

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**Final Report: Virginia Child and Family Services Review**  
**November 2009**

**INTRODUCTION**

This document presents a summary of the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Virginia. The CFSR is the Federal Government's program for assessing the performance of State child welfare agencies with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. The CFSR is authorized by the Social Security Amendments of 1994 requiring that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) promulgate regulations for reviews of State child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families within HHS.

The Virginia CFSR was conducted the week of July 13, 2009. The period under review for the onsite case review process was from April 1, 2008, through July 17, 2009. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), the Division of Family Services (DFS)
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau, which provides the State's child welfare data for the 12-month CFSR target period ending March 31, 2008
- Reviews of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in-home services cases) at three sites: 31 cases in Fairfax County, 17 cases in Hampton City, and 17 cases in Tazewell County
- Interviews and focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, child advocates, and attorneys

**Background Information**

The CFSR assesses State performance with regard to its substantial conformity with seven child and family outcomes and seven systemic factors. For the outcome assessments, each outcome incorporates one or more of the 23 items included in the review, and each item is rated as a Strength or Area Needing Improvement based on the results of the case reviews. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 90 percent or more of the applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. The evaluation options for these outcomes are "substantially achieved," "partially achieved," or "not achieved." For a State to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent or more of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. Two outcomes—Safety Outcome 1 and Permanency Outcome 1—also are evaluated based on State performance with regard to six national

data indicators. For a State to be in substantial conformity with these outcomes, both the national standards for each data indicator and the case review requirements must be met.

There are 22 items that are considered in assessing the State’s substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors. Each item reflects a key Federal program requirement relevant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) for that systemic factor. An item is rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement based on whether State performance on the item meets the Federal program requirements. A determination of the rating is based on information provided in the Statewide Assessment and from interviews with stakeholders held during the onsite CFSR. Additional information may come from other Federal reports or assessments.

Overall performance on each systemic factor is based on the ratings for the individual items incorporated in the systemic factor. For any given systemic factor, a State is rated as being either “in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 3 or 4) or “not in substantial conformity” with that factor (a score of 1 or 2). Specific requirements for each rating are shown in the table below.

**Rating the Systemic Factor**

<b>Not in Substantial Conformity</b>		<b>In Substantial Conformity</b>	
1	2	3	4
None of the CFSP or program requirements is in place.	Some or all of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fail to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place, and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement.	All of the CFSP or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

A State that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome or systemic factor must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan to address the areas of concern associated with that outcome or systemic factor.

Because many changes were made in the CFSR process based on lessons learned during the first round and in response to feedback from the child welfare field, a State’s performance in the second round of the CFSR is not directly comparable to its performance in the first round. Key changes in the process that make comparing performance difficult across reviews are the following:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items
- Changes in criteria for specific items to increase consistency and to ensure an assessment of critical areas such as child welfare agency efforts to involve noncustodial parents

## Key CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes

The 2009 CFSR identified the following areas of high performance with regard to the State's performance in achieving the outcomes assessed during the review:

- Items pertaining to repeat maltreatment, foster care reentry, proximity of children's placements to parents, placement with siblings, and the physical and dental health of children were rated as a Strength for the State.
- The State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to the absence of recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months, the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by their foster parents or a facility staff member, and the stability of placements for children in foster care.

Although the State's performance on Well-Being Outcome 3 (Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs) did not meet the required 95-percent level for substantial conformity, performance on this outcome was fairly high with the outcome being substantially achieved in 86.7 percent of the cases. In addition, although the State's performance on the items pertaining to preserving children's connections and addressing children's mental and behavioral health concerns did not reach the 90-percent level required for an overall rating of Strength, at least 85 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for these items.

In addition to these positive CFSR findings, HHS acknowledges the efforts VDSS is making to bring about systems change through the statewide implementation of the Virginia Children's Services System Transformation (Transformation) initiative. The mission of the Transformation is to strengthen permanent family connections for children and youth by transforming how services are delivered. The objectives are to increase the number and rate at which youth in foster care move into permanent family arrangements, decrease the use of congregate care by increasing the number of children and youth placed with relatives and foster parents, and devote more resources to community-based care.

