

**Continuous Quality Improvement
Quality Service Review**

FINAL REPORT

*November 16 – 20, 2009
Racine County Human Services*

**Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement Program
Office of Performance and Quality Assurance
Department of Children and Families**

*A Report by
The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Team*

August 31, 2010

I. INTRODUCTION

The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Program, within the Office of Performance and Quality Assurance (OPQA), of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), uses the Quality Service Review (QSR) protocol to evaluate the case practice models of Wisconsin's county child welfare programs. The QSR generates useful information for county staff and community stakeholders as to outcomes for children and families served, strengths of local practice, and opportunities for improving system performance.

The QSR process also provides an opportunity to gather additional information the department will use in reporting some federally required information, which is part of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR).

The Continuous Quality Improvement Team conducted a Quality Service Review in Racine County during the week of November 16, 2010.

II. THE RACINE COUNTY REVIEW

A. REVIEWERS

In the Racine County review, the Area Administrator, two DCF staff, three Continuous Quality Improvement Specialists, one retired and four current child welfare professionals, and one retired county director participated in reviewing the twelve cases selected. Two reviewers were observed and coached in their development as lead case reviewers. The lead case reviewers who provided coaching have extensive experience in child welfare.

B. CASE SAMPLE

Twelve cases were randomly selected for review in Racine County. In each case, one child was selected as the "focus child." Every attempt is made to stratify the case sample across workers and ages and genders of children. A family must agree to participate in the review process and sign releases for participants to be interviewed by the review team, or the case is not selected. In the Racine review, a total of eighty-nine persons were interviewed. Of the twelve cases, there were four in home and eight out of home cases. Five children were in the 0-4 age range, one child was in the 5-9 age range, four children were in the 10-13 age range, and two children were over the age of 13. There were five males and seven females in the sample.

C. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

As a complement to the individual case reviews, focus groups were conducted with stakeholders from the local child welfare system. Site Leaders Bridget Chybowski and Michelle Garnette conducted these sessions. The external perspectives that were gathered provide a valuable source of insight and feedback about how the systems with which

families are involved interface and perform with the child welfare agency, thereby affecting and influencing outcomes. The stakeholder focus groups and their perspectives are described in Section III.

D. DEMOGRAPHICS

Racine County population is 198,870 (2008), which consists of urban and rural communities comprising 82 percent Caucasian and 10 percent African-American. The county's median household income (2008) of \$54,241 is higher than the state's median of \$46,142. It was shared in focus groups that there is an increase in the number of individuals and families in the community living in poverty and/or are unemployed. According US Census Data, 6.9 percent of families in Racine County are living below poverty level which is comparable to the State's rate of 7 percent. However, in looking at unemployment percentages, the city of Racine is the second highest in the state at 14.5 percent (Department of Workforce Development – DWD 09/2009) where Racine County is at 5.1 percent and the state is at 7.6 percent (DWD 09/2009). The largest employers in Racine County are All Saints Medical Center, Inc., Racine Unified School District, SC Johnson and Sons, Inc., CNH American LLC, and the City of Racine.

In addition, families in the area are dealing with personal challenges, such as mental health needs and alcohol and drug addictions. Focus group participants shared that there is an increase of parents caring for younger children with challenging co-occurring conditions, such as mental illnesses, behavioral disorders, trauma related needs and alcohol and drug abuse. The community as a whole was seen has resourceful yet, like many counties in Wisconsin, there is always a need for more services to provide transportation, accessible mental health and alcohol and drug treatment, and an increase in dental providers who accept Medicaid

III. THE SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE (MACRO VIEW)

A. ORGANIZATIONAL – STRENGTHS

Agency workers (e.g. Access Workers, Initial Assessment Workers, and Ongoing Case Managers) are described by focus group participants as being committed to their work and their families. It appears that there is a balance of seasoned, experienced staff with new staff who have prior Child Protective Services (CPS) experiences in other counties. Staff was seen as being creative and flexible in working with the resources available to meet the needs of children and families. Agency staff appears to work together well and provide support to each other such as informal case staffings or assisting with daily job duties (e.g. covering vacations). Supervisors were described as having an open door policy to answer questions and/or staff cases when needed.

Racine County's relationship with community partners was described as both positive and collaborative. A number of local businesses, churches and individuals donate and volunteer services on a regular basis such as a holiday party for children with gifts donated by a local business. Focus group participants shared that Racine County Human Services Department's (HSD) philosophy of teaming internally and externally with partners has resulted in stronger relationships with stakeholders. The Child Advocacy Center in Racine County was due to the solid collaboration efforts between community stakeholders coming together. There is practice among division managers within HSD to have regular and open communication with each other. It was shared that there was the ability to shift resources (e.g. job positions) within the department when a need presented itself.

The relationship between HSD and law enforcement was described as collaborative and positive. There is a willingness on both sides to participate in joint investigations related to CPS. In addition, there is a collaborative effort with high schools and HSD to reduce the number incarcerated youth and promote education through the Alternatives to Corrections through Education program (ACE). The program is an alternative for youths who may be incarcerated through the State Corrections due to criminal convictions. The ACE occurs at Racine County Detention Center and all parties such as the District Attorney, HSD, family and the youth agreed to the youth's participation in the program.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL – CHALLENGES

While there were many examples of solid collaboration between HSD and community partners, there appears to be an opportunity to improve collaboration efforts with the Unified School District. There appears to be confusion on when the county is involved with families and when the school can obtain information on families working with the county. Another area of opportunity is to understand each other's roles and responsibilities as it relates to children and families. Schools may be able to offer additional support and resources for families involved or not involved in CPS.

There is a perception that the new federal and state policies (e.g. Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing Standards) have changed the work environment at HSD. There appears to be a feeling of a decrease in face time with clients and an increase amount of time in the office documenting and completing paperwork. An example shared was that of the amount of time to document a child abuse and/or neglect referral within Wisconsin Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (eWiSACWIS) has increased greatly and the perception that caseloads amongst Initial Assessment and Ongoing Case Managers are increasing. Furthermore, the increased workload has limited the time allowed for additional outreach and collaboration with community stakeholders. Agency staff who participated in state or local work groups are finding it harder to leave the office to attending the necessary meetings.

In conjunction with the new federal and state mandates, CPS units have experienced staff turnover in recent years that has impacted workload with consistently having vacancy across CPS units. It was also shared that in the last few years there has been increased awareness by the local media and community as to wanting to understand the role of CPS within the county. This awareness at times has been viewed as negatively impacting agency morale. The community and schools may benefit from learning information to the new federal and state standards as it relates to assessing child's safety, when HSD is able to intervene.

C. RESOURCES – STRENGTHS

Racine County has a comprehensive range of services to address parenting issues, drug/alcohol, and mental health issues, domestic violence, sexual abuse, homeless and crisis counseling, etc. There are a number of providers with private agencies throughout the county that offer an array of services through in home and outpatient services. Agencies frequently mentioned were *Professional Services Group* for supervised family interactions, parenting, independent living skills, and intensive supervision for juvenile justice cases, *Zimmerman Counseling* – alcohol and other drug treatment, *Racine Psychologist* – therapeutic services, *Lutheran Social Services, Inc.*, and *Children Service Society of Wisconsin* for sexual assault services in collaboration with the Child Advocacy Center, *St. Aemilian's Lakeside* – therapeutic and trauma base services, treatment foster care and support for foster parents if needed including home visits, crisis management and intervention, caregivers, *Next Generation Now* – parenting advocacy, support and resources, *Women's Resource Center* – domestic violence resources and shelter, *Safehaven* and *Safe Passage* – housing/shelter for older youth, and *Halo* and *Salvation Army* – housing and homeless resources. Lastly, CPS and young juvenile justice children are able to participate in recreational activities through *Royal Family Kids' Camp* which allows about 16 children to go camping during the summer months. It was mentioned that the program may include a mentoring component in the future.

D. RESOURCES – CHALLENGES

Many focus group participants talked about the need to expand the capacity of several services and programs to meet the needs and demands of the families in Racine County.

The majority of the focus groups spoke about waiting lists for main services such as mental health, alcohol and other drug treatment, parenting, and housing. One service that was discussed by focus group participants is that of transportation across the county and specifically the west side of Racine. There are limited resources on the west side of Racine. Therefore, transportation is critical in allowing west side families to access necessary resources in other locations across the county. There appears to be a need to expand the capacity of dental providers, adult and youth alcohol and other drugs and mental health providers that allow for a sliding pay scale for fees, and accept Medicaid and/or HMOs. Furthermore, there is a need for cultural sensitive and bilingual service providers who provide alcohol and other drug and mental health treatment.

While there were numerous services available to children and families within Racine County, focus group participants talked about the need for specialized services, such as support and services for fathers with children such as a homeless shelter and older youth dealing with alcohol and drug addictions and mental health issues. Additional resources for older youth mentioned across several focus groups were licensed treatment foster homes and licensed foster homes and mentoring. Lastly, parenting classes and mentoring for families was valued by focus group participants. However, due to continuous budget cuts, the parenting component continues to be decreased each year.

E. PRACTICE – STRENGTHS

Front line staff was considered to be knowledgeable about community resources. There appears to be considerable creativity in meeting the clients' needs, both by front line staff, as well as upper management. Agency staff was described as being solution focused and willing to look at all possibilities. It was reported that staff are gaining a better understanding of concurrent planning and are working diligently to incorporate it into daily practice. There is early utilization of the State Permanency Consultant at the six month mark of a case rather than a year and to use the State Permanency Consultant for all cases, not only for cases moving towards adoption. The State Permanency Consultant meets with staff two Fridays each month to discuss cases.

As previously mentioned, HSD has implemented the “teaming model” which can be seen not only on casework, but also within the agency as a whole. After the QSR 2006, HSD developed an action plan in response to the QSR results which identified teaming as an area to address. Agency staff was trained on a teaming model and a teaming coordinator was trained and reassigned to assist with enhancing staff competency and skill level for teaming. While it is early in the implementation of teaming, focus group participants recognize the efforts by staff and see the benefits to families when teaming occurs on a consistent basis. HSD expects staff engage with families and for the family to direct their family team.

Racine County has shown a commitment to helping children maintain a relationship with family whenever possible. By promoting and utilizing relative placements, children are able to have a sense of stability by remaining with familiar caretakers. When children are removed from the home, Racine County promotes “shared parenting” between foster

parents and biological parents. This approach empowers biological parents to have a significant role in caring for their child once removed from their home. It is also a way for parents to get additional support in developing strong parenting skills and learning how to appropriately care for their children. Foster parents and agency staff participated in Shared Parenting Training in 2007.

Racine County is committed to improving outcomes for children and families which are evident by their collaboration with St. Aemilian's Lakeside on trauma-informed trainings for staff and services for clients. There is a strong commitment in HSD to continue to develop and grow, both as an agency and as individuals. The agency is committed to professional development of staff through the trainings offered through the Southern Child Welfare Training Partnership. There was an appreciation by focus group participants that there were trainings for the beginner worker and experienced worker. Foster parents participate in the state Partners in Alternative Care Education (PACE) training which is 36 hours of training to become and maintain a foster care license.

