

COLORADO

**Department of Human Services
Office of Child and Family Services
Division of Child Welfare**



Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan Final Report

**January 1, 2007 through March 31, 2007
Submitted July 27, 2007**

PIP Final Report of Progress
January 1, through March 31, 2007

This is Colorado's final quarterly report of progress on the State Program Improvement Plan (PIP). This report will provide a summary of Colorado's performance on its Program Improvement Plan. In this Final Report of Progress the narrative will address the outcomes that are out of compliance and recommendations for consideration with regard to compliance.

OUTCOME PERMANENCY 1

Item 6 – Stability of Foster Care: This Item attempts to assure that the placement change children experience while in foster care is in line with their case plans. Colorado's baseline measure was 72%, with a goal of 76%. The statewide performance for the past year, 4/1/06 through 3/31/07 was 55.85%.

Since October 2003, this item evaluated the reason for children's moves from the perspective of the child and did not assess the efforts of the county to address the child's changing issues and needs. Thus each unplanned move or move that might be more restrictive rather than less restrictive, was seen as a move not in line with the child's case plan.

From Colorado's final report, a rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item was assigned when reviewers made the following determinations:

- A placement disrupted when foster parents requested the child's removal, and there was no evidence that DHS had made efforts to address the needs of foster parents experiencing problems with children in their care prior to the request for removal (3 cases).
- Children experienced multiple placements during the period under review, and changes in at least one of the placements did not reflect efforts to promote goal attainment or meet the child's service needs (2 cases).
- The agency placed a child in an emergency shelter without first attempting to find a more appropriate alternative placement, such as a relative home or a foster home (1 case).

With more and more counties implementing a team staffing processes with each move a child experiences, the issues for which Colorado were addressed. However the measurement did not take that into account. After much discussion and planning among State Child Welfare Staff, Administrative Review Staff, and County Department personal, the following method will be implemented to determine whether this item is strength or an area still needing improvement.

Proposed Changes:

Questions to explore in order to assess:

1. What is/was the reason for placement changes?
2. Was the placement change planned and made to accommodate the child's changing level of therapeutic care needs, or to place in an adoptive, kinship, or tribal home?
3. What are/were the timeframes of these changes?
4. Were there efforts to prevent unnecessary moves, if applicable?
5. Are/were the placement settings related and appropriate to the child's needs?
6. What is/was the agency's support of the current placement?
7. What are/were the reasons for instability of placement, if applicable?

Answer YES" if the child/youth moved for safety reasons:

- Abuse or Neglect Allegations
- Perpetrator or victim issues
- If there is documentation of a formalized staffing prior to the move:

Example: Documentation of a formalized staffing such as a Team Decision Making Staffing Report, prior to moving the youth out of detention to another placement that meets the youths needs.

NOTE: A court hearing or worker/supervisor meeting would not suffice.

Answer “NO” if there have been placement changes for the following reasons where a formalized staffing did not occur prior to the move:

- Provider request,
- Provider quit/closed,
- Provider was unable to cope with the child’s/youth’s behavior
- Provider’s divorce
- The move was not formally staffed.
- If the child/youth was moved more than once and one of the moves was due to provider problems or one of the moves was not formally staffed.

Answer “NA” if:

- There have been no placement changes during the review period.
- The child/youth was hospitalized.
- Short term respite care.
- The child/youth was placed on a trial home visit.
- The child/youth is on the run.
- The youth returned from a run or detention and was placed back in the same setting.

Item 9, action step 4 – Effectiveness of County Adoption Effort: This item attempts to assure that an adoptive family has been identified for any child who is legally free for adoption and whose goal is adoption. Colorado’s baseline measure was 76% with a goal of 81%. The statewide performance for the past year, 4/1/06 through 3/31/07 was 79.91.

Although Colorado fell short of the goal, there has been nearly a 4% improvement on this item. The state continues to meet the National Standard and is assured that the standard for Adoption Component will be met. There continues to be positive work done within the adoption arena and this will be addressed strongly in the future Statewide Assessment.

Assessment of Colorado’s Performance on Permanency 1: Regarding Permanency 1, the State would propose that this Outcome has been substantially achieved.

