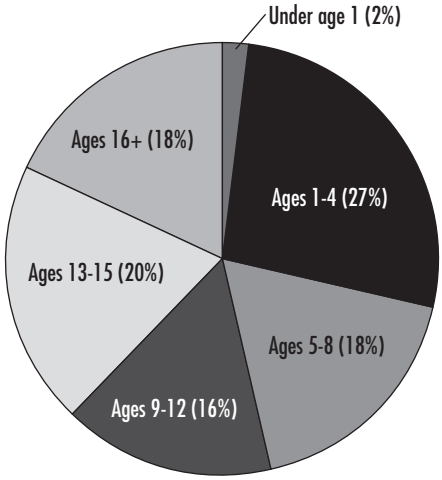
Cases reviewed in 2005 involved multiple and complex issues. "Alcohol or other drug problem of parents" (which includes problems with alcohol, methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana and prescription drugs) was the most commonly cited secondary reason for involvement. Neglect and mental health of a parent were also frequently identified as underlying issues or secondary reasons for involvement.

Ages of Children

In-home Cases

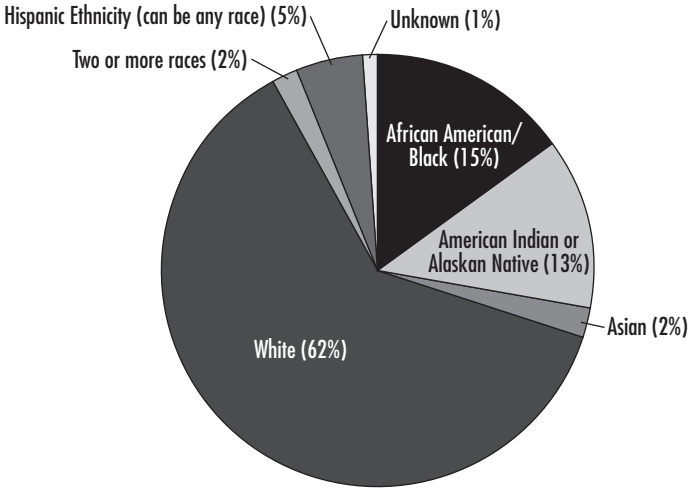


Placement Cases

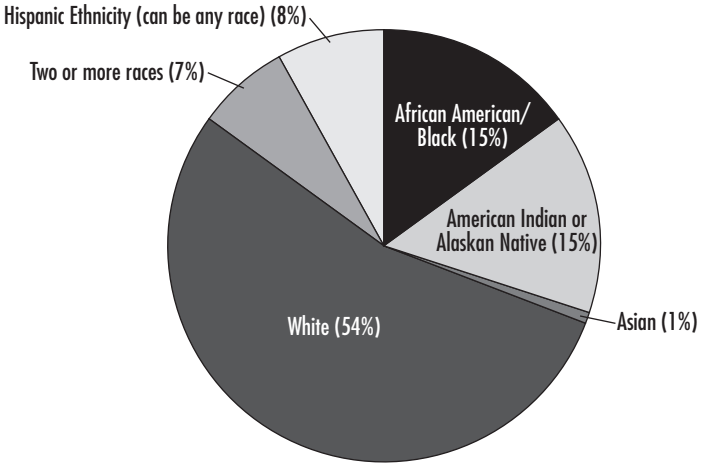


Race/Ethnicity of Children

In-home Cases



Placement Cases

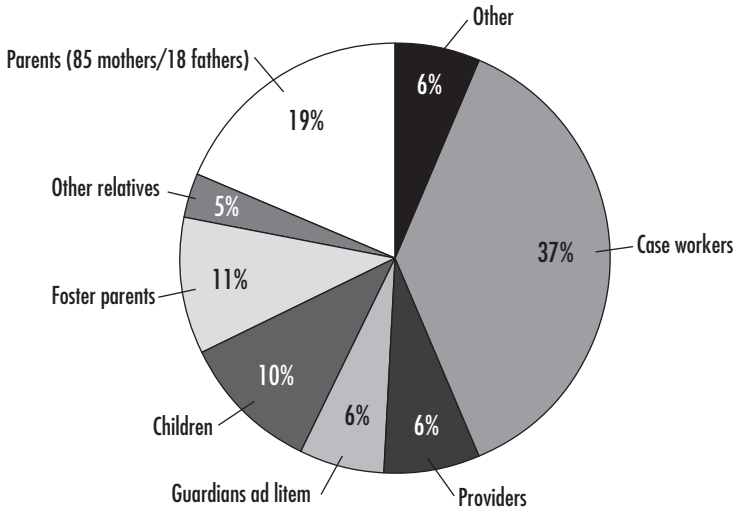


Case Related Interviews

One of the hallmarks of the Minnesota Child and Family Service Review is case related interviews. These interviews are conducted with those directly involved in the provision or receipt of services in each case reviewed. During 2005 reviews, the 556 interviews included:

- 207 caseworkers
- 103 parents (85 mothers and 18 fathers)
- 59 children
- 57 foster parents
- 40 providers
- 36 guardians ad litem
- 36 others
- 18 other relatives

Of these, 486 interviews were conducted in person and 70 by telephone.



County Self Assessment

The self assessment process provides county agencies with a structure to evaluate their child welfare systems. County agencies rate the capacity and effectiveness of their systems across eight systemic factors. The completed self assessment document provides a firm foundation for conducting the onsite case review, and developing and completing the county Program Improvement Plan. Additionally, trends in systemic factor observations and ratings are used to inform plans for statewide training, technical assistance, practice guidance and policy development by DHS.

2005 Self Assessment Observations: A Summary of Key Findings

- **Information System:** Counties reported that they follow the user policies recommended by the Social Service Information System (SSIS). Some counties have also developed more specific user protocols to assist social workers and supervisors in utilizing SSIS. Some counties indicated that they print only specific documents, and relied more heavily on their SSIS case files. Other counties reported that they maintain complete electronic and hard case files. The SSIS mentoring system was viewed as effective, and the regional mentor meetings were seen as a useful vehicle for sharing practical user information. Counties reported that SSIS was very complex, had too many screens, and in some cases required multiple entries of the same information. Data entry requirements were becoming overwhelming, and social workers were spending an increasing amount of their time at the computer, allowing less time for direct client contact.

- **Case Review System:** Many counties indicated that they used SSIS and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) reports to monitor the status of up-to-date case plans. County supervisors played an active role in reviewing the quality of individual case plans in some counties and a less active role in others. Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), Concurrent Permanency Planning and Family Assessment were viewed as effective processes to engage parents and, when appropriate, children in the case planning process. Social workers were expected to complete the Independent Living Skills section of the out-of-home placement plan for adolescents. In some counties, social workers developed Independent Living Skills Plans when youth turned 14 years old, while in others they were completed when youth reached age 16.

  The issuance of court orders early in a case to outline the schedule for 90 day review hearings as well as permanency hearings was seen as an effective practice in promoting timely permanency. Counties reported that 90 day court review hearings were held on a regular basis, but six and 12 month permanency hearings occurred less consistently due in part to inconsistent judicial implementation of the permanency timelines. In some counties court administration was responsible for notifying foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of their right to attend and be heard at court hearings. In other counties, this responsibility was not well-defined and the required notifications were not consistently provided. In the self assessment document, counties provided considerable information pertaining to their out-of-home placement planning expectations and practices, but very little regarding case planning in non-court cases.

- **Quality Assurance System:** Counties described a range of informal and formal quality assurance practices designed to improve child welfare service delivery. All counties indicated that they used their local child protection screening criteria, along with maltreatment definitions found in Minnesota statutes to inform agency decision making. Some counties developed multidisciplinary screening teams that made screening

County supervisors used SSIS in varying degrees to support and monitor a range of staff functions. Some used SSIS extensively to review case records and generate a variety of child welfare reports. Generally, supervisors were becoming more familiar with SSIS management features and were using them more frequently.

For the most part, counties viewed their Children's Justice Initiative teams as very useful in examining juvenile court practices, and a strong resource for improving the quality of the court process for children and families.

decisions and recommendations whether to assign reports for a traditional investigation or Family Assessment. Some county supervisors met monthly with staff to discuss cases and provide input on key decisions. Other supervisors indicated the supervisor/caseworker ratio precluded them from scheduling regular conferences with each caseworker. Most self assessments indicated supervisors had an "open door policy" so workers were generally able to access their supervisor when there was a significant need. In some counties, supervisors "signed off" on all case plans and conducted regular, formal case reviews.

Overall, counties reported an increase in the use of SSIS reports to monitor service delivery and promote improved outcomes for children and families. Some counties described in detail how they gathered and used data and information to inform their practice, and communicate important program information to the community and their county boards. Other counties' approach to quality assurance was less systematic.

- **Service Array and Resource Development:** Counties indicated that a range of services to preserve families and promote child safety were generally available. This included a variety of formal evaluations and community-based services, as well as services located outside the county. To access these services, clients often need assistance with transportation. Counties identified some key reunification services, including frequent visits between children and parents, pre and post in-home family services, and adequate caseworker involvement and contact with families throughout the reunification process. Counties reported that timely and comprehensive relative searches, along with FGDM, were important in identifying alternative permanency options. Some counties also indicated that they provided well-defined Concurrent Permanency Planning services as an additional component of their permanency service continuum.

  County use of Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools varied considerably. Some counties indicated that they thought SDM tools were very useful in evaluating the need for out-of-home placement, development of case plans, and making parent/child reunification decisions. Other counties reported that social workers viewed the SDM tools as burdensome and chose to rely more on their professional judgment when making case decisions or recommendations to the court.

- **Agency Responsiveness to the Community:** Counties indicated that the Child and Community Service Act (CCSA) planning process was a formal biennial method for consulting with local partners to obtain feedback about community needs and the effectiveness of agency policies and practices. County mental health and family service collaboratives, agency advisory councils and interaction with other community professionals provided ongoing input. Counties indicated that they were not particularly successful in obtaining client feedback. A few counties sent service satisfaction surveys to clients at case closings, but indicated that the rate of client response was low. The CCSA process was also ineffective in eliciting client input.

Counties identified the availability of culturally appropriate services, along with timely access to mental health evaluations and specialized therapeutic services, as major challenges.

Nearly all the counties reviewed in 2005 reported having an active child protection team that provided relevant case-specific and system-wide feedback. In approximately half of the counties, a Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) was in place to coordinate child abuse prevention efforts. Some counties had not established a CAPC, but used their child protection team or local collaborative to address child abuse prevention issues. Counties located in close proximity to Indian reservations reported cooperative working relationships with tribal social services. Core training for new social workers and Indian Child Welfare training offered through the Minnesota Child Welfare Training System (MCWTS) provided foundation instruction for county staff. The "Culture of Poverty" training was described by some counties as particularly relevant and helped staff to better understand the needs of agency clients. Overall, obtaining useful cultural diversity training remained a considerable challenge for counties.