F. PRACTICE – CHALLENGES

As previously mentioned in *Organizational Challenges*, understanding and implementing the new federal and state policies is an ongoing learning process that impacts daily child welfare practice. A common challenge to child welfare workers across the state is balancing increasingly high and intense caseloads with documentation and screen-time demands of eWiSACWIS. This is especially evident in workers being responsible for supervised family interactions when contracted providers do not have the needed capacity. Concerns were raised for the case transfer process between Initial Assessment Workers and Ongoing Case Managers. The procedure is for a case to transfer to an Ongoing Case Manager when the case reaches Disposition (court ordered entered). Focus group participants shared that cases are not reaching Disposition in a timely manner due to contests, delays, and etc. Therefore, there appears to be a delay with connecting the family with the appropriate interventions needed to address the needs of family that lead to involvement with the system. Initial Assessment Workers are expected to do case management duties when their primary job responsibilities are to respond to crisis situations with little notice and time to adjust their schedule.

Communication as a whole was seen as a strength with the division managers. However, there is an opportunity to enhance communication between front line staff within CPS and other divisions with shared clients. All systems should communicate and plan together to prevent any further challenges for the family when working multiple systems. Such as the Economic Support Worker and Ongoing Case Manager should assess and plan with the family together and develop one plan rather than having multiple case plans. Another area of opportunity in communication is a community perception that the Access staff are not always available or helpful when receiving calls. Focus group participants shared that there appeared to be some variation in responses by the agency staff towards the caller.

Another area of struggle is the implementation and maintenance of a teaming model that utilizes case planning with families and their supports. The county was applauded for their efforts in initiating new practice in order to improve outcomes for children and families. However, due to increase workloads and limited workforce capacity, the ability to allow workers to become skilled in conducting family team meetings has been minimal. Although teaming was viewed as being helpful and beneficial for the families and those working with the family, it needs to occur on a consistent basis. In addition, it was learned that Racine County is seeing multi-generational families involved in the system and more families with multiple needs related to their daily subsistence, alcohol and drug use, trauma, poverty, etc. Teaming can be utilized when working with families that have a number of challenges to bring together all of the supports and avoid duplication of interventions. When teaming is utilized, it shares responsibility across all team members rather than all responsibilities and tasks being placed on the ongoing case manager.

G. LEGAL – STRENGTHS

There were many strengths identified by participants with regard to the legal process of Racine County. Agency staff were reported to be knowledgeable about their families and well prepared when attending court hearings. Documentation submitted by agency staff to the courts was helpful in assisting legal partners in understanding the current status of each case. Their recommendations in court were both valued and respected. Workers were viewed as active participants in court hearings. There is a mutually respectful relationship between the courts and the agency. It was shared that legal parties and agency staff are able to disagree and continue to work in a professional manner. There is a long standing, solid relationship with the District Attorney's (DA) Office that allows for communication between HSD front line staff and management and the DA's Office.

The Judges were viewed as being respectful to individuals and were seen as being thorough and detailed to ensure due process and advising individuals of their rights as it pertains to the specific petition before the court. HSD and Judges will meet at the beginning of a rotation cycle to discuss expectations and understanding of procedures. Parents are given the right to participate in court hearings; asked for input. Judges were described as generally allowing all parties to participate in court hearings. Guardians ad Litem (GALs) are assigned to a case early on and will continue the appointment throughout the life of the child's case.

H. LEGAL – CHALLENGES

Counties in Wisconsin have established their own schedules for judicial rotation. While focus group participants shared the pros and cons of rotating judges, the overall consensus was that the rotation of judges can be challenging; especially as it relates to a learning curve each time a new judge takes over and the difference in expectations varies between judges. New Judges appear to need time to become acclimated to Juvenile Court and its challenges, as well as becoming proficient with Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 48 and 938.

The court calendar was viewed as a significant challenge by various focus group participants. Multiple court hearings are scheduled for the same time causing delays and forcing individuals to wait hours for a hearing. Another challenge observed by focus group participants is the variation in level of communication between GALs, DA's Office and Ongoing Case Managers. Focus group participants gave examples of open and regular communication between Ongoing Case Managers and legal partners as it relates to parent(s) and child status. Yet there were other examples of minimal to no communication between Ongoing Case Managers and legal partners (i.e. sharing updates and/or asking questions as walking into the court hearing).

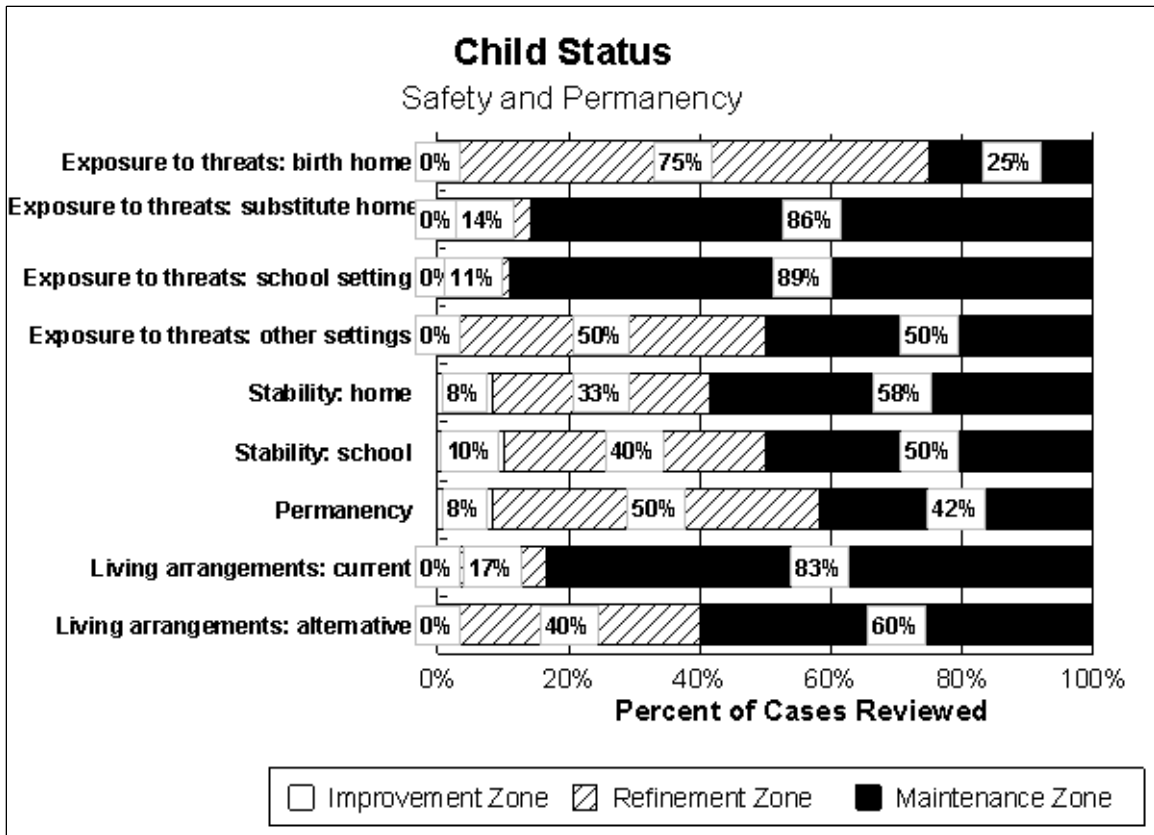
Focus group participants shared that despite some improvement in GALs' performance, there still appears to be some challenges in this area. It was reported that GALs' performance remains inconsistent and that some GALs are not seeing their minor clients until just prior to court hearings or not at all. Therefore, recommendations from the GAL are based on others' reports. This has been found to be a common theme found in other counties that have participated in a QSR and/or a Children's Court Initiative Review. In addition, appointment of attorneys for parents in Child of Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) cases varies across the state. Generally, a parent in Racine County is not appointed an attorney for a CHIPS case. On the occasions when attorney is appointed, the parent will be responsible for paying the county back after the CHIPS matter has been resolved. The lack of consistent legal representation for parents through the CHIPS process may create challenges when cases move towards termination of parental rights; increasing the possibility of appeals related to previous CHIPS petitions and orders.

IV. CHILD AND PARENT/CAREGIVER STATUS INDICATORS

The QSR uses eight indicators to assess a child’s status and five indicators to assess parents and/or caregivers. The QSR Interpretative Guide (below) provides definitions to understand the scoring system. The results for the 13 indicators are presented in aggregate and graphic format on the following pages and measure the child and parent/caregiver status in the 180 days prior to the review.

QSR Interpretative Guide for Child Status		
<p>Maintenance Zone: 5-6</p> <p>Status is favorable. Efforts should be made to maintain and build upon a positive situation.</p>	<p>6 = OPTIMAL STATUS. The best or most favorable status presently attainable for this child in this area [taking age and ability into account]. Child is doing great! Confidence is high that long-term goals or expectations will be met in this area.</p> <p>5 = GOOD STATUS. Substantially and dependably positive status for the child in this area, with an ongoing positive pattern. This status level is consistent with attainment of long-term goals in this area. Status is “looking good” and likely to continue.</p>	<p>Acceptable Range: 4-6</p>
<p>Refinement Zone: 3-4</p> <p>Status is minimal or marginal, maybe unstable. Further efforts are necessary to refine the situation.</p>	<p>4 = FAIR STATUS. Status is minimally or temporarily sufficient for the child to meet short-term objectives in this area. Status is minimally acceptable at this point in time, but may be short-term due to changing circumstance, requiring change soon.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3 = MARGINAL STATUS. Status is marginal/mixed, not quite sufficient to meet the child’s short-term objectives now in this area. Not quite enough for the child to be successful. Risks may be uncertain.</p>	
<p>Improvement Zone: 1-2</p> <p>Status is now problematic or risky. Quick action should be taken to improve the situation.</p>	<p>2 = POOR STATUS. Status has been and continues to be poor and unacceptable. The child seems to be “stuck” or “lost” and is not improving. Risks may be mild to moderate.</p> <p>1 = ADVERSE STATUS. Child status in this area is poor and getting worse. Risks of harm, restriction, exclusion, regression, and/or other adverse outcomes are substantial and increasing.</p>	<p>Unacceptable Range: 1-3</p>

Note: n = (x) next to a bar in a graph signifies the number of cases meeting the specified criteria for the measurement. For some indicators, not all cases in the sample are scored.



Exposure to Imminent Threats of Harm: To what degree is the child free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by others in his/her place of residence and other daily settings? Is the child free from injury caused by others in his/her daily home, school, and community settings? Do parents and caregivers provide the attention, actions, and supports necessary to protect the child from known threats of harm in the home?

Comments:

This indicator examines and assesses children’s exposure to factors that cause them to be at risk of harm. Of the 12 children in the Racine County sample, 8 children were rated for *Exposure to Imminent Threats of Harm* in the birth home. Two of those children (25 percent) scored in the maintenance zone, while six children (75 percent) scored in the refinement zone. No children were scored in the improvement zone for this indicator. Six of the seven children (86 percent) scored in the maintenance zone for substitute home setting and one child scored in the refinement zone. These results indicate that children in Racine County are generally free from risk of harm.

Stability: To what degree are the child’s daily living, learning, and work arrangements stable and free from risk of disruption? Are the child’s daily settings, routines, and relationships consistent? Are known risks being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption?

Comments:

This indicator examines a child's stability over the past 12 months as well as prospectively over the coming six months in both the home and the school setting. Reviewers are asked to consider whether a child will disrupt both in the school and current home setting. In Racine County, seven of the 12 children (58 percent) scored for stability in the home were rated in the maintenance zone. Four of the twelve children were scored in the refinement zone for stability in the home setting and one child scored in the improvement zone. In regard to the child scoring in the improvement zone, reviewers wrote, "The focus child's stability is a concern given in the last 12 months he was moved from foster care and returned home and was subsequently removed again. After his second removal from the home of his mother he was placed in two different foster homes. It is unknown if he will remain in his current foster home as his permanency is also undecided at this time." Statewide comparison for the first 42 counties reviewed showed that Racine County's child *Stability* in home is somewhat higher at 58 percent in the maintenance zone as compared to 49 percent overall in the state.