As was pointed out for Item 6, the measure being used did not actually measure the issues that caused Colorado to be out of compliance. As the State worked toward finding a solution, this work was reported to the Regional Office quarterly. A request to change the measure to data that would more accurately reflect the concerns was denied by the Regional Office. With the changes in practice where more and more counties are utilizing a team decision making process to better address the needs of the child and foster parents, it is believed that the moves children and youth experience are more in line with their case plans. Secondly, Adoption has continued to be strength throughout the time Colorado has been under a PIP. The National Standard has continued to be met and as was stated above although Colorado fell short of their goal, significant improvement was made on this item.

OUTCOME PERMANENCY 2

Item 14 – Preserving Connections: This Item attempts to assure that the Family Services Plan, and services provided, including foster placements, take into account the unique characteristics of the child and family. Colorado’s baseline measure was 95% with a goal of 96%. The statewide performance for the past year, 4/1/06 through 3/31/07 was 93.82.

Colorado did not meet their goal for this item. However, the State continues to emphasize the importance of maintaining and preserving a child’s natural support and connections when taken into care. The Division of Child Welfare philosophically believes that children need to be in families. With this belief, Colorado has seen a decline in the use of residential and group settings and an increase in the use of family foster homes and kinship care. More emphasis has been placed in the recruitment of family foster and adoptive homes within the communities and neighborhoods where the children currently live. Many counties have formalized their use of community based and faith based organizations to increase their recruitment efforts. Counties have also been charged with the outcome of improving the proportions of children that are placed in their own neighborhoods, communities or local regions.

Although there appears to be a drop in performance, Colorado continues to make efforts to improve this item and has consistently shown a high performance with regard to preserving connections for children.

Assessment of Colorado’s Performance on Permanency 2: Regarding Permanency 2, the State would propose that this Outcome has been substantially achieved.

In 2002, when Colorado was reviewed; the baseline performance on Item 14 – Preserving Connections - was 95%. Although the State agreed to a 1% increase on this item, it could be argued that there was not a need for this to be included on a Program Improvement Plan. Throughout the PIP timeframe, this item has maintained a high percentage and the State believes this item is a strength.

CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING 1

Item 19 – Worker Visits with the Child: This item attempts to assure that when the county department has an open case, monthly face-to-face contacts occur with children in foster care as well as with children living in their homes. Colorado’s baseline measure was 92% with a goal of 95%. The statewide performance for the past year, 4/1/06 through 3/31/07 was 85.19%.

Several factors had significant impacts on this item. One issue involved a rule change whereby county agencies were required to have monthly contact with children living in their homes and had an open child protection case. The previous rule required every other month contact. Upon analysis, it was found that this was the population that caused this item to be out of compliance.

Another factor that impacted this item was the manner by which this item was rated a strength or an area needing improvement. If a caseworker makes monthly contact with a child three out of three months, then the performance standard is met at 100%. If the same caseworker misses one month the compliance percentage is 0% rather than 66.7% (two out of three). The Division of Child Welfare contracted with Data Analytics to provide a more in-depth look at face-to-face contacts that occurred between County staff and the child in question. The report from Data Analytics reflects data from 7/1/03 through 6/30/06. As was stated previously, the goal is that 90% of the time, monthly face to face contact is made with the child in question. The different method of calculation being proposed involved determining how many months the child in question should have had contact with a worker compared to how many months the contact occurred. The chart below is a synopsis of the findings.

Colorado Performance on Face to Face Contacts by Reporting Period

	07/03-12/03	10/03-03/04	01/04-06/04	04/04-09/04	07/04-12/04	10/04-03/05	01/05-06/05	04/05-09/05	07/05-12/05	10/05-03/06	01/06-06/06
State wide performance for all children	95.1%	94.6%	94.7%	94.8%	94.8%	94.5%	94.3%	94.5%	94.7%	94.7%	94.8%
State wide performance for CW children in OOH care	97.2%	96.6%	96.6%	96.9%	96.6%	96.1%	96.4%	96.2%	95.9%	95.9%	96%
State wide performance for CW children living in home	85.4%	83.9%	84.2%	85.4%	86.7%	85.4%	83.1%	86.4	88.4%	87.9%	88.1%
State wide performance for DYCS Youth	98.4%	98.5%	98.9%	99%	98.3%	97.4%	97.4%	98%	98.7%	98.8%	99.3%