- **Staff and Provider Training:** Counties reported sending new child protection social workers to Core and SSIS introductory training. Some counties also sent new staff to Indian Child Welfare training. A few counties established formal pre-service protocols, which included sharing orientation materials, limiting caseloads, assigning a mentor, and frequent one-to-one supervisory contact for new workers.

  Training for foster and adoptive parents was provided in a number of ways. Generally, the agency licensing social worker played a key role in talking with providers about their training needs, and worked with MCWTS and other training agencies to arrange training to meet those needs. Some smaller counties developed regional strategies to provide quality and varied provider training. This included providing the Foster/Adoption/Kinship training through MCWTS. Although this allowed providers from several counties access to the training, transportation remained a barrier for some providers. Overall, evaluation of training was seen as an informal process. Evaluation results from MCWTS training courses were not typically provided to counties. Sharing training information with counties was encouraged and viewed as an important way to generalize training information across the agency and support improved outcomes for children and families.

- **Foster and Adoptive Family Licensing, Approval and Recruitment:** Some counties reported implementing several ongoing and special event strategies to recruit a diverse range of foster care providers, while other counties commented that they lacked the necessary resources to actively recruit foster care providers. Most counties indicated that they maintained a stable number of foster homes, but often found it difficult to locate homes for special needs children and sibling groups. Most counties did not have an adequate number of foster providers of color and actively recruited relatives to meet child placement needs. Counties near reservations described having cooperative working relationships with tribal social service staff, and routinely contacted tribal social service agencies to assist in locating appropriate homes for American Indian children.

Agency support for staff training varied considerably. Some counties maintained adequate training stipends per worker, while other counties responded to financial concerns by reducing agency training budgets.

Only one county discussed their efforts to recruit adoptive homes. They described presenting children at the Minnesota Task Force on Permanency, registering children on the Minnesota Adoption Exchange, and preparing traveling files for prospective adoptive families.

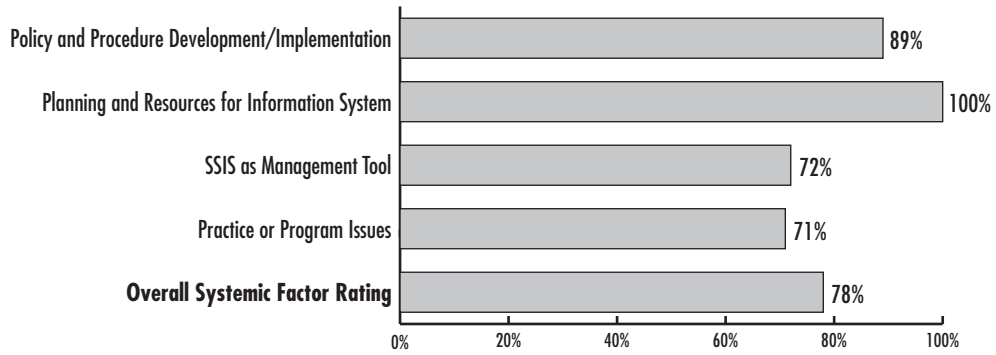
- **Supervisory and Social Worker Caseloads:** Supervisor ratio to social service staff varied across counties. In larger counties, supervisors managed social workers with fairly specialized caseloads. The supervisor to social worker ratio ranged from one supervisor for eight–15 social workers. In the smaller counties, where supervisors managed multiple program areas, the supervisor to social worker ratio ranged from one supervisor for seven–17 social service staff. The size and variety of social workers' caseloads also varied across counties. In some counties social workers carried approximately 10 ongoing child protection cases, and in others social workers carried a mixture of 20–25 child protection and children's mental health cases. The educational and/or experience hiring criteria outlined in the Minnesota Merit System for supervisors and social workers were observed by counties.

  Staff turnover also varied across counties. In counties with significant staff turnover, lower wages, worker related stress, and long commutes were cited as reasons for turnover. Decreased revenue lead to staff reductions in one county, while in other counties revenue shortfalls were addressed through cutbacks in training and other areas. A few counties described strong support from their county boards for maintaining the current level of social worker positions. The 2005 county self assessments were completed prior to the proposed cuts in federal Child Welfare Targeted Case Management funding.

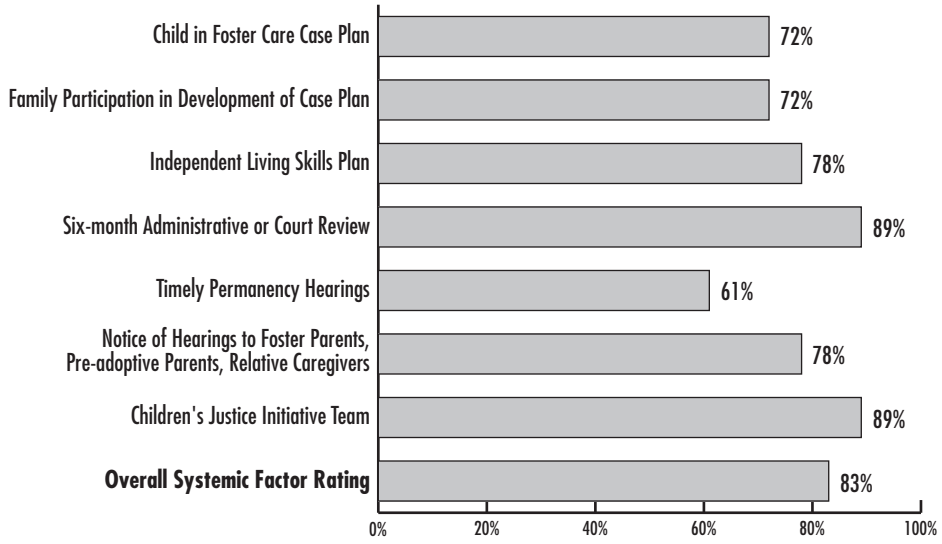
Percent of Counties Rating a Factor as a Strength

County agencies rated each exploratory issue and overall systemic factors on a numeric scale of one to four. Ratings of one and two are considered areas needing improvement, and ratings of three and four are considered strengths. The following tables summarize systemic factors rated as Strengths by the 19 counties that completed reviews in 2005.