In regard to *School Stability*, five of the 10 children (50 percent) scored for this indicator were in the maintenance zone, four (40%) scored in the refinement zone and one child (10%) scored in the improvement zone.

Permanency: Is the child/youth living with parents or out-of-home caregivers that the child, parents or out-of-home caregivers, and other stakeholders believe will sustain until the child reaches adulthood and continue onward to provide family connections and supports? If not, to what degree are permanency efforts presently increasing the likelihood that the child/youth soon will be enveloped in enduring relationships that provide a sense of family, stability, and belonging?

Comments:

Permanency scores for children in Racine County were mixed with 5 of 12 children (42 percent) scoring in the maintenance zone, 6 children scoring in the refinement zone (50 percent) and 1 child (8 percent) scoring in the improvement zone. These scores are somewhat higher than Racine County's 2006 QSR where only 33 percent of cases scored in the maintenance zone for this indicator. Statewide, Racine County's results are somewhat higher than the first 42 counties reviewed where 32 percent of cases scored in the maintenance zone.

The one child that was rated in the improvement zone for permanency is a child involved in the juvenile justice system who is currently placed in a residential treatment facility. This placement is not permanent, however, neither of his parents is willing or able to have placement of him so his future is uncertain.

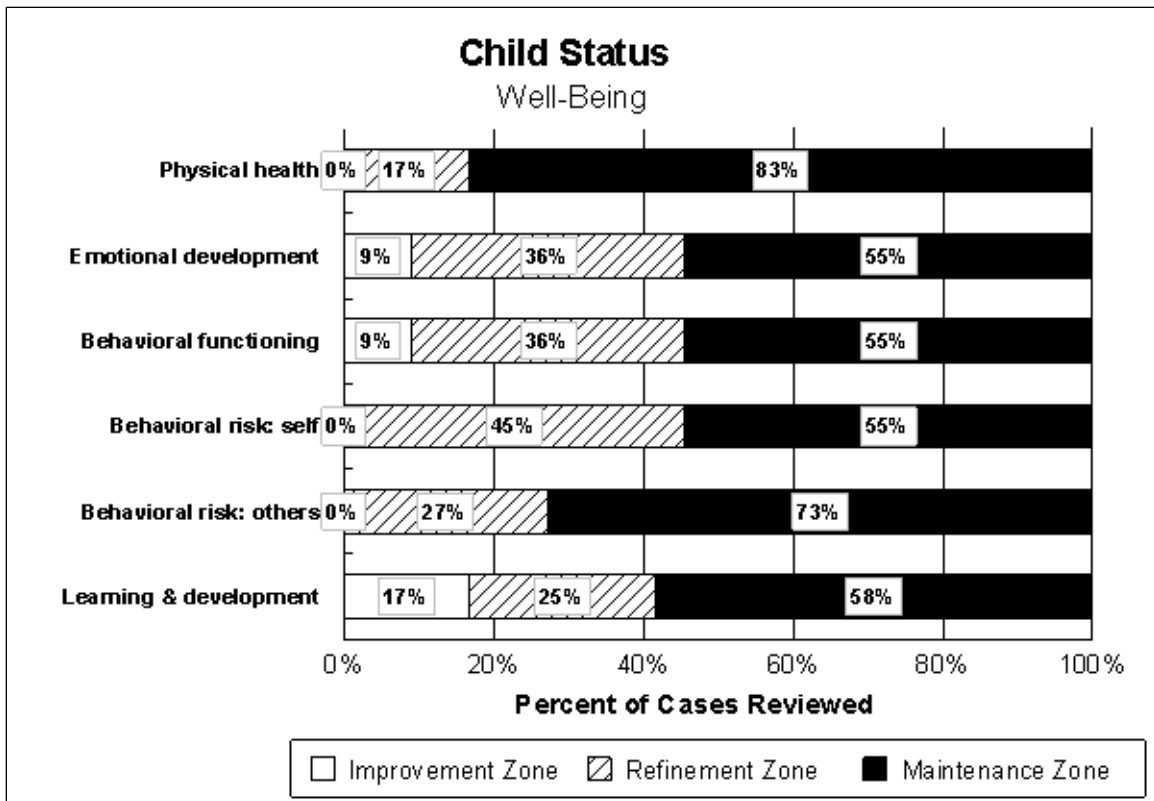
Living Arrangement: To what degree is the child in the most appropriate/least restrictive living arrangement, consistent with needs for family relationships, social connections, age, ability, special needs, and positive peer group affiliation? If the child is in temporary out-of-home care, does the living arrangement meet the child's

needs to be connected to his or her language and culture, community, faith, extended family, tribe, social activities, and peer group?

Comments:

Scores for this indicator reflect that children in the sample are living in settings that are appropriately meeting their needs. In home settings, 10 of the 12 children (83 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and only 2 children (17 percent) scored in the refinement zone. No children were scored in the improvement zone for this indicator. *Alternative Living Arrangements* refers to any other place the child has slept and received care in the 90 days prior to the review. Five children were scored for this indicator and three of those five (60 percent) scored in the maintenance zone with the remaining two children (40 percent) scoring in the refinement zone.

As compared to the first 42 counties reviewed across the state, Racine County scored higher in both current living arrangement and alternative living arrangement. Statewide averages are 75 percent maintenance zone and 25 percent refinement zone for *Current Living Arrangements*. Statewide scores for Alternate Living Arrangements were 44 percent in the maintenance zone, 50 percent refinement zone and 6 percent in the improvement zone. This would be considered an area of strength for Racine County.



Physical Health: To what degree is the child achieving and maintaining his/her optimum health status? If the child has a serious or chronic physical illness, is the

child achieving his/her best attainable health status given the disease diagnosis and prognosis?

Comments:

Children in Racine County were found to be in good physical health and if they had health concerns, their needs were being met. Ten of the twelve children (87 percent) were scored in the maintenance zone. The remaining two children (17 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Both children scoring in the refinement zone were teenagers who are currently involved in the juvenile justice system.

One child scoring in the maintenance zone despite a number of serious challenges was described by reviewers who wrote, “[The focus child] is being treated for a number of medical issues, including seizures, cerebral palsy, and possible spina bifida. Despite being medically fragile, [the focus child] is reported to be receiving all necessary treatment and care, and his physical health is currently stable. [The focus child’s] grandmother has proven to be a strong advocate for [the focus child] and his medical needs, and has even connected [the focus child] to a number of specialists that will help assess other medical treatment that may be needed or helpful for [the focus child].”

Emotional Development: To what degree is the child presenting age-appropriate emotional development, adjustment, appropriate coping skills, and self-control?

Comments:

For the *Emotional Development* indicator, 11 of the 12 children were scored. Results indicate that 6 of the 11 children (55 percent) scored in the maintenance zone, 4 children (36 percent) scored in the refinement zone. The one child (9 percent) that scored in the improvement zone was the soon to be 18 year old female mentioned previously. The QSR also collects data on conditions the child or parents may be experiencing that are co-occurring to their involvement with the child welfare system and which may impact their functioning. Data in Racine County reveals that 3 of the 12 children (25 percent) have a behavior disorder, 3 children (25 percent) have a diagnosed mental illness and 11 children (92 percent) have been exposed to one or more types of trauma in their lives. Comparing the data to the 2006 QSR, trauma exposure has nearly quadrupled (2006 data revealed only three children with trauma exposure).

Behavioral Functioning: To what degree is the child achieving and maintaining an adequate level of behavioral functioning in daily settings, activities, and social groups?

Comments:

Eleven of the twelve children were scored in the area of *Behavioral Functioning*. Of these 11, 6 children (55 percent) were scored in the maintenance zone, 4 children (36 percent) in the refinement zone and one child (9 percent) scored in the improvement zone. It should be noted that the child scoring in the improvement zone was a soon to be 18 year old female who is involved in the juvenile justice system. This young woman

has a number of diagnoses to include an eating disorder as well as struggling with alcohol and drug addiction.

Behavioral Risk: To what degree is the child/youth consistently avoiding self-endangerment situations and refraining from using behaviors that may put him/herself or others at risk of harm?

Comments:

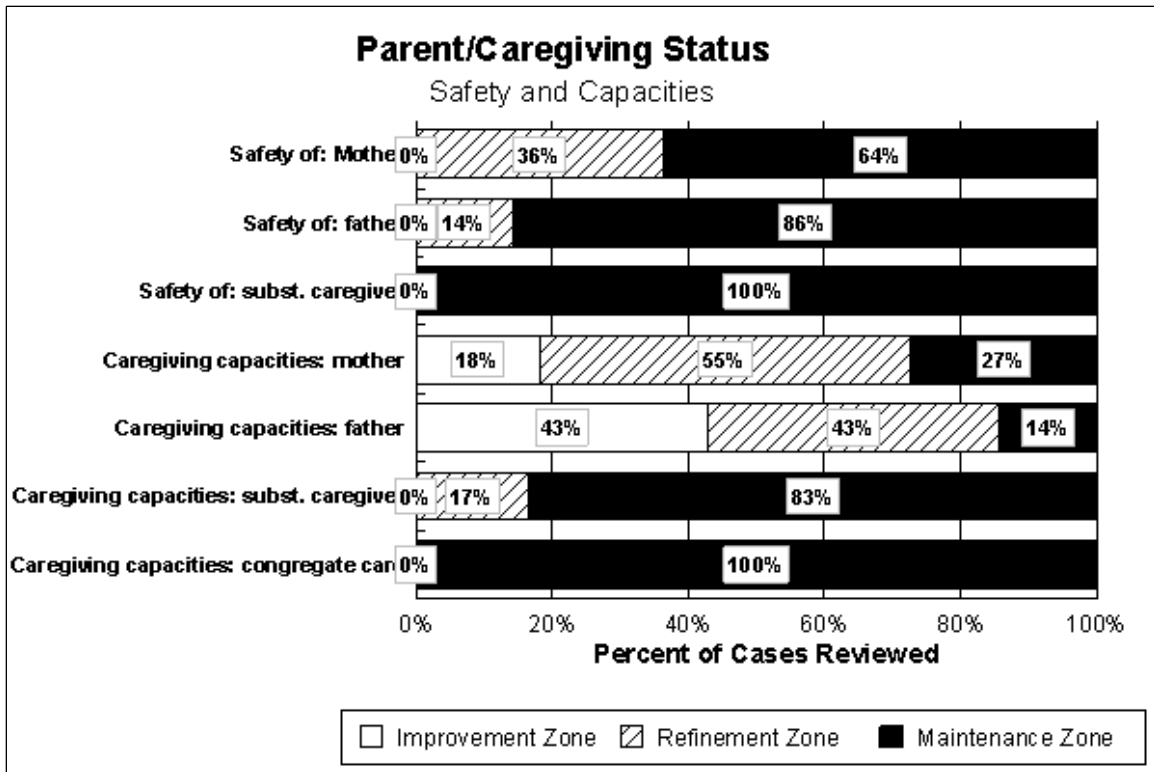
The area of *Behavioral Risk* looks at both risk to self as well as to others. Eleven of the twelve cases were scored for this indicator. In the area of *Behavioral Risk to Self*, 6 of the 11 children (55 percent) were scored in the maintenance zone with the remaining 5 children (45 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. Scores for *Behavioral Risk to Others* were somewhat higher with 8 children (75 percent) of the 11 children scoring in the maintenance zone and 3 children (27 percent) children scoring in the refinement zone.