Through this initiative, VDSS has increased the emphasis on managing by data; developed a practice model to serve as a framework for systems change; increased capacity to recruit, develop, and support foster and adoptive parents; and focused on building capacity and improving the agency's infrastructure.

The State is concentrating on the following:

- Identifying best practices in family engagement
- Implementing a formal model that is specific to Virginia
- Providing support to local agencies on policy and regulation
- Developing external partnerships, improving communication, and realigning the agency's structure to support the Transformation

These practices have served as the basis for the State's coordinated approach to the Statewide Assessment and the CFSP and also will serve as the structure for its Program Improvement Plan.

The CFSR also identified the following concerns with regard to the State's performance in achieving the desired outcomes for children and families:

- The State was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situation) with the outcome substantially achieved in only 35 percent of the applicable cases.
- The State was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs) with the outcome substantially achieved in only 43.1 percent of the nine cases reviewed.
- The State was not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1 (Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect) with the outcome substantially achieved in only 53.3 percent of the applicable cases.
- Item 9 pertaining to the timeliness of adoptions was rated as a Strength in only 33 percent of applicable cases.
- Item 17 pertaining to assessing and addressing the service needs of the child, parents, and foster parents was rated as a Strength in only 46 percent of the cases.
- The State did not meet the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to the timeliness and permanency of reunifications, the timeliness of adoptions, and permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods.

The State's low performance with regard to these CFSR outcomes and national data standards may be attributed in part to the following key factors:

- Although the State child welfare agency made concerted efforts in the past 5 years to improve policy and practice with regard to establishing training requirements for caseworkers and supervisors, the agency was unable to gain approval for these changes from the State Board of Social Services. As a result, the State does not ensure consistency in the delivery of ongoing training for caseworkers and supervisors.
- Poorer performance in the in-home services cases compared to the foster care cases indicates that the State may not be placing enough emphasis on family preservation.
- The lack of a fully implemented quality assurance (QA) system prevents the State from monitoring and ensuring consistency in practice across local departments of social services (LDSS).

### **Key CFSR Findings Regarding Systemic Factors**

With regard to systemic factors, Virginia is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The State is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factors pertaining to Statewide Information System; Case Review System; QA System; Staff and Provider Training; Service Array and Resource Development; and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention.

Specific findings on the State's performance on safety and permanency outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of this Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in table 2. Table 3 presents the State's performance with regard to the

seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. In the following section, key findings are summarized for each outcome and systemic factor. Information also is provided about the State's performance on each outcome and systemic factor during the Federal fiscal year 2003 CFSR.

## **I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES**

### **Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect**

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two items. One pertains to the timeliness of initiating a response to a child maltreatment report (item 1), and the other relates to the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment within a 6-month time period (item 2). Safety Outcome 1 also incorporates two national data indicators for which national standards have been established. These data indicators measure the absence of maltreatment recurrence and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 53.3 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 43 percent of applicable Fairfax County cases, 60 percent of applicable Hampton City cases, and 67 percent of applicable Tazewell County cases. However, the State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to the absence of maltreatment recurrence within 6 months and the absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

In the majority of case reviews for the 2009 CFSR there was an absence of maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period. However, those reviews also found that the agency was not consistent in initiating a response to a maltreatment report within the timeframes established by State policy, even when the reports were prioritized as high risk. In addition, concerns were raised regarding the lack of State time requirements for establishing face-to-face contact with the children reported as the alleged victims of maltreatment.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The key concern identified in the 2003 review was that the agency was not consistent in its efforts to initiate an investigation of a maltreatment report and/or establish face-to-face contact with the child subject of a maltreatment report in accordance with State or local required timeframes. To address the identified concern, Virginia implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Established statewide requirements regarding minimum timeframes for initiating a response to reports of abuse or neglect
- Implemented a pilot program incorporating policies and tools related to the acceptance and prioritization of reports of maltreatment in 30 local agencies

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

**Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate**

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two items. One item (item 3) assesses State efforts to prevent children’s removal from their homes by providing the family with services to ensure children’s safety while they remain in their homes. The other item (item 4) assesses efforts to manage safety and reduce risk of harm to children in their own homes and in their foster care placements.