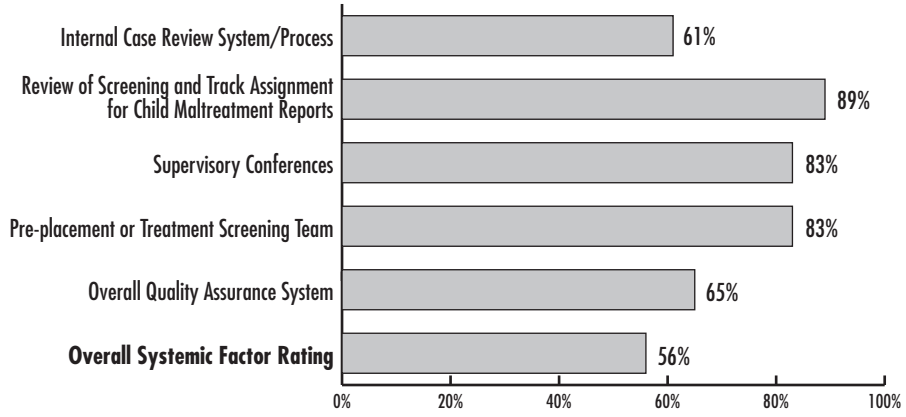
Information System



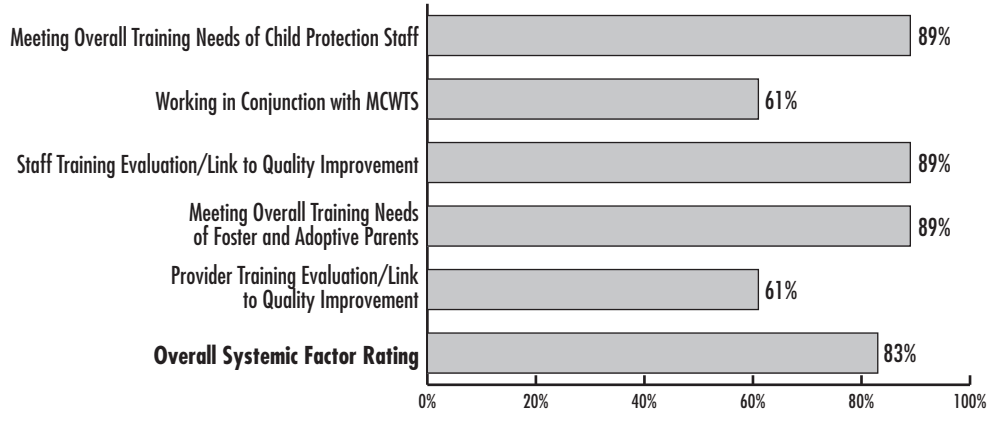
Case Review System



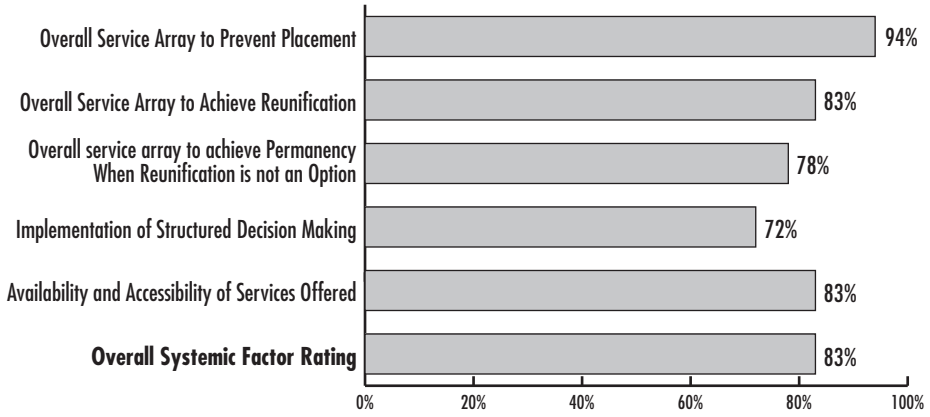
Quality Assurance System



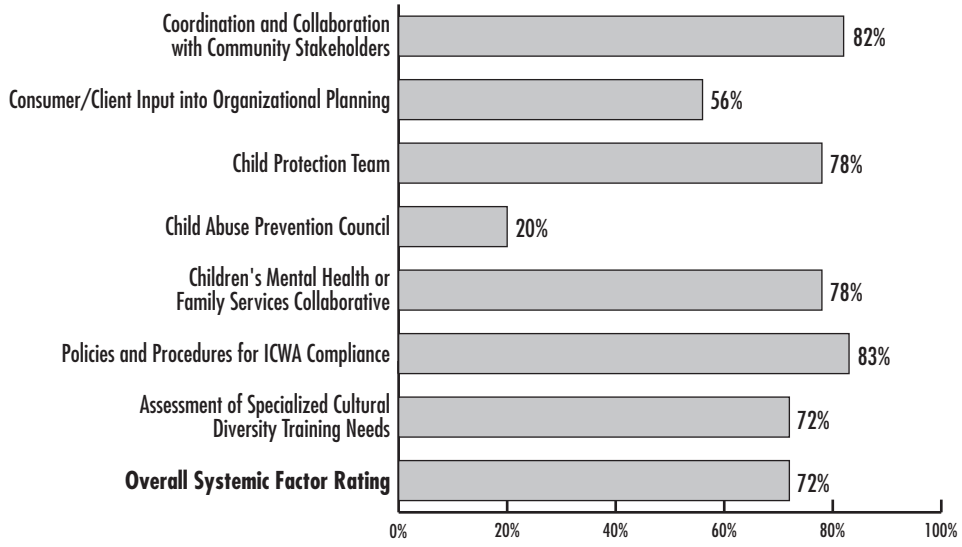
Staff and Provider Training



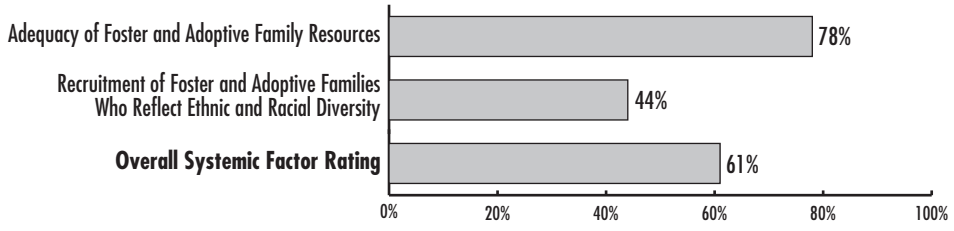
Service Array and Resource Development



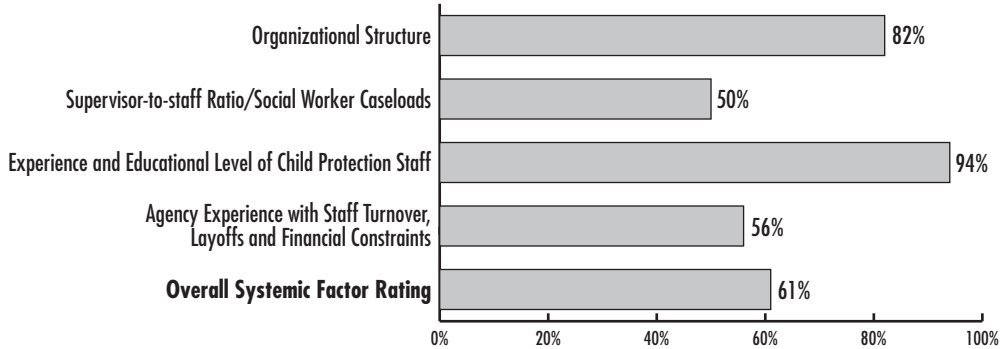
Agency Responsiveness to Community



Foster and Adoptive Home Licensing, Approval and Recruitment



Supervisory and Social Work Caseloads



Stakeholder Interviews

During the on-site phase of the Minnesota Child and Family Service Review, DHS Quality Improvement Unit staff convene stakeholder focus groups to gain a broader community perspective on systemic issues and the agency's capacity to achieve outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being. County agencies identify key community stakeholders and actively recruit their participation in the MnCFSR.

- Stakeholder interviews were held in all 19 county reviews.
- Community stakeholder groups of six to eight were interviewed for each review, resulting in approximately 133 persons interviewed in 2005.
- Community stakeholders included:
  - County agency social workers
  - County attorneys
  - Foster parents
  - Juvenile court judges
  - Mandated reporters
  - Public defenders/guardians ad litem
  - County agency administration
  - Law enforcement
  - School personnel
  - Tribes
  - Other provider agencies.

Stakeholder Observations

Stakeholders provide a community-wide perspective regarding the impact of services and programs on the lives of children and families served by county child welfare systems. Their observations supplement information provided in the county self assessment and onsite case review findings. The following themes were derived from stakeholder comments recorded during interviews conducted in 2005:

- Family Assessment (formerly known as Alternative Response) was viewed by many stakeholders as a respectful and useful approach for delivering supportive services to families. Some stakeholders were unclear about what criteria counties use in determining if a report should be assigned for a Family Assessment or a traditional child protection investigation. Some expressed concern that post Family Assessment services are voluntary and parents are too easily able to disregard service recommendations.
- Stakeholders identified Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) as an effective tool for engaging extended family in meeting children and parents' needs, especially in achieving timely permanency. In some

counties, FGDM was used frequently at various stages in the life of a case. In other counties, FGDM was rarely used, and only in the later stages of cases when parent/child reunification was not likely.

- Clear guidance for caseworkers in assessing the role of non-custodial parents in child welfare cases was rarely reported. Stakeholders reported that case practice within agencies varied considerably. Resources for supporting non-custodial fathers were very limited.
- Timely and comprehensive relative searches were viewed by stakeholders as a critical practice for identifying relatives willing and able to provide out-of-home care for children, support child/parent visitation, and help children maintain important family connections. In some counties, stakeholders reported that searches were initiated shortly after the child entered placement and were comprehensive in nature. In other counties, relative searches were less timely and generally initiated only after child/parent reunification was unlikely.
- County-wide response to child protection cases involving parental use of methamphetamine is more coordinated and comprehensive than in the past. Several counties have developed mutually agreed upon response protocols involving key law enforcement, medical, and social service community professionals. The increased use of methamphetamine has significantly taxed community resources.
- In counties where the Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) teams are well developed, stakeholders observed more frequent use of settlement conferences resulting in few contested Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) hearings. Permanency timelines were carefully observed, and children, parents and professionals involved in the court process were more informed and knowledgeable.
- In cases where the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) applied, stakeholders noted that regularly scheduled case consultation meetings between tribal and county caseworkers led to improved communication and teamwork. When ICWA cases moved closer toward permanency, interpretation of federal and state statutes became more complicated, and the roles of county and tribal staff less clear.

Data on Outcome and Performance Item Measures

The following table lists the aggregate county performance across each of the seven outcomes and 24 performance items. The first data column on the left represents the combined performance of all 58 counties reviewed from 2003 through 2005. The second data column lists the combined performance of all 19 counties reviewed in 2005. The final column illustrates the performance difference between columns one and two. N represents the raw number of cases that applied to each outcome and performance item measure.

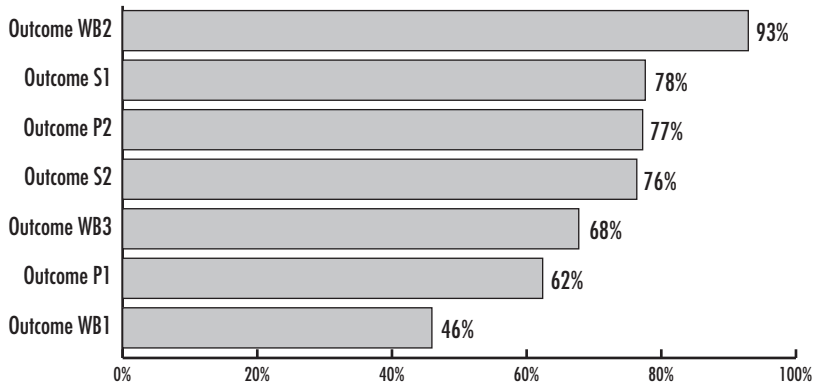
Performance on Quality Assurance Measures: Comparison between 2003–04 and 2005 MnCFSR Findings

KEY:	OUTCOME RATINGS (Shaded) % Substantially Achieved PERFORMANCE ITEM RATINGS (Not Shaded) % Strength	N = number of applicable cases per outcome/item				
Outcome or Performance Item		MnCFSR 2003–04	2003–04 N =	MnCFSR 2005	2005 N =	% Change
Outcome S1	Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	76.20%	470	77.62%	143	1.42%
Item 1	Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	68.75%	320	67.42%	89	-1.33%
Minnesota Supplement	Screening and assessment	69.57%	207	71.11%	90	1.54%
Item 2	Repeat maltreatment	91.96%	460	92.59%	135	0.63%
Outcome S2	Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	77.82%	514	76.36%	165	-1.46%
Item 3	Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	86.92%	428	90.37%	135	3.45%
Item 4	Risk of harm to child(ren)	81.05%	512	77.58%	165	-3.47%
Outcome P1	Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	73.10%	316	62.36%	101	-10.72%
Item 5	Foster care re-entries	76.47%	170	66.97%	58	-7.50%
Item 6	Stability of foster care placement	85.44%	316	85.15%	101	-0.29%
Item 7	Permanency goal for child	86.94%	314	83.17%	101	-3.77%
Item 8	Reunification or transfer of legal custody to a relative	82.80%	186	76.27%	59	-6.53%
Item 9	Adoption	75.32%	77	57.69%	26	-17.63%
Item 10	Permanency goal of long-term foster care	75.00%	68	56.52%	23	-18.48%
Outcome P2	Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children	81.65%	316	77.23%	101	-4.42%
Item 11	Proximity of foster care placement	86.48%	284	97.67%	86	1.19%
Item 12	Placement with siblings	95.21%	167	100.00%	50	4.79%
Item 13	Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	82.71%	295	85.00%	94	-1.86%
Item 14	Preserving connections	85.35%	314	83.17%	101	-2.18%
Item 15	Relative placement	79.66%	295	75.53%	94	-4.13%
Item 16	Relationship of child in care with parents	84.73%	275	86.05%	86	1.32%
Outcome WB1	Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs	51.57%	541	45.93%	172	-5.64%
Item 17	Needs and services of child, parents and foster parents	60.63%	541	54.07%	172	-6.56%
Item 18	Child and family involvement in case planning	63.33%	540	62.79%	172	-0.54%
Item 19	Worker visits with child	71.90%	541	70.35%	172	-1.55%
Item 20	Worker visits with parent(s)	69.49%	508	56.61%	157	-3.88%
Outcome WB2	Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	90.50%	358	92.92%	113	2.42%
Item 21	Educational needs of child	90.50%	358	92.92%	113	2.42%
Outcome WB3	Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	71.40%	479	67.74%	155	-3.66%
Item 22	Physical health of the child	82.70%	393	84.30%	121	1.60%
Item 23	Mental health of the child	78.54%	396	73.91%	138	-3.08%