Early Learning & Development (Under Age 5): To what degree is the young child's developmental status commensurate with his/her age and developmental capacities? Is the child's developmental status in key domains consistent with age-appropriate expectations?

Learning and Development (Age 5 and Older): Is the child (according to age and ability): 1) regularly attending school; 2) in a grade level consistent with age; 3) actively engaged in instructional activities; 4) reading at grade level or Individual Educational Plan (IEP) expectation; and 5) meeting requirements for annual promotion and course completion leading to a high school diploma or equivalent?

Comments:

For the most part, the children in Racine County are having their educational needs met. Nine of the twelve children (58 percent) were scored in the maintenance zone and 3 children (25 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Two children (17 percent) scored in the improvement zone. The two children who scored in the improvement zone for learning and development are both involved in the juvenile justice system. Both have significant personal struggles and one is considerably behind in his education as reflected by what reviewers wrote, "The focus child needs continued help with educational issues. He was evaluated by a psychologist at the residential treatment center (RTC) and found to be functioning at a borderline cognitive level. He is in the 7th grade but reading at a 2nd grade level. His spelling is at a 3rd grade level and his math is at a 4th grade level. In addition, there is a strong suspicion that he has learning disabilities."



Safety of the Parent/Caregiver: Is the parent/caregiver in the child’s household safe from manageable risk of harm at home? Is the parent/caregiver free from intimidations and reasonable fears of domestic violence in the home?

Comments:

This indicator assesses the *Safety* of the parents and/or caregiver in the home setting, as well as the community. Safety threats could include living in a high crime neighborhood, participation in high risk activities such as drug dealing and domestic violence to name a few. Seven of the eleven mothers (64 percent) scored in maintenance zone for this indicator with four mothers (36 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. Only seven fathers were scored on this indicator and six of the seven fathers (84 percent) were scored in the maintenance zone and one father (17 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Substitute caregivers scored 100 percent in the maintenance zone which is similar to scoring across the state.

Caregiving Capacities (Home Settings): To what degree does the parent/caregiver demonstrate adequate caregiving capacities on a reliable daily basis commensurate with that required to provide the child(ren) with appropriate nurturance, guidance, protection, care, and supervision? If the child(ren) have special medical, emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental needs, does the caregiver have and use any special knowledge, skills, and supports that may be required to meet the needs of the child(ren)?

Comments:

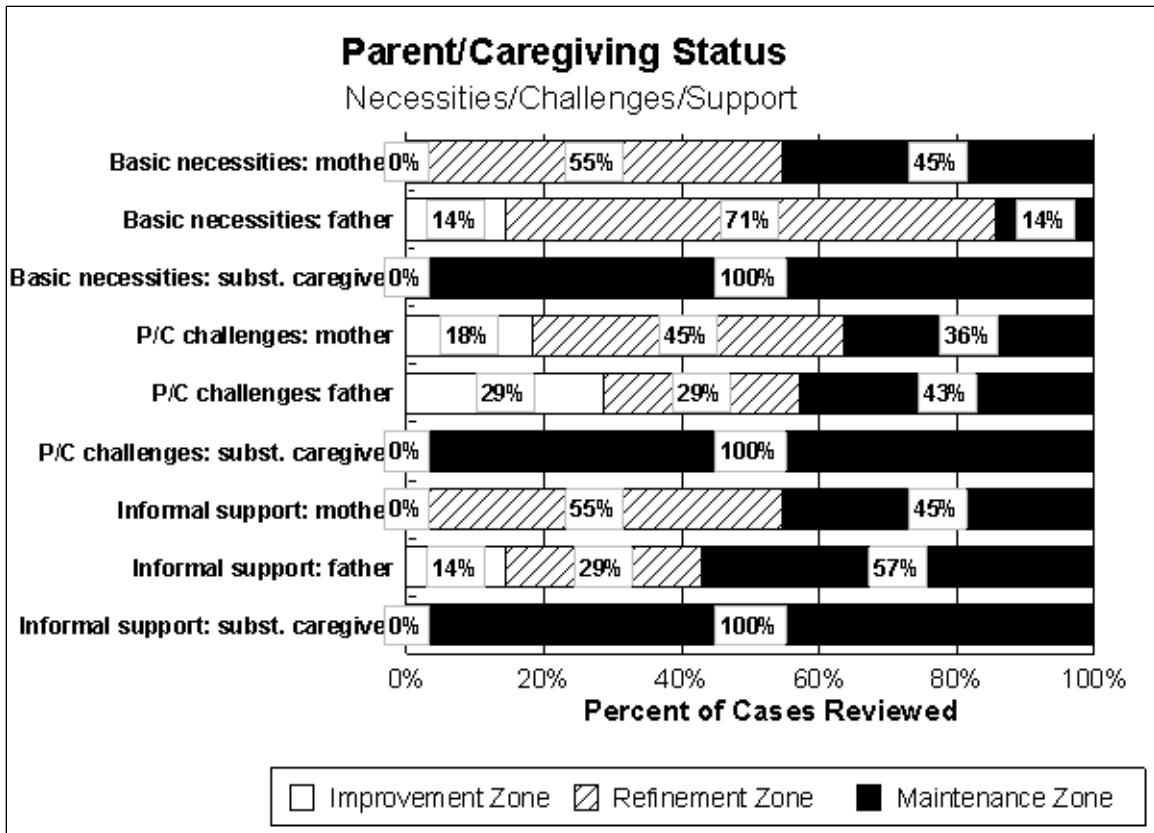
In regard to *Caregiving Capacities*, 3 of the 11 mothers (27 percent) scored in the maintenance zone with 6 of the 11 (55 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. Two mothers (18 percent) scored in the improvement zone in regard to their capacity to be a caregiver. Fathers did not score as well as mothers in this sample. Only one father (14 percent) out of seven scored in the maintenance zone and three of the seven fathers (43 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Three fathers (43 percent) scored in the improvement zone. Six substitute caregivers were rated for this indicator and five of the six substitute caregivers (83 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and one substitute caregiver (17 percent) scored in the refinement zone.

Following is a comparison between a father rating in the improvement zone and one rating in the maintenance zone. Reviewers of the father rating in the improvement zone for *Caregiving Capacities* wrote, “He seemed reliable and committed to his son’s return home until a few weeks ago. Unfortunately, the father’s expectations for his son have become unrealistic. He wants a ‘normal’ son and is having trouble accepting the fact that his son has cognitive limitations and serious behavioral problems. The father wants a ‘quick fix’ and a son with college in his future. Although there have been no substantiated reports of abuse, some of the people interviewed spoke repeatedly of the father’s anger, use of physical punishment and abusiveness toward the child.” On the other side, reviewers wrote the following about a father who scored in the maintenance zone, “The father was involved with his children prior to the children being taken into custody. He was paying child support and they would visit him on the weekends. There are no concerns with his ability to parent the focus child. The father has made sure that the focus child attends school regularly, is supervised and safe at all times, and provides the focus child with the needed guidance and support.”

Caregiving Capacities (Congregate Settings): To what degree are the child’s/youth’s primary caregivers in the group home or facility supporting the education, development, and independence of the child/youth adequately on a consistent daily basis (as appropriate to age and need)?

Comments:

Two cases were rated for this indicator and both cases were scored in the maintenance zone. For one of the cases scored reviewers wrote, “During the child’s placement in the residential child center (RCC), the *Caregiving Capacities of the Congregate Setting* rated in the maintenance zone. The RCC demonstrated the ability to meet the basic and special needs of the child and also facilitated a focused school program that met the educational needs of the focus child. This placement clearly understood the underlying needs of the focus child and was able to appropriately respond to her challenges with structure and supervision.”



Basic Necessities: To what degree are the family’s earned income and/or economic supports adequate to cover the family’s basic living requirements (i.e., shelter, food, clothing, transportation, health care/medicine, childcare)? Is the parent/caregiver accessing, receiving, and adequately managing the economic supports to which he/she is entitled? Does the parent/caregiver have economic security and skills sufficient for meeting the family’s basic needs and maintaining a stable living arrangement for the children? Does the current living arrangement provide the family with adequate space and living conditions?

Comments:

Basic necessities appear to be a struggle for both mothers and fathers but particularly for fathers. Five of the eleven mothers scored in the maintenance zone (45 percent) and six mothers (55 percent) scored in the refinement zone. However, fathers did not score as well for this indicator. Only one father out of seven scored in the maintenance zone (14 percent), while five (71 percent) scored in the refinement zone. One father (14 percent) scored in the improvement zone. All six (100 percent) caregivers scored in the maintenance zone for *Basic Necessities*.

Reviewers wrote the following regarding the father who scored in the improvement zone, “Although the focus child’s father also expresses a desire to care for his children, he does not appear able to provide for his children’s basic needs related to food, clothing and housing. His work history is somewhat erratic. He has a criminal history that includes sexual assault of a child when he was 19 years of age, disorderly conduct, criminal

damage to property and possession of cocaine. This criminal history may impact his ability to obtain and maintain employment...He may not be able to access financial supports such as FoodShare or Medicaid as he is not meeting his child support obligations.”

Special Parenting/Caregiving Challenges: To what degree do parents/caregivers, with whom the child is currently residing or has a goal of reunification, present or experience a pattern of significant, ongoing challenges that limit or adversely affect the parent/caregiver’s capacity to function successfully as an adequate caregiver for this child? Does the family have any special life challenges that interfere with or prevent them from living together safely and functioning successfully?

Comments:

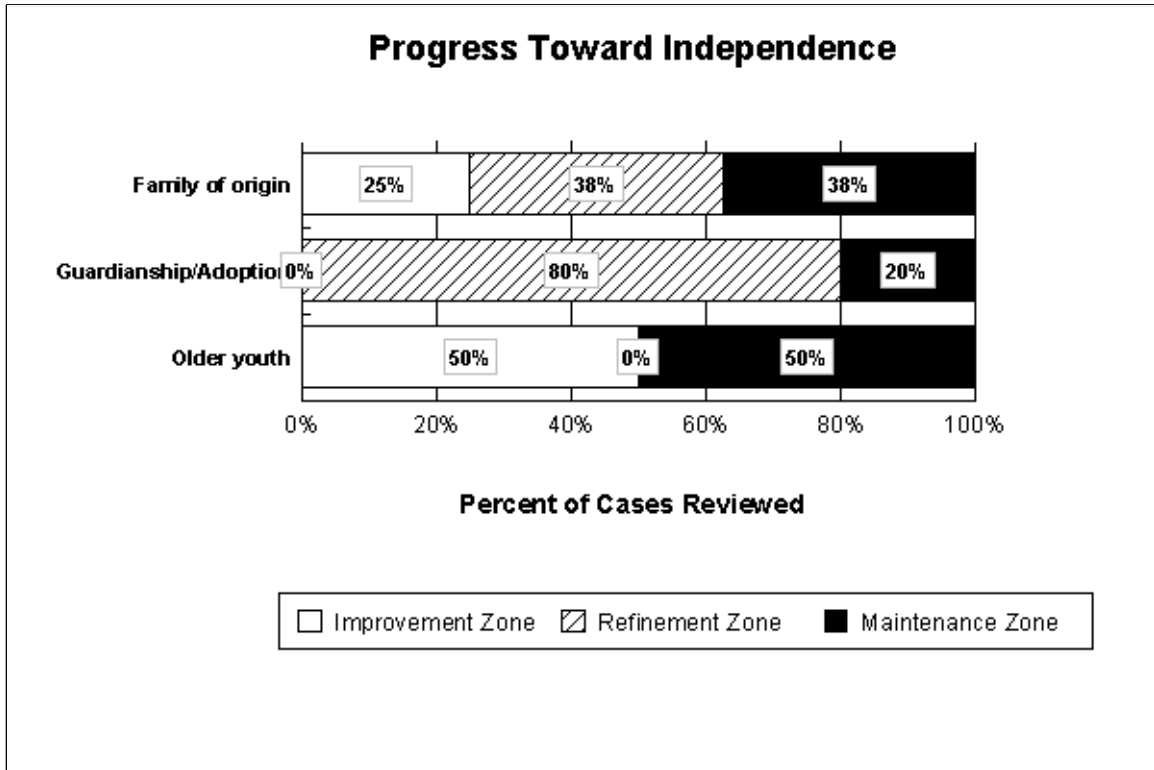
Special Caregiving Challenges examine secondary issues that the caregiver or parent might be experiencing that impact their ability to care for their child to include mental health issues, cognitive disabilities and substance abuse. As discussed previously, co-occurring conditions were tracked for both parents and children in the sample. Results reveal that like the children, the parents in Racine County are also struggling with trauma exposure (75 percent), mental illness (58 percent) and substance abuse issues (25 percent) and these challenges affect their ability to provide adequate and consistent care to their children. Four of the eleven mothers (36 percent) rated for this indicator scored in the maintenance zone and five mothers (45 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Two mothers (18 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Three fathers out of seven (43 percent) scored in the maintenance zone, while two fathers (29 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Two fathers (29 percent) scored in the improvement zone. Six substitute caregivers were rated for this indicator and all six (100 percent) scored in the maintenance zone.