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 69.2 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 77 percent of applicable Fairfax County cases, 59 percent of applicable Hampton City cases, and 65 percent of applicable Tazewell County cases.

The 2009 CFSR case reviews found that, in many cases, the agency was effective in providing services to the family to prevent the child’s removal from the home and in conducting initial and ongoing risk and safety assessments to ensure the child’s safety.

However, the 2009 CFSR also identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- Children remaining in their own homes continued to be at risk either because services were not provided, or the services that were provided did not target the key safety concerns.
- There was a lack of initial and ongoing safety and risk assessments.
- Children in foster care were at risk during visitation with parents due to insufficient monitoring.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State closed cases when the parent refused to comply with services although the child was still at risk.
- The State was not consistent in its efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children.
- There were no safety assessments in some cases or the safety assessment was not sufficiently comprehensive to capture critical family issues relevant to the child’s safety, such as domestic violence.

To address these concerns Virginia implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Developed and implemented training for local Child Protective Services (CPS) and foster care staff on the knowledge and skills needed to engage families effectively in safety and risk assessment and reassessment
- Piloted a Structured Decision Making (SDM) assessment of risk of harm to children living in their own homes in 30 agencies
- Clarified policy related to the management of CPS in-home services cases, including policy regarding the intensity of service provision and the frequency of caseworker contacts based on risk

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

### **Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations**

Six items are incorporated in the assessment of Permanency Outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all of the foster care cases reviewed. The items pertain to State efforts to prevent foster care reentry (item 5), ensure placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establish appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner as well as seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining items focus on an assessment of State efforts to achieve permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, or permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9), or to ensure that children who have a case goal of other planned permanent living arrangement (OPPLA) are in stable long-term placements and are adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 35 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 30 percent of Fairfax County cases, 40 percent of Hampton City cases, and 40 percent of Tazewell County cases. In addition to case review findings, Virginia did not meet the national data indicators pertaining to timeliness and permanency of reunification, timeliness of adoptions, and permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. However, the State met the national standard for the national data indicator pertaining to placement stability.

The 2009 CFSR case reviews found that foster care reentry was a rare occurrence, and that, in most cases, children experienced placement stability while in foster care. However, the 2009 CFSR also identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- The child's permanency goal was either not appropriate or not established in a timely manner.
- The agency had not sought TPR in accordance with the requirements of ASFA.
- There was a lack of concerted effort to achieve reunification with parents or relatives in a timely manner.
- There were agency delays in achieving adoptions in a timely manner as well as delays due to appeals of TPR decisions.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with this outcome in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State was not consistent in its efforts to ensure children's placement stability while in foster care.
- The State was not consistent in establishing permanency goals in a timely manner, and permanency goals were not always appropriate to meet the needs of the child.
- The State was not consistent in its efforts to attain the goal of reunification in a timely manner.
- The State was not consistent in achieving finalized adoptions in a timely manner due to both agency- and court-related barriers.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Submitted regulations to mandate pre-service and in-service training for resource parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents to prepare families to meet the needs of children entering foster care
- Developed and implemented strategies to strengthen the screening and assessment of children's needs to improve placement matches
- Piloted concurrent planning to ensure that appropriate permanency goals are selected and achieved for children in a timely manner
- Established a process for filing petitions for TPR simultaneously with petitions for an initial permanency planning hearing to change the goal to adoption or to document, in Virginia's On-Line Automated Services Information System (OASIS), the reasons for not pursuing termination
- Piloted SDM tools in the decision-making process for reunification in 30 localities
- Promulgated regulations and developed policy to allow for dual approval of resource parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents
- Developed Progress to Excellence Reports as a management tool for assessing efforts to expedite adoptions and ensure timely documentation of final orders of adoption and other actions
- Collaborated with the Court Improvement Program to identify child welfare best practices and issues influencing timely permanency for children in foster care, and educate agency and court staff about these practices and issues