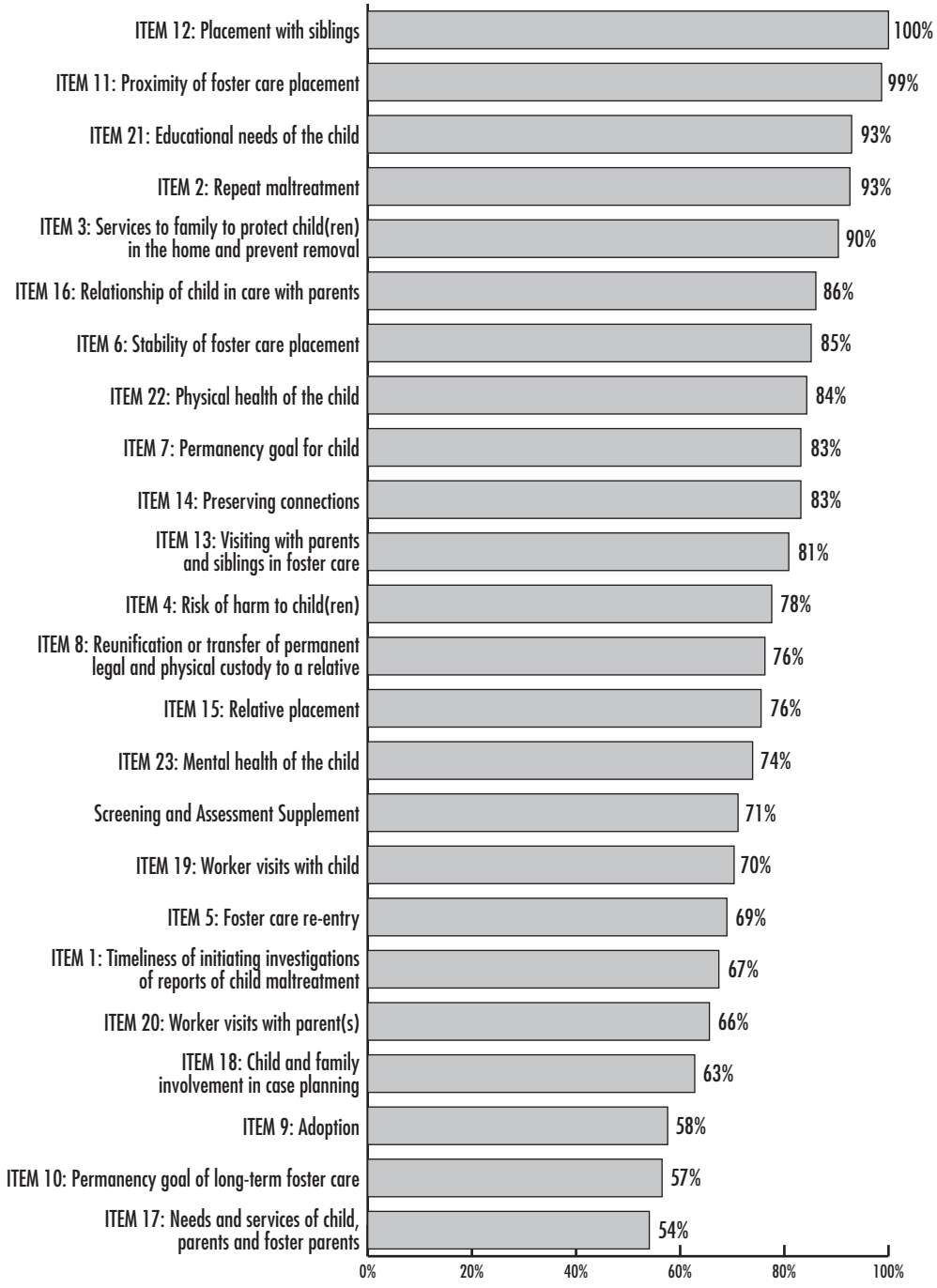
Outcome and Performance Item Measures

The first bar graph in this section illustrates the ranked order of 2005 performance on Outcomes. The outcome ratings represent the percent of cases rated as "substantially achieved." In order for an outcome to be rated substantially achieved, the key performance items within that outcome area must be rated as Strengths. This is the same criteria used by the federal Administration of Children and Families when conducting state Child and Family Service Reviews. The second bar graph lists the ranked order of 2005 performance on Items. The percentage across from each item indicates the percentage of cases rated as a Strength for that item.

Ranked Order of Performance on Outcomes, Percent of Cases Rated as "Substantially Achieved" in 2005



Ranked Order of Performance on Items, Percent of Cases Rated as "Strengths" in 2005



Findings from 2005 Case Review Data Analysis

The MnCFSR is a structured review process that generates considerable statewide and county-specific outcome and performance item data. In 2004, DHS developed a MnCFSR database to capture and share important data with county and community partners. Data from all 19 county reviews conducted in 2005 was entered into this dataset. Specific reporting features were created to address the following critical areas of child welfare practice:

- Initiating timely child protection assessments/investigations, including time elapsed before initial face-to-face contact with children
- Assessing the role of fathers in child welfare cases
- Engaging mothers, fathers and children in the case planning process
- Determining the association between caseworker visits with children and performance across other safety, permanency and well-being measures
- Determining the association between use of Concurrent Permanency Planning and performance across several permanency and well-being measures.

Time to Initiate Child Protection Assessments/ Investigations and Face-to-face Contact with Children

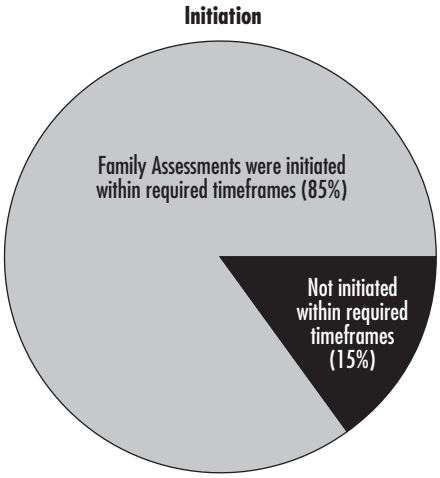
Timeliness of initiating child protection assessments/investigations and face-to-face contact with children is evaluated in Item 1 of the MnCFSR. Assessment and investigation case records are reviewed to determine whether they were initiated within state required timeframes, and also whether face-to-face contact with children was made within state required timeframes. Revisions to state statutes outlining the requirements for initiating assessments/investigations and making face-to-face contact with alleged child victims were made in 2005.

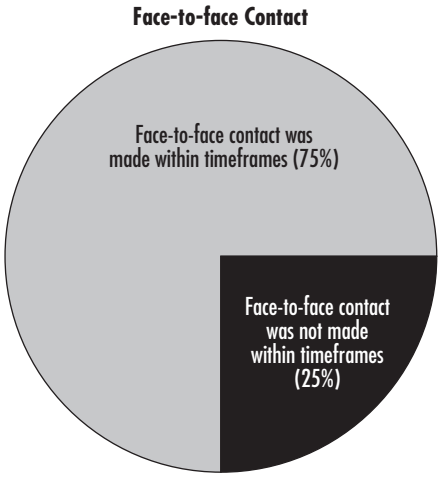
Of the 121 assessments/ investigations reviewed in 2005, 118 were received prior to August 1, 2005. The three investigations that occurred after August 1 were all initiated within required timeframes, and face-to-face contact with children was also made within required timeframes.

Prior to August 1, 2005, state policy required an immediate response to reports of maltreatment that indicated a child was in imminent danger. When a report of maltreatment did not indicate imminent danger, the agency could delay initiation of the investigation for up to 72 hours. Agencies were required to have face-to-face contact with alleged child victims in the initial stages of the investigation. State policy regarding the timeliness for initiating a Family Assessment (formerly known as Alternative Response) required person-to-person contact with the family within five working days from the date the report was accepted for an assessment, and face-to-face contact within 10 calendar days. Since August 1, 2005, state policy requires an immediate response to reports of maltreatment that allege substantial child endangerment. When a report does not allege substantial child endangerment, state policy requires initiation of the investigation or assessment and face-to-face contact with the family within five calendar days of the date the report is accepted for assessment/investigation.

There were 121 child maltreatment reports screened-in for assessment or investigation from the 171 cases reviewed in 2005. The following charts identify the percentage of assessments/investigations that were initiated within state required timelines; and the percentage of assessments/investigations in which face-to-face contact was made with alleged child victims within state designated timeframes. Overall, 84 percent (102) of assessments/investigations were initiated within required timeframes, and face-to-face contact with alleged child victims was made within required timeframes in 74 percent (90) of assessments/investigations. The charts below provide separate information regarding findings specific to Family Assessments and investigations.

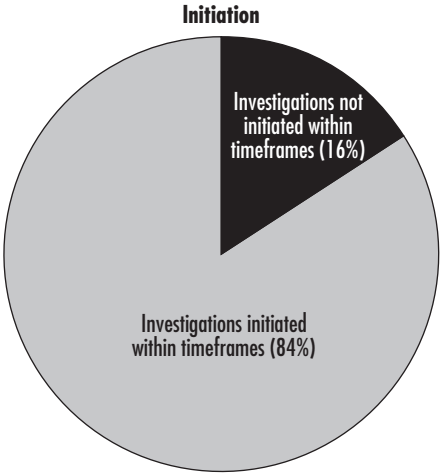
Family Assessment

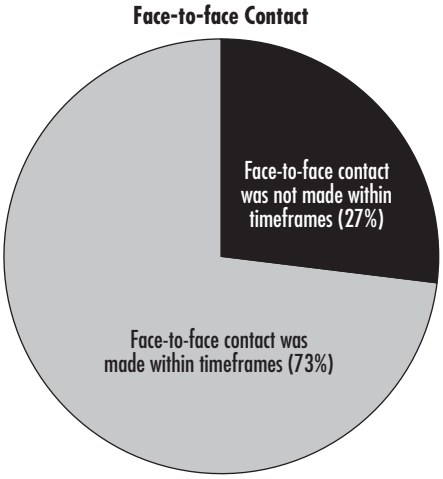




There were 81 investigations and 40 Family Assessments for the cases reviewed in 2005. Findings regarding initiating a response to a maltreatment report and conducting face-to-face contact with alleged child victims were consistent between investigations and Family Assessments.