Informal Support System: To what degree is the family engaged with an informal support system that assists them with essential caregiving responsibilities? Do families having special needs children, recovery/relapse prevention plans, and/or family safety plans have adequate levels of informal support provided by family, friends, neighbors, or other supporters involved who will help them manage adequately on an enduring basis? When a family has a child with special needs (physical, developmental, emotional, behavioral), do parents/caregivers have opportunities to exchange experiences, strategies, and successes with parents/caregivers of similar circumstances?

Comments:

Research has shown that having healthy informal supports increases a family’s ability to sustain changes and have successful case closure. This is an area of struggle for many families across the state and Racine County is no exception. Of the 11 mothers scored for this indicator, 5 mothers (45 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and 6 mothers (55 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Four fathers out of seven (57 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and two (29 percent) scored in the refinement zone. One father

(14 percent) scored in the improvement zone. All six (100 percent) substitute caregivers scored in the maintenance zone for the informal support system indicator.



V. PROGRESS INDICATORS

Progress to Independence (Family of Origin): To what degree is the family making progress toward their permanency goal of maintaining the child safely at home and/or successful reunification? As necessary to reunify/preserve the family, to what degree have: 1) protective provisions necessary for keeping children safe been established and maintained within the home; 2) necessary parent/caregiver behavior changes been made, demonstrated, and sustained; and 3) necessary and sustainable conditions and supports been established within the home and family situation (e.g., housing, childcare, income, health care)?

Comments:

Eight cases were rated for *Progress to Independence (Family of Origin)*. Of those eight, three cases (38 percent) scored in the maintenance zone, three cases (38 percent) in the refinement zone and two cases (25 percent) scored in the improvement zone. In one case scoring in the maintenance zone reviewers noted, “The focus child is living in the home of his father and is visiting with his mother frequently. The father went to Family Court and the court awarded the father primary placement and child support for the focus child...The parents have a good working relationship and it is anticipated that they will be successful in co-parenting the children.”

One of the cases scoring in the improvement zone involved a young man placed in a residential treatment facility. Both parents are either unwilling or unable to care for the child. Reviewers wrote, “The focus child’s father was a very active participant with his son until a few weeks ago. Then suddenly he did not come to pick his son up for a weekend home visit. He withdrew and stopped contact with everyone. The focus child’s mother does not appear to be an option for reunification despite the fact that he wants to live with her. A new permanency plan needs to be developed and a concurrent goal needs to be established.”

Progress to Permanency (Guardianship/Adoption): To what degree is the child living in an environment that supports achievement of permanency through guardianship or adoption? Has the permanent family been identified? To what extent has this child and family: 1) accepted new members and formed realistic expectations; 2) moved through family formation and adaptation stages with necessary adjustments made, demonstrated, and sustained; 3) established sustainable conditions and supports within the home and family situation (e.g., childcare, health care, respite, crisis support, in-home assistance) necessary to meet any special care requirements that the adoptive child presents in the home and family situation?

Comments:

Five cases were scored for this indicator. One of the five cases (20 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and four cases (80 percent) scored in the refinement zone. The case scoring in the maintenance zone involved a child who was placed and remained with the grandparents. The child has significant medical needs to include seizures and cerebral palsy. Regarding this case, reviewers wrote, “This family has made good progress toward independence from the agency. [The focus child] is currently placed with his paternal grandparents, who have legal guardianship of him and who are dedicated to raising [the focus child] and his twin brother. The goal is to terminate court jurisdiction on [the focus child] in a few months, once the agency has assisted [the focus child’s] grandparents in securing needed resources.”

Progress to Independence (Older Youth): To what degree has the youth been making progress toward living safely and functioning successfully independent of agency services over the past six months? Is the youth demonstrating a developing ability to live safely and function successfully without outside supervision, assuming that any necessary supports continue after reaching the age of majority? Is the youth developing long-term connections that will support him/her into adulthood?

Comments:

This indicator examines the progress of children age 15 and older in learning the necessary skills and strategies to live independently when they have reached age 18. Two cases were scored for this indicator and the results were split. One case (50 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and the other case (50 percent) scored in the improvement zone. For the child scoring in the maintenance zone reviewers noted, “The focus child is only three months shy of her 18th birthday. [The focus child] plans to stay

working with the agency until she graduates from high school when she is 19. She is doing well in school and in her activities and is on track with goals of going to college...The focus child has a plan to finish high school and pursue further education. She works with an Independent Living Coordinator and has access to funds that can help her purchase the necessary items to skill build...” In contrast, the youth who scored in the improvement zone was a 17 year old female involved in the juvenile justice system who spent some time in a residential facility. Reviewers noted, “The focus child did demonstrate progress in learning and developing capacities while in the structured environment of the residential care center, but she has made inadequate progress in her current home environment. She demonstrates marginal independent living skills which will impede success to live independently.”

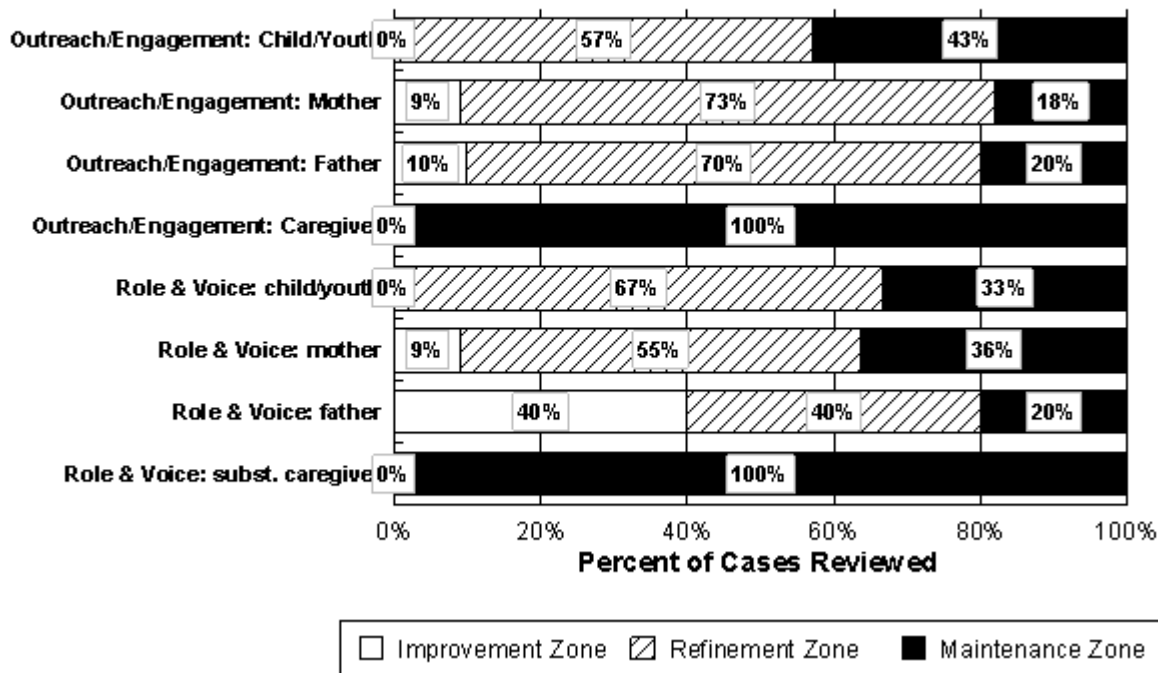
VI. THE ELEMENTS OF CASE PRACTICE (THE MICRO VIEW)

The Quality Service Review (QSR) case practice model contains evidence based elements of best practice. The elements are found in the QSR protocol and were applied in rating the 12 cases that were reviewed. There is an ample body of research that documents the efficacy and contribution in helping families develop, pursue, and complete successful strategies of change. The scores on practice performance are presented to point out strengths in case practice that should be maintained, as well as opportunities where the agency can focus efforts in improving outcomes for children and families served.

QSR Interpretative Guide for Practice Indicator Ratings		
<p>Maintenance Zone: 5-6</p> <p>Performance is effective. Efforts should be made to maintain and build upon a positive practice situation.</p>	<p>6 = OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE. <u>Excellent, consistent, effective practice</u> for this person in this function area. This level of performance is indicative of <u>exemplary practice and results</u> for the person. [6 month sustained pattern]</p> <p>5 = GOOD PERFORMANCE. At this level, the system function is <u>working dependably</u> for this person, <u>under changing conditions and over time.</u> Effectiveness level is <u>consistent with meeting long-term needs and goals</u> for the person. [3 month sustained pattern]</p>	<p>Acceptable Range: 4-6</p>
<p>Refinement Zone: 3-4</p> <p>Performance is minimal or marginal and maybe changing. Further efforts are necessary to refine the practice situation.</p>	<p>4 = FAIR PERFORMANCE. This level of performance is <u>minimally or temporarily sufficient to meet short-term need or objectives.</u> Performance may be time-limited, somewhat variable, or require adjustment soon due to changing circumstances. [1 month continuing pattern. Some refinement is indicated]</p> <p>-----</p> <p>3 = MARGINAL PERFORMANCE. Practice at this level may be <u>under-powered, inconsistent or not well-matched to need.</u> Performance is <u>insufficient for the person to meet short-term needs or objectives.</u> [With refinement, this could become acceptable in the near future.]</p>	
<p>Improvement Zone: 1-2</p> <p>Performance is inadequate. Quick action should be taken to improve practice now.</p>	<p>2 = POOR PERFORMANCE. Practice at this level is <u>fragmented, inconsistent, lacking necessary intensity or off-target.</u> Elements of practice may be noted, but it is <u>incomplete/not operative on a consistent basis.</u></p> <p>1 = ADVERSE PERFORMANCE. Practice may be <u>absent or not operative.</u> Performance may be <u>missing (not done).</u> - OR - Practice strategies, if occurring in this area, may be <u>contra-indicated or may be performed inappropriately or harmfully.</u></p>	<p>Unacceptable Range: 1-3</p>

Practice Performance

Engagement/Role & Voice



ENGAGEMENT OF CHILD & FAMILY: To what degree are those interveners involved with the family using engagement strategies, including special accommodations with any difficult-to-reach family members, to increase family engagement and participation in the service process? Are interveners building a trust-based working relationship with the child, family, and/or others to support ongoing assessment, understanding, and service decisions? Are interveners relying on a mutually beneficial partnership with the child, family, and/or others that is sustaining their interest in and commitment to the change process?