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

### **Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children**

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six items that assess State performance with regard to placing children in foster care near their parents and close relatives (item 11); placing siblings together (item 12); ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13); preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14); seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15); and promoting relationships between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 66.7 percent of the cases reviewed. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 65 percent of Fairfax County cases, 50 percent of Hampton City cases, and 89 percent of Tazewell County cases.

The 2009 CFSR case reviews found that the State was effective in regard to placing children near their parents and placing siblings together in foster care, and, in many cases, the State made concerted efforts to ensure that the connections of children in foster care were maintained. However, the 2009 CFSR also identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- The frequency and quality of visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings were insufficient to meet the needs of the children and families.
- The agency had not made concerted efforts to search for either maternal or paternal relatives as potential placement resources.
- The agency had not made concerted efforts to support the child's relationship with the mother or father while the child was in foster care.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 during its 2003 CFSR and was required to address this outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State was not consistent in ensuring sufficient visitation for children in foster care with their parents.
- The State was not consistent in supporting the relationship of children in care with either their mothers or fathers or in preserving the child's connections to extended family.
- The State was not consistent in seeking or assessing either maternal or paternal relatives as placement resources.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Established guidelines and best practice strategies for visits among children in foster care and their parents and siblings
- Increased the involvement of resource parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents in facilitating contact among children in foster care and their parents and siblings
- Strengthened policies and practices on preserving connections for children in foster care such as statewide use of Life Books
- Developed and used a Relative Identifier form to expedite the identification and location of relatives as placement options for children entering foster care
- Developed State guidance and implemented collaborative efforts with the VDSS Division of Licensing Programs to promote increased contact between children in foster care and their parents through venues such as e-mail and phone calls as well as visitation

The State met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

### **Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs**

Well-Being Outcome 1 incorporates four items. One item pertains to State efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and that the necessary services are provided to meet identified needs (item 17). A second item examines State efforts to actively involve parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two remaining items examine the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. The outcome was substantially achieved in 43.1 percent of cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 45 percent of Fairfax County cases, 41 percent of Hampton City cases, and 41 percent of Tazewell County cases. In addition, the outcome was substantially achieved in 52.5 percent of the 40 foster care cases and 28 percent of the 25 in-home services cases.

The 2009 CFSR case reviews found that in general, the agency was effective in assessing and meeting the service needs of foster parents and children in foster care. However, the 2009 CFSR also identified the following concerns in many of the cases reviewed:

- The agency did not make concerted efforts to assess and address the service needs of mothers and/or fathers in both the foster care and in-home services cases.
- The agency did not make concerted efforts to involve children, mothers, and fathers in case planning in both the foster care and in-home services cases, although children in the foster care cases were slightly more likely to be involved than children in the in-home services cases.
- The frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children, particularly children in the in-home services cases, were not sufficient to ensure the child's safety and well-being.
- The frequency and quality of caseworker visits with parents were not sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 during its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. The following concerns were identified in the 2003 review:

- The State was not consistent in its efforts to assess needs and provide services to children, parents, and foster parents.
- The State was not consistent in its efforts to ensure that caseworker's face-to-face contacts with children and their parents were of sufficient frequency and quality to meet the needs of children and families.
- The State was not consistent in its efforts to involve children and parents in case planning.