Under this method, statewide compliance scores have been stable and consistently high from 7/01/03 through 6/30/06. Over the span of the eleven quarterly reporting periods completed to date, the total compliance has experienced a minimal range of only 0.8% difference between the highest compliance of 95.1% and the lowest of 94.3%. For children in out of home care, there has been a range of only 1.3% from a high of 97.2% to a low of 95.9%. For youth in the Division of Youth Corrections System, the range has also varied minimally from a high of 99.3% to a low of 97.4% (1.9%). A highly significant range can be seen when looking at children living in their own homes. The range with this group is 5.3%, from a low of 83.1% to a high of 88.4%. In looking at the first 3 reporting periods 7/03 through 6/04, the average was 84.5%. The average for the last 3 reporting periods was 88.13%. As can be seen, the population that has kept Colorado out of compliance has been the children living at home. However within that population, a significant improvement can also be seen.

Finally, the 2008 Annual Progress and Services Report indicates the following activities that will occur to come into compliance with the federal mandates regarding caseworker contact with children in foster care.

Work to increase caseworker visits with the child in the home include the following plans:

1. Create a Realistic Job Overview or RJO video for potential caseworkers. The video would be Colorado focused and give a realistic view of what the job of caseworker may entail. This video would be shown to potential applicants before filling out applications to become a caseworker. The video could be used in all 64 counties. The video hopefully will give people a sense on whether this would be a profession they would succeed in, and deter those who are unsure of what issues they may face in the profession.
2. Child protection contract consultants provide ongoing consultation regarding the importance of face-to-face contacts. The focus of this T.A. will be on the quality of face to face contact between caseworkers and children. Areas to be address will include how to address concerns of the children, assess for safety, permanency, and well-being, while making any necessary adjustments to the case plan from the information received during those visits.
3. Increase training at the CORE training to include a curriculum specific to addressing successful visitation between workers and children in placement. The training would help workers be able to

- identify established goals of the visit, what are successful approaches for visits, challenges of visits, barriers in planning the visits, positive outcomes for families associated with workers visits, and what can be learned from the visits. Improve supervision training to adequately support caseworkers.
4. Program to track visitation in each county and assess where deficits are occurring, where resources need to be focused to reach better outcomes. Money could be provided as part of an RFP for counties that submit plans to address gaps in visitation services to meet the goal of 90%. Plans may include roving workers who can cover things for caseworkers to free up time for caseworkers to conduct home visits, hiring workers to keep in reserve that perform other functions that would be trained and ready to take over a caseload should the current caseworker quit.
 5. Provide incentive dollars to those county departments that meet the projected goals that would be passed on to those caseworkers that helped achieve the goal.
 6. Explore making caseworker visitation part of performance plans.
 7. Continue to analyze policies and procedures that either help achieve desired goals or may be barriers to reach goals.
 8. Continue to monitor caseworker visit trends and address needs with additional technical assistance and training as needed, and identified.

Assessment of Colorado's Performance on Child and Family Well-Being 1: Regarding this outcome, the state agrees that this is an area that continues to need improvement.

As the State works with the Regional Office to develop a plan to meet the 90% Federal Requirement regarding face to face contact with children in foster care, contacts with children in their homes will also be addressed. The plan will provide baselines, goals, benchmarks as well as strategies and technical assistance to address the issues and concerns that have been documented.

CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING 3

Item 22a – Timely Initial Health Assessments: This Item attempts to assure that children with open cases receive timely initial health and dental assessments. Colorado's baseline measure was 82% with a goal of 86%. The statewide performance for the past year, 4/1/06 through 3/31/07 was 80.95.

Many efforts have been made by the Division of Child Welfare to assist counties to make timely health assessments strength. A major systemic factor had a huge impact on the county's ability to schedule appointments. Because of a large computer glitch with a statewide information system that delayed the arrival of Medicaid cards for children in foster care, fewer health providers accepted Medicaid as a payment source. Also nearly all providers would not set appointments until a Medicaid Card was provided.

Although this item is still an area needing improvement, the percentage compliance has increased over the past year and appears to have leveled off at this time. Perhaps this is a more realistic baseline for Colorado as the prepare for the 2008 review.