Comments:

Engagement is an essential component of good practice and a foundation for working with children and families. This indicator examines the system's ability to engage and build a trust based relationship with children and families involved in the child welfare system. Seven children were rated in regard to this indicator and three children (43 percent) scored in the maintenance zone. The remaining four children (57 percent) scored in the refinement zone.

Eleven mothers were scored for this indicator. Two mothers (18 percent) scored in the maintenance zone, eight mothers (73 percent) scored in the refinement zone and one mother (9 percent) scored in the improvement zone. Ten fathers were rated for this indicator and one father (20 percent) scored in the maintenance zone. Eight fathers (70 percent) scored in the refinement zone and one father (10 percent) scored in the improvement zone. Reviewers wrote the following in regard to one father who scored in

the refinement zone, “Engagement is an area for opportunity for the agency. The agency sent letters to the home of the focus child’s father, but there were no other efforts made such as home visits or phone calls to attempt to set up a time to meet with him.”

Six substitute caregivers were rated for this indicator and all six substitute caregivers (100 percent) scored in the maintenance zone.

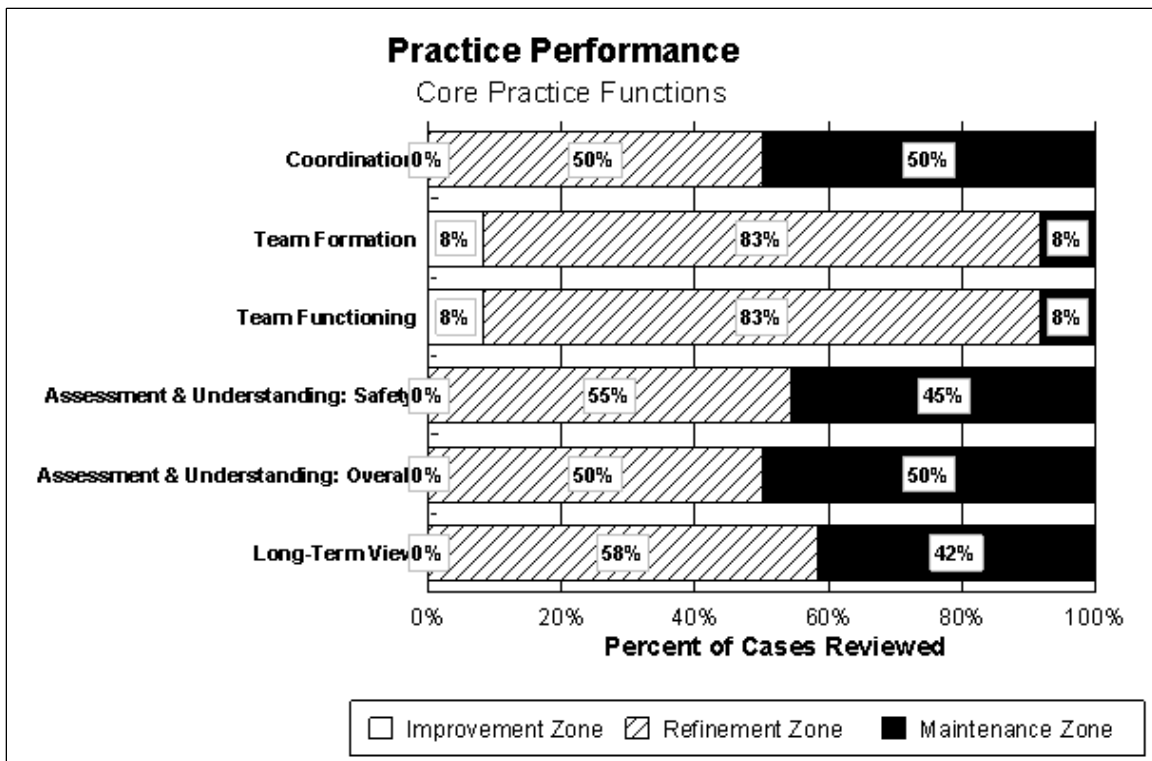
ROLE & VOICE IN DECISIONS: To what degree are the child’s parents significant, ongoing participants (e.g. having a significant role, voice, influence) in decisions made about child/family change strategies, services, supports, and results? (Role and voice in recent meetings).

Comments:

Like engagement, *Role and Voice* are critical to the outcomes of child welfare clients. When clients have a stronger role and voice in planning, they are more invested in the change process. Five children were rated in this indicator and two children (33 percent) scored in the maintenance zone. The remaining three children (67 percent) scored the refinement zone. In regard to a child that scored in the maintenance zone, reviewers wrote, “The agency is fully engaged with everyone who was interviewed. They view the worker as competent, committed, fully responsive and truthful. The child, caregiver and providers feel they have a role and voice... For example, the child is being given time to process her feelings about her family and not being pressured into a plan for permanency before she is ready to make an informed commitment.”

Eleven mothers were rated for this indicator and four mothers (36 percent) scored in the maintenance zone. Six mothers (55 percent) scored in the refinement zone and one mother (9 percent) scored in the improvement zone. Fathers, unfortunately, did not score as well as mothers or children. This is an area that Racine County could consider as an opportunity for enhancement. Ten fathers were rated for this indicator and two fathers (20 percent) scored in the maintenance zone while four fathers (40 percent) in the refinement zone. The remaining four fathers (40 percent) scored in the improvement zone. One reviewer wrote the following in regard to a father who scored in the improvement zone, “The father expressed an interest in playing a role in the focus child’s life and perhaps even in parenting the focus child. The agency is reluctant to pursue the father until he submits to a DNA test proving he is the father, thus little is known about the father...The father was said to be reluctant and perhaps untrusting of formal services and, therefore; outreach may have to be extended to him much in the way it was to the mother; by building a trust-based working relationship.”

Seven substitute caregivers were scored for this indicator and all seven substitute caregivers (100 percent) were scored in the maintenance zone.



COORDINATION: To what degree are there: A single point of coordination and leadership necessary for convening and facilitating effective family change planning and service decision processes for this child and family? Effective coordination, integration, and continuity in the assessment, planning, organization, and provision of services to this child and family?

Comments:

Coordination is a strength for Racine County. Six of the twelve cases (50 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and the remaining six (50 percent) scored in the refinement zone. No cases scored in the improvement zone. Reviewers reflect on strong coordination when they wrote “*Coordination* was excellent on this case. The family and service providers all saw the worker as the point person on this case and felt that she was responsive, timely and efficient. The family expressed that the worker was a good problem solver, and they felt that when there were concerns, she did a great job of pulling people together and addressing them.”

TEAM FORMATION: To what degree: (1) Have the people who provide support and services for this child and family formed a working team that meets, talks, and plans together? (2) Does the team have the skills, family knowledge, and abilities necessary to organize effective services for a child and family of this complexity and cultural background?

Comments:

Teaming is an area for continued focus for Racine County. Groundwork has been put into place regarding teaming as was discussed in many focus groups and throughout case

reviews. There were many comments on “pockets of teaming” throughout the QSR week and this is a good opportunity to expand on the teaming already present in Racine County especially as it relates to school involvement. Of the 12 cases scored for this indicator for team formation, one case (8 percent) scored in the maintenance zone, 10 cases (83 percent) scored in the refinement zone and one case (8 percent) scored in the improvement zone. In regard to a case scoring in the refinement zone, reviewers wrote, “There is an opportunity for *Team Formation* to be strengthened by including the school and the Independent Living Coordinator in meetings with the focus child. Presently, the school and the Independent Living Coordinator are unaware of efforts that both are making towards helping the focus child attain the permanency goal of independent living. The absence of teaming has given rise to an instance where small groups talk to one another in ‘silos’ rather than in an overarching manner that integrates all the service providers.”

TEAM FUNCTIONING: To what degree: (1) Do members of the family team collectively function as a unified team in planning services and evaluating results? (2) Do actions of the family team reflect a coherent pattern of effective teamwork and collaborative problem solving that benefits the child and family?

Comments:

Team Functioning scored similarly to *Team Formation* with one case (8 percent) scoring in the maintenance zone, 10 cases (83 percent) scoring in the refinement zone and one case (8 percent) scoring in the improvement zone. For the case scoring in the maintenance zone, reviewers write, “The people who provide supports and services for this child have formed a good and dependable working team that meets, talks and plans together. The team has the skills and knowledge to organize effective services for the child and they work together to resolve issues that arise and discuss possible solutions to problems. They are currently working on the school transition plan which will occur next semester.”

ASSESSMENT & UNDERSTANDING - SAFETY: To what degree: Is there a shared big picture understanding of the child and family’s strengths, needs, and diminished parent/caregiver protective capacities that must change to assure child safety? Are these understandings reflected in the process used for helping the family achieve a safe home (via protective provisions in the home, demonstrated parent/caregiver protective capacities, and sustainable family supports)?

Comments:

Assessment and Understanding – Safety is another area of strength for Racine County. Of the 11 cases scored for this indicator, 5 cases (45 percent) scored in the maintenance zone. The remaining six cases (55 percent) scored in the refinement zone. No cases scored in the improvement zone. One case not of CPS nature was not scored in accordance to the QSR guidelines.

ASSESSMENT & UNDERSTANDING - OVERALL: To what degree: Is there a shared big picture understanding of the child and family's strengths, needs,

risks, and underlying issues that must change for the child and family of origin or adoptive family to live independent of agency supervision? Are these understandings reflected in the family change process used for helping the family achieve permanency and well-being (via demonstrated parental behavior changes, sustainable family supports, and concurrent alternatives pursued for achieving permanency with another family, if necessary)?

Comments:

Similarly to *Assessment and Understanding - Safety, Overall Assessment and Understanding* also scored well. All 12 cases were scored for this indicator and 6 of the 12 cases (50 percent) scored in the maintenance zone with the remaining six (50 percent) scoring in the refinement zone.

Considerable improvement has been made in *Overall Assessment and Understanding*. Data for the 2006 QSR shows that 25 percent of cases scored were in the maintenance zone as compared to 50 percent today. Given the children with significant challenges involved in the 2009 review, this shows a strong understanding of the needs of the children as well as the underlying issues within the family. Compared to the first 42 counties reviewed, Racine County scores considerably higher on this indicator. Statewide scores reveal only 33 percent in the maintenance zone for the overall assessment and understanding indicator.

Reviewers wrote the following in regard to a case that scored in the maintenance zone for both *Assessment and Understanding – Safety and Overall Assessment*, “Those interviewed on this case had a good understanding of safety and overall functioning, strengths, and struggles of the children and family. Practice in this case was largely driven by safety, and the decisions that were made reflected that. The agency worker had a clear understanding of the parenting capacities of [the focus child’s] caregivers, and thoroughly assessed his safety in those environments as well. Though the case was complicated due to the severity of the injury to [the focus child] with an unknown maltreater, the worker was able to thoroughly assess and make knowledgeable decisions on this case.”