To address the identified concerns, the State took the following measures:

- Developed practices designed to strengthen assessment of needs for children and parents, including SDM
- Developed practices designed to strengthen service planning for children, parents, and resource parents
- Developed and implemented standardized training for caseworkers focusing on improving the assessment of the needs of foster parents, and developed ongoing peer support groups to address those needs
- Revised policy to reinforce the involvement of parents in case planning and trained agency staff on the new policy
- Developed and implemented training on strength-based interviewing
- Developed and implemented policies to increase caseworker contacts with children and parents
- Developed a tool to guide caseworkers in making quality face-to-face contacts with children

## **Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs**

Only one item is incorporated under Well-Being Outcome 2. It pertains to State efforts to assess and meet the educational needs of children in foster care and, when relevant, children in the in-home services cases (item 21).

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. The outcome was substantially achieved in 83.0 percent of the 47 applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 95 percent of Fairfax County cases, 75 percent of Hampton City cases, and 75 percent of Tazewell County cases. Also, the outcome was substantially achieved in 92 percent of the 36 applicable foster care cases and 55 percent of the 11 applicable in-home services cases.

The 2009 CFSR case reviews found that in general, the educational needs of children in foster care were being appropriately and adequately assessed and addressed. However, in several of the applicable in-home services cases, educational needs were not assessed or addressed, although education-related concerns were apparent and a reason for agency contact.

Virginia was in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 during its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this outcome in its Program Improvement Plan.

## **Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs**

This outcome incorporates two items pertaining to State efforts to assess and meet the physical health (item 22) and mental health (item 23) needs of children in foster care and children in the in-home services cases, if relevant.

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was substantially achieved in 86.7 percent of the applicable cases. This percentage is less than the 95 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. The outcome was substantially achieved in 93 percent of Fairfax County cases, 82 percent of Hampton City cases, and 80 percent of Tazewell County cases. In addition, the outcome was substantially achieved in 100 percent of the 40 foster care cases and in 60 percent of the 20 applicable in-home services cases.

The 2009 CFSR case reviews found that in general the physical, dental, and mental health needs of children in foster care were appropriately assessed and adequately addressed. However, the 2009 CFSR also found that for several of the children in the in-home services cases, mental health needs were not adequately assessed and/or addressed.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 during its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the outcome in its Program Improvement Plan. In the 2003 CFSR, the key concern identified was that children's mental health needs were not being adequately assessed and when mental health services were recommended, the agency did not always provide timely and/or sufficient services to meet the child's needs.

To address the identified concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Provided guidelines and tools to LDSS on mental health screening of children entering foster care and children and families receiving ongoing CPS services
- Implemented a range of strategies to increase mental health and substance abuse treatment resources

Virginia met its goals for this outcome by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

## **II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

### **Statewide Information System**

Substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System is determined by whether the State is operating an information system that can provide accurate and timely information pertaining to the status, demographic characteristics, location, and case goals for the placement of every child in foster care.

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The 2009 CFSR determined that OASIS incorporates data pertaining to the status, demographic characteristics, location, and case goals of children in foster care and can generate reports on that information. However, the 2009 CFSR also identified concerns regarding the accuracy of the data in OASIS at any given time, particularly data pertaining to the location of children's placements. This was attributed to delays in entering the child's placement information in some locations and to the State policy that allows a 30-day period for entering or updating information in OASIS.

Virginia was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan.

### **Case Review System**

Five items are included in the assessment of State performance for the systemic factor of Case Review System. The items examine development of case plans and parent involvement in that process (item 25), the consistency of 6-month case reviews (item 26) and 12-month permanency hearings (item 27), implementation of procedures to seek TPR in accordance with the timeframes established in ASFA (item 28), and notifications to foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of case reviews and hearings regarding the children in their care and about their rights to be heard in those proceedings (item 29).