Investigations

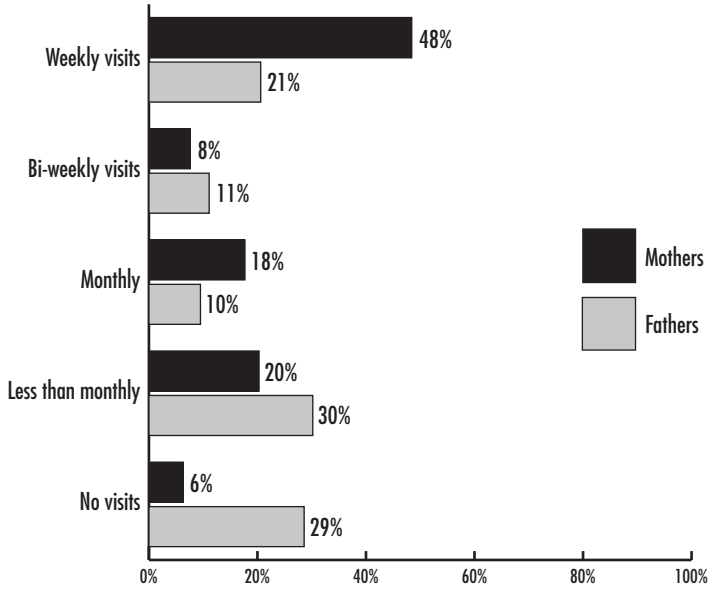




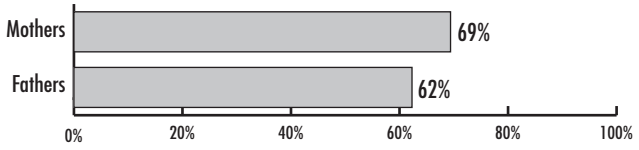
Assessing the Role of Fathers in Child Welfare Cases

Six MnCFSR performance items evaluate case practice and service provision separately for fathers and mothers. Analysis of the information demonstrated that, in all of the applicable items, agencies were less likely to engage and involve fathers than mothers. Fathers had less frequent visits with their children in out-of-home placement, and caseworkers had fewer contacts with fathers than mothers. Fathers' needs were assessed less frequently, and they were less likely to have their identified needs met through provision of services. The following charts outline the differences between engaging and involving fathers and mothers in the cases reviewed in 2005. **The numbers and percentages included in this section are for applicable cases only. Fathers were more likely than mothers to be determined to be "not applicable" in each of these items.**

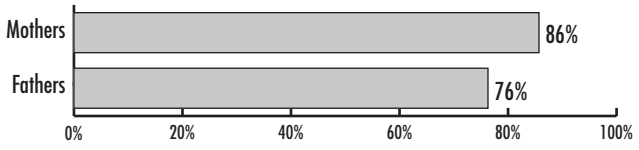
Item 13: Visiting with parents. The table below addresses the frequency of visits between parent(s) and their children in foster care. Nearly 50 percent of mothers had weekly visits with their children, while nearly one third of fathers had no visits. Total number of applicable cases: 94.



Item 15: Relative search. This table reflects the number and percentage of relative searches involving maternal and paternal relatives. Of all six items addressed in this report, relative searches showed the least disparity between mothers and fathers. Total number of applicable cases: 94.



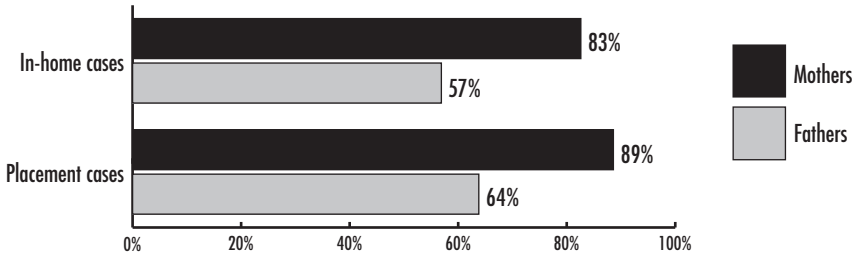
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents. The information below represents the percentage of cases in which efforts were made to maintain relationships between mothers and fathers and their children in out-of-home care. There is a strong, but not exclusive, relationship between this item and Item 13 – supporting and facilitating visits is one way in which agencies make efforts to support a continued parent/child relationship. The information below appears consistent with, and supported by, information presented in Item 13. Total number of applicable cases: 86.



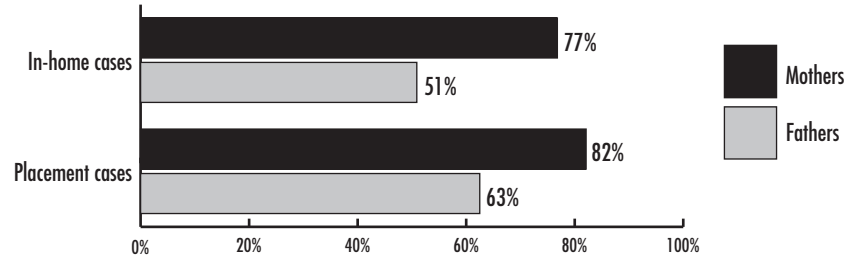
It is more difficult for agencies to assess the role of non-custodial parents (typically fathers) for in-home cases than for placement cases. There are more distinct protocols and requirements in place for including non-custodial parents once a child enters out-of-home care. This struggle to define roles and expectations may be a partial explanation for the disparities between mothers and fathers in Items 17, 18 and 20.

Item 17: Needs and services. Item 17 is particularly critical to case practice and overall achievement of positive outcomes for children and families. Federal CFSR data identifies significant associations between performance on Item 17 and several other performance items. There are additional components to Item 17 that are not included here, including assessing needs and providing services to children and foster parents. Performance on both in-home and placement cases reflected that mothers' needs were assessed and services provided at a much higher rate than for fathers. Total number of applicable cases: 172.

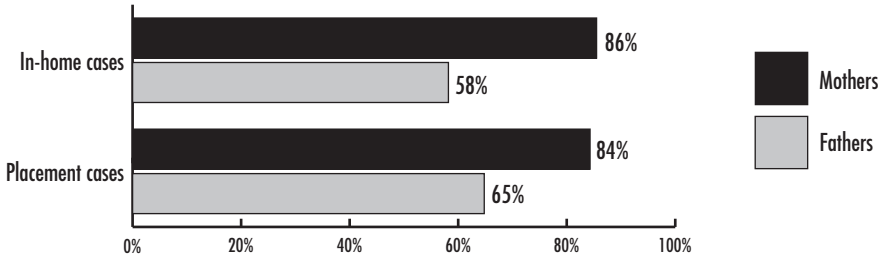
Assessment of Needs



Provision of Services

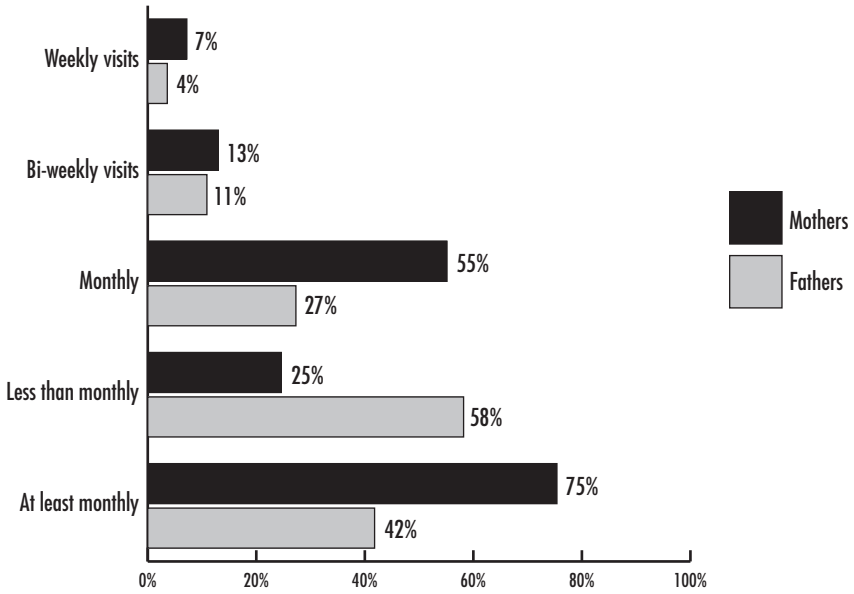


Item 18: Parent involvement in case planning. The information below identifies mother and father involvement in the case planning process, including opportunities to identify strengths and needs, request services, establish goals, evaluate progress, and attend case planning meetings. The table below demonstrates great disparity between mothers and fathers in non-placement cases. Generally, in placement cases, agencies have legal custody of children for purposes of placement and are obligated to consider non-custodial parents as potential placement resources. Total number of applicable cases: 172.

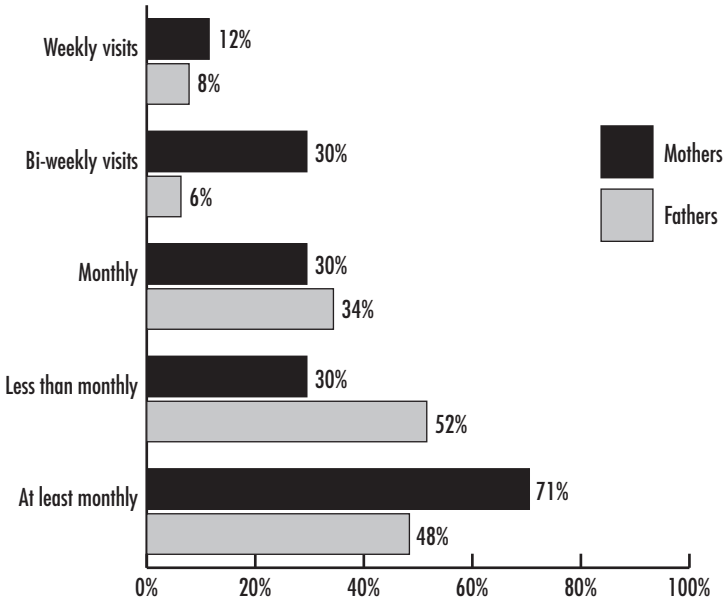


Item 20: Worker visits with parents. The focus of Item 20 is whether the frequency of caseworker face-to-face visits with mothers and fathers is consistent with the needs of the family. In both in-home and placement cases, less than monthly caseworker contact with fathers was significantly higher than with mothers. Total number of applicable cases: 157.