Item 22b – Health Needs Identified and Services Provided: This Item attempts to assure that children's health needs are identified, and that health services are provided on a regular basis. Colorado's baseline measure was 90% with a goal of 94%. The statewide performance for the past year, 4/1/06 through 3/31/07 was 90.19%

The issues in 22a also impact this item. Although Colorado did not meet their goal, practice on this item appears to be stabilized near the baseline.

Assessment of Colorado's Performance on Child and Family Well-Being 3: Regarding this outcome, the state agrees that this is an area that continues to need improvement.

The State will continue to work with the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance to continue to address the Medicaid issues that arise in providing timely health and dental assessments and the provision of services.

Conclusion

As Colorado prepares the Statewide Assessment the second round of the Child and Family Services Review, further analysis will be provided for the 5 items above. Further, the State will review the manner by which these items have been measured for compliance and determine if the measures continue to be appropriate or if other measures and baselines would more adequately reflect the child welfare practice being done.

The Program Improvement Plan has been a positive experience for Colorado. The review process and the further development of the PIP has required more collaboration with other human services agencies and has allowed Child Welfare to more effectively employ community and faith based agencies. Practice has changed through the use of more highly structured assessment tools, and through the statewide implementation of a family centered, community-based approach to child welfare and foster care. Annie E. Casey's Family-to-Family model has assisted Colorado greatly over the last few years. It is believed that Colorado has accomplished many positive changes and that the Child and Family Service System has become stronger for children, youth and families involved with Child Welfare. This process has assisted Colorado in the tracking of relevant outcomes and the technical assistance from the National Resource Centers has assisted in the implementation of practice that impacts the outcomes.

Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan October 2003 – March 2007

ANI = Area Needing Improvement

ST = Strength

Outcomes Or Systemic Factors And Item(s) Contributing To Nonconformity	ANI	ST	Goal/Negotiated Measure/Percent Of Improvement	Date of Goal Achievement <u>Actual</u>
Outcomes S1 Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect	Not Achieved			
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of maltreatment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	85% of reports will receive a face-to-face observation of child within assigned timeframe. (ARD)	This Goal was achieved 9/30/04
National Standard – Repeat Maltreatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6.1% or less will experience repeat maltreatment within 6 months of the previous incident (NCANDS)	This National Standard was achieved prior to the 2002 review at 2.7%
Item 2: Repeat Maltreatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This item was a strength during the 2002 review
National Standard – Maltreatment in foster care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	.57% or less will experience repeat maltreatment within 6 months of the previous incident (NCANDS)	This Goal was achieved 9/30/04
Outcome S2 Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	Not Achieved			
Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) and prevent removal.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	88% of Family Services Plans (FSP) contain a description of specific services that address the needs of the child(ren).(ARD)	This Goal was achieved 12/31/04.
Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	75% of Safety plans will address the issues identified in the safety assessment (ARD)	This Goal was achieved 12/31/04.
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	Not Achieved			
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No more than 17% of children will experience re-entry into foster care within a 12-month period (Trails))	This Goal was achieved 9/31/04.
National Standard – Foster Care re-entries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No more that 8.6% of children will experience re-entry into foster care within a 12-month period. (AFCARS)	The National Standard has not been achieved and will be an issue in 2008.
Item 6: Stability of Foster Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For 76% of children who experience change of placement, the change will be directly related	Area needing improvement

Outcomes Or Systemic Factors And Item(s) Contributing To Nonconformity	ANI	ST	Goal/Negotiated Measure/Percent Of Improvement	Date of Goal Achievement <u>Actual</u>
			to helping the child achieve his/her goals in the case plan. (ARD)	
National Standard – Stability of Foster Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	At least 86.7% of children in foster care will experience no more than 2 moves in their first 12 months of out of home placement. (AFCARS)	This National Standard was achieved prior to the 2002 review at 86.9%.
Item 7: Permanency goal for Child	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. 96% of children in foster care will have an appropriate permanency goal. (ARD) 2. 50% of children in foster care will have a perm goal established in a timely manner (Trails)	1. Jun 2005 97.4% 2. Mar 2005 63.5%
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This item was a strength during the 2002 review
National Standard – Length of time to reunification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	At least 76.2% of children who reunify with their family achieve this reunification within 12 months of their most recent placement in out of home care. (AFCARS)	This National Standard was achieved prior to the 2002 review at 85.7%.
Item 9: Adoption	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	At least 81% of children legally free for adoption will have an adoptive family identified. (ARD)	Area needing improvement
National Standard – Length of time to achieve adoption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	At least 32% of children will achieve a permanent adoption within 24 months of their most recent placement in out of home care. (AFCARS)	This National Standard was achieved prior to the 2002 review at 49.5%
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. 18% of cases will have OPPLA as a permanency goal (Trails) 2. 90% of the IL cases will reflect diligent efforts to prepare youth for emancipation (ARD)	This Goal was achieved 12/31/06
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	Not Achieved			
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This item was a strength during the 2002 review