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State was holding permanency hearings in a timely manner and has a process for TPR proceedings in accordance with the provisions of ASFA. However, the CFSR also identified the following concerns:

- Although most children have a case plan, and case plans are updated in a timely manner, parents are not consistently involved in the development of case plans.
- Although the State has a policy requiring that reviews of the status of all children in foster care be held at least every 6 months, State policy does not require that the initial review be held less than 6 months from the date of the child's entry into foster care, even when "date of entry" is considered to be 60 days from the time of the child's removal from home.
- Notifying caregivers about hearings and reviews involving the children in their care is not occurring consistently across the State, and caregivers are not consistently given opportunities to be heard in these reviews and hearings.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following concerns were identified in the 2003 CFSR:

- Parents were not consistently engaged or involved in the case planning process.
- The status of each child in foster care was not reviewed at least once every 6 months (periodic review).
- There was inconsistent implementation of the process for TPR in accordance with the provisions of ASFA.
- There was inconsistency in notifying foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers about hearings and reviews and about their opportunities to be heard in reviews and hearings.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Developed specific protocols and policies for early involvement of children and parents in assessment and case planning
- Implemented concurrent planning to ensure regular meetings with the family to plan for the child's permanency
- Designed and implemented a QA process to monitor the development of written case plans and the inclusion of the child and child's parents in the planning process
- Updated and strengthened the periodic review process by creating policy regarding administrative panel reviews to include mandated timeframes and a requirement that a full administrative panel review be held for children in foster care with the goals of adoption, permanent foster care, and independent living
- Created monitoring reports to document compliance with the new policy
- Required the LDSS to file a petition for TPR at the time of the initial permanency planning hearing if it included a recommendation to change the goal to adoption or to enter into OASIS the reason TPR was not being sought
- Provided a process that allows resource parents, foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers who are unable to attend court hearings to be included in the hearing through a conference call
- Strengthened foster care policy guidance and trained caseworkers regarding the right of caregivers to provide input during administrative panel reviews

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

### **Quality Assurance System**

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of QA System is based on whether the State has developed standards that ensure the safety and health of children in foster care (item 30), and whether the State is operating a statewide QA system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement (item 31).

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of QA System. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services that protect their health and safety. However, the 2009 CFSR also determined that although the State has piloted a QA process, it is not yet operating a fully functioning QA system that evaluates the quality of services and program improvement measures that have been implemented.

Virginia was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address it in its Program Improvement Plan.

### **Staff and Provider Training**

The systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training incorporates an assessment of the State's training of new caseworkers (item 32), the ongoing training provided to agency staff (item 33), and both initial and ongoing training provided to foster and adoptive parents (item 34). This systemic factor does not assess the training of service providers other than child welfare agency staff unless the service providers are private agency caseworkers operating under a contract with the State who have full case management responsibilities.

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. The 2009 CFSR identified the following concerns with regard to training:

- The State's training requirements are not consistently and fully implemented, and there is no process in place for determining whether all staff has been trained or whether training results in gains in knowledge or skills.
- The State's training requirements for new caseworkers include courses that are critical to effective functioning, yet the caseworkers have 1 year to complete the required courses.
- The State has no requirements for ongoing training for caseworkers and supervisors, and opportunities for ongoing training are not consistently available across the State.
- Although the State mandates training for staff of licensed child care facilities, at the time of the 2009 CFSR there was no mandated pre-service or ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was required to address the factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 CFSR:

- The State did not mandate or provide initial training for all staff that delivered services under titles IV-B and IV-E.
- The State did not consistently provide ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties.
- The State did not mandate training for current or prospective foster parents and adoptive parents who care for foster children that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out foster care and/or adoption duties.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies:

- Submitted regulations for approval to the Board of Social Services that would mandate initial training for all child welfare caseworkers that must be completed prior to carrying a caseload and that addresses the skills and knowledge necessary for the performance of their jobs
- Submitted regulations for approval to the Board of Social Services that would mandate in-service training for child welfare caseworkers and supervisors that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties in working with children and families involved in the child welfare system
- Submitted regulations for approval that would mandate pre-service and ongoing training for resource parents, foster parents and adoptive parents to prepare families to meet the needs of children entering foster care
- Established core training content and objectives to ensure statewide consistency in pre-service training of resource parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

### **Service Array and Resource Development**

The assessment of the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development incorporates answers to three questions: Does the State have in place an array of services that meet the needs of children and families served by the child welfare agency (item 35)? Are the services accessible to families and children throughout the State (item 36)? Can services be individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and family served by the child welfare agency (item 37)?