LONG-TERM VIEW FOR SAFE CASE CLOSURE: To what degree are there defined, understood, and agreed-upon conditions for Safe Case Closure that specify what: Protective provisions must be present in the home to keep children and parents safe? Permanency issues must be resolved and outcomes attained? Behavioral patterns must be demonstrated and sustained in the home by the parent? Sustainable conditions and supports must be present in the home and family situation to preserve the family, reunify the family, support the adoptive family or youth transitioning to independent living so that external supervision may be safely concluded with the family or youth being independent of the system?

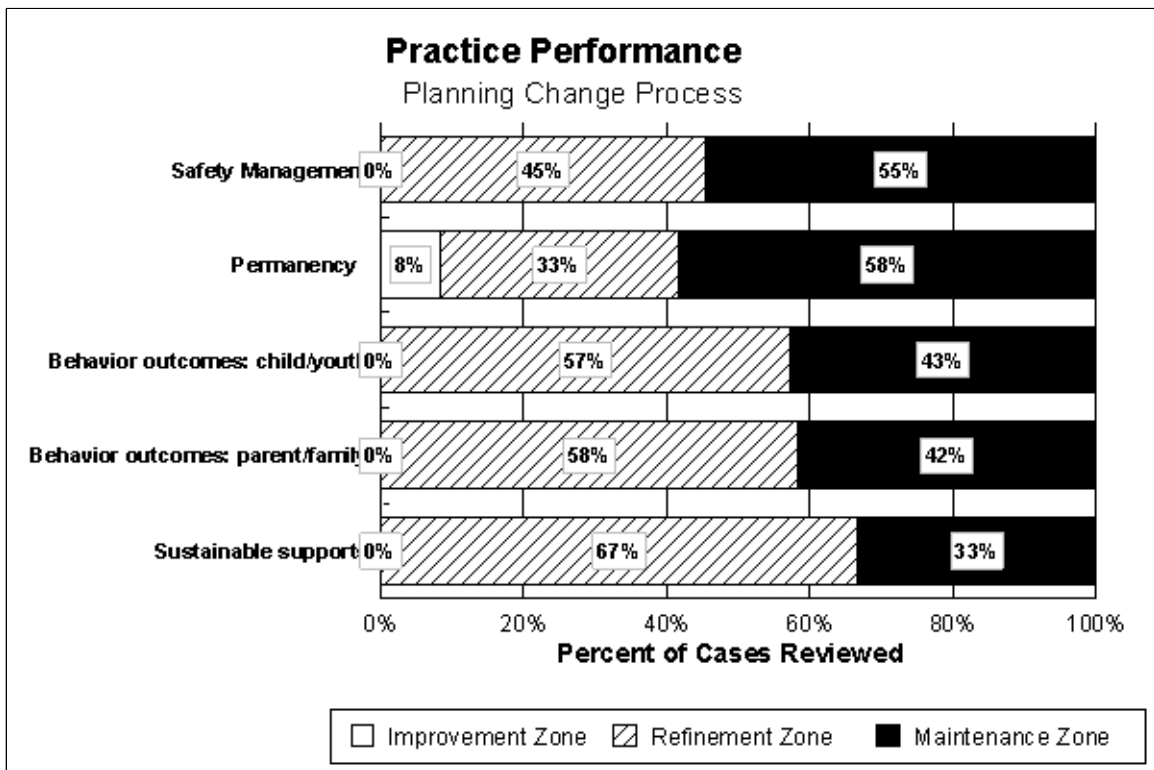
Comments:

Long Term View examines whether or not the family and team are able to know when they are “done.” Does the family understand what needs to change in order for their

children to live safely in their home and for their case to be closed? All 12 cases were scored for Racine County and 5 of the 12 cases (42 percent) scored in the maintenance zone. The remaining seven (58 percent) cases scored in the refinement zone.

This indicator is often a struggle for counties. Racine County, however, has made considerable improvement since the 2006 QSR when only 17 percent of cases scored in the maintenance zone. In 2006, 25 percent of Racine County cases scored in the improvement zone compared to none in 2009. Statewide comparisons reveal that only 22 percent of cases scored in the maintenance zone for the first 42 counties reviewed. Understanding of the long term view helps drive a case and Racine County's improvement in this indicator will help improve overall practice and understanding of cases.

Reviewers wrote the following in regard to a case scoring in the maintenance zone, "There was good long term view as everyone understood what needed to be accomplished for safe case closure. These goals included: Mother following through with medication and medical treatment for [the focus child's] brother, all the children attending school, and mother maintaining sobriety."



PLANNING A PROCESS FOR SAFETY MANAGEMENT: To what degree is a well-reasoned, ongoing process being used for controlling and managing impending danger threats to child safety while strategies and actions are developed and implemented for the family change process via enhancing parent/caregiver capacities that lead to attainment of protective conditions for safety in the home, acquisition/demonstration of required parent behavior changes, and securing sustainable family supports?

Comments:

Racine County has shown improvement in the area of *Planning a Change Process for Safety Management* since the 2006 QSR. Eleven cases were scored for this indicator and of those, six (55 percent) scored in the maintenance zone with the remaining five (45 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. In 2006, only 40 percent of cases scored in the maintenance zone. Data compared to the first 42 counties reviewed showed that Racine County is performing higher on this indicator at 55 percent in the maintenance zone compared to the statewide average of 33 percent.

In regard to a case scoring in the maintenance zone for this indicator the reviewers wrote, “Given the nature of the case as it came into the system with a child with serious injuries, the agency and team has managed safety well over the life of the family’s involvement. The agency social worker and foster parents have a shared understanding of the safety threats to this child. The visits have been supervised at all times, either by a parent advocate or the foster parents.”

PLANNING A CHANGE PROCESS FOR PERMANENCY [For a child removed from his or her home]: To what degree is a well-reasoned planning process used to drive strategies and actions for the family change process that provides, as needed, for: Reunifying the child and parent, replacing the entering parent with another, or achieving independence for a youth? Searching for, finding, eliminating, and approving a relative or another replacement to be the permanent caregiver? Resolving any legal barriers to permanency? Supporting and evaluating the stability and success of the child and family in a potentially permanent home to ensure family sustainability as a condition for Safe Case Closure?

Comments:

All twelve cases were scored for this indicator. Seven of the twelve cases (58 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and 4 cases (33 percent) scored in the refinement zone. One case (8 percent) scored in the improvement zone and this case involves a 13 year old boy who currently resides in a residential treatment facility. Planning for permanency is stalled for this child given the current plan of reunification.

PLANNING A CHANGE PROCESS FOR BEHAVIOR OUTCOMES: To what degree is a well-reasoned, ongoing planning process being used to drive strategies and actions for a behavior change process that provides, as needed, for: Acquisition and demonstration of knowledge and skills necessary for parenting? Reduction of behaviors and/or symptoms that interfere with protective and

caregiving capacities? Demonstration that behavior changes are effective in parenting, protecting children, and maintaining stability of the home and family situation? Demonstration that behavior changes are sustainable over time and likely to continue following return and Safe Case Closure?

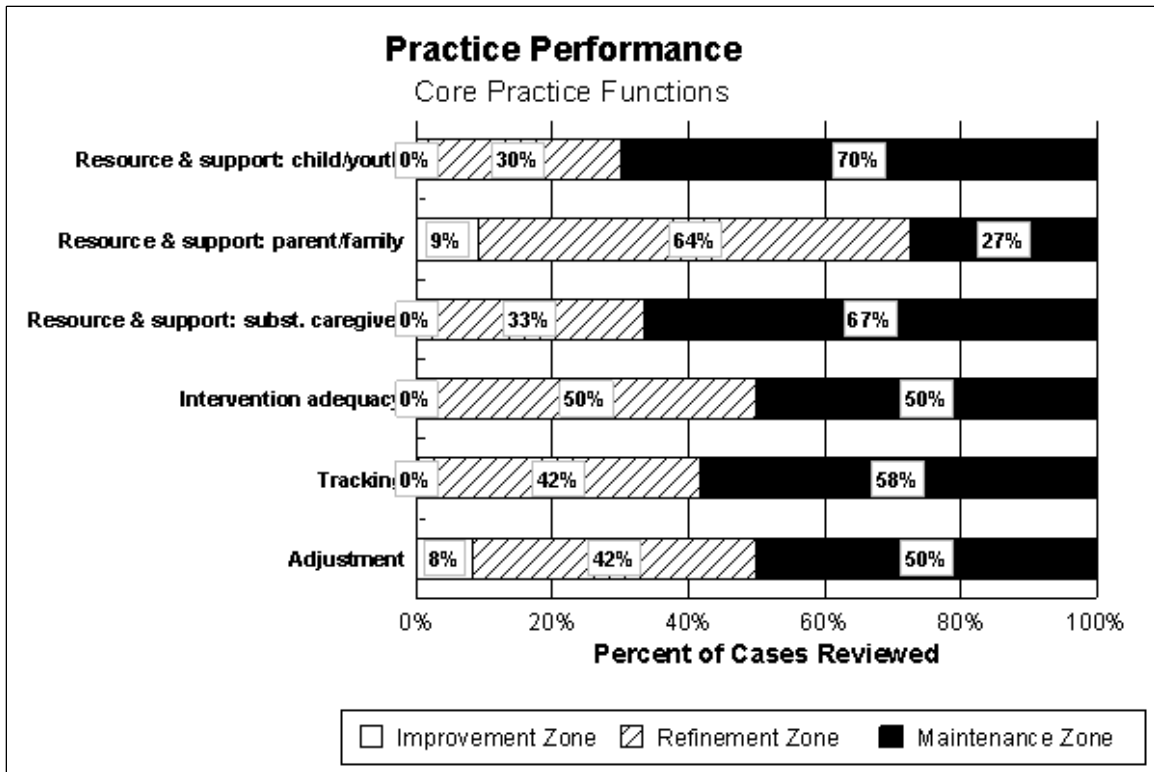
Comments:

In regard to planning for *Behavior Outcomes for Children*, seven cases were scored for this indicator. Of the seven, three cases (43 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and four cases (57 percent) scored in the refinement zone. This shows that there is a strong foundation in Racine County in regard to planning with children for sustainable outcomes. *Planning for Behavior Outcomes for Parents* scored similarly with 5 of 12 cases (42 percent) scoring in the maintenance zone and the remaining 7 cases (58 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. Scores regarding the parents show considerable improvement since the 2006 QSR where only 25 percent of outcomes for parent/families scored in the maintenance zone and 17 percent scored in the improvement zone.

PLANNING A CHANGE PROCESS FOR SUSTAINABLE SUPPORTS: To what degree is a well-reasoned, ongoing planning process being used to drive strategies and actions for sustainable supports for the family that provides, as needed, for: Meeting basic necessities of life? Ongoing supports necessary for recovery and relapse prevention? Informal social supports necessary to sustain the family following Safe Case Closure?

Comments:

Supports in the life of families involved in the child welfare system are essential. Even more, these supports play a huge role in case closure and the ability of the family to be able to sustain themselves without agency intervention. Like other counties, this is an area that Racine County can view as an opportunity. Four of the twelve cases (33 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and eight cases (67 percent) scored in the refinement zone. No cases scored in the improvement zone unlike 2006 when 18 percent of cases scored in the improvement zone. This reveals a trend in management of cases to identify and maintain sustainable supports beyond case closure.



RESOURCE & SUPPORT USE: To what degree is/are the family and/or out-of-home caregiver actively being provided the training, in-home support, supervision, resources, support-development assistance, and relief necessary to provide a safe and stable living arrangement for the child that meets the child’s daily care, development, and parenting needs? If the child presents special needs with more extensive care requirements, to what degree is the family/out-of-home caregiver provided specialized support commensurate with that required to meet the child’s needs while maintaining stability of the home and family commitment to the child?