Outcomes Or Systemic Factors And Item(s) Contributing To Nonconformity	ANI	ST	Goal/Negotiated Measure/Percent Of Improvement	Date of Goal Achievement <u>Actual</u>
Item 12: Placement with siblings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This item was a strength during the 2002 review
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	94% of visitation plans address permanency goal and are of sufficient <u>frequency</u> with each parent %. (ARD)	This Goal was achieved Sep 2004.
Item 14: Preserving connections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	96% of case records address maintaining familial and cultural connections.(ARD)	Area needing improvement
Item 15: Relative Placement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This item was a strength during the 2002 review
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refer to Goals for Items 13 and 17 as measures for this outcome. Item 13 goal addresses visitation and relationship with child in care and parents Item 17 address services and support to enhance relationship of child in care with parents.	Completed Sep 2004 and ongoing
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	Not Achieved			
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. 95% of the time, <u>mothers'</u> needs as related to the child will be addressed through services. 2. 91% of the time, <u>fathers'</u> needs as related to the child will be addressed through services 3. 95% of the time, <u>children's'</u> needs will be addressed through services. (ARD)	1a, 1b, 1c This Goal was achieved Sep 2004
Item 18: Child and family involved in case planning.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	97% of parents and children interviewed will be involved in case planning (ARD)	This Goal was achieved Mar 2005
Item 19: Worker visits with child.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	90% of monthly visits with the child will be face to face. (ARD)	Area needing improvement
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	72% of the time, caseworker will meet face to face at least every other month with parent or guardian to whom the child will return. (ARD)	Completed Dec 2004
Outcome WB2 – Children receive adequate services to meet their educational needs.	Substantially Achieved			
Item 21 – Educational needs of the child(ren)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This item was a strength during the

Outcomes Or Systemic Factors And Item(s) Contributing To Nonconformity	ANI	ST	Goal/Negotiated Measure/Percent Of Improvement	Date of Goal Achievement <i>Actual</i>
				2002 review
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	Not Achieved			
Item 22: Physical health of child	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. 86% of initial health assessments of children in foster care are done in a timely manner.(ARD) 2. 94% of children in foster care will have health needs identified and services provided (ARD)	Area needing improvement
Item 23: Mental health of the child	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	84% of children with mental health needs will have services provided (ARD)	This Goal was achieved Sep 2004
Systemic Factor 1 Statewide Information System	Substantially Achieved			
Systemic Factor 2: Case Review System	Not Achieved			
Item 25: Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refer to item 18 .	This Goal was achieved Mar 2005
Item 26: Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This item was a strength during the 2002 review
Item 27: Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	88% of the 12-month permanency hearings are held in a timely manner. Baseline 84%(ARD)	Completed June 2005
Item 28: Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	75% of children who have been in FC 15/22 will either have a TPR filed or compelling reasons documented. (Trails)	Completed June 2005

Outcomes Or Systemic Factors And Item(s) Contributing To Nonconformity	ANI	ST	Goal/Negotiated Measure/Percent Of Improvement	Date of Goal Achievement <i>Actual</i>
and Safe Families Act.				
Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This item was a strength during the 2002 review
Systemic Factor 3: Quality Assurance System	Substantially Achieved			
Systemic Factor 4: Training	Substantially Achieved			
Systemic Factor 5 Services Array	Substantially Achieved			
Systemic Factor 6 Agency Responsiveness to the Community	Substantially Achieved			
Systemic Factor 7: Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention.	Substantially Achieved			