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array and Resource Development. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State has an appropriate array of key services to meet the needs of children and families. However, the 2009 CFSR also identified the following concerns:

- Some key services are not available in rural areas.
- A lack of transportation in some areas is a barrier to accessing services in both rural and urban areas.
- A scarcity of key services, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment services, results in waiting lists for these services.

- There are insufficient resources to ensure that the unique needs of children and families can be met, particularly for non-English-speaking families.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFPSR and was required to address it in its Program Improvement Plan. The following key concerns were identified in the 2003 CFPSR:

- There were critical gaps in services that address the needs of families, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster placements achieve permanency.
- Many programs were not available statewide, particularly sexual offender treatment programs; preventive services; and psychiatrists, physicians, and dentists who accept Medicaid.
- There were waiting lists for services such as dental care and substance abuse evaluation and treatment in some areas.

To address these concerns Virginia implemented the following strategies:

- Collaborated with public and private agencies to increase access to mental health, dental, and medical services
- Increased substance abuse services availability and accessibility for families and children
- Collaborated with public and private partners to increase access to services for juveniles displaying sexually aggressive or reactive behaviors
- Expanded partnerships with local offices, other government agencies, and community organizations to improve the accessibility, availability, and delivery of services to older youth transitioning out of foster care

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

### **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community incorporates an assessment of the State's consultation with external stakeholders in developing the CFSP and producing annual reports (items 38 and 39), and the extent to which the State coordinates child welfare services with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population (item 40).

Virginia is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The 2009 CFPSR determined the following:

- The State engages in ongoing consultation with a range of stakeholders in developing goals and objectives for CFSPs and in preparing Annual Progress and Service Reports.
- The State's child welfare agency services are coordinated with the services and benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs.

Virginia was in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address it in its Program Improvement Plan.

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

The assessment of this systemic factor focuses on the State's standards for foster homes and child care institutions (items 41 and 42), the State's compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks for foster and adoptive parents (item 43), the State's efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of foster children (item 44), and the State's activities with regard to using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements for waiting children (item 45).

Virginia is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The 2009 CFSR determined that the State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background checks for foster and adoptive parents. However, the 2009 CFSR also identified the following concerns:

- At the time of the Onsite Review, the standards for approval of foster family homes did not include essential requirements such as foster parent training.
- At the time of the Onsite Review, the standards that applied to foster homes approved by licensed child placing agencies (LCPAs) were different from those applied to foster homes approved by LDSS.
- The State does not require LDSS to recruit foster and adoptive homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.
- There are barriers to the interjurisdictional adoption of waiting children; some LDSS workers are unwilling to place waiting children in adoptive homes in different areas because they are concerned that other LDSS have less stringent adoptive home requirements.

Virginia also was not in substantial conformity with this factor in its 2003 CFSR and was not required to address this factor in its Program Improvement Plan. The following concerns were identified in the 2003 CFSR:

- Although the State had standards for foster family homes and child care institutions, these standards did not include essential requirements such as foster parent training.
- State standards were not applied equally to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.
- The State did not have a recruitment process in place for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children who need foster and adoptive homes.

To address these concerns, the State implemented the following strategies in its Program Improvement Plan:

- Promulgated standards for resource parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents that are consistent for LDSS and LCPA, and are in reasonable accord with Child Welfare League of America standards

- Submitted regulations on minimum standards for LCPA to the State Board in August 2005 (however, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources pulled the regulations in November 2005)
- Implemented dual approval of resource parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents
- Developed and implemented a statewide recruitment plan in collaboration with LDSS and private agencies to ensure the diligent recruitment of potential resource parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care

The State met its goals for this systemic factor by the end of its Program Improvement Plan implementation period.