Comments:

Resource and Support Use for children and substitute caregivers is a considerable strength for Racine County. Of the ten children scored for this indicator, seven (70 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and the remaining three children (30 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Similarly, of the six substitute caregivers scored for this indicator, four substitute caregivers (67 percent) scored in the maintenance zone with the remaining two substitute caregivers (33 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. *Resource and Support Use* for parents did not score as well. Of the 11 parents scored for this indicator, 3 parents (27 percent) scored in the maintenance zone. Six parents (64 percent) scored in the refinement zone and one parent (9 percent) scored in the improvement zone.

Reviewers wrote the following in regard to a high needs child who scored in the maintenance zone for this indicator, “The decision to place the focus child in an

residential treatment center (RTC) was excellent. The center offers therapy for both the focus child and the family, along with visitation. Other much needed interventions and behavioral retraining are available for the focus child.”

INTERVENTION ADEQUACY FOR CHANGE: To what degree are the change-related interventions, actions, and resources provided to the child and family of sufficient power (precision, intensity, duration, fidelity, and consistency) to produce desired results and make timely progress necessary to meet Safe Case Closure requirements and to sustain family independence from the service system following closure?

Comments:

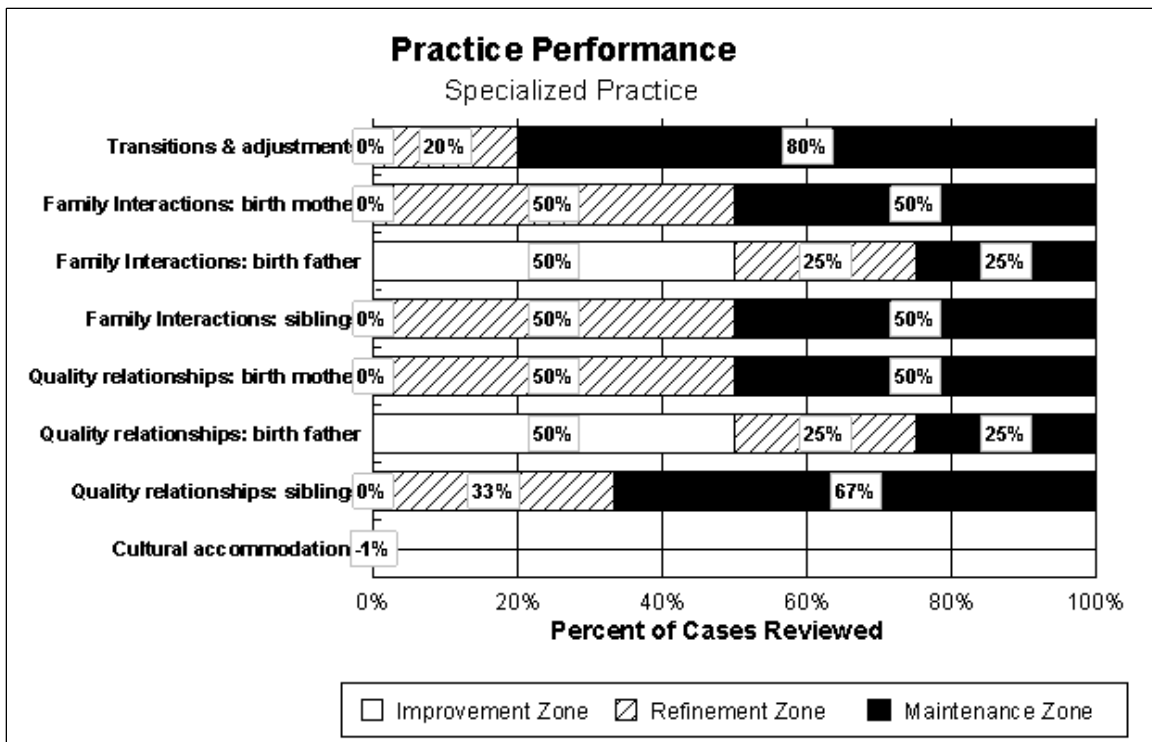
Intervention Adequacy for Change appears to be a strength in Racine County. Six of the twelve cases (50 percent) rated for this indicator scored in the maintenance zone and the remaining six (50 percent) scored in the refinement zone. When comparing this data to the first 42 counties reviewed, Racine County scored higher with 50 percent in the maintenance zone compared to statewide only 33 percent.

TRACKING AND ADJUSTMENT: Are the child and family status, intervention process, and change results routinely followed along and evaluated? Are strategies and services modified to respond to the changing needs and to apply knowledge gained about strategies and results to create a self-correcting service process for finding what works for the child and family?

Comments:

Tracking is another area of strength for Racine County. The scores show that ongoing case managers are knowledgeable about their families and the changing needs of their clients. Seven of the twelve cases (58 percent) scored in the maintenance zone with the remaining five cases (42 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. Adjustment scores were similar to those of *Tracking* with 6 of the 12 cases (50 percent) scoring in the maintenance zone and five cases (42 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. One case (8 percent) scored in the improvement zone.

Reviewers wrote the following in regard to a case scoring in the maintenance zone, “The worker had good situational awareness about the family throughout the case and was able to adjust the plan of all the children staying with dad as time progressed. It was determined that mother could handle having her children come home one at a time, so it was decided to have the youngest child return first since he was not enrolled in any school program.”



TRANSITIONS & LIFE ADJUSTMENTS: To what degree: Is the current or next life change transition for the child being planned, staged, and implemented to assure a timely, smooth, and successful adjustment for the child and family after the change occurs? Are transitional staging plans/arrangements being made to assure a successful transition and life adjustment in daily settings? If the child is returning home and to school following a temporary placement in foster care, treatment, or detention, is the transition and life adjustment sequence working? Is there follow-along support for the adjustment period?

Comments:

In regard to *Transitions*, five children were scored for this indicator. Results showed this was an area of strength for Racine County and that there was recognition and planning for *Transitions*. Of the five children, four children (80 percent) scored in the maintenance zone. One child (20 percent) scored in the refinement zone. This indicator improved significantly since 2006 where only 38 percent of cases scored in the maintenance zone. It was also dramatically higher compared to the other 42 counties reviewed who scored 28 percent in the maintenance zone.

FAMILY INTERACTIONS: When children and family members are living temporarily away from one another, how well are specifically planned strategies and supports working to build and sustain family connections with meaningful interactions via frequent visitation and other means, unless compelling reasons exist for keeping them apart? To what degree are strategies and efforts being implemented to support the following between the child and his/her family members for: (1) Supporting frequent interactions via visitation and other means? and (2)

Using varied and creative opportunities for family members to nurture one another?

Comments:

Results from *Family Interactions* were mixed. *Family Interactions with the Mother and Sibling* had the same results. Out of six cases scored, *Family Interactions with the Mother and the Siblings* had three cases (50 percent) scored in the maintenance zone and three cases (50 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Fathers, however, did not fare as well. *Family Interaction with Fathers*, four cases were scored and one of the cases (25 percent) scored in the maintenance zone, one case (25 percent) scored in the refinement zone and two cases (50 percent) scored in the improvement zone. This is an area of opportunity for Racine County.

QUALITY FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: When children and family members are living temporarily away from one another, how well are specifically planned strategies and supports working to build and sustain good quality family relationships through various appropriate means, unless compelling reasons exist for keeping them apart? To what degree are current strategies and efforts enabling family members to improve and maintain the strengths and positive qualities of their relationships with one another?

Comments:

Like the results for *Family Interaction*, *Quality Relationships for Mothers and Siblings* scored much higher than for fathers. Regarding the *Quality Relationships for Siblings* six cases were scored and four (67 percent) scored in the maintenance zone while two cases (33 percent) scored in the refinement zone. Sibling relationships appear to be a focus for Racine County and one that has resulted in positive outcomes. Comparing results to the other 42 counties reviewed Racine scored significantly higher on sibling relationships with 67 percent in the maintenance zone compared to statewide average of 28 percent. *Quality Relationships for Mothers* and their children was split with three of the six cases (50 percent) scoring in the maintenance zone and the remaining three cases (50 percent) scoring in the refinement zone. Fathers on the other hand did not score as well. One of the four (25 percent) fathers scored in the maintenance zone and one father (25 percent) scored in the refinement zone. The remaining two fathers (50 percent) scored in the improvement zone. Helping fathers maintain connections to their children is not a struggle unique to Racine County. Counties across the state have struggled with engaging fathers which in turn makes it difficult for them to maintain quality relationships with their children.

Reviewers wrote the following in regard to a case scoring in the maintenance zone for quality relationships with father, mother and siblings, “The *Quality of Family Relationships and Interactions* was good in this case. Family contacts for [the focus child], his parents and his siblings are able to happen frequently and in natural settings. The siblings are able to see one another not only in contacts supervised by the agency, but since they are placed with family, they also are able to see each other during family functions and respite.”

SPECIALIZED CULTURAL ACCOMMODATIONS: How well have any major cultural issues of the child and family been identified and addressed in practice? If indicated, are specialized supports and services provided being made culturally appropriate via special accommodations in the family engagement, assessment, planning, and service delivery processes being used with this child and family?

Comments:

There were no cases scored for *Specialized Cultural Accommodations*.

VII. NEXT STEPS AND ACTION PLANNING

County staff, supervisors, and the director were encouraged to use the results of the review to formulate and implement an action plan to address enhancement of case practice and systems issues, which will ultimately result in improved outcomes for children and families in Racine County. Agency staff identified the following as areas of potential focus for system and practice improvement:

- Expand teaming to go beyond crisis focused and participate in teaming with families on ongoing basis
- Examine how to engage and involve fathers with their children and the system
- Evaluate the case transfer process between Initial Assessment and Ongoing. Determine how this transfer process can allow Ongoing to work with families sooner
- Work with schools on opening up communication and examining roles of both schools and case workers
- Evaluate if there is a way to reduce documentation and eliminate repetitious paperwork to allow case workers to have more contact with families
- Educate the community on the roles of case workers
- Focus attention on recruitment of foster homes throughout the county and utilize this opportunity to involve all staff
- Expand capacity of in-home services to allow in home service providers the ability to spend more time with clients (i.e. parenting, home skills)

The final “next steps” meeting of the review involved Racine County Human Services Director, Debra Jossart and her upper management staff and agency leadership meeting with CQI facilitators to identify areas in which the agency should first focus on improving. Southern Training Partnership representative and Area Coordinator were also present to assist in the development of a plan. Two post QSR facilitators, Dan Wendt and Gary Groth, were also present to begin formalizing the action planning process.

VIII. SUMMARY

The results of Racine County’s second review offer information about the strengths and opportunities to enhance child protective services case practice. The scores from the first

quality service review serve as a baseline from which the agency can measure progress against this most recent review and any future reviews. The best practice model underpinning the QSR raises the bar for evaluating case practice. More specifically, the best practice model represents a set of values and standards that promote provision of strategic, dynamic, and high quality services to keep children and families safe.

Agency staff identified several possible next steps. Among these, staff talked about the need for developing effective engagement strategies in every case especially in regard to fathers and utilizing a teaming model. Racine County implemented the use of teaming following the 2006 QSR and is invested in building on the foundation of what they already have in place. Agency workers and management are encouraged to use the results of this review to formulate and implement an action plan to enhance case practice and address the systemic issues, which will ultimately result in improved outcomes for the children and families with whom the agency works