In-home Cases



Placement Cases



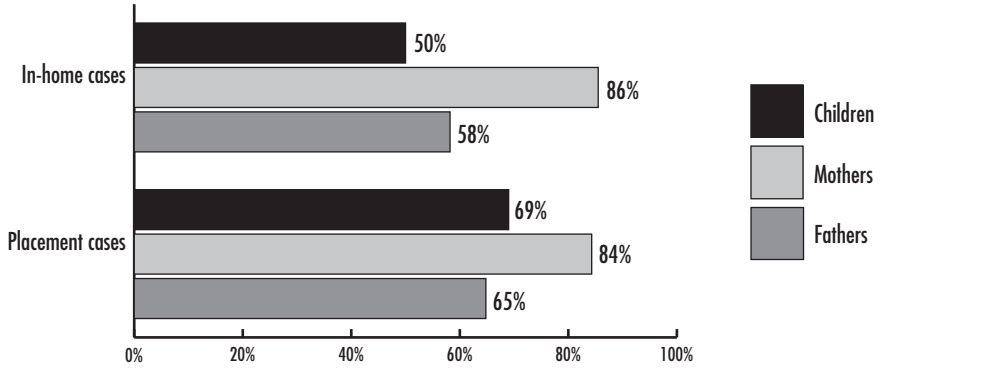
Engagement of Mothers, Fathers and Children in the Case Planning Process

The engagement of mothers, fathers and age appropriate children is evaluated in Item 18. The following tables provide information on the percentage of cases in which children, mothers and fathers were engaged in

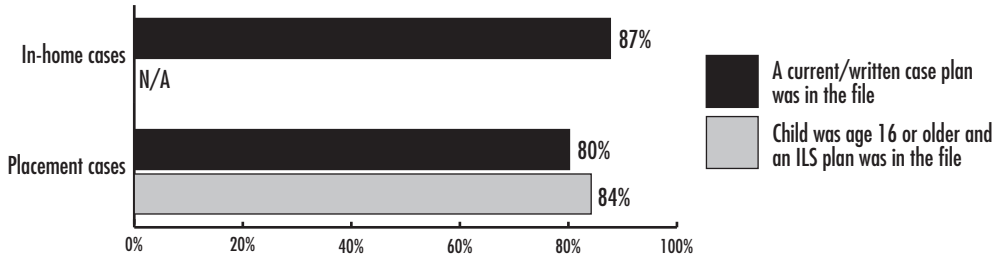
the case planning process. If children were determined to be too young to participate in case planning, their participation was rated as "not applicable" and those numbers were not included in the information below.

An additional chart includes information on whether current case plans (including Independent Living Skills plans) were included in the case files reviewed.

Family Involvement in Case Planning



Case Plans



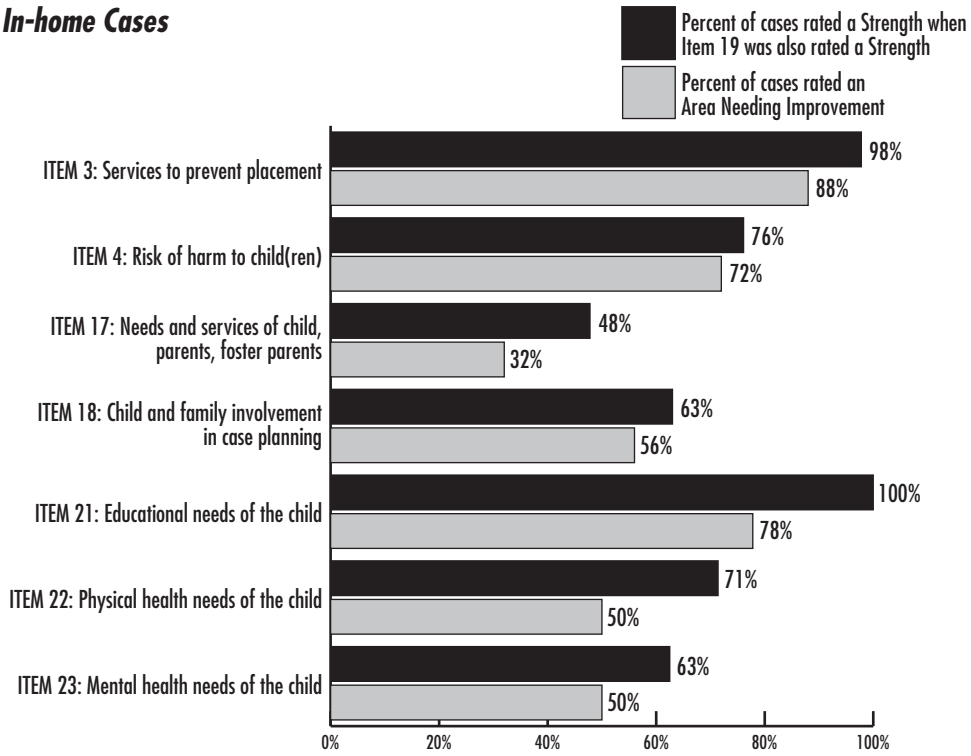
Associations Between Caseworker Visits with Children and Performance Across other Safety, Permanency and Well-being Data Measures

Of the cases reviewed in 2005, 64.8 percent of in-home and 74.3 percent of placement cases were rated as a strength on Item 19.

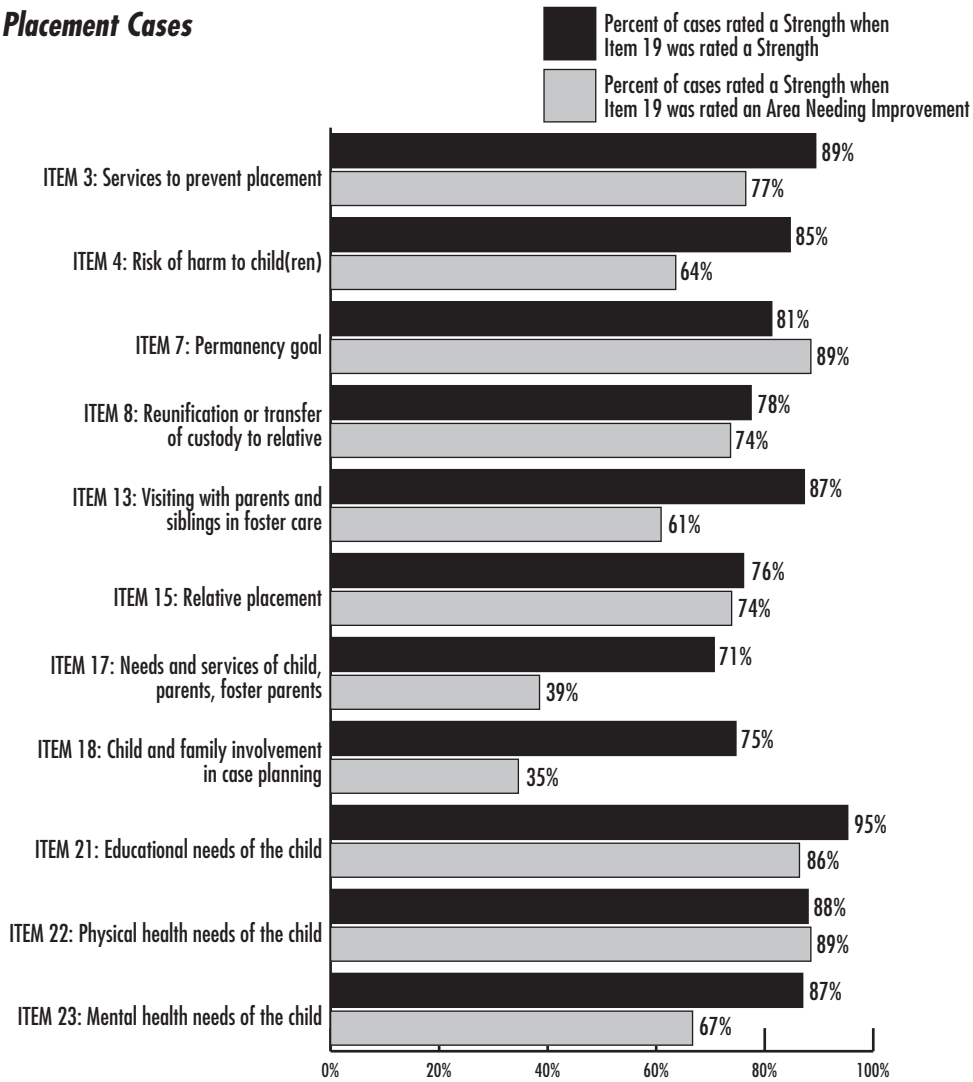
Following the completion of reviews in all 50 states, the federal Children's Bureau conducted an analysis of associations between different performance items. Through their analysis, they identified that caseworker face-to-face visits with children had a strong correlation to achievement of positive outcomes. The following information provides a similar analysis of 2005 Minnesota data. The first dataset provides a comparison of in-home cases: When Item 19 (Worker visits with child) was a Strength, what percentage of cases on comparison items were also rated a Strength, versus, when Item 19 was rated an Area Needing Improvement, what percentage of cases on comparison items were still rated a Strength?

The second dataset provides the same comparison for placement cases: If Item 19 was rated an Area Needing Improvement, what percentage of cases were still rated a Strength on the comparison items?

In-home Cases



Placement Cases



When comparing the two datasets, worker visits seemed to have a more positive influence on safety, permanency and well-being measures in placement cases.