**Table 1. Virginia 2009 CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items**

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings			Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved*	Met National Standards?	Rating**	Percent Strength
<b>Safety Outcome 1:</b> Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	53.3	Met both		
Item 1. Timeliness of investigations				ANI	60
Item 2. Repeat maltreatment				Strength	93
<b>Safety Outcome 2:</b> Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	69.2			
Item 3. Services to protect children in home				ANI	68
Item 4. Risk of harm				ANI	69
<b>Permanency Outcome 1:</b> Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	35.0			
Item 5. Foster care reentry				Strength	90
Item 6. Stability of foster care placements				ANI	82.5
Item 7. Permanency goal for child				ANI	57.5
Item 8. Reunification, guardianship, and placement with relatives				ANI	69
Item 9. Adoption				ANI	33
Item 10. Other planned living arrangement				ANI	80
<b>Permanency Outcome 2:</b> The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	66.7			
Item 11. Proximity of placement				Strength	100
Item 12. Placement with siblings				Strength	94
Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	55
Item 14. Preserving connections				ANI	85
Item 15. Relative placement				ANI	55
Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	53

\* 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

\*\* Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement. For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases must be rated as a Strength.

**Table 2. Virginia 2009 CFSR Ratings for Child and Family Well-Being Outcomes and Items**

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings		Item Ratings	
	In Substantial Conformity?	Percent Substantially Achieved	Rating**	Percent Strength
<b>Well-Being Outcome 1:</b> Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs	No	43.1		
Item 17. Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents			ANI	46
Item 18. Child/family involvement in case planning			ANI	52
Item 19. Caseworker visits with child			ANI	66
Item 20. Caseworker visits with parents			ANI	38
<b>Well-Being Outcome 2:</b> Children receive services to meet their educational needs	No	83.0		
Item 21. Educational needs of child			ANI	83
<b>Well-Being Outcome 3:</b> Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	No	86.7		
Item 22. Physical health of child			Strength	94
Item 23. Mental/behavioral health of child			ANI	87

\* 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

\*\* Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANI). For an overall rating of Strength, 90 percent of the cases reviewed for the item (with the exception of item 21) must be rated as a Strength. Because item 21 is the only item for Well-Being Outcome 2, the requirement of a 95-percent Strength rating applies.

**Table 3. Virginia 2009 CFSR Ratings for Systemic Factors and Items**

<b>Systemic Factors and Items</b>	<b>Substantial Conformity?</b>	<b>Score*</b>	<b>Item Rating**</b>
<b>Statewide Information System</b>	No	2	
Item 24. The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or, within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care			ANI
<b>Case Review System</b>	No	2	
Item 25. The State provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions			ANI
Item 26. The State provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review			ANI
Item 27. The State provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter			Strength
Item 28. The State provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act			Strength
Item 29. The State provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child			ANI
<b>Quality Assurance System</b>	No	2	
Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children			Strength
Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented			ANI
<b>Staff and Provider Training</b>	No	1	
Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services			ANI
Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP			ANI
Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children			ANI

<b>Systemic Factors and Items</b>	<b>Substantial Conformity?</b>	<b>Score*</b>	<b>Item Rating**</b>
<b>Service Array and Resource Development</b>	No	2	
Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency			Strength
Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP			ANI
Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency			ANI
<b>Agency Responsiveness to the Community</b>	Yes	4	
Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP			Strength
Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, Annual Progress and Services Reports delivered pursuant to the CFSP			Strength
Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population			Strength
<b>Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention</b>	No	2	
Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards			ANI
Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds			ANI
Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children			Strength
Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed			ANI
Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children			ANI

\* Scores range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 means that the factor is not in substantial conformity. A score of 3 or 4 means that the factor is in substantial conformity.

\*\* Items may be rated as Strengths or as Areas Needing Improvement (ANI).