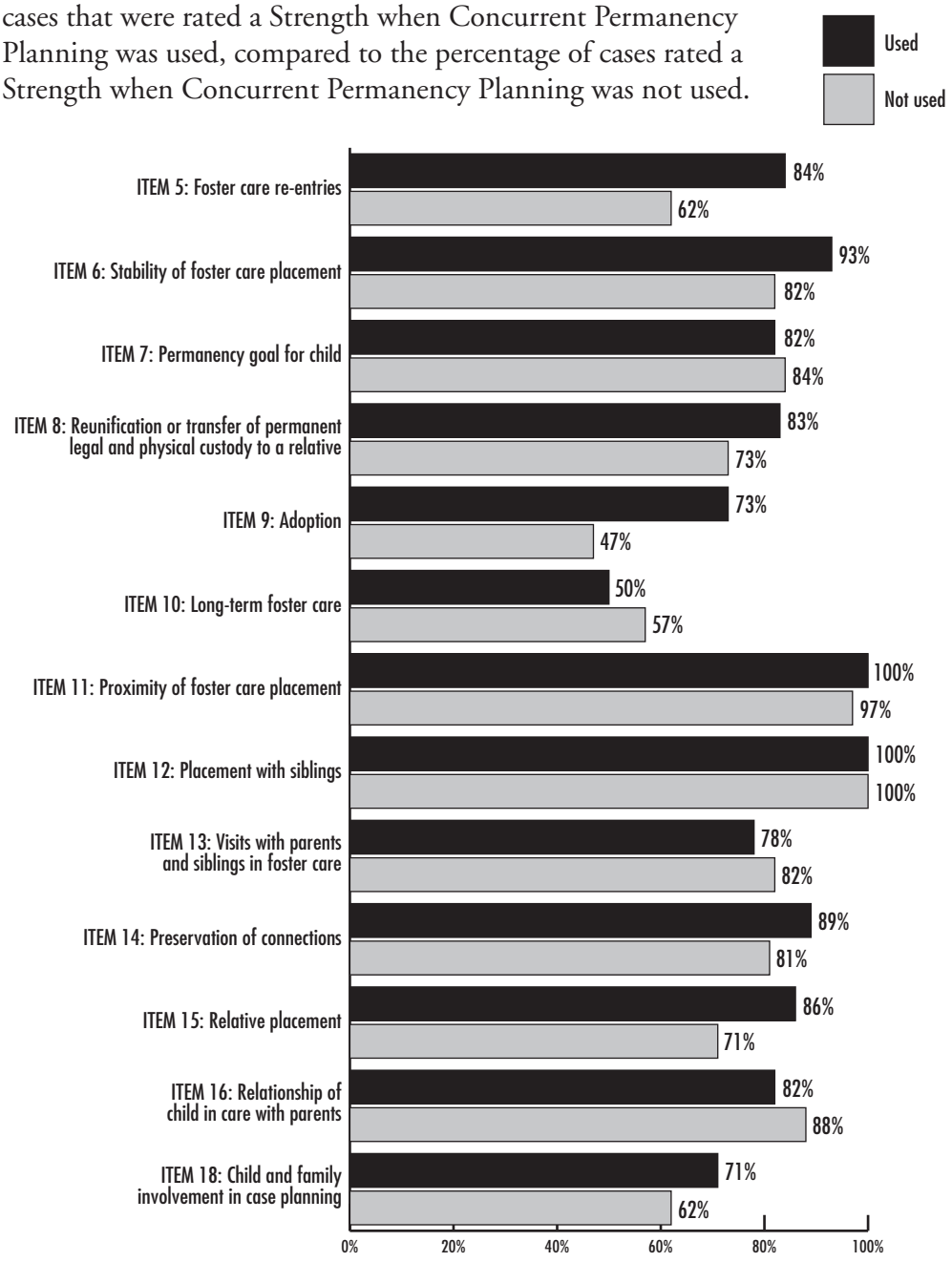
Associations Between Use of Concurrent Permanency Planning and Performance Across Well-being Measures

Concurrent Permanency Planning was authorized by the Minnesota Legislature in 1998. Concurrent Permanency Planning means simultaneously developing two permanency plans for children: a plan for safe reunification with parent(s), and a plan for permanent placement away from their parent(s) if they cannot safety return home. The goals of Concurrent Permanency Planning are to reduce the length of time children spend in foster care, and to reduce the number of moves children experience while in foster care.

To evaluate the impact of Concurrent Permanency Planning on the cases reviewed in 2005, a query was developed to compare performance on cases in which Concurrent Permanency Planning was implemented with performance on cases where it was not. The information below indicates the percentage of cases that were rated a Strength when Concurrent Permanency Planning was used, compared to the percentage of cases rated a Strength when Concurrent Permanency Planning was not used.

Reunification was the most commonly identified primary permanency goal in the cases reviewed, followed by adoption and long-term foster care. Transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative was the least cited primary permanency goal. The most commonly identified secondary permanency goal was transfer of custody to a relative, followed by adoption and long-term foster care.

Concurrent Permanency Planning was used in 28 of the 101 cases reviewed in 2005.



Concurrent permanency planning summary

- Performance was higher in eight items when Concurrent Permanency Planning was implemented. The average difference in performance was +13 percent, with performance on individual items ranging from +3 to +26 percent.
- Performance remained the same in one item.
- In four items, performance was not higher when Concurrent Permanency Planning was implemented. The average difference was -4.25 percent, with performance on individual items ranging from -2 to -7 percent.

Cumulative MnCFSR Data on Outcome and Performance Items with Comparison to Federal CFSR Performance

Cumulative results of Minnesota Child and Family Service Reviews from 2003 through 2005 provide a broader perspective of overall performance on outcomes and performance items. As MnCFSRs continue, it will be possible to identify trends in performance across the state, represented by rural and urban counties, as well as counties from each of the five regions. Identifying where counties are collectively demonstrating strengths and areas needing improvement provides a foundation for department planning and the development of training and technical assistance.

Federal CFSRs were completed in all 50 states and two districts by the beginning of 2004. Cumulative results from the CFSRs provide a national perspective on performance and a context for comparing Minnesota's performance.

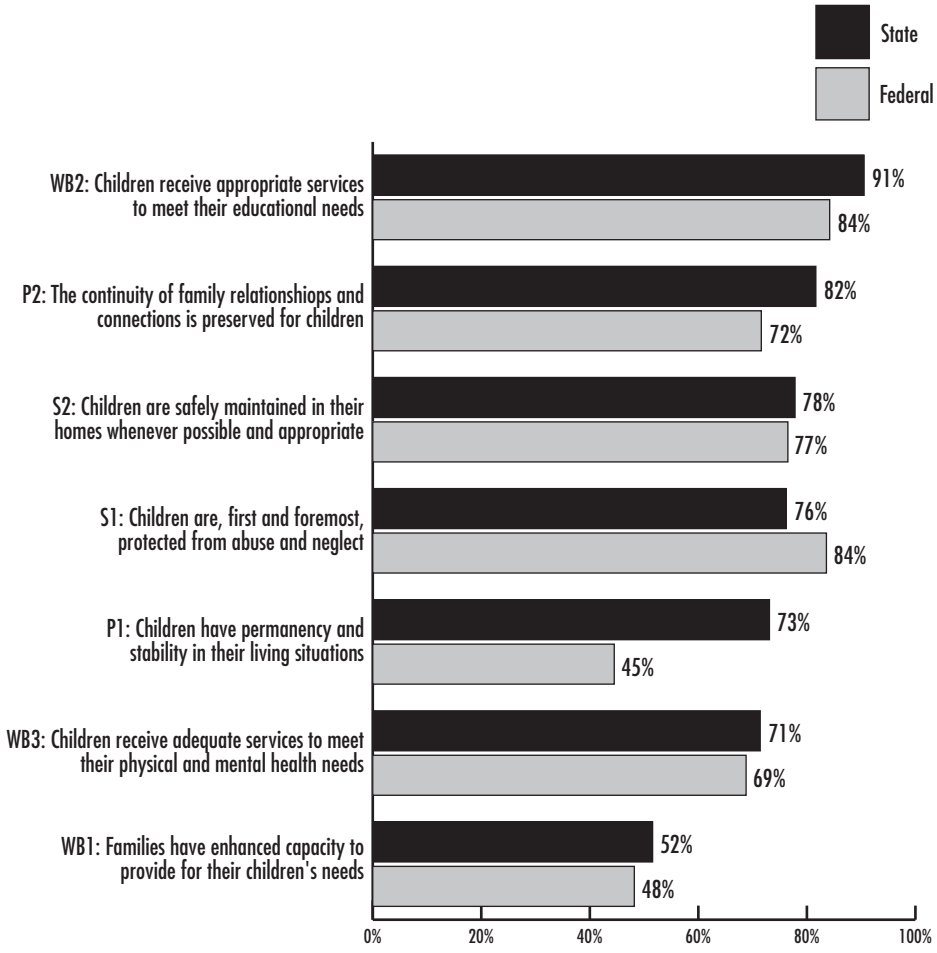
The following table represents the cumulative Minnesota 2003-05 performance along with federal 2001-04 CFSR performance. The table also includes a state and federal column for N, the raw number of cases that applied to each specific outcome and performance item measure.

Additional tables provide a more visual comparison of 2003-05 Minnesota performance to federal performance.

Performance on Quality Assurance Measures: 2003-05 Comparison with Federal Performance

KEY:	OUTCOME RATINGS (Shaded) % Substantially Achieved PERFORMANCE ITEM RATINGS (Not Shaded) % Strength	N = number of applicable cases per outcome/item			
	Outcome or Performance Item	MnCFSR 2003-05	2003-05 N =	Federal CFSR 2001-04	Fed N =
Outcome S1	Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	76.20%	478	83.6%	1,559
Item 1	Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	68.75%	320	75.4%	712
Minnesota Supplement	Screening and assessment	69.57%	207	NA	NA
Item 2	Repeat maltreatment	91.96%	460	92.5%	1,510
Outcome S2	Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	77.82%	514	76.5%	1,609
Item 3	Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	86.92%	426	80.3%	1,047
Item 4	Risk of harm to children	81.05%	512	79.1%	1,602
Outcome P1	Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	73.10%	316	44.5%	965
Item 5	Foster care re-entries	76.47%	170	85.2%	311
Item 6	Stability of foster care placement	85.44%	316	76.0%	962
Item 7	Permanency goal for child	86.94%	314	68.4%	964
Item 8	Reunification or transfer of legal custody to a relative	82.80%	186	64.2%	461
Item 9	Adoption	75.32%	77	36.4%	330
Item 10	Permanency goal of long-term foster care	75.00%	68	66.8%	202
Outcome P2	Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children	81.65%	316	71.6%	961
Item 11	Proximity of foster care placement	96.48%	284	94.4%	765
Item 12	Placement with siblings	95.21%	167	85.7%	595
Item 13	Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	82.71%	295	73.1%	821
Item 14	Preserving connections	85.35%	314	79.6%	948
Item 15	Relative placement	79.66%	295	74.5%	891
Item 16	Relationship of child in care with parents	84.73%	275	74.4%	742
Outcome WB1	Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs	51.57%	541	48.2%	1,735
Item 17	Needs and services of child, parents and foster parents	60.63%	541	58.9%	1,735
Item 18	Child and family involvement in case planning	63.33%	540	58.0%	1,706
Item 19	Worker visits with child	71.90%	541	66.2%	1,733
Item 20	Worker visits with parent(s)	69.49%	508	56.1%	1,572
Outcome WB2	Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	90.50%	358	84.2%	1,309
Item 21	Educational needs of child	90.50%	348	84.3%	1,309
Outcome WB3	Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	71.40%	479	68.8%	1,632
Item 22	Physical health of the child	82.70%	393	83.4%	1,427
Item 23	Mental health of the child	76.54%	396	70.9%	1,324

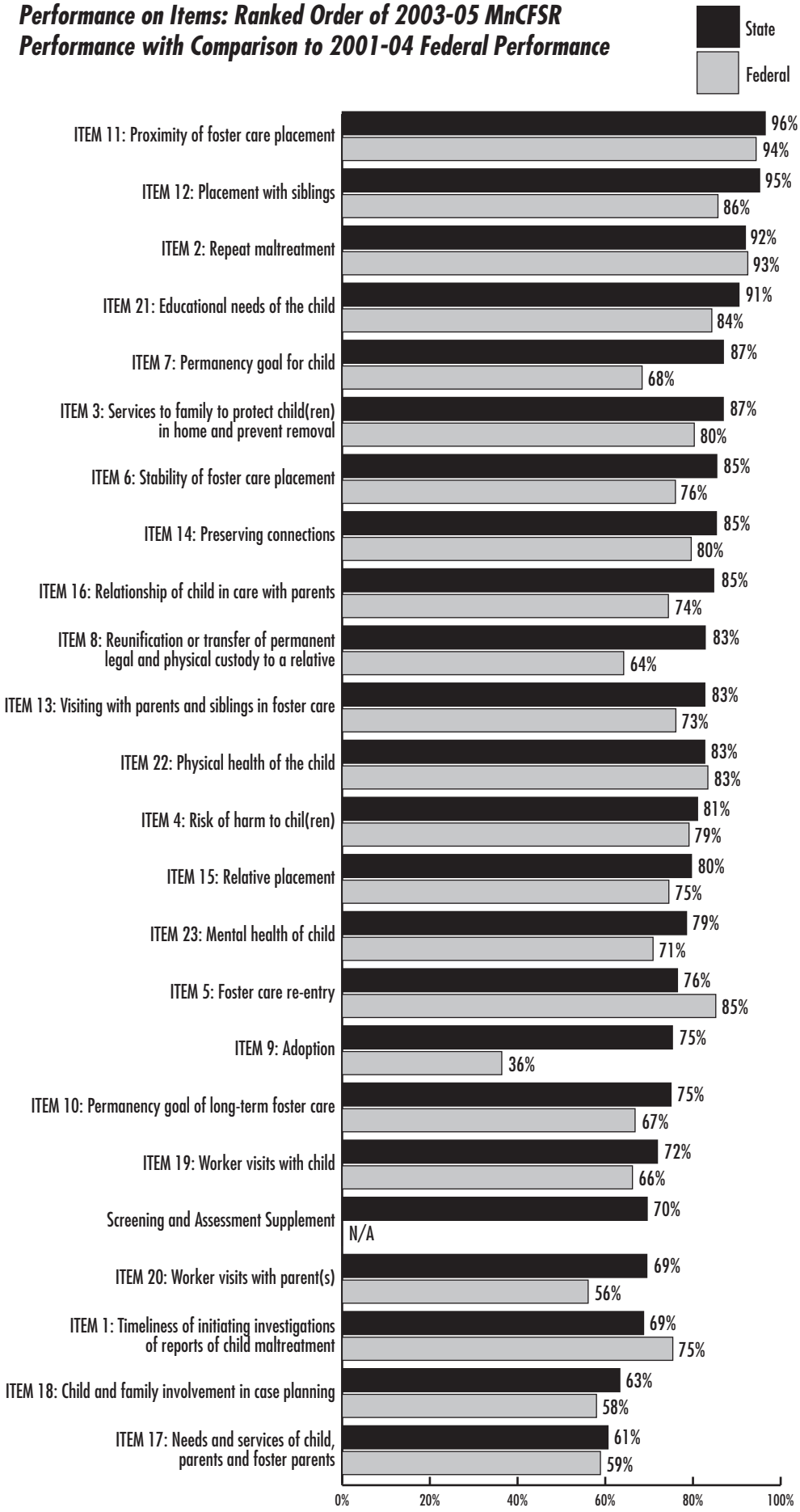
Performance on Outcomes: Ranked Order of 2003-05 MnCFSR Performance with Comparison to 2001-04 Federal Performance



Minnesota performance exceeded federal performance on six of seven outcomes.

Minnesota performance exceeded federal performance on 19 of 23 performance items.

Performance on Items: Ranked Order of 2003-05 MnCFSR Performance with Comparison to 2001-04 Federal Performance



County Level Performance Data

The following table presents MnCFSR 2003-05 cumulative findings with respect to how counties performed on the outcomes and performance items. The table provides the number and percentage of counties that substantially achieved the seven outcome measures, and the number and percentage of counties that received a rating of Strength on the 24 performance items. This presentation of county level performance provides a different perspective of MnCFSR performance than previous case level performance.

In order to receive a substantially achieved rating, 90 percent or more of the cases reviewed in the county have to have a substantial achievement rating. To receive a rating of Strength, 85 percent or more of the cases reviewed have to have a Strength rating.

The county level range of performance on outcomes closely reflects the case level performance. Fifty-two counties received ratings of strength on Item 11, proximity of foster care, while only seven counties received ratings of strength on Item 17, needs and services. Forty-one counties substantially achieved Well-being Outcome 2, educational needs, while only three counties substantially achieved Well-being Outcome 1, families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Number and percentage of counties rated "Substantially Achieved" Number and percentage of counties rated "Strength" 58 Counties Reviewed in 2003-05					
Outcome or Performance Item		Performance Items		Outcomes	
		Number of Counties with Strength Level Performance	Percent of Counties with Strength Level Performance	Number of Counties with Substantially Achieved Level Performance	Percent of Counties with Substantially Achieved Level Performance
Outcome S1	Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect			14	25%
Item 1	Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	18	32%		
Item 2	Repeat maltreatment	41	72%		
Outcome S2	Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate			12	21%
Item 3	Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	34	60%		
Item 4	Risk of harm to child(ren)	25	43%		
Outcome P1	Children have permanency and stability in their living situations			16	28%
Item 5	Foster care re-entries	25	46%		
Item 6	Stability of foster care placement	32	55%		
Item 7	Permanency goal for child	35	60%		
Item 8	Reunification or transfer of legal custody to a relative	35	61%		
Item 9	Adoption	30	65%		
Item 10	Permanency goal of long-term foster care	22	59%		
Outcome P2	Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children			22	38%
Item 11	Proximity of foster care placement	52	91%		
Item 12	Placement with siblings	48	87%		
Item 13	Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	27	47%		
Item 14	Preserving connections	33	57%		
Item 15	Relative placement	29	50%		
Item 16	Relationship of child in care with parents	29	51%		
Outcome WB1	Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs			3	5%
Item 17	Needs and services of child, parents and foster parents	7	12%		
Item 18	Child and family involvement in case planning	9	16%		
Item 19	Worker visits with child	16	28%		
Item 20	Worker visits with parent(s)	10	18%		
Outcome WB2	Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs			41	71%
Item 21	Educational needs of the child	46	79%		
Outcome WB3	Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs			10	17%
Item 22	Physical health of the child	24	41%		
Item 23	Mental health of the child	24	41%		

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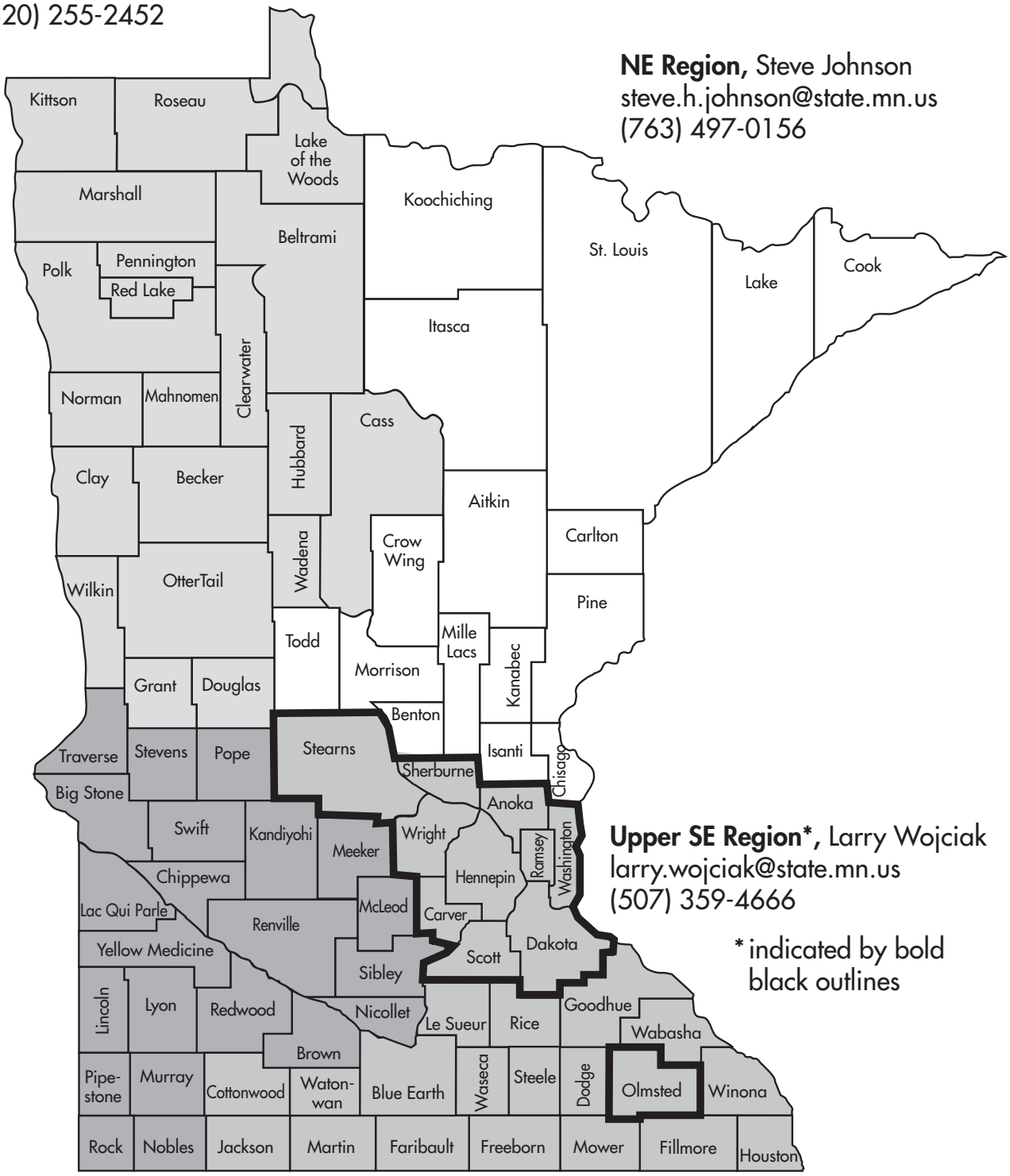

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